

# **THE UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Among the most important assets of a community are its facilities and utilities. The Town of Somerset, like many communities in western Wisconsin, is growing at a rate that challenges the Town's ability to manage development in an efficient and effective manner. The Town's population has grown from 1,975 in 1990 to an estimated 2,957 in 2003, and the Town has become an ex post facto suburb of the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Area.

What follows is an inventory of existing facilities in the Town of Somerset and an assessment of their future needs.

## **TOWN HALL**

The Town Hall and Garage is a 5,750 square foot structure built in 1958. It includes the town office, a Planning Commission office, a large kitchen, a large assembly area and the Town road equipment storage and repair garage. The kitchen and assembly areas are used for a hot lunch program for senior citizens from the area Monday through Thursday in cooperation with the St. Croix County Office of Aging. The Town offers this facility rent-free. There are currently no plans for expansion of this structure.

## **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

The Town of Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) serves both the Town and Village of Somerset and is housed in a large structure attached to the Somerset Town Hall. The FRS has been in this location since 1970. At present, the FRS has 23 volunteers and operates with two fire engines, two tankers, two rescue vehicles, 2 pickups, and the Jaws of Life. Additionally, the FRS has numerous other pieces of supportive fire and rescue equipment.

Contracts have recently been let for a 2,100 square foot expansion of the FRS facility which will provide space for a meeting room and equipment storage.

## **AMBULANCE SERVICE**

Ambulance service for the Town of Somerset is provided by Lakeview Hospital in Stillwater, Minnesota.

## **POLICE**

The Town of Somerset has receives policing from the St. Croix County Sheriffs Department.

## **CHILD CARE SERVICES**

The Town of Somerset has two St. Croix County licensed day care centers and two certified day care centers all of which operate in private homes. The Somerset School District also provides child care services for young students both before and after school at a moderate cost.

## **SCHOOLS – PUBLIC AND PRIVATE/ PAROCHIAL**

The Somerset School District provides public education for the major portion of the Town of Somerset. Students living toward the outer boundaries of the Town may attend schools in the Osceola, New Richmond, and Hudson school districts.

The Somerset School District facilities include: a new high school built in 1996, an elementary school built in 2001, and a middle school built in 1975 with new additions and overall remodeling in 2001. The Schools are located on a large campus in the Village of Somerset and the majority of the students are from the Town of Somerset.

The Somerset School District sponsors three and four year old half-day early childhood development classes. District school population was 727 in 1987 and has grown to 1,207 in April 2003.

A task force has currently been established to address issues of future growth and district needs. There remains room on the existing campus for moderate expansion.

St. Anne's Catholic School is located in the Village of Somerset and provides parochial education for both the Town of Somerset and the Village of Somerset. Current enrollment K – 8 is 185 students. Proposed future expansion includes an addition to the existing administration and multi-media structures and the implementation of pre and after school child care and early childhood development programs.

## **PARKS**

The Town of Somerset has developed a boat launch and parking area in cooperation with the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway administration that allows public access to the St. Croix River at the southern Town boundary. This facility is supported through income generated by the sale of yearly launch and parking permits issued by the Town. The National Park Service operates and supports a boat launch and parking area that provides access to the St. Croix River at the Town's northern boundary.

St. Croix County assesses a \$250 park fee for each lot created in the Town of Somerset. \$200 of such fees are held by the County and designated for park development by the Town of Somerset, the remaining \$50 is held by the county for support of county parks. In the past twenty years the Town of Somerset has donated \$57,000 of accrued park fees to the Village of Somerset to support development of parks serving recreational activities for both the village and the Town of Somerset.

As this plan was being developed, it was clear that residents of the Town of Somerset who participated in the citizen advisory groups and were closely involved in the development of the comprehensive plan were concerned that land development continuing at its present rate would leave the town with no parklands in the future. It was suggested that a Park Committee be formed to address this issue without waiting for the Comprehensive Plan to be in place.

## **LIBRARIES**

The Somerset Public Library is located in the Village of Somerset in a structure built in 1993. The library is supported by the Village of Somerset and monies provided by St. Croix County. The Town of Somerset contributes indirectly through taxes paid to the county. 70% of the library's circulation involves residents outside the Village of Somerset. The library board is presently made up of two residents of the Town of Somerset, two residents of the Village of Somerset and the Superintendent of the Somerset Schools.

The library has approximately 13,000 books, 900 videos and 400 "books on tape". The library also has five computers available to the public, two of which offer internet access. The library is currently staffed by two full time and four part-time employees. The library has an inter-library loan program that can access books and materials statewide for Somerset Library clients.

## **RECYCLING**

The Town of Somerset provides recycling facilities at the Town Hall on the second and fourth Saturday of each month. The Town participates in the annual tire and appliance roundup at the which is sometimes held at same facility.

## **RUBBISH AND GARBAGE**

A number of commercial haulers provide garbage and recycling service throughout the Town. The primary commercial haulers are: Waste Management, Waste Busters and Olson Sanitation. These haulers dispose of their waste at three primary sites: Timberland Trails (Bruce, WI), BFI Disposal (Sarona, WI) and ONIX Disposal (Roberts WI).

## **STORM WATER MANAGEMENT**

While each new development presented to the Planning Commission and the Town Board is examined carefully, it is the St. Croix County Zoning Office that brings expertise to matters of storm water management since the Town of Somerset is under County ordinances.

## **TELECOMMUNICATION FACILITIES**

The primary telecommunication facility in the Town of Somerset is the Somerset Telephone Company (STC). STC offers local phone, long distance, fiber optics, internet, and cable TV services. The STC office is in the Village of Somerset and presently has three full-time employees. Other telecommunication companies serving border areas of the Town include Ameritech, AT & T, century Telephone, MCI, and Quest.

## **GAS AND ELECTRICAL FACILITIES**

Midwest Natural Gas currently provides natural gas to many parts of the Town and is in the process of expanding coverage. Electrical service for the Town is provided by two co-ops (St. Croix Electric Cooperative and Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative) and a private provider (Xcel Energy).

## **CEMETERIES**

The Town of Somerset has only one active cemetery which is associated with a small recently restored one hundred and seven year old Lutheran church and its Cemetery Association. More interesting information regarding this church can be found on page 83 of this document in the Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources chapter.

## **UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES GOALS AND POLICIES**

### **Goal 1**

To support and maintain existing community facilities and to anticipate and respect public needs and desires for new or expanded facilities.

### **Policy 1.1**

To create and appoint a Park and Recreation Committee within six months of approval of the Comprehensive Plan.

### **Policy 1.2**

To be alert and to seek out funding through grants, foundations and volunteerism to support establishment, expansion or repair of Town facilities.

### **Policy 1.3**

To be alert to new means of communication that would support the creation of new businesses that might provide good jobs with little impact on the environment or infrastructure of the Town.

### **Policy 1.4**

To establish and maintain a supportive liaison with the Somerset Public Schools.

### **Policy 1.5**

To establish and maintain a supportive liaison with the Somerset Public Library.

## **UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES IMPLEMENTATION**

1. Continue to support the joint fire/rescue service in cooperation with the Village of Somerset.
2. Maintain and improve lines of communication with the fire/rescue service to anticipate future needs.

3. Develop a system of random well testing supported by the County and State that would monitor the quality and safety of our water supply.
4. Encourage the County to develop a system to analyze the effectiveness of private on-site wastewater treatment systems. Encourage the County to establish a requirement for septic tank pumping on a two or three year basis as is practiced by several northern Wisconsin counties.
5. Establish a Parks and Recreation Committee by 2004 to advise the Planning Commission and Town Board on park and recreation needs.
6. Designate a member of the Planning Commission who will confer on a regular basis with the Somerset Schools and the Somerset Library and share their needs and concerns with the Planning Commission and the Town Board.

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