

YOUR AMHERST GOVERNMENT

seventh edition, 2009

prepared by the League of Women Voters of Amherst



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A NOTE ON QUOTATIONS

The quotations at the beginning of the various sections indicate the earliest known involvement by town government in the activity described.

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Town Center

I. AMHERST'S BACKGROUND

1. A BRIEF POLITICAL HISTORY OF AMHERST

The religious orthodoxy that led John Russell and his band of sixteen "strict Congregationalists" to the Connecticut Valley in the 1600's had been diluted somewhat by the late 1720's when the first families, known as the "eastern inhabitants" of Hadley, settled in Amherst. Those who traveled beyond the "New Swamp" – the Smiths, the Nashes, the Cowlses, the Boltwoods, the Dickinsons, and others – came as farmers. Soon tavern keepers, grist and sawmill owners, a doctor, and, of course, a minister swelled their ranks. Recognized in 1735 as the Third Precinct of Hadley, the area had its own church and cemetery and limited political autonomy in the form of Town Meeting. The settlers, as their numbers grew, chafed under political dependence on Hadley. In 1759, as a result of local petitions, the Governor, the Governor's Council, and the General Court of the Bay Colony approved the creation of a "separate and distinct district." The new district was named, as were towns in Maine, New York, New Hampshire, and Virginia, after Major General Jeffery Amherst, hero of the French and Indian Wars.

As a "district" Amherst had all the rights of a town, such as electing officers and levying taxes, but it did not have the right to send a representative to the General Court. Full township status was not granted by the Commonwealth until 1786, the same year that many Amherst men, answering the call-to-arms issued by Daniel Shays of Pelham, vainly sought to oppose repressive taxation by and inadequate representation in Massachusetts' post-revolutionary government.

The romantic view of the New England town as politically placid has always been at odds with reality. To be sure, shared "Yankee" values of thrift, hard work, and Protestantism dominated in the early years, but political disputes agitated the town even then. Men of property often found themselves at odds with their less fortunate fellows. Although many Amherst patriots secured honored places in the annals of the Revolution, the town had its share of Tories – including

the minister, the doctor, and the justice of the peace – who remained loyal to George III. Many of its most prominent citizens looked with suspicion, if not horror, upon the followers of Daniel Shays, even though Amherst was largely an "insurgent" town in 1787.

Local issues, too, such as schooling, the location of highways, and the town's obligation to the needy, often sparked intense debate, both in Town Meeting and in the taverns. In predominantly Protestant Amherst, religion even caused discord from time to time. Indeed, so deep were the divisions between members of the First and Second Congregational churches in the early nineteenth century that Triangle Street, laid out in 1820, was designed – at least local legend has it so – in order that members of the Second Church might avoid passing the First Church on their way to worship.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, manufacturers of carriages, textiles, and hats opened up new occupations to Amherst residents. Although insufficient water power, lack of easy access to major markets, and increasing competition from large urban centers kept Amherst from becoming a classic mill town, the brief industrial boom left a permanent mark. The town rosters of those marching with the Grand Army of the Republic during the Civil War reflect the change: Irish immigrants and former slaves, along with Dickinsons, Kelloggs, and Smiths, sent their sons to preserve the Union.

The nineteenth century was also a time when Amherst began to gain celebrity as a center of education, with the founding of Amherst College in 1821 and Massachusetts Agricultural College in 1863. Although conflicting interests of the community and the institutions proved to be of greater concern in the twentieth century than in the nineteenth, mutual suspicion occasionally distorted relations between town and gown in the earlier period, as when Amherst College students established an anti-slavery society in 1833 and when many farmers opposed the establishment of the agricultural college, especially the \$50,000 to be contributed by the town.

Amherst's population remained stable during the first half of the twentieth century. The town began to grow rapidly after World War II when the agricultural college, which had been renamed Massachusetts State College in 1931, became a university in 1947. The University of Massachusetts and Amherst College, while still not dominating the town's economy, became Amherst's major employers. The 1957 Town Report proclaimed on its cover: "Education ... Our Industry. "

An expanding population brought about changes in government. In 1938, the traditional open Town Meeting was replaced by a Representative Town Meeting. An even more profound change occurred in 1953 when Amherst voted to accept the Town Manager Act, which transferred much of the authority historically held by elected officials to a professional manager and reduced the number of elected positions.

Amherst's growth accelerated during the 1960's, when the University nearly tripled in size, and continued with the founding of Hampshire College in

1971. As the ranks of the professional classes swelled, agriculture, industry, and small business became less dominant. As the three schools attracted more students and faculty worldwide, the town's already diverse population became even more cosmopolitan. In the late 1970's and the 1980's, while Amherst grew only modestly, its appeal as a university town in a rural setting attracted retirees and professional people who worked in other communities.

With the extension of suffrage to eighteen-year olds in 1971, voter registration increased by 50% between the 1968 and 1972 presidential elections. Although the proportion of students voting in local elections remains small, town meeting typically has undergraduates among its members.

The changing population and the lower voting age are reflected in Amherst's overwhelming support of progressive or liberal candidates in state and national elections. At the local level, the rapid changes have sharpened awareness of political differences among various groups.

Even though dissent in Amherst has often been vigorous, it has rarely led to alienation. Rather, disagreements have been moderated through what Frank Prentice Rand, Amherst historian, called "that most democratic of legislative bodies," the New England town meeting. Examples of this process from the last two decades include the parking garage construction and the progress toward an official comprehensive plan. It took votes by six town meetings, a referendum and three lawsuits before the garage was finally opened in 2003. Similarly, work toward a master plan for the town began with a rejection for study funds by the 1999 town meeting. Eventually the idea began to catch on and town meeting subsequently funded several extensive town-wide studies that may lead to final acceptance by the Planning Board.

These examples show us that whether members celebrate the New England tradition of individualism or argue for governmental solutions, town meeting continues as a forum for diverse opinion, as it effects compromises and encourages democracy through direct participation and observation. This remains the case even with the rapid changes in the town's population, the plethora of federal and state regulations that now complicate local decision-making, and the increasing activities of special interest groups.

This is not to say, however, that during the past two decades there has been unanimous support for continuing town meeting as the best legislature for Amherst. In 1995 and in 2003, Amherst citizens voted to create charter commissions whose proposals either would have reduced the size of town meeting or eliminated it in favor of a mayor/council form of government. In four successive votes, two for each proposal, the voters rejected these proposed changes, but the votes were very close; in one case the charter lost by just fourteen votes.

The close division in town over support of town meeting caused a palpable rift in public opinion, which transcended political and socio-economic considerations. But even in this atmosphere the town found ways to make

compromises. In 2001, Amherst voted to combine the Town Meeting Act and the Town Manager Act into a modified new charter that retained the select board, manager, town meeting form of government. The new charter, titled “The Amherst Town Government Act,” (ATGA) contains changes that increase the policy-making role of the Select Board and reduce the independence of the Town Manager in making appointments. Its major contribution is to give Amherst a well-organized and user-friendly document that continues to be referred to at meetings of town boards and committees.

As the end of another decade approaches, the town faces new concerns mostly of an economic nature. Federal and state aid to cities and towns has been reduced, and Amherst, like many towns, has had to rely on the use of reserves and override referenda to cover expenses. Services have been cut and jobs have been reduced in hours or eliminated.

On a brighter note, the budget crisis has brought an era of cooperation among town committees and boards. The select board, school committees, library trustees, and finance committee are working together on the new Budget Coordinating Group (BCG). The Town Meeting Coordinating Committee (TMCC, 2003), comprised of members elected from the town meeting itself, has provided leadership by proposing procedural changes to town meeting and has improved communication and outreach to town meeting and the community. The town also established the Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC, 2001) whose job it is to recommend projects in four areas (open space, recreation, affordable housing, and historic preservation) to town meeting. Funding for these projects comes from a 1.5% surtax on property evaluations. (For details see section on Amherst Finances, page 26.)

Amherst will face challenges in the coming decades as it seeks to provide service to the community, to encourage economic development, and to preserve its unique environment.

2. OTHER UNITS OF GOVERNMENT

AMHERST AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Federal authority. The role of the federal government has changed since the United States Constitution was drafted 200 years ago. The Constitution, however, remains the basis of the relationship between the United States and municipalities, which are considered subdivisions of the states. The Constitution delegates exclusive powers to the federal government over national defense, interstate commerce, and certain other governmental functions, while the tenth amendment of the Bill of Rights declares that the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states or to the people.

Over the years, the United States Supreme Court has interpreted the Constitution as granting the federal government broad authority to regulate state and local activities. Federal regulations include guaranteeing civil rights, protecting the environment, and regulating intrastate commerce where interstate commerce is affected thereby.

Federal funds. In recent years, direct federal assistance has been limited to aid for the school lunch program. In the past, the town has received federal aid for sewers, highways, and community development. Some federal aid is distributed through state and regional entities. Amherst benefits, for example, from federal aid to the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA).

AMHERST AND THE STATE

Amherst, like all the 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts, derives its powers from the state. Under the Township Acts of 1636, 1641, and 1647, the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony granted municipalities the authority to manage their own affairs, to make and enforce bylaws, and to choose their own officials. The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, adopted in 1780, did not explicitly establish town government, but gave broad authority to the state legislature, which in 1785 formally recognized the towns and their powers and duties as previously established.

The Home Rule Amendment of 1966 and the subsequent Home Rule Act reaffirmed the rights of cities and towns to make decisions on matters not preempted by state law and gave them authority and a mechanism to write or rewrite their own charters. The state continues to regulate the town's conduct in many areas, including education, public health, public safety, highways, voting procedures, and especially finance. In addition, the amount and nature of state aid strongly influence municipal decisions.

AMHERST AND THE COUNTY

Amherst is located in Hampshire County, one of fourteen counties in Massachusetts that derive their powers from the state. New England counties are less important political divisions than counties elsewhere in the United States where town boundaries are not contiguous.

In 1662, area residents did not want to rely on Boston for all their decisions so they obtained a charter from King Charles to establish Hampshire County. In the late 1990's the governor and the legislature abolished county government in six of the state's counties, including Hampshire, although the geographic boundaries remained. In Hampshire County, functions such as the county jail, registry of deeds, certain roads and bridges, and land records were transferred to the state.

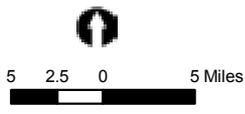
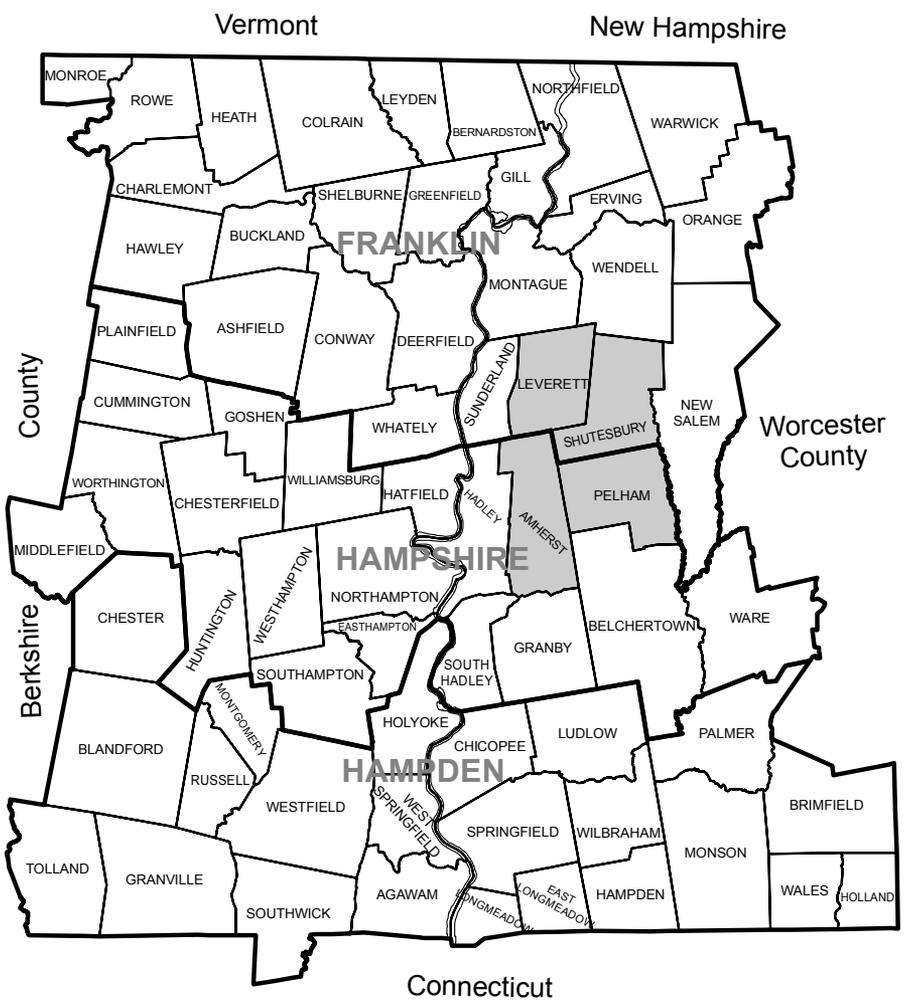
Amherst and the Hampshire Council of Governments (HCOG). In 1998, in view of the abolition of Hampshire County, voters chose to charter the Hampshire Council of Governments (HCOG) as its successor. The charter was approved in the general election, and the legislature subsequently ratified it with MGL, Ch. 34B, Sec. 20, effective January 1, 1999.

The HCOG is located in downtown Northampton where the former County Government had been since 1662, and it retains ownership of the historic courthouse on Main Street. HCOG is a consortium of towns solving local problems by acting regionally. Membership is voluntary and voters in member towns elect representatives to the HCOG Board at their municipal elections. The HCOG Board oversees a variety of services used by over 80 entities, including towns, districts, and regional schools in western Massachusetts. Many of the services involve collective purchasing aimed at reducing prices and administrative costs. HCOG also owns and operates a long-term nursing facility (Hampshire Care) as well as 100 acres of recreational land (Hampshire Park.)

Although Amherst was one of the original members of HCOG, Town Meeting in 2002, because of fiscal constraints, voted to withdraw its membership. Nevertheless, Amherst continues to purchase electricity from HCOG (Hampshire Power), and Amherst residents continue to have access to Hampshire Park and Hampshire Care.

1. Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire Counties

Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire Counties



-  County Boundaries
-  Town Boundaries
-  Amherst Regional School District

Source: Town of Amherst GIS & MassGIS, December 2008

AMHERST AND THE REGION

PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)

Established in 1962, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission encompasses the 43 cities and towns of Hampden and Hampshire Counties, a land area of nearly 1200 square miles. The PVPC is one of thirteen regional planning agencies that together cover the entire state. Its governance, powers, and duties are determined by state law, primarily Chapter 40B of the Massachusetts General Laws.

Functions. The principal purpose of PVPC is to foster planning on a collaborative, regional basis. The PVPC is an advisory body to its member communities and the other levels of government. The commission makes plans and projections for land use, transportation, housing, economic development, environmental protection, historical preservation, energy, community development, regional services, and many other issues and projects of area-wide significance. The PVPC provides technical assistance to member communities, routinely conducts environmental reviews of proposed development projects, and frequently serves as a fiscal agent for a wide range of planning, development, and service-delivery projects. The commission also serves as the Pioneer Valley's data center and has an extensive archive of both regional and local maps.

Representation. The commission is composed of one representative from each municipality in the PVPC's planning district. The planning board of the city or town elects a PVPC commissioner from among its members. The chief elected official(s) of member municipalities are also responsible for appointing an alternate commissioner, who need not be a planning board member. Each community has a single, unweighted vote. Day-to-day oversight of the commission's work activities, budget, and professional staff is the responsibility of an executive director working in concert with a nine-member executive committee, which is composed of the five officers of the PVPC and four commissioners elected at large by the commission's members.

Funding. The PVPC is funded by a wide array of grant programs and an annual per capita assessment of its member communities. The assessment is determined by the member cities and towns and is currently fifteen cents per capita, the lowest rate in Massachusetts.

AMHERST-PELHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT (See pages 43-47.)

PIONEER VALLEY TRANSIT AUTHORITY (PVTA) (See pages 60-62.)



Town Hall

II. STRUCTURE, ADMINISTRATION, FINANCE

Hampshire ss. In perseuance to the Request of several freeholders of the third or East Precinct of Hadley for the Calling of a precinct Meeting-To Ebenezer Kellogg of sd precinct these are In his Majesties name to will and Require you forth with to notefy the free Holders and other Inhabetance of sd Precinct quallefyd for Voating in Town Meeting, that they Convean & meet to gethere at the House of Mr. Zachr Feild In sd Precinct on the Eaight day of October next at Eaight of ye Clock in the fore noone in order to Make Choyce of all necessary Precinct offecers: [... and to find out] what Lands may be Taxed ...

Warrant for the first Precinct Meeting and election in Amherst, 1735

The Amherst Town Government Act (ATGA) has been the legal basis for Amherst's town government since 2001. The General Laws of the Commonwealth, town bylaws, and tradition have supplemented the ATGA.

3. REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING

The legislative function of Amherst's government is vested in Town Meeting, which makes rules, passes bylaws, and appropriates money. The traditional New England town meeting includes all registered voters of the town. Although in 1938 Amherst adopted the representative form of town meeting, the body continues to be called simply Town Meeting.

MEMBERSHIP

Amherst's 240 elected town meeting members are chosen by precinct for terms of three years, with one-third of the membership chosen each year. In addition, there are currently fourteen ex-officio positions.

While only members may make motions and vote at town meeting, all of Amherst's registered voters may participate in debates and address the meeting.

MEETINGS

The Select Board calls a town meeting by issuing a warrant, the name given to the agenda. The select board and other town committees sponsor most items (articles) in the warrant. Citizens may also sponsor articles by a procedure described in a later chapter (see page 66). All town meetings meet for as many evenings as are required to cover all the articles in the warrant.

The state requires every town between February 1 and May 31 to call an Annual Meeting to adopt a budget for the ensuing fiscal year, which begins July 1. Amherst's Annual Meeting usually begins in late April or early May. Special town meetings may be called any time during the year by the select board or by petition of 200 registered voters. Amherst regularly schedules a fall meeting. All meetings except the annual spring meeting are special meetings.

MODERATOR

A Moderator, elected annually, presides over all sessions of Town Meeting. The moderator also appoints the Finance Committee (see page 30) and appoints ad hoc committees when so directed by town meeting.

The powers of the moderator stem from Massachusetts General Laws, the Rules of Town Meeting (see Town Bylaws), and local custom.

STANDING COMMITTEES OF TOWN MEETING

The Finance Committee (1939) is composed of seven members chosen by the moderator for terms of three years. (For more information, see section on Finance, page 26.)

The Town Meeting Coordinating Committee (2003) is comprised of seven members chosen by town meeting members for staggered two-year terms in order to provide continuing leadership and organization to town meeting and to extend outreach to the community on behalf of town meeting. Its duties include but are not limited to:

- organizing warrant forums open to the public prior to town meeting;
- communicating to the public about town meeting through various means;
- taking responsibility for the education and orientation of new members.

The committee performs other duties as determined by town meeting.

More information on town meeting can be found on the website of the Town Meeting Coordinating Committee, in the League of Women Voters' Town Meeting Handbook, which is available in the town manager's office, and on the League website.

TABLE 2. ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES AND OFFICIALS

Name	# of members	Terms in Years	Function
Town Meeting	240 ¹	3	determines the broad policies of the town through approval of the budget, by-laws, and other proposals; elects TMCC ⁴
Select Board	5	3	recommends, interprets broad policies; sets specific policies; oversees governance; hires Town Manager
Board of Trustees of the Town Library	6	3	sets library policy, hires and oversees the director of library, also acts as Board of Trustees of Jones Library, Inc. (a non-profit organization)
Housing Authority	5 ²	5	obtains and administers federal and state housing assistance
Redevelopment Authority	5	5	implements urban renewal plan, e.g. Boltwood Walk
Amherst School Committee	5	3	serves as governing body of the elementary schools
Regional School Committee	9 ³	3	serves as governing body of the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District
Moderator	1	1	presides over Town Meeting; appoints the Finance Committee
Elector for the Oliver Smith Will	1	1	acts as Amherst's representative to the Smith Charities Trust

¹ 240 elected and currently fourteen ex-officio members

² four elected, one appointed by the Governor

³ The Regional School Committee is composed of the five members of the Amherst School Committee, two members of the Pelham School Committee, and one member each from the Leverett and Shutesbury committees.

⁴ Town Meeting Coordinating Committee.

4. ADMINISTRATION

SELECT BOARD

The General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Amherst Town Government Act recognize the Board of Selectmen as the town's chief elected officials. In 1988, the Amherst Select Board adopted its current name in place of the traditional Board of Selectmen, the term still used by the state and most towns.

Early town meetings chose select boards to enforce the votes of the meetings and to carry out the daily affairs of the town, thus reducing the necessity for numerous town meetings throughout the year. Over the years, select boards have been granted discretionary and regulatory authority over certain aspects of town affairs and administration.

The select board is responsible for the general governance of the town. It initiates policy proposals and considers and makes decisions on policy recommendations brought to it. It sets budget guidelines and makes recommendations to town meeting. The powers and duties of the board, which also serves as Sewer and Water Commission, include issuing warrants for town meetings, issuing certain licenses and permits, enforcing special sections of the town bylaws, signing bonds and notes for borrowing money, and regulating the public ways.

The select board appoints and oversees the town manager, members of the zoning board of appeals, personnel board, election officers, registrar of voters, and members of other boards and committees.

TOWN MANAGER

As local government has increased in complexity, some towns have chosen to employ professional administrators. Amherst is one of many Massachusetts towns now administered under the Select Board/Town Manager form of government. The town manager, appointed by the select board and serving at its discretion, is the chief administrative officer of the town.

Powers and duties. Under the Amherst Town Government Act, the town manager:

- appoints and removes, if necessary, town officers and employees for which no other method is provided, except employees of the school department and town library;
- appoints the members of the planning board, conservation commission, board of health and historical commission – with the approval of the select board; appoints assessors and members of other boards, committees, and commissions; ensures that their charge is carried out and meetings are held in conformance with the law;

- supervises and directs the administration of all officers and employees whom the manager appoints and their respective offices and departments;
- determines the organization of the town's departments, within the constraints of Massachusetts General Laws, the Amherst Town Government Act, the Personnel Bylaw, and the budget;
- attends all regular meetings of the select board, keeps the board advised as to the needs of the town, and recommends to it such measures requiring action by them or the town as the manager may deem necessary or expedient;
- has jurisdiction over the rental, use, and maintenance of all town property except property controlled by the schools or Trustees of the Town Library;
- has jurisdiction over the purchase and use of supplies, materials, and equipment and the awarding of contracts for departments under the manager's authority; at the request of the schools or library, may make purchases and award contracts on their behalf;
- administers directly or indirectly all laws applicable to the town, all bylaws, and all regulations established by the select board;
- prosecutes, defends, and compromises all litigation to which the town is a party, appoints town counsel, employs special counsel whenever in the judgment of the select board it may be necessary;
- acts as chief fiscal officer of the town, signs all warrants for the payment of town funds;
- prepares and administers a comprehensive annual budget.

OTHER GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

The present duties of the town's administrative officers are described below. The roles of the various departmental officials are discussed in later chapters (see also Organization Chart, pages 36 and 37).

The Finance Director/Treasurer:

- works with the manager to plan and prepare the annual budget;
- oversees insurance;
- supervises the departments of Assessors, Collector, and Accountant;
- acts as custodian of the town's funds, manages investments, and issues and retires debt;

- currently serves as Assistant Town Manager
- **Principal Assessor** (See pages 31 and 32)

The Collector:

- is responsible for billing and collection of monies due the town, including property and motor vehicle excise taxes and charges for water, sewer, refuse disposal, and ambulance services;
- as parking clerk, is responsible for collecting parking fines.

The Town Accountant:

- reviews all requests for payment of town funds for compliance with the law, oversees purchasing, and prepares all warrants for such payments;
- maintains the complete, official financial records of the town and prepares other records and reports.

The Information Technology Department:

- provides technology systems and support for all town departments excluding only the schools. The department is currently staffed by six employees including the director, who reports to the town manager.

The Human Resources Director has responsibility for personnel and works with the Personnel Board. (See page 24)

Town Clerk. State law assigns duties to the Town Clerk in four areas: keeping *records and documents*, issuing *licenses and passports*, serving on the *districting advisory board*, and administering *elections*. The clerk is usually appointed as director of the federal census and is also a source of information to candidates for political office and the public at large.

- *Records.* As the official custodian of town records, the clerk records the proceedings of all town meetings and elections; is registrar of all vital statistics; and is filing officer for birth and death certificates, zoning decisions, and a variety of other documents. The office also keeps official listings of town boards and committees and posts notices of their meetings.
- *Licenses.* The clerk's office issues marriage licenses, fish and game licenses, dog licenses, and many others.
- *Elections.* The clerk acts as supervisor of all elections and serves as clerk of the Board of Registrars. The clerk's office also registers voters,

maintains voter lists, and compiles the annual town census (street list). (See also ELECTIONS, page 63.)

Town Counsel. Appointed by and serving at the discretion of the town manager, town counsel advises the manager and, with the manager's approval, advises other officials, boards, and committees. Town counsel represents the town in most legal actions.

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Like most New England towns, Amherst relies on citizen boards and committees for many functions of its government. All the appointed committees are advisory while some of the appointed committees also have specific responsibilities under state and local laws. Tables 2 and 3 (pages 17 and 22) list the major elected and appointed boards and committees of the town. Additional information will be found in later chapters, in the town manager's office, in the Jones Library, and on the town website.

SPECIAL OFFICERS

The Elector for the Oliver Smith Will is elected annually to represent Amherst on the Board of Electors of Smith Charities. Smith Charities, established in 1848, annually provides gifts of at least \$300 for widows with children under the age of eighteen, one-time gifts of \$100 for brides, and \$600 for tradespersons, nurses and licensed practical nurses. Additional monies may be disbursed to the trade and nurse categories as determined by the Trustees. Certain requirements such as residence and age apply. Further information is available at the Smith Charities office in Northampton.

Other special officers. Five offices of historical significance are still filled today, but most of their functions are performed by modern counterparts. **Constables** distribute town meeting warrants, and work at the polls and Town Meeting. **Fence Viewers** attempt to resolve disputes concerning boundary line fences. **Field Drivers** help remove stray farm animals from private property and public ways. **Weighers** weigh commercial loads, such as hay, coal, and grain. **Measurers of Wood** measure wood that is sold, especially if questions of full measure arise.

TABLE 3. APPOINTED STANDING COMMITTEES¹

Key to Appointing Authorities: SB = Select Board; TM = Town Manager; M = Moderator

Name	Appt'd By	# of Mbrs	Term Yrs	Functions
Agricultural Commission	SB	9	3	supports commercial agriculture and other farming activities
Council on Aging	TM	9	3	sets policy and direction of programs for older residents
Board of Assessors	TM	3	3	determines property tax rate; assesses all property at fair market value; grants exemptions and abatements
Community Preservation Act Committee	SB	10	3	recommends projects for Community Preservation Act funding to Town Meeting
Conservation Commission	TM ²	7	3	acquires and manages conservation land; advises Select Board on conservation issues; administers wetlands regulations
Design Review Board	SB	5	3	makes recommendations based on the town's design standards for town projects and buildings, and alterations in downtown area
Disability Access Advisory Committee	TM	8	3	ensures equal access for people with disabilities; advises on related issues
Finance Committee	M	7	3	advises Town Meeting on financial matters; authorizes transfers from Reserve Fund
Board of Health	TM ²	5	3	sets policy for public health programs; enforces housing and environmental regulations
Historical Commission	TM ²	7	3	does research on historical places; makes recommendations on acquiring, protecting, and preserving historical buildings and areas
Housing Partnership/ Fair Housing Committee	SB	7	3	develops and recommends to Select Board programs for affordable housing; monitors compliance with non-discriminatory housing policies
Human Rights Commission	SB	9	3	reviews actions, hears grievances, and confers with town officials to ensure equal opportunity and protection and nondiscrimination
Leisure Services and Supplemental Education Commission	TM	7	3	sets policy for Leisure Services Department on providing educational and recreational opportunities for people of all ages

Name	Appt'd By	# of Mbrs	Term Yrs	Functions
Personnel Board	SB	5	3	interprets the Personnel Bylaw; advises Town Manager and Town Meeting; hears grievances; establishes personnel policies
Planning Board	TM ²	9	3	advises town on planning issues and changes in Zoning Bylaw; regulates subdivisions; hears and decides on site plan review and special permits
Public Transportation and Bicycling Committee	SB	9	2	reviews proposals; conducts studies; and advises Select Board and Town Meeting on public transportation
Public Works Committee	SB	7	3	evaluates proposals for roads and sidewalks; makes recommendations to Town Manager, Select Board, and Town Meeting on public works projects
Recycling and Refuse Management Committee	TM	7	3	advises the town about solid waste disposal issues; initiates recycling activities
Registrar of Voters	SB	3	3 ³	oversees voter registration
Town/Commercial Relations Committee	SB	11	3	advises Select Board on relations with business community, particularly in related areas of economic development, public safety, and planning
Zoning Board Appeals	SB	3 + 4 alter- nates	3 1	hears and issues decisions on petitions for variances from Zoning Bylaw, petitions for special permits, and appeals from decisions of Building Commissioner

¹ Complete list of boards and committees in Town Manager's office.

² The Select Board must ratify the Manager's appointments.

³ Three appointed plus Town Clerk.

5. THE TOWN AS EMPLOYER

In 2008 the Town of Amherst employed 271.73 full-time equivalent employees (FTEs). In addition, the town employs non-benefited part-time and temporary help as needed. There are 265.59 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees in the elementary schools, 244.99 in the secondary schools, 128.6 who work at both levels, and 35.79 in the central office. Table 4 shows town employees by department. Personnel costs constitute approximately 80% of all town and school expenditures.

The town manager hires all town employees except those selected by the library trustees and school committee. Procedures for recruiting, screening, and hiring are determined by the manager, library trustees, and school committee and conform to affirmative action policies.

Personnel Bylaw: All employees, except the town manager and school personnel, are paid in accordance with the town's Personnel Bylaw, which specifies job classifications, pay scales, and certain policies (sick leave, for example). The bylaw was established by Town Meeting and can be amended only by that body. The manager is responsible for proposing changes in the bylaw to the Personnel Board and may, with the board's advice and approval, establish new positions and reclassify employees.

The Personnel Board establishes personnel policies. By local custom, the board does not review collective bargaining agreements. The board:

- interprets the Personnel Bylaw;
- advises the manager about policies and regulations;
- acts as a board of appeals to hear grievances, except where collective bargaining agreements provide otherwise.

Collective bargaining: Several groups of town and school employees are organized for collective bargaining. The town manager is responsible for negotiating agreements with unions in departments under the manager's authority. At present, the police officers, firefighters, clerical, maintenance, and public works employees are unionized. The school committees are responsible for bargaining with school employees. Collective bargaining units now represent all school employees except the superintendent's administrative team. Both the town and the school system hire professional consultants to assist in negotiations.

TABLE 4. TOWN EMPLOYEES BY DEPARTMENT, FY09 Budget¹

Departments	FTE
Select Board/Town Manager	3.00
Finance	13.00
Clerk	3.05
Human Resources/Human Rights	2.00
Information Technology	4.50
Facilities Maintenance	5.83
Police	52.00
Animal Welfare	1.00
Communications Center	13.00
Fire, Emergency Medical Services	46.00
Public Works Administration	3.40
Highway, Trees, Parks, Cemeteries, Equipment Maintenance	23.50
Planning, Zoning, Inspections, and Conservation	14.36
Public Health	5.43
Senior Center	3.54
LSSE, Pools, Golf Course	11.54
Other ² (Veterans' Services, Community Development)	1.20
Water Fund	15.08
Sewer Fund	17.50
Solid Waste Fund	3.60
Transportation Fund	4.00
Libraries	25.20
TOTAL TOWN EMPLOYEES	271.73

**TABLE 4A. TOWN AND SCHOOL EMPLOYEES
(See Table 9, page 47, for school staffing)**

	FTE
Town, including libraries	271.73
Amherst (elementary) schools	265.59
Regional (secondary) schools (75.17% students from Amherst)	244.99
District Level (both elementary and secondary districts), and central office	164.39
TOTAL TOWN AND SCHOOL EMPLOYEES	946.70

¹ All counts are for full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. For current information, see the most recent town, school, and library budgets. Grants may fund part or all of some positions.

² Housing Authority is not included; these are not town employees.

6. AMHERST'S FINANCES

INCOME AND EXPENDITURES

The charts on pages 28 and 29 illustrate revenue sources and expenditure categories for FY09 – where the money comes from and where the money goes. Revenue sources fluctuate from year to year. For current information, see the most recent Finance Committee Report.

WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

The town relies on three major sources of revenue: 1) the property tax; 2) state aid; and 3) receipts from fees, fines, licenses, and permits. The property tax is the largest source; it is estimated at 56% of all revenues for FY09 (July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009). State aid is expected to account for about 28% and other receipts for the remaining 16% of revenues in FY09.

Most revenues are not designated as to their specific use, allowing the town flexibility in deciding upon programs and budgets. Undesignated revenues include property taxes, excise taxes, and general state aid.

The major sources of designated revenue are: certain categories of state and federal aid; fees from enterprise funds (water, sewer, solid waste, transportation) and other services; and income on the endowment of the Jones Library.

Sources of funds for major programs. Most town services receive at least some support from local taxation. The principal exceptions are water, sewer, solid waste, and transportation. Services that are at least 50% self-supporting include the ambulance, most recreational activities, and some regulatory activities (e.g., building inspections).

The Community Preservation Act (CPA), adopted by Amherst Town Meeting in 2001, allows the town to levy a surcharge of up to 3% on local real estate taxes (MGL, Ch. 44B, Sec. 3(b)). Amherst voters have approved a surcharge of 1.5%. The first \$100,000 of valuation for residential property is exempt from the surcharge. The surcharge funding is matched by state funding and is authorized or appropriated by town meeting annually to pay for projects that meet any of four specific community preservation purposes – open space, recreation, affordable housing and historic preservation. A committee (CPAC) appointed by the select board recommends the projects for CPA funding to town meeting. (See Town Meeting Handbook, page 34.)

WHERE THE MONEY GOES

The usual expenses of the town are:

- direct services (e.g., schools, police, fire, highways, libraries);
- regulatory activities (e.g., inspection services, environmental, health);
- general government and administration (e.g., elections, finance);

- payment of debts;
- capital and special projects (e.g., land, buildings, studies);
- assessments for services provided through state and regional agencies, i.e., *cherry sheet*¹ assessments for PVTA regional transit assessment, retired teachers' health insurance, and pensions.

Most expenditures require prior appropriation by town meeting. Exceptions include payments from revolving funds, expenditures for legal judgments against the town, cherry sheet assessments, and some projects funded by grants.

THE BUDGET

Amherst's budget is a financial plan for the provision of services for the next fiscal year. It includes estimated costs, anticipated revenues, and the expected tax levy. The budget reflects the priorities of the citizens of Amherst and the requirements of state law.

Preparation of the budget. The budget process begins in the early fall when the select board, school committee, and library trustees develop policy guidelines for the town manager, school superintendent, and library director, respectively. The finance director prepares updated multi-year projections on the basis of the experience of prior years and judgment about future revenue and expenditure trends. The town manager solicits budget requests and documentation from town departments and committees, reviews the proposals with department heads, draws up a budget, and submits it to the select board and the finance committee by mid - January. The schools and library follow a similar procedure.

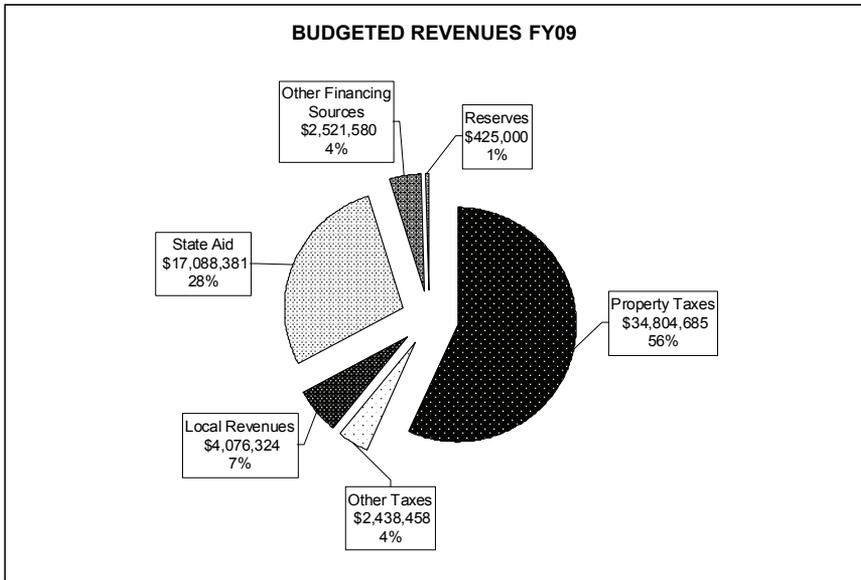
Beginning in January, the select board undertakes a general review of the manager's budget with overall policy in mind, while the finance committee subjects it to detailed scrutiny. The finance committee also reviews the school and library budgets and all other warrant articles affecting finances.

The **Budget Coordinating Group**, an informal group made up of two representatives each from the select board, school committee, library trustees, and finance committee as well as regional school committee chair, town manager, finance director, school business manager, and library director, develops a common understanding of budget-related issues and priorities and sets a master budget calendar. (See Town Meeting Handbook, page 4.)

The **Joint Capital Planning Committee**, composed of two representatives each from the select board, school committee, library board of trustees, and finance committee, makes recommendations for capital spending to the town manager and town meeting after reviewing and prioritizing the capital needs of the town. (See Town Meeting Handbook, page 4.)

¹The cherry sheet, formerly printed on cherry-colored paper, summarizes estimated receipts from the state and the town's share of expenses of certain state and regional programs.

5. Where the Money Comes From



TOTAL GENERAL FUND - \$61,354,428

EXPENDITURE CATEGORIES ¹

Schools. Elementary schools plus Amherst's proportionate share (about 77%) of amount remaining after state aid is deducted from total Regional School budget of \$28,120,995.

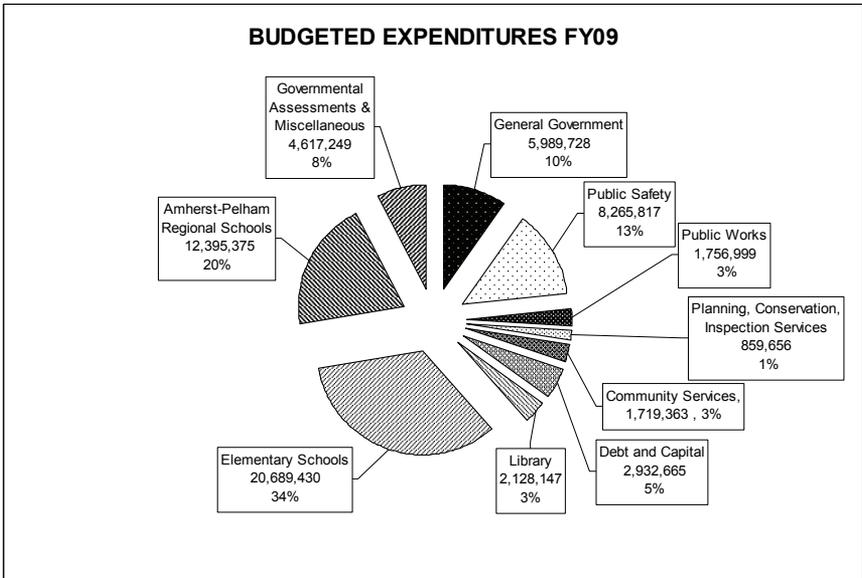
General Government. Select Board, Town Manager, finance, clerk and elections, legal services, human resources/human rights, maintenance of Town Hall, Bangs Community Center, Munson Library, North Amherst and Cushman Schools, and general services (postage, supplies, insurance for all departments).

Planning, Conservation, and Inspections. Planning, conservation, development, inspections, and zoning.

Public Safety. Police, fire, ambulance, animal welfare, emergency management, and communications center.

Public Works. Highways, sidewalks, downtown maintenance, street lights, trees, parks and commons, cemeteries, public works administration and engineering, equipment maintenance.

6. Where the Money Goes



EXPENDITURE CATEGORIES (cont.)

Community Services. Public health, senior services, community development, human services agencies funding, veterans' services, children's services, leisure services, swimming pools, golf course.

Libraries. Includes town appropriation and contributions from Jones Library endowment.

Debt and Capital. Direct cash expenditures for major equipment (vehicles, technology, etc.), buildings, and facilities needs (road maintenance, parks, open space, etc.), and debt service (interest and principal) on prior bonded expenditures and any new authorized and issued bonds.

Governmental Assessments and Miscellaneous.² State services, PVTA regional transit authority assessment, PVPC regional planning commission assessment, retirement fund, assessors' reserve for property tax abatements and exemptions, and the Finance Committee's reserve fund.

¹ The chart does not include appropriations for Enterprise Funds for water, sewer, solid waste, and transportation services. Enterprise funds are self-supporting from fees; their monies are held in special funds. In FY 09, appropriations for operating and capital budgets totaled \$9,530,931.

² Some of these are estimates of expenditures not requiring appropriation (state and regional assessments, assessors' reserve for property tax abatements and exemptions).

The Finance Committee is a standing committee of town meeting. In accordance with MGL, Ch. 39, Sec. 16, the committee:

- presents its recommended operating budget to town meeting, and
- makes recommendations on all warrant articles that may affect the financial interests of the town.

The finance committee also controls the Reserve Fund, making transfers for unforeseen and extraordinary expenses during the year (MGL, Ch. 40, Sec. 6).

The finance committee's proposed operating budget includes appropriations for the town, libraries, and schools. The committee prepares a written report, which is mailed to town meeting members prior to Annual Town Meeting.

The budget at town meeting. Budget requests are submitted to annual town meeting each spring in the form of warrant articles calling for the expenditure of money. Most such articles, including the operating budget, are part of the proposed comprehensive budget. Ten or more voters may petition for a project not included in the proposed budget by filing a written request in the select board's office in time for its inclusion in the warrant.

Town meeting votes on each requested appropriation, usually, but not always, accepting the recommendation of the finance committee. All appropriations include both the amount and source of money. Funds are appropriated through taxation, from available funds (for example, sewer receipts), or by borrowing. (See Borrowing, page 31).

Tax limits and the budget process. Proposition 2½, which was approved by the voters of the state in 1980 and has since been amended by the legislature, reduces the authority of town meeting over the amount appropriated from taxation each year. State law now limits the property tax rate to \$25 per \$1000 of assessed valuation and limits increases in the levy (the amount raised from property taxation) to 2½% per year plus an allowance for new development. The increase in the levy limit is cumulative and does not necessarily depend on the actual levy of the previous year.

State law permits a town to override the limits – to some degree and under certain conditions – in a town-wide referendum called by the select board.

THE SCHOOL BUDGETS

Authority over the school budgets. The budgets for the elementary and secondary schools are developed by the school committees (see pages 43 and 44) and the Superintendent of Schools. The budgets are subject to scrutiny by the finance committee and town meeting, but town meeting determines only the total appropriation for each of the school district budgets. The school committees determine the funding for individual programs within the totals.

Requirements for passage of the school budgets. The Amherst (elementary) School Department is part of Amherst town government, and its budget is approved by vote of town meeting. The Amherst-Pelham Regional (secondary) School District, however, is an independent unit of government. Its budget requires approval of at least three of the four towns in the district. (State law specifies approval by two-thirds of the member towns.) A town is said to approve the budget if it appropriates funds to pay its assessment (that is, its share of estimated net costs after deductions for state aid and other revenues).

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN BUDGETING

Final decisions about budgets are, of course, made by town meeting and by voters in referenda on the tax levy. Equally important are the decisions affecting future budgets made throughout the year by the major town committees and boards. Citizens can influence such decisions by voting in town elections and by making their views known to town and school officials. (See Citizen Participation, pages 65 to 67.)

BORROWING

When a town or district authorizes any major capital item, such as a new building, the cost is usually financed by borrowing. This method spreads payment over several years, thus reducing the impact on the current tax rate and assigning some of the cost to future users.

Borrowing by the town. A town may borrow for purposes designated by state law. A two-thirds vote of town meeting is necessary for all appropriations involving long-term borrowing by the town, including borrowing for the elementary schools.

Borrowing by the regional schools. The Regional School Committee has the power to approve borrowing for specified types of capital projects, but the decision is subject to the veto of any member town. If the town meeting of any town in the district disapproves the proposal by majority vote within sixty days, the debt may not be incurred. The issue may be placed before town meeting by the select board or by petition (see page 66).

PROPERTY TAXES

THE BOARD OF ASSESSORS

While town meeting is the only body that can appropriate money, the Board of Assessors has responsibility for levying the property taxes necessary to meet appropriations and for allocating the taxes equitably on the basis of the property owned by each taxpayer. With the assistance of the full-time Principal Assessor and staff, the assessors are required:

- to assess all real and taxable personal property within the town at fair cash value;
- to grant exemptions, abatements, and other special treatment to certain properties on the basis of use or ownership; and
- to compute the tax rate.

These activities are guided by state regulation and monitored closely by the Department of Revenue. Assessments must be approved by the state.

The assessors are appointed by and serve at the discretion of the town manager. The Principal Assessor is a full-time town employee. Board members serve part-time and receive no compensation.

THE TAX RATE

The assessors compute the tax rate each year after the budget has been approved by town meeting, the cherry sheet has been received from the state, and the levy has been determined to be within the limits established by state law. The rate depends on three factors: 1) the **levy**, or net amount to be raised from taxation; 2) the **valuation of taxable property**; and 3) **property classification**.

The levy. The assessors determine the levy by subtracting all other revenues from the total expenses of the town. (See page 26; levy limits, page 30.)

Valuation of taxable property. The board determines property values according to fair market value and according to the value of property qualifying for exemptions and other special treatment (see below).

Property classification. State laws (MGL, Ch. 59, Sec. 2A and Sec. 5C) permit towns, within certain limits, to shift the property tax burden from residential and open space property to commercial and industrial property and to shift the burden within the residential class. The select board is required to vote on both questions each year. Amherst has never made use of either option.

Definition of the tax rate. Assuming that the town sets a single tax rate for all classes of property, the tax rate is defined by the following formula:

$$\text{property tax rate per \$1000 valuation} = \frac{\text{levy (i.e., net amount to be raised)}}{\text{total taxable valuation}} \times 1000$$

Stated differently, the tax rate is set so that, when multiplied by the total valuation of all taxable property, it produces the property tax revenue (i.e., levy) required to meet the town's needs:

$$\text{property tax rate per \$1000 valuation} \times \frac{\text{total taxable valuation}}{1000} = \text{levy}$$

Examples: tax rate and revenue. With a total property valuation of two billion dollars and a levy of \$32,000,000, the **tax rate** would be \$16.00 per \$1000 and the amount raised by **\$1 on the tax rate** would be two million dollars.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{tax rate} &= (\text{levy} \times 1000) / \text{total taxable valuation} \\ &= (\$32,000,000 \times 1000) / \$2,000,000,000 = \$16.00 \text{ per } \$1000 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{amount raised by } \$1 \text{ on the tax rate} &= \frac{\text{total taxable valuation}}{1000} \\ &= \$2,000,000,000 / 1000 = \$2,000,000 \end{aligned}$$

Individual tax bills are computed by multiplying the tax rate by the assessed property value. For example, with a hypothetical tax rate of \$16.00 per \$1000 and a property worth \$300,000:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{tax bill} &= \text{tax rate} \times \text{property valuation} \\ &= (\$16.00 / \$1000) \times \$300,000 = .016 \times \$300,000 = \$4,800 \end{aligned}$$

Individual tax bills are issued quarterly. Until the rate is finalized, tax bills are estimates.

ABATEMENTS, EXEMPTIONS, AND OTHER PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT

Tax abatements. Taxpayers who believe that their property is incorrectly assessed may apply for reductions (abatements) to the Board of Assessors. If the assessors decide to grant only part or none of a requested abatement, the property owner may appeal the decision within 90 days to the Appellate Tax Board of the state or to the Hampshire Council of Governments. In either case, the taxpayer must pay the tax, pending appeal.

Individual tax exemptions. Persons over 65 years of age, veterans, and members of certain other groups may, in specified circumstances, qualify for real estate tax exemptions, which will reduce their property tax burden.

Tax-exempt property. State law provides for exemptions for property taxation for property owned by the state and municipalities, and for certain properties owned by non-profit entities (e.g., colleges, churches, qualifying clubs and associations, non-profit medical groups).

Other preferential tax treatment. State laws (MGL, Chs. 61, 61A, and 61B) require towns to assess forest, agricultural, and recreation lands on the basis of use rather than cash value, if the owners apply and meet all conditions. Another state law (MGL, Ch. 121A, Sec. 10) permits the town to grant favorable treatment for a limited time to encourage certain kinds of development, e.g., the construction of low-income housing and the redevelopment of blighted property.

Information on abatements, exemptions, and other special treatment is available at the assessors' office and on the town website.

8. Major Town and School Facilities

Major Town and School Facilities

Secondary Schools

1. Amherst Regional High School, Mattoon St
2. Amherst Regional Middle School, Chestnut St
3. S Amherst HS Annex, S East St

Elementary Schools

4. Crocker Farm School, West St
5. Fort River School, S East St
6. Fort River Annex, S East St
7. Marks Meadow School, N Pleasant St
8. Wildwood School, Strong St

Libraries

9. Jones Library, Amity St
10. Munson Memorial Library, S Amherst Common
11. North Amherst Library, N Pleasant St

Recreation Areas

12. Cherry Hill Golf Course, Montague Rd
13. Groff Park, Mill Ln
14. Kiwanis Park, Stanley St
15. Mill River Recreation Area, Montague Rd
16. Plum Brook, Potwine Ln
17. Ziomek Community Field, Triangle St

Cemeteries

18. North Cemetery, E Pleasant St
19. S Amherst Cemetery, Middle St
20. West Cemetery, Triangle St

Community Buildings

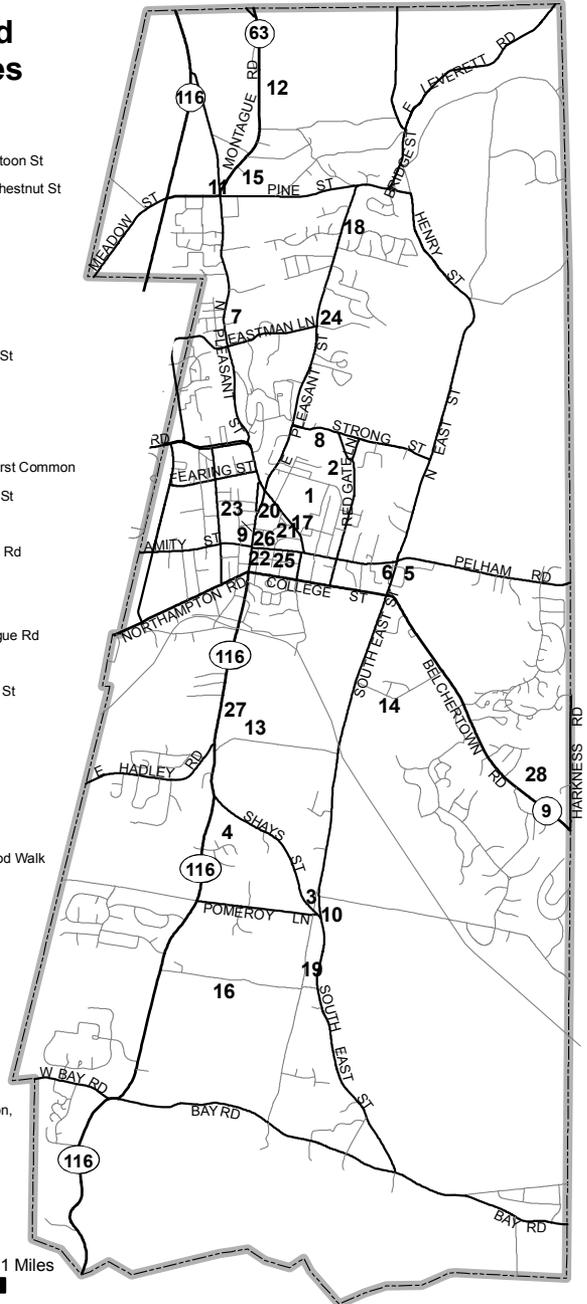
21. Bangs Community Center, Boltwood Walk
22. Town Hall, Boltwood Ave

Public Safety

23. Central Fire Station, N Pleasant St
24. North Fire Station, E Pleasant St
25. Police Station, Main St

Other

26. Boltwood Parking Garage, Boltwood Walk
27. Public Works, S Pleasant St
28. Recycling Center & Transfer Station, Belchertown Rd



Source: Town of Amherst GIS, December 2008



Old North Amherst Fire Station

III. PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

This section describes Amherst's major programs in general terms. For current information about town departments and services, see Directory of Town Services, published by the League of Women Voters of Amherst, and the town website, www.amherstma.gov.

7. PUBLIC SAFETY

POLICE

Vot 4	Pelitiah Smith	sworn	
	Isaac Goodale	sworn	Constables
	First Town Meeting, March 19, 1759		

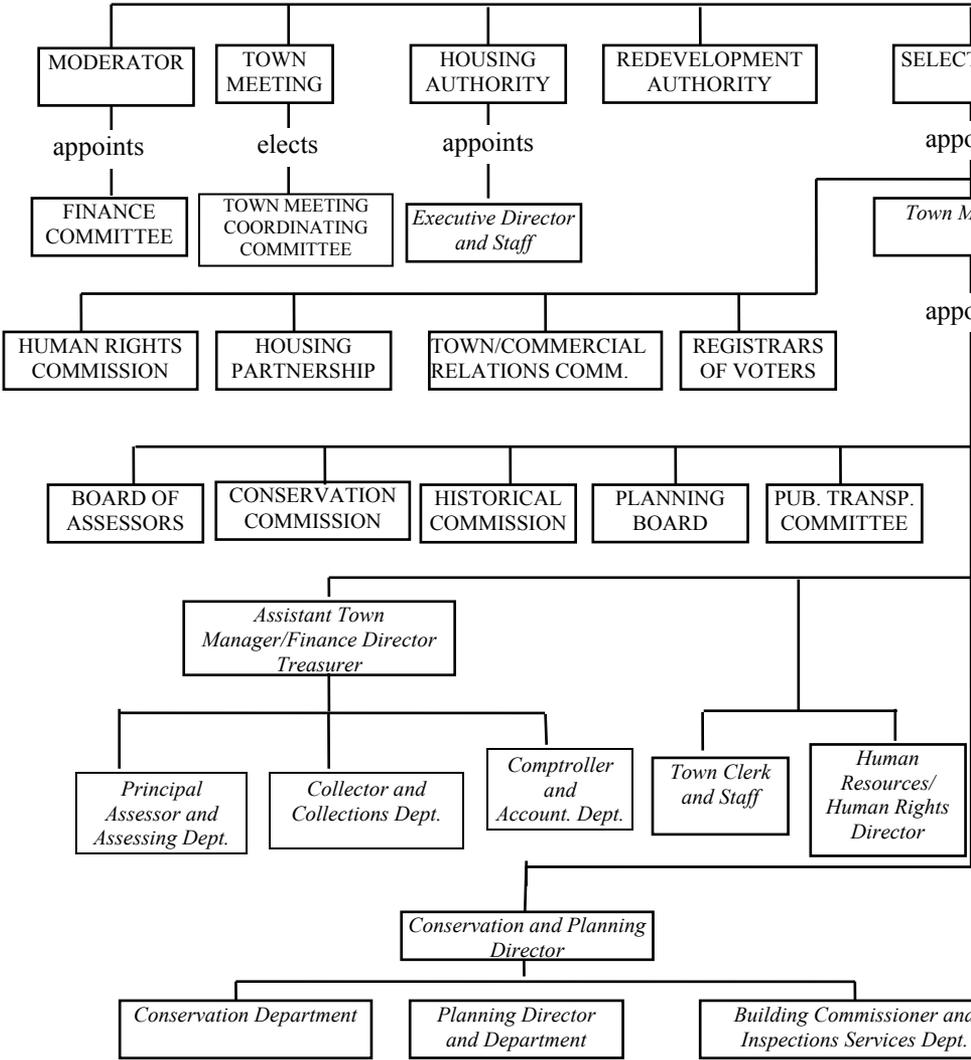
The Police Department has its headquarters at the corner of Main and Churchill Streets. Requests for information and assistance may be made in person or by telephone.

The principal responsibility of the Amherst police is the protection of people and property through enforcement of criminal laws and traffic regulations. The department also enforces parking regulations and certain local bylaws, provides assistance, and conducts public education programs.

The staff includes police officers and clerical employees. The regular force is supplemented as needed. The department works cooperatively with federal and state law enforcement agencies including the University's Department of Public Safety. Amherst has police mutual aid agreements with most neighboring towns.

The Amherst Police Department is accredited by the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission. To award accredited status the police accreditation commission examined various aspects of the Amherst Police Department's

8. TOWN ORGANIZATION



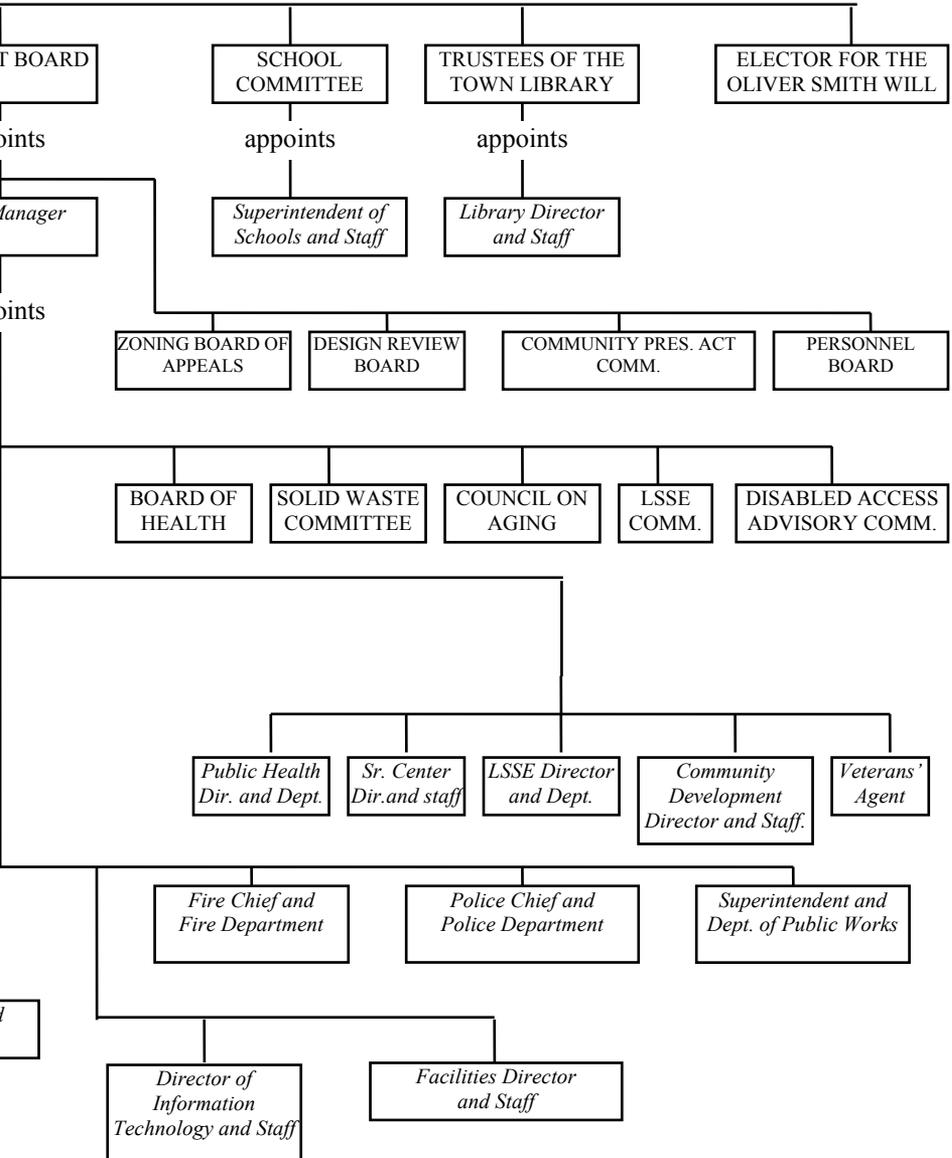
TOWN OF AMHERST
ORGANIZATION CHART (1/05)

Staff

ELECTED AND APPOINTED BOARDS,
COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES

VOTERS

elect



policies and procedures, operations, and facilities to ensure that they met the highest standards.

The Amherst Police Department utilizes the most up-to-date technology. A department website was launched in 2003 making police department information available to the community 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. In December 2007, the police department started a blog to exchange valuable information with the community. In 2008, the Amherst Police Department became the first police department in the Commonwealth to accept online crime reporting. With this technology citizens may easily report minor crimes and incidents, and lodge complaints. See page 70 for website information.

COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

Police, fire, and emergency medical services are dispatched from the Public Safety Communications Center located in the police station. Other communities pay a fee and rely on the communications center for dispatching services.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

To Mr Chester Williams, Captain of the South Company of Militia in the Town of Amherst-We the Subscribers Selectmen of the Town of Amherst do hereby Certify that we have appointed Elijah Boltwood, David Parsons, Junr Moses Dickinson Henery Merrill & Elisha Tilden of said Town as Engine Men for said Town agreeable to the Rules prescribed by Law. (first official documentation of the existence of fire apparatus in Amherst; the earlier fire companies were independent organizations).

Notice signed by the selectmen, April 13, 1814

The Amherst Fire Department provides fire and ambulance service for the entire town including the university and colleges. As a member of the Hampshire County mutual aid systems, it can, in cases of major emergency, receive assistance from other towns in Massachusetts, or provide assistance to another town in need.

The town has two fire stations, Central Fire Station in the center of town and North Fire Station on East Pleasant Street near Eastman Lane.

The fire department is staffed by three separately organized but integrated groups: a force of permanent full-time firefighters who are unionized; a part-time call force; and a volunteer force composed of students from the University of Massachusetts and Amherst College, some of whom live in quarters provided for this purpose in the North Fire Station. Firefighters from all three forces are equipped with personal radio receivers. They receive on-going training as firefighters and emergency medical technicians (EMTs).

Fire Prevention

The Amherst Fire Department considers fire prevention its highest priority.

Fire safety inspections. Members of the department make regular inspections of nursing homes, health facilities, places of public assembly, schools, and daycare centers. Home inspections are made upon request.

Smoke detectors and/or sprinkler systems are required in most structures. The fire department must certify such installations. It also conducts regular inspections of one-family and two-family structures at the time of sale for state smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector compliance.

Outdoor burning is regulated by state law. Permits must be obtained from the fire department.

Hazardous equipment and material are regulated by the fire department under state law. The department issues permits for oil burner installations, the storage of flammable liquids, and the purchase, storage, and use of such explosives as dynamite, model rockets, and gunpowder.

AMBULANCE SERVICE

... at a special town meeting on November 17th a group of Amherst clubs through their united efforts presented to the town a new Pontiac ambulance. fully equipped and subsidized with a sum of \$2,594.02 to operate same

Selectmen's Report for 1947

The Amherst Fire Department provides paramedic level emergency medical service to residents of Amherst, including the three campuses, as well as to residents of some of the surrounding communities. Firefighters trained as EMTs also serve as ambulance attendants.

The town's ambulances provide both emergency service and urgent patient transport. When necessary, they can provide advanced life support service in which a firefighter/paramedic carries out specific medical procedures under the direction of a hospital physician who communicates with the ambulance by radio.

Ambulance fees are set by the select board. In most cases, all or part of the cost is covered by health insurance. The emergency medical service is not fully self-supporting. Each town using the service provides a share of the cost.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

As required by the federal and state governments, Emergency Management (formerly Civil Defense) has updated Amherst's emergency plan to include Homeland Security issues in the post 9/11 era. Emergency management coordinates all town departments should a natural or man-made disaster strike and

assists in the mitigation of and recovery from the incident. The assistant fire chief is responsible for the town's program but reports directly to the town manager.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Voated 8 to Build a pound and to set sd pound upon or near the midle High way in ye First Division in ye most Convenient place

Precinct Meeting, March 25, 1743

Enforcement of state and town dog laws falls under the jurisdiction of the police department. The town employs an animal welfare officer. Regular police officers respond to urgent calls when necessary.

Modified leash law. Town bylaws require that dogs be leashed or otherwise under control when not on their keepers' property.

Dog Licenses. All dogs must be licensed annually. Licenses are available through the town clerk. Proof of rabies immunization is required.

The shelter, located at 1 Mullins Way, has an office space where people can meet and play with dogs that become available from time to time for adoption. Kennels are housed in back with a large fenced area where the animals play and get exercise.

Complaints and requests for information should be addressed to the police department. Information about missing dogs and those available for adoption can be obtained at the animal shelter.

8. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

The Department of Public Works (DPW) is responsible for highways, public shade trees, parks, commons, cemeteries, water, sewers, town streetlights, traffic signals, solid waste, and recycling. The services are provided by the several operating divisions of the department with the support of an equipment maintenance section and an administrative division, which includes the town's engineering staff. Staff and equipment are shared as needed among the various divisions when necessary or economical. The DPW headquarters is located at 586 South Pleasant Street, just north of the Fort River bridge.

Funding for the public works department comes from the general funds and from the following Enterprise Funds: transportation, water, sewer and solid waste.

HIGHWAYS AND STREETS

Voted that ye High way work be done by heads and Teams and yt a Team shall be Equal to a head per day

Precinct Meeting, March 10, 1736

The Highway Division is responsible for the care and maintenance of town roads, sidewalks, parking areas, traffic lights, and certain portions of state routes 9 and 116. The division is also responsible for maintaining the sanitary sewer lines and monitoring and repairing most of the street lighting system.

TREES, PARKS, AND COMMONS

The Comtee for Disposing of Lands in the Town Ways report that they have according to the Instructions of the Town, Laid out and Surveyed a Town Way Six Rods Wide [...] Excepting also that in Several Places the Comtee have left and reserved the whole breadth of the former Way for Particular Public use...

Committee report (on the laying out of the east and south commons), January 14, 1788

The Parks Division is responsible for maintaining the town's commons, parks, and recreation areas. This division also provides services to the schools and Leisure Service and Supplemental Education Department (LSSE).

The Tree Division has responsibility for the town's public shade and ornamental trees, the tree nursery, and burials in the town cemeteries. Both divisions assist the highway division with snow removal. (See also Other Regulations, pages 57-58.)

CEMETERIES

Voted that the East Inhabitants have Liberty Granted them for a Burying place there in some convenient place... (authorization for West Cemetery)

Hadley Town Meeting, January 5, 1730

The three town cemeteries, North Cemetery on East Pleasant Street, West Cemetery on Triangle Street, and South Cemetery on South East Street, are under the jurisdiction of the department of public works.

WATER SUPPLY AND DISTRIBUTION

Voted, That the Selectmen be authorized to pay six Hundred dollars a year, for ten years [to the Amherst Water Company, a private company organized in July 1879] for the use of the water, when thirty four Hydrants are put in, for public Use.

Town Meeting, November 20, 1879

Shall the town purchase the property, rights and privileges of the Amherst Water Company?

Ballot Question, 1941 Town Election (passed 853 to 418)

The Water Division maintains the town's wells, reservoirs, treatment plants, and distribution system. The town's water supplies include the South Amherst Belchertown well system, the Hills and Hawley Reservoirs in Pelham, and the Atkins Reservoir in Shutesbury.

The system provides water for all of Amherst and small sections of Pelham and Belchertown.

SEWAGE DISPOSAL

With the introduction of running water came the necessity of sewers. On this question we sought wisdom from many directions, and found ourselves floating on different opinions. We consulted engineers, lawyers and doctors, and found no two of the same opinion....

Report of the Selectmen, 1880

Sewer facilities include sewer mains, pumping stations, and the sewage treatment plant. The highway department cares for the mains. The Wastewater Treatment Division is responsible for the pumping stations and treatment plant.

Much of the town is served by sewers. Dwellings in outlying areas rely on septic systems. The treatment plant is in Hadley, just west of the University of Massachusetts. Under the terms of the federal grant, which provided most of the funds for its construction, the plant is a regional facility that is intended to serve Amherst and parts of Hadley, Pelham, and Belchertown. At present there is only limited use by neighboring towns.

SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL AND RECYCLING

Voted to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1075. for the purchase of land for a town dump and gravel bank, the same land having been conveyed to John Mullen, Gerald D. Jones and William H. Atkins [the town's three selectmen, who had purchased the land as private individuals] by Barbara Galusza and Veronica Slaby as per deed recorded in Hampshire County Registry of Deeds, Book 879, Page 313.

Annual Town Meeting, March 6, 1933

The town tightly regulates the disposal of solid waste and mandates recycling for everyone, including households, businesses, and institutions. The landfill on Belchertown Road is now closed and operates as a transfer station for residents of Amherst, Pelham, and Shutesbury who purchase the required permit. Many recycling services are available to users of the transfer station; some at no charge and others for a fee. Amherst residential curbside waste removal is performed for a fee by licensed private waste haulers. Contact the Public Works Department for more information. (Also, see page 70.)



Old North Amherst School

9. PUBLIC EDUCATION

Voated 6 that John Nash Ebenr Dickinson Nathaniel Smith a Commtity to Hire three scool Dames for three or four Months In the Summer Seson to Larne Children to Read: sd Scools to be In the Most Convenient Places In the Preceinct

Precinct Meeting, March 13, 1749

ORGANIZATION OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEMS

School districts. Amherst is served by two school districts, the Amherst Public School District (elementary) and the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District (secondary). The elementary district forms a two-member superintendency union with the Town of Pelham School Department. The regional district includes Amherst, Leverett, Pelham, and Shutesbury.

Although governed by separate school committees, the Amherst, Pelham, and regional districts share a central administration and follow the same policies. In addition, employees in all three districts are represented by the same collective bargaining units.

Legal authority. All school districts in Massachusetts operate under the General Laws of the Commonwealth, especially Chapter 71: Public Education. The Amherst Town Government Act defines the relationship between the elementary schools and the town manager, while the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Agreement establishes the framework for the secondary district.

School Committees. State law gives elected school committees the responsibility for local education. Their major powers and duties include: 1) establishing policy; 2) implementing state laws regarding education; 3) approving courses and educational programs; 4) appointing and evaluating the superintendent of schools, and appointing the district business manager; and 5) recommending school budgets (see page 30) to town meetings or city councils.

The Amherst School Committee consists of five members. The Regional School Committee is composed of the members of the Amherst committee plus

two representatives from Pelham and one each from Leverett and Shutesbury, for a total of nine members.

The **Superintendent of Schools** is appointed by the school committees. As chief administrative officer, the superintendent prepares the school budgets for review by the committees, advises them on educational policy and other matters under their jurisdiction, and implements their policies.

The superintendent is assisted by a central administrative staff that includes a business manager and educational directors.

THE SCHOOLS AND THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

Enrollment and staffing for 2007-2008 in the four elementary and secondary schools are found in Table 9 (page 47).

The elementary schools. Amherst's four neighborhood elementary schools follow the same curriculum and provide similar services.

Open Enrollment. Children are assigned to elementary schools on a geographical basis, but may attend schools outside their own neighborhoods as space allows and with permission of the administration. Transportation is not provided for students in the open enrollment program.

The basic curriculum. Regular classroom teachers provide instruction in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, computers, and health. Special subject teachers instruct all students in art, music, and physical education. Resource teachers in language arts, science, and other subjects help design the curriculum and work with students and teachers.

Special assistance and elective programs (see also special education, below). The schools provide remedial programs in reading and mathematics. English Language Learning instruction (ELL) is available to students whose English is limited. Instrumental music lessons have been offered to students in grades four through six.

The secondary schools. The middle and high schools are situated on adjacent campuses.

Instruction. The secondary schools offer a comprehensive curriculum, including academic programs, fine arts, performing arts, technology education, business education, computer education, family and consumer sciences, physical education, health education, and an ELL program. The schools also have many athletic programs and extracurricular activities.

Amherst pays tuition for secondary students admitted to public vocational schools, as required by state law.

Special education. In accordance with state and federal laws and local policy, the elementary and secondary schools provide special instruction and assistance for students who are from three to twenty-two years of age and have disabilities that interfere with their learning. The preschool program is at Crocker Farm School.

The special education program is staffed by teachers, paraprofessionals, tutors, psychologists, and speech pathologists who work as a team to develop and implement individual plans for students in the program. Other specialists are called upon as necessary. Students whose needs cannot be met in the Amherst school system may be assigned to out-of-district placements.

The Inter-District School Choice Program allows a parent to enroll his or her child in a school district that is not the child's home district. Depending upon the student's educational program, part or all of the cost of educating the student is paid by the home district. Specifically, tuition for regular and vocational students is 75% of the cost of educating students in the receiving district with a cap of \$5,000. The cost of educating special education choice students is paid in full by the sending district. Transportation is not included under the program. Primarily because of limited space at the elementary level, the Amherst School District currently does not participate in the program but the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District does.

Charter Schools are public schools that function independently from local school districts. They are governed by a board of trustees and operate under a five-year renewable charter granted by the State Board of Education. Charters specify the particular program the school will offer and the grade levels the school will serve. Charter schools are answerable to the State Board of Education and must meet all state requirements for public schools. Local districts pay tuition for their students who attend a charter school. The State Department of Education calculates the tuition rate and the state deducts the amount of the tuition from the district's state aid account. Currently, there are two charter schools operating in the local Amherst area.

Home education. According to Massachusetts General Laws, parents have the right to propose a home education alternative to public schooling for their children. Both the Amherst School Committee and the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee recognize this right. The superintendent or school committee reviews each alternative plan and has the authority to approve or disapprove it. Such approval must be obtained in advance of its implementation. Once a plan is approved, periodic evaluation of a child's progress takes place according to guidelines and standards established by the school committee to verify that adequate educational progress is being made. There are no regulations requiring home-educated students to take state or national standardized tests, including the state MCAS tests. The Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools encourage students with approved home education plans to participate in athletics and extracurricular activities at the middle school and high school. School committee policy specifies participation criteria.

OTHER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Support programs include libraries, cafeterias, health services, audio-visual programs, transportation, and counseling.

Parent advisory councils in all schools give parents and school staff opportunities to discuss school-related issues.

Community use of the schools. All the schools serve as community centers, providing a space for such activities as town meeting, special performances, recreation, adult education, and other public meetings.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION about school programs, facilities, and staff, see the Town Reports, the town website and school budgets or call the superintendent's office. A visit to any school may be arranged through the principal's office.

**TABLE 9. SCHOOL ENROLLMENT AND STAFFING FOR 2007-2008
AMHERST ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
AMHERST-PELHAM REGIONAL SCHOOLS**

A. ENROLLMENT

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS PUPILS		SECONDARY SCHOOLS PUPILS	
Crocker Farm, grades K-6	255	Middle School, grades 7-8	575
Fort River, grades K-6	468	High School, grades 9-12	1,242
Mark's Meadow, grades K-6	185		
Wildwood, grades K-6	418	TOTAL, grades 7-12	1,817
pre-K	74		
TOTAL, grades PK-6	1,400	TOTAL, grades PK-12	3,217

B. FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE) STAFF

	Total FTE Staff	Total # Students
Central Office Administration and Support	35.79	
Central Maintenance/Transportation	23.75	
District (Shared School Personnel)	17.84	
RNs/LPNs	8.8	
All Schools Secretaries/Custodial/Food Service	78.21	
Crocker Farm School	68.30	329
Fort River School	80.91	468
Mark's Meadow School	32.59	185
Wildwood School	83.79	418
Pelham School	22.06	117
Regional Middle School	80.45	575
Regional High School	164.54	1242 ¹

¹ These figures are based on the Oct 1, 2008 data submitted to DOE.

10. COMMUNITY SERVICES

Votd 1 two Pounds Lawfull money to Be Raised & the Select men have Liberty To Pay Part or all Said two Pounds To Reuben Ingram for Keeping Datill Smith [a deranged person] if Determined By them the Due from the District

Town Meeting, January 23, 1760

Massachusetts cities and towns play an important role in community services, especially in the areas of senior services, veterans' services, libraries, recreation, and housing. In Massachusetts, welfare is the responsibility of the state.

The sections that follow describe services provided directly by the Town of Amherst. The town also supports, by contracts for service, several programs indirectly by providing space and grants-in-aid to other public and private agencies. In addition, the select board administers several small trust funds.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Voted That the Selectmen draw on the Treasury for fifty Dollars, due Cutler & Gridley by contract, for vaccinating the Inhabitants of Amherst [against small pox], when in their opinion said contract is Willed.

Town Meeting, March 5, 1832

The **Board of Health** is responsible for setting policies and creating regulations to protect the health of Amherst residents. Under Massachusetts General Laws, and state and local regulations, boards of health have a broad range of responsibilities for making and enforcing policies that promote and protect the health of citizens.

The Amherst **Health Department** implements the board's policies. The health department is responsible for the following functions:

- ensuring access to health care for all Amherst residents;
- controlling the spread of communicable diseases and food-borne illnesses;
- planning programs aimed at promoting health and preventing disease;
- working with other town and state agencies to ensure an adequate response to a public health emergency.

Environmental Health. The board of health is required by state statute to perform duties relating to the protection of public health, disease control, and sanitary living conditions. These include the inspection and permitting or licensing of all food establishments, septic systems, recreational camps, pools, and body arts establishments. In addition, the health department works to ensure that all housing meets the state sanitary code.

SENIOR SERVICES

Voted unanimously that the town adopt the following bylaw: There shall be a council on aging consisting of nine members appointed by the Town Manager...

Town Meeting, January 23, 1967

PROGRAMS

The **Senior Center**, located in the Bangs Community Center, 70 Boltwood Walk, is a place where Amherst-area elders have access to a wide variety of programs and services, including health clinics, therapeutic massage, psychological counseling, adult education classes, discussion and support groups, and several food distribution programs. The center also provides services to assist elders with problems that arise in their daily lives through its full-time social worker.

The overall policy and direction of the center is determined by a nine-member **Council on Aging** appointed by the town manager. The programs are administered by an executive director who oversees the center's staff. Over 300 volunteers annually are involved in all aspects of program and service delivery.

Revenues. Donations, fees, and federal, local, and state grants augment the town's funding. "The Friends of the Amherst Senior Center" accepts tax-deductible donations to further the work of the council on aging.

TRANSPORTATION FOR ELDERLY AND DISABLED RESIDENTS

"The Senior Surrey," the blue 12-passenger Dodge Custom Wagon got on the road December 2, and has been duly christened by sleet and snow...

1972 Town Report

Dial-a-ride transportation for elderly and disabled people is provided under the auspices of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVRTA). Subsidized van and bus tickets are available at the Senior Center.

VETERANS' SERVICES AND BENEFITS

Any person who shall have been duly enlisted and mustered into the military or naval service of the United States, as part of the quota of any city or town in this Commonwealth, under call of the president of the United States, during the recent civil war, [... shall ...] be entitled for himself, his wife or widow, and minor children, to relief and support in such city or town, if at any time they should fall into distress therein...

An Act of the General Court, 1865

The **Veterans' Agent** administers a state-mandated public assistance program for veterans and those veterans' dependents who qualify. Financial aid, which is partly reimbursed by the Commonwealth, is rendered in the form of cash grants to cover such items as living expenses and medical bills. The veterans'

agent also offers assistance in applying for pensions and other programs administered by the United States Veterans' Administration. Military discharges may be filed in the veterans' service office for safekeeping. The veterans' agent sees that veterans' graves are properly marked and cared for and that records of the graves are accurate. The agent is also responsible for planning observances for Memorial Day and Veteran's Day.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Voted: YES 113, NO 70 that the Town appropriate the sum of \$12,000 for the purpose of hiring a consultant on child care. This consultant will report to the Town Manager, and will prepare, with the advice and assistance of the [ad hoc] Child Care Committee a comprehensive assessment of child care needs in Amherst and an analysis of alternative ways in which these needs might be met.

1982 Annual Town Meeting

Services for young children are administered by the Community Development Department. The department provides information about the childcare and early education options available in the town and works with the state to maintain childcare subsidies for low-income and moderate-income households. Tuition assistance for early education is currently provided through the town's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The department supports projects that sustain existing childcare programs but is not presently involved in the development of such programs.

RECREATION AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

Voted to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,300, for the purchase of the so-called Elder lot on Triangle Street and the so-called Pratt Hospital lot on Mattoon and Taylor Streets from their respective owners, the same to be used as a town playground;...

Annual Town Meeting, March 20, 1939

The **Department of Leisure Services and Supplemental Education (LSSE)** was established in 1982 through the merger of the town's recreation department and the schools' continuing education program. A **Commission for Leisure Services and Supplemental Education** is the policy advisory board. The **LSSE Director**, who serves under the general guidance of the commission and the administrative supervision of the town manager, administers the LSSE department. The superintendent of schools is consulted on matters related to education and school facilities.

LSSE programs serve people of all ages and ability levels in Amherst and the other towns of the regional school district. Programs, which are offered year round, include youth and adult sports leagues, aquatics, day camps, sports camps and after school programs, youth and adult educational classes, special events, community theater, and arts programming. The town's recreational facilities are

also available for programs sponsored by community organizations like the Youth Baseball Program and the Youth Soccer Program.

Facilities. The town's recreational facilities include a nine-hole golf course and 58 acres of park and recreation land that have three parks, two outdoor swimming pools, two tennis courts, three outdoor basketball courts, picnic grounds, playgrounds, and playing fields. (See map, page 34.) LSSE coordinates indoor and outdoor school facilities that are available for town programs and the general public. Conservation lands are also available for passive recreational use.

Funding. LSSE programs are funded through user fees, grants, and sponsorships with partial fee waivers available in some cases. The general revenues of the Town of Amherst finance administrative costs and the costs of fee waivers and support for individuals with special needs.

Information about current programs may be obtained from the leisure services office in the Bangs Community Center or online. LSSE distributes a quarterly brochure, "Leisure Times," to homes and businesses in Amherst and the regional school district.

LIBRARIES

As the town has appropriated money for the support of the Public Library, the past year, its managers have thought it best to present a brief report of its operations during this, the first year of its existence....

Report of the Managers of the Public Library, 1875

Three public libraries serve Amherst: Jones Library in the center of town and two branch libraries, Munson Memorial Library in South Amherst and the North Amherst Library. Jones Library was established in 1919 as a private non-profit organization, absorbing the original Amherst Public Library. In 1973, as a result of home-rule legislation, Jones Library became a town department. The legislation also made library personnel regular town employees and the town library budget subject to the approval of town meeting.

The **Trustees of the Town Library**, who are elected for staggered three-year terms, supervise and direct the administration of the libraries and have authority over purchasing and contracts (ATGA). They also serve as Trustees of the Jones Library, Incorporated; their powers and duties in this capacity include supervising the Jones Library building, accepting gifts and grants on behalf of the corporation, and overseeing the investment of the endowment.

The **Director of Library Services**, who is appointed by the trustees, administers the libraries, appoints all library personnel (under the town personnel system and union contracts), and supervises the staff.

Jones Library has over 175,000 books, collections of audio and video recordings, current magazines, computers, and free access to the Internet. Special Collections houses extensive collections that focus on the history of Amherst, research collections on Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, other Amherst authors,

and local genealogy. As a member of C/W MARS and the Western Massachusetts Regional Library System, patrons can request free delivery of materials from libraries statewide.

Jones Library has traditionally served as a community center for cultural and civic activities sponsored by other local organizations. An art gallery and other space may be reserved by individuals and groups. The English as a Second Language Center helps area refugees and immigrants become self-reliant by providing trained volunteers to teach English and GED skills and to prepare for U.S. Citizenship exams. The Jones Library website offers research information on topics ranging from auto repair to world travel information and easy access to library catalogs of materials to request for use.

Munson Memorial Library has a collection of over 20,000 print and audiovisual titles, public computers, and Internet access. The library is located in Munson Memorial Building, which also houses a large hall and other meeting rooms for community activities. A three-member board of trustees, appointed by the town manager, sets overall policy for the building.

North Amherst Library, the town's first free library established in 1869, has a collection of about 18,000 books and audiovisual titles, public computers, and Internet access.

Funding. Until the 1950s, the Jones Library was supported almost entirely from private funds, primarily income from the generous endowment of Samuel Minot Jones. As the town grew and the libraries' programs increased, tax funds became an increasingly important source of revenue. At present, the endowment and gifts provide about one-fourth of the libraries' annual income. Three quarters of the libraries' annual operating budget comes from the town's general revenues. The state provides a small sum each year.

The **Friends of the Jones Library**, a private organization founded in 1968, continues the tradition of Samuel Minot Jones by sponsoring service projects at all three libraries, helping to raise funds, and sponsoring cultural activities. Membership is open to all interested individuals and groups.

HOUSING

Our initial appointment of a committee to investigate the subject of housing for elderly citizens led to the Town Meeting approval [March 2, 1959] of a Housing Authority which is now well on its way toward actual construction of thirty units [at Chestnut Court].

Report of the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager for 1959

Amherst Housing Authority

The Amherst Housing Authority (AHA) works with the state Executive Office of Communities and Development and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Although four of its five members are elected locally, the AHA is independent of the town administration.

The authority has four principal responsibilities: 1) managing its existing facilities; 2) administering state and federal rental assistance for tenants in privately owned units at scattered sites; 3) seeking funds, as it deems necessary and appropriate, to construct additional housing and to expand its rental assistance program; and 4) overseeing construction of any new facilities. The authority also advises town officials on matters that may affect the supply and cost of low-income and moderate-income housing.

The AHA has developed 206 low-income housing units, including those in Chestnut Court and Ann Whalen Apartments for people who are elderly or disabled, congregate housing in the Jean Elder House, congregate housing for people with severe mobility disabilities in the John Nutting Apartments, staffed apartments on Sunrise Avenue for people with developmental disabilities, family units at Watson Farms, and several scattered sites.

The executive director of the housing authority acts as administrative agent for the AHA, planning and managing state and federal programs. Duties include the supervision and maintenance of the authority's properties, tenant selection for all programs, and coordination of the authority's staff, which currently includes six full-time and three part-time employees in addition to the director.

Other town housing programs

The Amherst Housing Partnership / Fair Housing Committee (HP/FHC) is a committee of seven members appointed by the select board. Their responsibilities involve carrying out the Amherst housing policy approved by the select board October 21, 2002.

This policy contains Amherst's goals regarding housing. They are:

- to support initiatives designed to preserve, develop, and/or replenish its affordable housing inventory;
- to promote access to housing for all persons, regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, sexual orientation, physical capabilities, marital or economic status;
- to educate the public on all housing conditions, current housing laws and regulations.

The HP/FHC has the responsibility to review and advise permitting boards on any residential development that has an affordable housing component. In addition, the committee works cooperatively with the Amherst Housing Authority, state, and other housing groups.



Railroad Station

11. PLANNING, CONSERVATION, DEVELOPMENT

As Amherst changed from a rural community to a large town, the town took measures to regulate land use and development, promote conservation, and encourage certain development in the public interest. Currently, responsibility for these activities falls to several boards, committees, and departments.

PLANNING BOARD AND PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Planning Boards in country towns are a new institution: even in sizable cities comparatively new. They have the zest and interest of a new thing: they have also its disadvantages

First Annual Report of the Town Planning Board, 1915

The **Planning Board** is responsible for matters related to land use. The board prepares long-range plans, advises the town on zoning proposals, and performs duties delegated to it under state and local laws. Its specific duties fall into several categories:

Master Planning. State law (MGL, Ch. 41, Sec. 81D) charges the planning board with studying the resources and needs of the community and preparing a master plan for future community development including land use, development, housing, transportation, and zoning. The board carries out the charge primarily through strategic planning efforts that target critical issues for intensive study. These efforts have included village center studies, farmland and aquifer protection, research park development, commercial corridor studies, and a joint effort with other boards to develop a downtown master plan. For several years, the town has been developing a town-wide master plan, which will require the board's final review and adoption.

Zoning. (See also Administration of the Zoning Bylaw, below.) The zoning powers of cities and towns are defined by MGL, Ch. 40A. Authority to adopt and amend the zoning bylaw and zoning map is vested in town meeting.

Changes in the zoning bylaw and zoning map require a two-thirds vote of that body.

The state law charges the planning board with reviewing the bylaw and map and developing amendments to improve them. The board is also required to hold a public hearing and advise town meeting on zoning changes proposed by others.

Subdivision control. The Commonwealth's Subdivision Control Law (MGL, Ch. 41, Secs. 81K-GG) permits the town to set standards for the construction of roads, sidewalks, water mains, sewer lines, and other improvements that will become the town's responsibility when the subdivision is completed. The law also allows the town to control other aspects of the design. The planning board promulgates and administers these regulations.

Permits and approvals. The planning board reviews site plans for uses designated by Site Plan Review (SPR) in the Use Classification and Standards Table in the zoning bylaw. Such uses are allowed by right but the board reviews aspects of the application such as refuse disposal, design, traffic, and parking. Approval is frequently given with conditions. This permitting procedure is used for commercial, office, and other non-residential development, as well as for residential cluster subdivisions. The board also issues special permits, including for residential open space community developments and selected dimensional modifications. The board may make recommendations to the Zoning Board of Appeals on special permits, variances, and appeals.

Special property tax categories. The planning board advises the select board on the release for general use of property taxed as forest, farm, or recreation land (MGL, Chs. 61, 61A, and 61B). It also advises the select board on granting special tax status for qualifying developments (MGL, Ch. 121A).

Scenic roads. The planning board must approve proposed changes in all town ways designated by town meeting as scenic roads (MGL, Ch. 40, Sec. 15C) where displacement of stone walls or public shade trees is involved, and may hold a joint public hearing with the Tree Warden for this purpose.

Staff Assistance to Other Boards. The planning department provides staff assistance to the planning board and other town committees and departments.

Other committees. Both the select board and planning board advise on policy related to the promotion of the public interest in development activities. Over the years, specific issues in the town have been reviewed by other boards including the Town Commercial/Relations Committee, the Parking Task Force, the Aquifer Protection Committee, Disability Access Advisory Committee, and the Agricultural Commission.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE ZONING BYLAW

Building Commissioner and Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)

Amherst's Zoning Bylaw is administered by the Building Commissioner and the Zoning Board of Appeals through a system of approvals, permits, variances, and appeals.

The bylaw specifies, for each permitted use in each zoning district, whether the use is permitted by right, by right with site plan approval of the planning board, or by special permit issued by the planning board or zoning board of appeals. The differences among the three categories lie in the degree of control exercised by the town and in the procedures for obtaining permission for development. The bylaw also permits variances by the zoning board of appeals. A variance may be granted only if the application meets all conditions, including hardship. However, no variance may authorize a use not otherwise permitted in that zoning district.

The bylaw also establishes quotas for the number of housing units that may be developed in any one year and priorities for awarding building permits. This quota system is referred to as the Phased-growth Bylaw.

The Building Commissioner is the chief zoning enforcement officer of the town. Decisions of the building commissioner may be appealed to the zoning board of appeals. The commissioner has authority:

- to determine who is eligible for building permits under the quota system;
- to refuse to issue a building permit if the use would violate the bylaw;
- to order compliance with provisions of the bylaw and conditions of special permits and site plan review.

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) is a quasi-judicial board. It hears petitions for special permits and variances, requests for changes in conditions of special permits, appeals from decisions of the building commissioner, and approves site plans related to special permit applications.

How to Apply for a Hearing before the ZBA.

- Pick up forms at the planning department office.
- Since the planning department staff reviews all applications to the ZBA, ask the staff for help if you have any questions about the forms.
- Pay required fees and file completed forms with the town clerk.

What happens after you file your application.

- The ZBA must hold a hearing within 65 days of a filing.

- It must render a decision on a variance within 100 days of the filing date and a decision on any other matter within 90 days of the close of the public hearing.
- No decision of the zoning board of appeals is final until it is signed by the sitting board members and filed with the town clerk.
- Once the decision is filed with the town clerk, there is a twenty-day appeal period for an aggrieved party to contest the decision with the relevant judicial body in Superior Court.
- After the appeal period, the permit must be recorded at the Registry of Deeds to take effect.

Copies of the bylaw, the rules and regulations of the planning board and ZBA, and instructions for petitioners are available online and in the planning department office. Additional information and assistance may be obtained from the building commissioner.

OTHER REGULATIONS

Vot Joseph Church Surveyer of Timber
 Vot Isaac Goodale Sealer of Leather

Town Meeting, March 1762

The **Department of Inspection Services** administers and enforces the state building code, plumbing, electrical, and gas codes, as well as the rules and regulations of the Architectural Access Board and the zoning bylaw. It provides assistance to the zoning board of appeals, architects, engineers, contractors, and individual property owners in preparing zoning cases, plans, and applications for permits.

The department is also responsible for the inspection of weights and measures. It makes periodic checks of scales used for commercial purposes and enforces the unit pricing law.

The department head has two titles: Building Commissioner and Zoning Enforcement Officer.

The **Historical Commission** is responsible for identifying the town's historic assets through extensive inventories and for developing programs of preservation. It initiates recommendations for listing specific sites and areas in the National Register of Historic Places. The commission also acts as an advocate for the protection of historic and architecturally significant properties.

The planning board and the ZBA may consult the historical commission for advice before granting permits for any exterior building renovation or site alteration on properties within Amherst's nine National Historic Register districts. The commission may raise funds, acquire and hold property, and undertake numerous other actions in carrying out its responsibilities. (See also page 26, Community Preservation Act Committee.)

The **Design Review Board (DRB)** reviews the design of town projects and the exterior design of projects in the downtown business district and then makes recommendations to town building and land use permit-granting authorities – the building commissioner, zoning board of appeals, and planning board. The DRB also advises the Amherst Redevelopment Authority.

The DRB reviews projects for new construction and alterations of buildings and sites, examining exterior architecture, landscape design and details such as signs, lighting, materials, and color. Its review is based on general urban and landscape design principles set forth in the zoning bylaw. Although consultation with the DRB is mandatory, its recommendations are advisory. Application forms, a design handbook, and information may be obtained from the planning or inspection services departments.

Other departments have authority over licenses and permits that affect development and land use.

The **Select Board** controls sewer and water regulations, permits for utility poles and other changes within the public way, alcohol licenses, and other state-mandated regulations and permits. The **Department of Public Works** issues permits for excavations, curb cuts, connections to or privately-funded extensions of town utility systems, and gives advice about other permits, for example, those for utility poles. The **Tree Warden**, with the advice of the Public Shade Tree Committee (a subcommittee of the Conservation Commission) controls the removal of public shade trees.

For other development-related permits, see **Fire Department, Board of Health, and Conservation Department**.

CONSERVATION

Voted that the town accept Section 8C of Chapter 40 of the General Laws, as amended, and establish thereunder a conservation commission composed of seven members.

Annual Town Meeting, March 5, 1962

The **Conservation Commission** promotes the preservation of open space through acquisition of land and development rights and makes policy related to the use and management of acquired conservation land. In addition, the conservation commission engages in the promotion and development of natural resources, especially for the protection of watershed resources. Other boards and commissions receive advice from the commission whenever their work is related to conservation issues.

The commission administers the Wetland Protection Act (MGL, Ch 131, Sec. 40) which protects wetlands and the public interest they serve, including flood control, prevention of pollution and storm damage, protection of water supplies, fisheries, and wildlife habitat. The conservation commission reviews proposals on a case-by-case basis and holds public hearings according to Massachusetts regulations. The Town of Amherst Wetland Protection Bylaw

allows the conservation commission to impose stronger protective measures than those of the state Wetlands Protection Act.

The Department of Conservation Services assists the conservation commission and other town boards and committees regarding all conservation activities of the town. The department also assists in the management of the town's watershed forests in Amherst and surrounding towns. The watershed areas protect Amherst's four reservoirs and three well fields from development and the risk of water contamination from septic seepage, road salt, and other hazards.

Conservation land and deed restrictions. The town now holds over 1400 acres of conservation land. In addition, some 1600 acres of farmland are protected by deed restrictions purchased by the town and the state under the Agricultural Preservation Restriction Act. Finally about 120 acres of land donated to the town are protected by conservation restrictions. Since 2001 the open space program has also received funding from the Community Preservation Act Fund, recently contributing to a dozen conservation projects including the preservation of over 100 acres of land.

The **Public Shade Tree Committee**, a sub-committee of the conservation commission, adheres to the provisions of the state Shade Tree Act. The committee advises and makes recommendations to the tree warden and the select board on matters involving public shade trees within the public way or on its boundaries. Its recommendations include, but are not limited to, replacement of specific dead or dying trees, species recommended for such replacements, and planting of additional trees at specific locations and the species recommended. The removal of public shade trees is guided by MGL, Ch.87, Secs. 3 and 4, which authorize a public hearing.

The Kestrel Trust is a private, non-profit organization devoted to assisting the Town of Amherst and its neighbors through cooperation with the conservation commissions of the several towns in the area. The trust has provided substantial funds for the preservation of conservation land.

Several guidebooks and maps, available from the conservation commission, contain information about trails and facilities of Amherst conservation areas.

DEVELOPMENT

Voted that the Treasurer be and hereby is authorized and directed to subscribe immediately in the name of the town, for \$100,000 of the capital Stock of the Massachusetts Central Rail Road Company [... for construction of a railroad] from Northampton through Hadley & the central part of Amherst, so that a depot shall be made for passengers & freight within one half mile of the Amherst House and through the towns of Enfield and Greenwich, so as to make a continuous line to Stony Brook Station. on the Fitchburg Rail Road.

Special Town Meeting, October 4, 1870

The **Amherst Redevelopment Authority (ARA)** was established by town meeting in 1971. In Massachusetts redevelopment authorities are autonomous agencies, which municipalities may form to aid in urban renewal under MGL, Ch. 121B. Urban renewal is restricted to “decadent” or “blighted” areas of unrealized potential for a community. The ARA has full control over projects although public participation plays a major role. Town meeting must approve all requests for project funds.

Although enabled to undertake redevelopment projects throughout the community, the ARA’s initial task was to plan and develop Boltwood Walk, a 9.6-acre area between Main Street and Kellogg Avenue, most of it previously used for schools. The purpose of the Boltwood Walk Project has been to strengthen the center of Amherst with the addition of facilities for community activities and services, business, and housing for the elderly. Special emphasis has been placed on providing a place where older citizens can lead active, independent lives. Boltwood Walk includes Ann Whalen Apartments, Clark House, the Bangs Community Center, several commercial properties, and public ways. With the completion of the Boltwood Walk parking garage in 2002, redevelopment of the properties within the Boltwood Walk Project was substantially completed.

Presently the ARA is responsible for continuing design review within Boltwood Walk until 2013 in order to ensure that the project's goals are carried out for the benefit of the people of Amherst.

12. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND THE PIONEER VALLEY TRANSIT AUTHORITY (PVTA)

Voted by a majority that the Town authorize the Selectmen to take such action that they may deem necessary or advisable to establish and enroll the town as a member of the Lower Pioneer Valley Regional Transit Authority ...

Annual Town Meeting, May 6, 1974

Amherst's public transportation system is an outstanding example of cooperation among many organizations, including state and federal agencies, a regional authority, cities and towns, private colleges, and a public university, which have pooled their resources to provide a service that would not otherwise

be possible. The resulting network of bus lines is, in terms of passenger miles, the second largest public transportation system in Massachusetts, and one of the largest general-purpose, no-fare bus systems in the United States.

In 2008, Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) provided almost 3,500,000 rides on buses and vans serving Amherst.

Legal authority. PVTA is a public body established under state law (MGL, Ch. 161B, Sec. 2) to regulate public transportation in Hampden and Hampshire Counties and to provide transit service to member cities and towns. It determines changes in all routes and is the recipient of all federal and state grants for transit operation in the region. A city or town is eligible to join if it is in the two-county area or contiguous to a member town within that area. Twenty-four cities and towns now belong.

PVTA is authorized to contract with carriers for transit services but may not itself operate such services.

Governance. The authority is governed by an advisory board composed of one representative from each member city or town. Voting is weighted on the basis of assessments. Municipalities are represented by their chief elected officials, who may delegate the responsibility. A senior staff member customarily represents Amherst. The representative consults with the Select Board, Town Manager, and the Public Transportation and Bicycling Committee before voting on policy issues that may affect Amherst.

Role of the town. Amherst plays a variety of roles with respect to PVTA. The town:

- *sponsors* some bus routes. A sponsor assumes an obligation for a share of the costs.
- *acts as liaison* between PVTA and two other sponsors, the University of Massachusetts and Five Colleges, Inc., who between them sponsor the major bus routes in town. Their routes are intended to serve the university and colleges but are available to the general public. Contracts between the town and each of these sponsors enable the routes to qualify for state and federal funds.

Non-PVTA, town-sponsored service. In addition to working through PVTA, Amherst contracts with the university for services not approved for PVTA subsidies. These routes are funded from the town's general revenues except for private donations for two route extensions. Amherst also contracts for services for elderly and disabled citizens.

Financing. In FY07 the \$3,000,000 cost of PVTA in Amherst was shared as follows: federal and state subsidies – 75%; town taxes – 5%; and University of Massachusetts and Five Colleges, Inc., reimbursements – 20%.

PVTA assessments. PVTA collects all fares and all funds from federal and state grants. Costs in excess of these revenues, called the "local share," are allocated among the municipalities served and appear as assessments on their cherry sheets (see page 27). Amherst absorbs the local share for town-sponsored

services except for private donations for two route extensions. Amherst is reimbursed by the University and Five Colleges, Inc., for the local share for the remaining PVT routes.

Fares. With the exception of summer bus service between Amherst and Northampton and some services for disabled riders, for the most part there are no fares for public transportation in Amherst. This may be subject to change from time to time.

The Public Transportation and Bicycling Committee gives advice to the select board and town meeting on public transportation policies and programs in Amherst.



Munson Memorial Library

IV. THE TOWN AND THE CITIZEN

Voted Samuel Hauley sen Moderator Voated John Nash Clark Voated John Ingram sen Samll Boulwood Samll Haulcy Commy for Calling Precinct Meatings Voted Ebenezer Dickenson Aaron Smeth Jno Nash Assessors Voted Ebenezer Kellogg Collector ...

first Precinct Meeting. October 8. 1735

13. ELECTIONS

ADMINISTRATION

The **Town Clerk** is responsible for the conduct of all elections. A bipartisan **Board of Registrars** oversees voter registration. The clerk is an ex-officio member of the board. On election day, the voting at each polling place is supervised by a **warden** and a team of election workers.

REGISTERING TO VOTE

Qualifications. Anyone may register who: is a United States citizen by birth or naturalization; will be at least 18 years of age by the time of the next election; and is a resident of Amherst on the day of registration. One may declare residency immediately on moving to town; there is no waiting period. No proof of eligibility is required, but the application is signed under penalty of perjury.

Where and when. Citizens may register to vote at the town clerk's office or by Mail-In Voter Registration Affidavit available in the town clerk's office or in the town libraries. Citizens may also register to vote at the Registry of Motor Vehicles. It is advisable to obtain a receipt and take it to the polls on election day. Currently, citizens must be registered 20 days prior to an election in order to vote in that election.

How often. Even though registration is permanent in Massachusetts, a voter must notify the town clerk of any change in name or address and must maintain a listing in the town census (street list). A census form is mailed to every household each year. Failure to return this census form or respond to a follow-up confirmation card will affect a voter's status and may result in being dropped from the registered voters list.

Party designation. When registering, voters may request a party designation or remain unenrolled. Party members may vote only in their own party's primary, but unenrolled voters may vote in any partisan primary. Voters who are enrolled in an inactive political designation cannot vote in party primaries.

VOTING

Polling places and hours. Polling hours and places are usually published in the newspapers shortly before elections. Voters may learn their precincts by contacting the town clerk's office or consulting the town website.

Assistance with voting, sample ballots. Poll workers will provide instructions for write-ins and other assistance for those unfamiliar with the process or unable to read the ballot. Sample ballots are posted outside each polling place.

Absentee voting. Registered voters may vote absentee if they are unable to be at the polls on election day because of absence from town, physical disability, or religious belief. They may vote either by mail or in the town clerk's office. People who are not registered may, under certain circumstances, qualify to vote by mail.

Contact the clerk's office for information on rules, deadlines, and procedures.

Dates of state and national elections.

election – in even-numbered years, first Tuesday in November.

state primary – in even-numbered years, usually in September. Elective offices include U.S. Congress, state offices, district attorney, and other court officers.

national (presidential preference) primary – in presidential election years, usually in March. Elective offices include election of state and local party committees.

Dates of town elections.

election – annually, usually in late March or early April. Elective offices include town officials and town meeting members.

referenda – State and local laws provide for several types of local referenda which are scheduled as needed.

VOTER INFORMATION FOR TOWN ELECTIONS

The League of Women Voters of Amherst publishes an Election Guide in the local newspaper and sponsors a Candidates' Night preceding the annual town election. Presentations by candidates for town-wide office are broadcast on the local cable television channel.

Various neighborhood and interest groups sponsor forums for candidates. The local newspapers report on candidates' meetings and publish candidates' statements.

RUNNING FOR LOCAL OFFICE

To run for Town Meeting

- Obtain nomination papers from the town clerk.
- Fill in the required information, including the term of office. (A full term is three years, but there are often unexpired terms to be filled.)
- Have at least one registered voter from your precinct sign the nomination paper. The signature can be your own. Make sure that the signature is as it appears on the voting list and include the address.
- Submit the nomination paper to the clerk's office by the deadline.

To run for town-wide office

- Obtain and fill in nomination papers as above.
- Have at least 50 registered voters from Amherst sign them. You should obtain extra signatures in case some are not validated.
- Submit the papers to the clerk's office by the deadline.

14. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Amherst residents take a lively interest in town government. They contribute their time and talents to a multitude of town committees, boards, and commissions, enriching the quality of life in Amherst.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Register and vote in all elections.

Run for elected office.

Read and learn about Amherst affairs in the Annual Town Report and other official documents of the town (available in the town manager's office), the media, the town website, and publications by the League of Women Voters of Amherst and others.

Attend Town Meeting and meetings of town committees or follow their deliberations by reading the local newspapers. Town meeting and select board meetings are broadcast on the local TV cable channel. Any resident may speak at

town meeting. It is advisable to speak with the moderator prior to the meeting if you wish to be recognized.

Make your views known to town officials and others involved in town government. Lobbying can be done as an individual or a member of a group. You can telephone, write letters, testify at public hearings, or, when time permits, speak at regular meetings of the appropriate committees.

Become active in a political party.

Seek appointment to a town committee by filling out an electronic Citizen Activity Form, available on the town website. (Assistance is available.) To become more familiar with the way a committee works, attend meetings of the committee in which you are interested. Filling out the form does not assure that you will be appointed, but it does assure that you will be considered.

Sponsor a Warrant Article or ballot question. The local New England tradition of participatory democracy has preserved the right of ordinary citizens to take direct action on issues. A citizen who is unable to persuade elected and appointed officials to act, or who disagrees with their actions, can place the question directly before town meeting or the voters at large. You may:

Place an article in the Town Meeting Warrant. The signatures of ten voters will place an article before the annual meeting. The signatures of 100 voters are required to place an article before a special town meeting, including the regularly scheduled fall meetings. A single individual may request a zoning article that affects the person's own property.

Petitioners are urged to speak with the select board, the moderator, and appropriate committees and officials before placing articles in the warrant and again prior to town meeting. (See Town Meeting Handbook, available in the town manager's office.)

Call a special town meeting. A special town meeting must be held if at least 200 registered voters sign a petition requesting the meeting.

Call a referendum to challenge, and possibly reverse, major actions of a town meeting. A referendum may be initiated by filing a petition with the select board within five days of the conclusion of a town meeting. The petition must be signed by at least 5% of Amherst's registered voters who are in active status on the voter rolls. The outcome of a referendum is determined by the same proportion of votes as would be required in town meeting (2/3 to approve a zoning change, for example). The action of the town meeting is not reversed unless at least 18% of all active registered voters vote for reversal. Anyone considering calling a referendum should refer to the Amherst Town Government Act and the Town Meeting Handbook.

Place a non-binding public opinion advisory question on the town election ballot. This is a lengthy, complex process. Consult the town clerk for information.

To sum up, any citizen can have a voice in local government. By becoming informed and involved, voters strengthen both the democratic process and Amherst town government.

THE OPEN MEETING AND PUBLIC RECORDS LAWS

The Open Meeting and Public Records Laws are designed to encourage citizen understanding and involvement in public decision making. The Open Meeting Law (MGL, Ch. 39, Sec. 23B) requires that all committee meetings be open to the public and press unless the committee votes to go into executive session for a purpose permitted by the law. Executive sessions are allowed only for certain narrowly defined purposes where public discussion might adversely affect the financial interests of the town, public security, or the personal reputation of an individual. Notice of all meetings must be filed with the town clerk and posted on the official bulletin board at least 48 hours in advance, except in emergencies. The law also requires committees to keep minutes, which must be available to the public as soon as they are created.

Citizens who believe that the law has been violated may find that the matter can be resolved through discussions with the committee itself or with the select board. If not, they may bring the apparent violation to the attention of the District Attorney.

The Public Records Law (MGL, Ch. 4, Sec. 7) requires that, with certain exceptions, documents, records, and correspondence made and received by officers and employees of state, county, and municipal bodies be open for public scrutiny.

15. RESOLVING DIFFICULTIES

Amherst has long been recognized for the quality of its services and the fairness of its procedures, but misunderstandings and difficulties do occur. Both the town and the schools have developed procedures for handling complaints. In addition, the Human Rights Commission may be called upon when a problem is thought to involve discrimination.

The School System. Concerns and complaints related to the schools should normally be discussed first with the teacher, next referred to the building principal, and then to the appropriate district director or superintendent. In addition, complaints about possible violations of civil rights may be referred to the school's affirmative action officer. If the matter cannot be resolved otherwise, the school committee may grant a hearing either in open session or in executive session, in accordance with the state's open meeting law. Finally, if a problem cannot be solved locally, it may be appealed to the State Department of Education.

The Police Department. Complaints of misconduct against the police may be made in person or in writing. Written complaint forms may be obtained at the police department or at the town manager's office. To discuss a complaint in person, a citizen may also request to speak to a supervisor at the police department. A police supervisor is on duty at all times. All complaints are investigated according to procedures approved by the town manager.

Other Town Departments. Town officials recommend that citizens discuss their problems first with the staff members involved. If satisfaction cannot be obtained, further complaints should be addressed to the department head, then the manager.

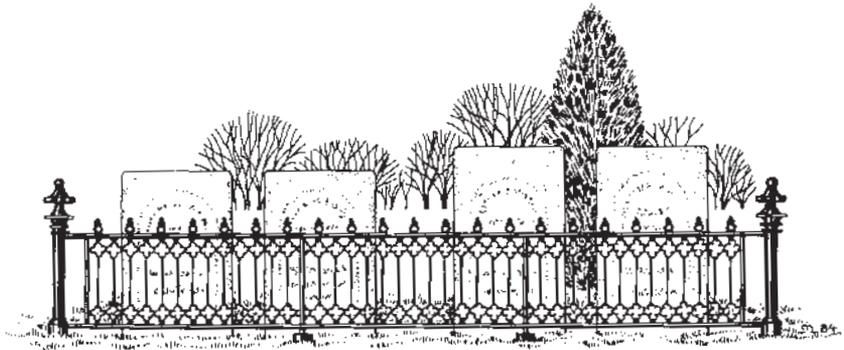
The **Human Rights Commission**, composed of nine residents, was established to ensure that all citizens are afforded equal protection under the law. The **Human Rights Director** is the town's civil rights officer, as well as the sexual harassment officer and equal opportunity/affirmative action officer. The director, in conjunction with the human rights commission and town government, seeks to promote economic and social justice for all citizens through means of mediation, education, and enforcement of local, state, federal, and international human rights laws.

The human rights director's office, in collaboration with the human rights commission, pursues investigations into alleged civil and human rights violations, within both the public and private sectors of Amherst. The director also works with the town manager on issues of diversity, and conducts workshops within the region.

AFTERWORD

One of the primary objectives of the League of Women Voters is to promote political responsibility by increasing citizen participation in, and better understanding of, government. In this publication the League of Women Voters of Amherst attempts to provide information about Amherst town government – its history, structure, programs and services, finances, and relationship to other units of government.

Because the challenge of effective self-government increases with the growing complexities and limitations imposed by measures like Proposition 2½, the need for citizens to inform themselves, vote, and participate in public policy decisions is critical to the survival of our democracy.



West Cemetary

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Consult the town website, www.amherstma.gov, for information about the schools, library, and town departments, e.g., police, clerk, public works.

Consult the League of Women Voters of Amherst website, www.lwvamherst.org, for information about voting and links to League publications.

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AMHERST GOVERNMENT

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Town of Amherst Appointed Committee Handbook

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