

**DRAFT**

# **PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES**

**INTRODUCTION**

**OVERVIEW**

**WASTEWATER TREATMENT**

**STORMWATER MANAGEMENT**

**BELFAST WATER DISTRICT**

**REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT**

**SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT**

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE SYSTEM**

**HEALTH CARE FACILITIES**

**CONDITIONS AND TRENDS**

## INTRODUCTION

The City of Belfast provides a range of facilities and services for its citizens. The Water District owns and operates the water supply system and the School District operates the school system. The single largest expenditure is for education. This chapter describes existing public facilities and services, and the extent to which they adequately meet the City's needs today and have the available capacity to serve Belfast for the next ten years. The goal of this chapter is to plan, finance, and maintain an efficient system of public facilities and services that will accommodate the City's future needs. See the Public Facilities Map for the location of these facilities within Belfast.

## OVERVIEW

Municipal services include emergency services, fire, police and EMT, city government administration, public works (road, storm sewer, public sewer and parks) recreation, public library, and sewer services, and others. The Belfast Water District provides public water services. Even more broadly, the term includes management and operations of actual facilities such as buildings, park and recreation areas, the city hall itself, and such. The modest decline in the population projections for Belfast during the planning period of ten years, suggests that the City will be able to handle the needs of residents and businesses without having to increase service provision, especially where current demand is below supply, like water and sewer. However, the aging of the population and expectations for improved services like ambulance and road maintenance might encourage the City to invest more in these areas.

General municipal administration employs 17 persons full-time year round, and 2 persons part-time. Public works employs 13 persons full-time year round, and uses part time and seasonal employees to help maintain the roads in winter and the parks in the summer. General municipal administration staff and facilities are housed in City Hall, located on Church Street. Public Works staff, equipment, and facilities are located on Congress Street. The City Hall provides adequate space for current and anticipated staffing needs for the ten-year planning period of this plan. A potential need is for off-site storage of records.

Anticipated needs are noted in the strategies section of this chapter and in the Capital Investment Plan.

Both large and small-scale businesses require basic public services, roadway access, water/sewer connections and the like. In the current economy, access to markets far beyond Belfast is essential for many as well. Internet and telecommunications infrastructure in Belfast was significantly improved with the arrival of MBNA. Although MBNA downsized and was acquired by Bank of America, much of that infrastructure (telecommunications and three-phase power) capacity remains in place for new tenants of the commercial and office park facilities in Belfast,

like athenahealth, Inc. While reasonable quality cell phone service is now available in most areas of Belfast, an ongoing concern in many rural areas is the quality and availability of good quality internet service. As of 2019, there are approximately 40 households in Belfast that are considered underserved for broadband (meaning they do not meet the 25/3 mbps ratings considered the minimum standard for broadband speed).

## **WASTEWATER TREATMENT**

The City of Belfast Wastewater Treatment System consists of 31 miles of gravity sewer lines and force mains, 18 pump stations, and a 1,490,000 gallon per day secondary wastewater treatment facility.

The City has been aggressively replacing old leaking undersized sewers with new watertight sewers that are sized to carry flows for the next century. Several wastewater-pumping stations have been upgraded, with the most recent (2012) project occurring along Front Street. The City has also been removing excess groundwater and precipitation flows from the sewer system with the goal of eliminating the two combined sewer overflow (CSO) points.

The City has been able to extend the life of its present treatment facility instead of building a new plant. In the long run, this will save millions of dollars as compared to the cost of a new plant. Water quality in Belfast Harbor continues to improve and the treatment plant consistently produces a fully compliant effluent. While the City’s unseen wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure improvements are not the most visible sign of the community’s recent growth, the City’s aggressive focus on these capital improvements are the foundation upon which much of the new growth has been built.

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CSO abatement efforts over the past 20 years have reduced CSO flows from a historical average of 382,000 gallons/year to an average of 159,000 gallons/year the past four years. The treatment plant’s design capacity is 1,000,000 GPD (Peak Hourly 3.8 MGD). There are approximately 1,475 users of the sewer system (1,200 residential and 275 commercial).

Recent sewer extensions have been few and limited in size, partly because most areas for which ‘growth’ is targeted have access to public sewer, and at present, there is limited need to extend existing lines to facilitate additional growth. As noted above, most City work and expenditures have focused on upgrading existing sewer lines to address infiltration and inflow concerns.

| <b>Excess Groundwater Excess</b>                |                |                         |                       |
|---|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Infiltration/Snowmelt storm water inflow</b> |                |                         |                       |
| <b>Location</b>                                 | <b>GPD</b>     | <b>GPD/Inch of Rain</b> | <b>Work Performed</b> |
| Vine/High/Waldo Ave                             | 180,000        | 95,000                  | Future Upgrade        |
| Miller Street                                   | 170,000        | 95,000                  | Future Upgrade        |
| Maine Street                                    | 80,000         | 50,000                  | System Upgraded       |
| Glenview Lane                                   | 110,000        | 50,000                  | System Upgraded       |
| North Ocean Street                              | 50,000         | 35,000                  | System Upgraded       |
| Washington/Green Street                         | 50,000         | 25,000                  | Future Upgrade        |
| Penobscot Terrace                               | 90,000         | 10,000                  | System Upgraded       |
| Mayo Street                                     | 60,000         | 40,000                  | Future Upgrade        |
| <b>Totals</b>                                   | <b>790,000</b> | <b>400,000</b>          |                       |

The City operates a public sewer system and the Belfast Water District operates the water system. Overall, both services are available to areas that need these services; areas which support dense residential development and intense nonresidential development; larger retail stores (e.g. Downtown, Hannaford and Reny’s), large public facilities (e.g. Troy Howard Middle School and Belfast High School), large office complexes (e.g. BOA and athenahealth), industrial development (e.g. Mathew Brothers and Ducktrap Seafoods) and denser residential development such as occurs inside the Route 1 bypass and in some areas on the eastside.

Public water is available to all of the above areas. Also, water service is available to some areas in which sewer is not available, such as along sections of Swan Lake Avenue located westerly of the Back Searsport Road (end of line terminates at the intersection of Swan Lake Ave and the Back of Searsport Road), mostly because this is the route that public water is provided from the District’s groundwater wells.

Most areas in which public water and sewer is not available rely upon on-site septic and water. In most cases, the density of existing development and desired future development is quite low, a 1.5 to 2 acre lot size, and most intense nonresidential uses are prohibited, and on-site services can be used to support such development. That said, there are some isolated problems,

including several mobile home parks located in rural areas. The cost of providing sewer and water to these isolated areas does not warrant the service extensions, and the provision of public services to these areas would cause growth to occur in areas which the City considers as rural areas. Overall, Belfast has provided public services to areas in which there is sufficient land area to support anticipated growth for at least the next 10 – 20 years.

Property owners are responsible for the maintenance and disposal of septic waste. Several private services which ‘pump’ private septic wastes contract with the City sewer treatment plant for processing this waste. Also, Moore’s Septic operates a DEP and City permitted privately owned facility on the Back Searport Road to dry and spread solids pumped from subsurface systems. The current system generally works well, however, some individual property owners do not regularly maintain their system which may lead to a system failure. Most current system failures are isolated events and typically occur when a system reaches its anticipated life expectancy. When a failure occurs the City requires the property owner to replace the system. In cases in which the property owner cannot pay the cost, the City has used small system grant funds that may be available through the DEP and City revenues to help pay replacement costs.

## STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Overall stormwater management facilities are in adequate condition, and the Public Works Department regularly maintains the existing system. Our facilities include stormwater management basins and filtration or other treatment systems such as detention ponds, culverts, and/or vegetated swales. Also, when the City has upgraded an existing public sewer line or extended public sewer to an area it also has improved existing stormwater facilities, and Public Works systematically replaces culverts during road overlay projects. That said, changes in the number, duration and intensity of major rainfall events in the past 10 years has or is expected to cause problems with the capacity of current City facilities. Lastly, the most frequent concern abutting property owners typically raise during Planning Board review of a proposed development involve managing stormwater. In the Future Land Use Plan it is recommended that the City consider amending current Ordinance provisions to better address stormwater management concerns, including greater use of low impact development standards.

## BELFAST WATER DISTRICT

The Belfast Water District is governed by a quasi-municipal Board of Trustees, which is directly responsible to the State of Maine Public Utilities Commission. The Water District is a self-supporting utility. The City’s water supply is provided by two underground wells on the east side of the Passagassawakeag River. One of the wells, dug in 1950, is located near the juncture of Smart Road and Achorn Road. The other well, dug in 1965, is located near Jackson Pitt, just off Route 141 in Swanville. The water quality of these wells is excellent and requires only fluoridation. The City’s aquifer overlay district, established in the early 1990’s at the request of

the Water District, protects the aquifer in Belfast, which is the source for these wells. The Water District continues to maintain the Little River Reservoir as a back-up water supply. In 2018, about 628,521 gallons per day were pumped on average. In 2019 that figure was about 657,123 gallons per day, which is below the estimated capacity of the system. Replacement of aging waterlines has reduced significantly the loss of water within the distribution system itself. The extension of the water system based on need has been in keeping with the policies of the comprehensive plan. Like sewer extensions, water extensions have been few and limited in size. Also, public water service typically is available to areas the City has targeted as growth areas.

## REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT

In the fall of 2019 Regional School Unit 71 opened the newly renovated Belfast Area High School. The renovations cost \$7.6 million and consisted of multiple new facilities including classrooms, bathrooms, locker rooms, cafeteria, a math and special education wing, and a renovation of the pool. The Regional School Unit (RSU) 71 consists of the following schools:

1. Belfast Area High School
2. Bcope (Belfast Community Outreach Program in Education)
3. Captain Albert W. Stevens School
4. Gladys Weymouth School
5. East Belfast School
6. Ames Elementary
7. Kermit Nickerson
8. Troy A. Howard Middle School
9. Belfast Adult Education

Six of the RSU 71 schools are located in Belfast (Belfast Area High School, Bcope, Captain Albert W. Stevens School, East Belfast School, Belfast Adult Education and Troy A. Howard Middle School). Additionally, Belfast is home to the University of Maine Hutchinson Center, River School Belfast, Waterfall Arts, and Cornerspring Montessori School.

Under current regulations, and with some vacant parcels nearby, new residential development is possible around most of these schools located in the City. The Belfast Area High School and Captain Albert W. Stevens School are located within the Route 1 bypass and are within walking distance of existing residential neighborhoods. Sidewalks and pathways serve these schools. In 2010, the City worked with MDOT Safe Route to School funds to construct improvements to pedestrian crosswalk improvements at the Route 1/Route 52 intersection; an improvement which enhances walkability to this school. While very few students walk to the Eastside Elementary School, the City also has constructed pedestrian improvements to the Route 1/Swan Lake Avenue Intersection.

## SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

In 1992, the City established a new recycling center and transfer station at the Business Park.

The city operates the transfer facility and has a contract with a private vendor to haul some of the waste to the Penobscot Energy Recovery Company incinerator in Orrington. In recent years the City has worked to increase its recycling rate. Private companies also contract with some residents to collect their waste at curb-side, and most businesses contract with private companies to collect and dispose of their solid waste. It is anticipated that the system’s current capacity will be able to handle projected growth during the ten-year planning period.

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE SYSTEM**

Belfast’s emergency response system is the method by which the City responds to police, fire, medical and other emergencies. Police, fire and ambulance services are adequate. The City uses capital reserve funds to which it makes annual contributions to purchase needed upgraded and replacement equipment for the above services. The City uses paid staff to provide EMT services and provides such services to Belfast and many surrounding communities. A detailed list of recommended improvements is included in the Capital Investment Plan (CIP) within the Fiscal Capacity Chapter of this plan.

**HEALTH CARE FACILITIES**

Waldo County General Hospital (WCGH) is a non-profit Critical Access (25 bed) Hospital, part of the Coastal Healthcare Alliance (CHA) along with Pen Bay Medical Center (99 beds, Rockport) and the MaineHealth System. Additionally, Mental Health Services are provided through MaineHealth. The local and regional facilities are currently adequate to meet the needs of the community.

Waldo County General Hospital (WCGH) is a non-profit Critical Access (25 bed) Hospital, part of the Coastal Healthcare Alliance (CHA) along with Pen Bay Medical Center (99 beds, Rockport) and the MaineHealth System. WCGH offers a range of medical services, including Emergency Room, renal dialysis, an inpatient hospice unit, state of the art radiological services and oncology services.

*Services include:*

- |                           |                         |                            |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Anesthesiology            | General Surgery         | Orthopedics                |
| Audiology                 | Geriatric Care          | Palliative Care            |
| Bone and Joint Healthcare | Home Health & Hospice   | Pediatrics                 |
| Cardiac Rehabilitation    | Intensive Care Unit     | Physical Medicine          |
| Cardiopulmonary           | Laboratory Services     | Physical Therapy           |
| Cardiovascular Medicine   | Neurology               | Radiology                  |
| Dental Care               | Nuclear Medicine        | Rheumatology               |
| Diabetes Care             | Obstetrics/Gynecology   | Sleep Disorders Laboratory |
| Dialysis                  | Oncology/Hematology     | Speech Therapy             |
| Ear, Nose and Throat      | Occupational Healthcare | Sports Medicine            |

Surgery

Urology

Voice And Swallowing

Additional patient services are available from Maine Medical Center in Portland (WCGH Tertiary referral center) and Northern Lights Medical Center in Bangor. Mental Health Services are provided through MaineHealth. Penobscot Shores, a subsidiary of WCGH, provides assisted living.

**CONDITIONS AND TRENDS**

Most current public facilities have the capacity to satisfy anticipated growth. In 2001 the City purchased a former bank building on Church Street and relocated the police station from City Hall to this facility, and subsequently renovated City Hall to provide better customer services. A major expansion of the Belfast Free Library also occurred in 1999 – 2000.

The City completed construction of a new public works facility in 2019. The facility is located at 54 Crocker Road. The City purchased the 35 acre property in 2017. Total construction cost of the new facility was about \$6.5 million. The project included a new garage, a sand/salt shed, and accompanying laydown areas. The site also includes a 5 acre solar field, owned by the City. The solar field, combined with the solar installation at the former landfill on Pitcher Road and panels located on the Fire Station, result in a the City off-setting about 85% of its electronic generation needs.

Most public facilities (police, fire, schools, city hall, sewage treatment,) are located within the designated growth areas, many in or near Downtown Belfast, and so funding for their improvement benefits those growth areas. The only current public facilities not located in a growth area are several City Parks, such as Sportsman Park. Within Belfast are the following schools (shown on the public facilities maps):

- Belfast Area High School
- Bcope
- Captain Albert W. Stevens School
- Cornerspring Montessori School (private school)
- East Belfast School
- Montessori School (private school)
- The School at Sweetser (Not part of RSU 71)
- Troy A. Howard Middle School
- University of Maine Hutchison Center

| Grades/Year         | 2011  | 2012  | 2013  | 2014  | 2015  | 2016  | 2017  | 2018  |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Elementary (PK-8)   | 1,655 | 1,584 | 1,503 | 1,445 | 1,105 | 1,027 | 985   | 1,009 |
| Secondary (HS 9-12) | 772   | 748   | 698   | 727   | 514   | 487   | 509   | 491   |
| Total               | 2,427 | 2,332 | 2,201 | 2,172 | 1,529 | 1,514 | 1,494 | 1,500 |

*\*Note: 2011-2014 enrollment numbers based off RSU 20 which includes Edna Drinkwater School, Frankfort Elementary School, Searsport District High School, Searsport District Middle School, Searsport Elementary, and Stockton Springs Elementary School in addition to RSU 71 schools listed below.*



The Belfast Airport Business Park is owned by the City of Belfast, and the Belfast City Council negotiates all sales. The Park is located on Congress Street, adjacent to the Belfast Municipal Airport, south of U.S. Route 1. The Park is made up of two sections, which are separated by the airstrip. The North Phase of the Park was completed in 1984 and is comprised of 18 acres of industrially zoned land. This section is serviced by municipal water and sewer, as well as three-phase power. The South Phase of the Park was constructed several years after the North Phase and has similar services. A redemption center and the City Transfer Station also is located in this phase. The City has 5 lots which it owns in this area, each of which is about 1.5 acres in size. The City's goal is to attract 'job creation' enterprises to the Park. Current tenants include Coastal Helicopters, Ducktrap River of Maine, Easterly Wine, GEO, Kids Unplugged, Larrabee Brothers Plumbing and Heating, Maine Maritime Products, Tidewater Oil, and United States Department of Natural Resource Conservation Service.

| <b>Municipal Property</b> | <b>Address</b>    | <b>Municipal Property</b>   | <b>Address</b>    |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| City Hall                 | 1 Church Street   | Boathouse at Steamboat      | Front Street      |
| Fire Department           | Belmont Avenue    | City Park                   | Northport Ave     |
| City Garage               | Congress Street   | Transfer Station            | Business Park     |
| Airport                   | Congress Street   | Police Station              | Church Street     |
| City Dump (closed)        | Pitcher Road      | Belfast Common              | Miller Street     |
| Pollution Abatement Plant | Front Street      | Belfast Skate Park          | Washington Street |
| Public Works              | 54 Crocker Road   | Eleanor Crawford Park       | High Street       |
| Parking Lot               | Cross Street      | Four-Season Recreation Area | High Street       |
| Hayford Block Parking Lot | Church Street     | Heritage Park               | Maine Street      |
| Belfast Free Library      | High Street       | High Street Ice Rink        | High Street       |
| Parking Lot               | Washington Street | Kirby Lake                  | Miller Street     |
| Wales Park                | Congress Street   | Sportman's Park             | Sheppard Road     |
| Legion Park               | High Street       | Steamboat Landing           | Front Street      |
| Parking Lot               | Front Street      | Walsh Field Recreation Area | Route 52          |