

# **TOWN PLAN**

## **TOWN OF BROOKLINE, VERMONT**

**Adopted**

01-09-2013

By

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David Y. Parker, Jr. – Chairman, Brookline Selectboard

# 2012 TOWN PLAN

## TOWN OF BROOKLINE, VERMONT

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. PURPOSE OF THE TOWN PLAN

This Plan has been prepared to set a direction for the Town's future and to address changing needs through a continuous planning process. The Brookline Planning Commission obtained input from the 2008 survey. It has held public meetings on the Plan and has received advice and assistance from the Windham Regional commission.

The Plan is meant to be a guide for the Selectboard and Planning Commission and other town officials both in their routine business and in their consideration of proposals which would have an impact on the Town. When a project falls under the jurisdiction of Act 250, under § 6086 (a) (10) of Title 10, Chapter 151 (Act 250), this Plan will serve as a guide for the District Environmental Commission in reviewing proposals for development and subdivision.

In addition, the Plan should serve as a source of information about Brookline and the objectives of its citizens and about the opportunities and limitations for prospective residents, developers and investors.

## B. STRUCTURE OF TOWN PLAN

The Brookline Town Plan states goals intended to provide a direction for the future. These goals are defined through statements of policy which establish how the Town should achieve its goals. The Town of Brookline's policy statements pertain to the following:

- Housing (Section III)
- Energy (Section IV)
- Community Facilities and Services (Section V)
- Natural Resources (Section VI)
- Cultural Resources (Section VII)
- Land Use Planning (Section VIII)
- Maps (Appendix page 56)

In accordance with Title 24, Chapter 117, §4382, the following ten (10) elements are included in the Plan:

1. Statement of Objectives;
2. Land Use;
3. Transportation;
4. Public Utilities and Facilities;
5. Preservation of Rare and Irreplaceable Natural/Scenic Areas;
6. Educational Facilities;
7. Implementation Plan;
8. Impact on Neighboring Communities;
9. Energy Plan;
10. Housing/Affordable Housing;

## C. INTERPRETATION OF THE TOWN PLAN

Town policies are to be interpreted as **guidelines** or standards for the use of the Town's Planning Commission and Selectboard in reviewing possible needs for zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, a capital program and budget and other town ordinances; to guide the Windham Regional Commission and the State of Vermont in their planning programs; to assist in the judgment of applications submitted under Act 250; and to guide those interested in subdividing and developing land in the Town of Brookline.

“Should” or “may” will be interpreted as an encouraged action while “shall” or “must” means that the Town has the intention of ensuring that a requirement is met.

Specific interpretations of Town Plan policies, as required to evaluate applications submitted under Act 250, should be addressed in any local ordinances.

## D. GOALS OF THE TOWN PLAN

1. To establish the principle that the public good of the entire community must be of primary consideration as the Town plans for the future.
2. To address the changing needs of the Town of Brookline through a continuous planning process.
3. To maintain Brookline as a diverse rural community.
4. To adequately meet the needs of the Town for housing, education, communication, safety, health and employment.
5. To expand access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all Brookline residents.
6. To limit development in those areas where danger to the public health and welfare would be occasioned because of physical site limitations.
7. To limit development that would significantly change the character of the community and/or adversely affect neighboring properties.
8. To protect significant historical and natural resources in order to preserve these resources for the public good.
9. To provide a safe and efficient road transportation network for diverse modes of travel that respects the scenic qualities of the area it serves.
10. To encourage the efficient use of energy, the development of renewable energy resources, and the recycling, reduction and reuse of waste.
11. Provide a safe and pleasant recreational environment for residents of Brookline.
12. To provide Maps of resources; transportation, facilities, and utilities; classification of lands and uses.

## **E. SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE THE 2005 TOWN PLAN**

Highlights of accomplishments of the Town of Brookline in the past five years include:

- Education: The Brookline and Newfane Elementary Schools merged into one school and school board serving both towns. Brookline received a two year bridge grant supporting preschool education from the Vermont Community Preschool Collaborative.
- Transportation: The “Green Iron Bridge (#19) has been restored to completion. No walkway or extra width was provided for the safety of our townsfolk as set forth in 2000 Town Plan. Signage continues to be improved along Grassy Brook and Hill Roads.
- Telecommunication: Comcast has brought cable telecommunication to Brookline.
- Health and Emergency Services: Grace Cottage/Rescue Ambulance services. Awareness of the organized Mobility/Disability program. The establishment of assisted living and elder care in Townshend.
- Town Government: Community interest in Town Government is thriving with a five member select board and full planning commission.
- Flood Hazard: The Selectboard adopted Flood Hazard Regulations in June , 2008 and has followed up with joining the National Flood Hazard Insurance Program. The Selectboard has filed for the Flood Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.
- Outdoor Recreation: Expansion of the Windmill Hill Trail, the Putney Mountain Pinnacle Trail and the addition of the Cascade trail.
- Historic: The Round School House has undergone restoration and is currently open to the public by appointment. The Historic Brookline Church, formerly known as the Baptist Church, is not currently open to the public. The Historic Brookline Church Preservation Initiative is a 501(c)3 nonprofit association and can receive tax deductible donations.
- Land Use: The March 2008 survey indicated once again a strong interest in development and growth of the town.
- Town-wide Property Reappraisal: Concluded in – 2007.

## **F. BROOKLINE PLANNING COMMISSION**

The Brookline Planning Commission comprises five (5) individuals appointed by the Selectboard to serve 3-year terms. The purpose of the Commission is to:

- identify needs and concerns of townspeople through surveys, community feedback and observation of evolving town developments;
- formulate those needs and concerns into a Town Plan that conforms to the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act (Title 24, V SA Chapter 17);
- conduct a periodic review and update of the Town Plan; and
- periodically review the options available for implementation of the Town Plan.

As a Planning Commission we recognize that the planning process must be continuous in order that new and timely policies may emerge that will guide the Town's development and utilization of its resources. The Town Plan should be regularly evaluated by the Planning Commission and a report of the Commission's findings should be presented to the Selectboard annually.

The Town Planning Commission has seriously taken into consideration all of the responses to the 2008 Survey and will act upon your requests in a concerned manner. The commission has been able to maintain a five-member board since 2007.

The Planning Commission encourages our fellow citizens of Brookline to contact us with your comments and questions, participate in public meetings and hearings and become part of the ongoing discussion of issues addressed in the Town Plan.

## **G. TOWN SURVEY**

The Brookline Planning Commission conducted a town survey in March of 2008, to measure how opinions vary on issues of importance to town planning. 415 surveys were mailed to persons on the Town List, which includes property owners and registered voters. Copies of the survey were also made available at the Town Office and at Town Meeting on March 4, 2008. The rate of response was 31%, with 130 people filling out the surveys. The Planning Commission posted the results on the Town Web page and at the legal posting locations.

### **HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SURVEY**

#### **The Most Important Issues Chosen From a List**

1. Telecommunications
2. Roads and Bridges
3. Environment
4. Education
5. Emergency Services

#### **Top Important Issues Added as Comments**

1. Tax burden
2. Education
3. Excessive regulation
4. Regulation of excessive noise
5. Regulation of Development
6. Maintaining Rural Quality of Life

**Top Goals for the Next 5 years**

1. Maintain rural character and quality of life
2. Manage / protect natural resources
3. Encourage improved communications
4. Improve roads and bridges
5. Energy efficiency

**Growth and Development**

Of the Survey participants expressing an opinion on Growth:

More than 82% think there should be more  
Home Based Business  
Agricultural Development

More than 73% think there should not be more  
Industry and Commercial Development  
Educational Institutions  
Residential Housing Developments  
Low Income Housing

Of the Survey participants expressing an opinion on Regulation:

More than 64% do not think there should be more regulation of  
Home Based Businesses  
Individual Residential Housing  
Agricultural Development

More than 61% think there should be more regulation of  
Residential Housing Developments  
Industry and Commercial Developments

**Cultural and Community Issues**

Over 83% of the Survey participants think Brookline should encourage social and agricultural events, after school programs, continuing education for adults, and promote the Preservation and re-use of historic resources. 67% think Brookline should not encourage development of Low-Income housing.

**Natural Resources**

Over 90% of the Survey participants think Brookline's natural resources should be used for wildlife, plant habitat and recreation. Over 86% of the Survey participants think Brookline should make a special effort to protect its water resources, wildlife habitat, prime agricultural land and forests, scenic vistas and ridgelines.

## II COMMUNITY PROFILE

### A. HISTORY

The Town of Brookline was originally located in parts of Putney, Athens, and Newfane. The first Settlements were made in 1777 along the valley of Grassy Brook. No political rights were granted until 1794 when the settlers organized and held their first Town Meeting in 1795. At that time, there were no churches or schools and meetings were held in private homes.

Between 1794 and 1824, lands were cleared, roads were laid out and businesses were started. During that time, three stores, two hotels, two blacksmith shops, three sawmills, two grist mills, one tannery and one ashery existed. One doctor and one counselor at law were in practice.

In 1819, part of Newfane lying on the eastern side of the West River was annexed to Brookline. In 1823 Brookline was granted a charter, and in 1824 the Town sent its first representative to the State Legislature.

In 1822, the Round Schoolhouse was built and used as a school until 1929 when it was replaced by the present school building. The Round Schoolhouse served the Town from 1929 to 1989 as a Town Hall for various town functions.

In 1836 the Brookline Baptist Church was erected. It is currently known locally as The Historic Brookline Church.

Mail service from Bellows Falls via Saxtons River to Brookline was started in 1837. At one time the Post Office was located in the present Meehl house.

In November 1927, the bridge to Newfane was washed out in a flood, and in the spring of 1928, the present iron bridge was built. Again, in 1936 and 1938, there were floods causing substantial damage.

Over the years farming has played an important role in Brookline's land use and local economy. Many farms have ceased to operate and at this time in 2010 there is only one produce farm and one stable. Today Brookline serves mostly as a residential community relying on the commerce and industry of surrounding towns.

### B. POPULATION

The factor most commonly considered when assessing a community's growth is its population. Although many other factors contribute to the changes associated with growth, it is the number of people and the activities they generate that most clearly define the issue.

As shown in **Table 1**, Brookline's population has steadily increased since 1940 except between the years 1951 and 1960 when there was a net decline in

population. The number of residents sharply increased between 1960 and 1980. While the Brookline population continues to increase, the rate of population growth has been steadily decreasing since 1980. Population estimates provided by the 2010 US Census shows Brookline's population to be 530 permanent residents.

TABLE 1: BROOKLINE POPULATION TRENDS								
	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Population	104	132	127	180	310	403	467	530
% change		26.9	-3.8	41.7	72.2	30	15.9	13.5
Source: 2010 US Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing								

**Table 2** shows Brookline's growth as compared with data from neighboring towns. The towns surrounding Brookline have also experienced growth over the past 15 years.

TABLE 2: POPULATION TRENDS IN NEARBY TOWNS					
Town/Area	1990	2000	2010	Total Increase 2000-2010	% Change 2000-2010
Brookline	403	467	530	63	13.5
Newfane	1,555	1,680	1726	46	2.7
Townshend	1,019	1,149	1232	83	7.2
Putney	2,352	2,634	2702	68	2.6
Westminster	3,026	3,210	3178	-32	-1.0
Athens	313	340	442	102	30.0
Source: 2010 US Census Bureau					

Census data shows that population growth in Windham County has generally been higher in the less populated and more rural towns than in the larger towns, ski towns, and towns with a more urban center. New residents are choosing to move to smaller towns like Brookline. The scenic landscape of Brookline is attractive and will continue to attract new residents.

**Table 3** provides projections of Brookline's permanent populations over the coming years. The Town is expected to continue to grow, but at a slower rate than it has experienced in the past.

Population projections are of interest in projecting future housing, facility, and service needs. One method of predicting population trends is to review demographic trends

from the Census data, as well as making assumptions in regards to future fertility, mortality, migration trends, and group quarters population.

These projections are subject to a degree of uncertainty because it is impossible to accurately predict future trends, especially those related to migration.

<b>TABLE 3: BROOKLINE POPULATION PROJECTIONS: 2010-2020</b>				
U.S. Census	Projection 2015	Projection 2020	% Change 2010-2015	% Change 2015-2020
530	560	591	5.7	5.5
Source: Data provided by Windham Regional Commission with Forecasts Made Analyzing Recent Reductions in Population Growth Over 10 Year Periods				

Brookline’s age distribution (**Table 4**) for 2010 is similar to that which is found in Windham County as a whole. This information is important in projecting future facility and service trends. The school aged population (ages 5-17) in Brookline has remained relatively stable between 2000 and 2010. There were no significant changes in any age group during this period. The median age in Brookline increased from 39 in 2000 to 40.5 in 2010. The median age in the county and the state are 44.9 and 41.5 respectively.

<b>TABLE 4: AGE DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENT</b>				
	2000		2010	
	Brookline	Windham County	Brookline	Windham County
Under 5	6.2	5.2	5.7	4.8
5-17	20.9	18.3	19.8	15.0
18-34	12.8	18.4	18.1	18.6
35-64	49.2	44	41.9	45.5
65+	10.7	13.9	14.5	16.1
Source: 2010 U.S. Census				

### **C. ECONOMY**

Over the years, Brookline has changed from a small, rural farming community to a residential one comprising permanent dwellers and vacation owners. There is little commercial or industrial development in Brookline.

The 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey data estimates 77.2% of the Brookline population over 16 years of age are employed in the labor force, while 65% of the total population are employed in the labor force. The 2000

Census reported 54% of the total population was employed in the labor force. **Table 5** illustrates the occupations that Brookline’s citizens are employed in. The largest percentage of employees residing in Brookline are employed in the fields of management, business, science, and arts ((31.2%) and sales and office (26.3%)A further breakdown of occupations by industry shows that the educational, health and social services fields employ 26.9% of the town residents.

<b>TABLE 5: OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY OF TOWN RESIDENTS, AGE 16 AND OLDER</b>		
Category	Number	Percent
Management, business, science, and arts	108	31.2
Service	45	13.0
Sales and office	91	26.3
Natural resources, construction and maintenance	58	16.8
Production, transportation, and material moving	44	12.7
2010 U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates		

Commuting

There is little commercial or industrial development in Brookline. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates more Brookline residents are commuting longer distances to work. The mean commute time for Brookline residents increased from 25.3 minutes to 25.7 minutes. Of those residents 16 years and older who commuted to work in 2010, 82.5% drive alone and 2.1% carpoled. In 2010 20.5% worked in Brookline while 79.5% percent worked elsewhere. 11.3% worked at home. Nearby job centers include Brattleboro and Rockingham.

Median Income

Brookline’s median household income for 2010 was \$52,955 (in 2010 inflation-adjusted dollars), up from \$39,125 in 2000. When compared with the adjacent communities, Brookline’s median income is higher than the median incomes of Athens, Putney, Townshend, and Westminster, but less than Newfane’s.

Businesses

Although Brookline is primarily a “bedroom community,” there are a number of enterprises and numerous small home-based businesses that contribute to the character and vitality of the Town in Brookline. Along Grassy Brook Road there is Dutton’s Farm; Z Pots, ceramic ware; 2 Wire Guys, computer support and repair;

Sunny Lane Daycare Center & Preschool, a new child care facility; and two CSAs, Wild Carrot and Grassy Brook Farm.

On Hill Road there is West River Transportation, a school bus facility; Brookline Auto, automobile repair and service; West River Stables, boarding for horses and riding lessons; Johnny Swing Welding. Throughout the Town there are small home-based businesses such as web design, graphic design, artists, small construction businesses, and various professional services.

Brookline should encourage enterprises that are in keeping with the existing community. There is potential for increased agricultural enterprises and CSAs, most likely along Grassy Brook Road, the lower part of Hill Road, and along the Ellen Ware Road. High-speed internet service enables the presence of low impact professional services. As internet service technology evolves, professional services will depend on access to the new standards.

***Economic Recommendations:***

1. Support town-wide access to high-speed internet.
2. Support agricultural “current use” through distribution of information on available programs and grants.
3. Explore possible tax stabilization for agricultural lands.
4. Support Brookline’s self-employed individuals and small businesses access to local, regional and state-wide resources providing business growth strategies, business plans, operational advice, financial advice, management expertise, grant resources and low-interest sources of capital while encouraging recipients to be mindful of Town Plan Goals.

### III. HOUSING

#### A. HOUSING TYPES

Brookline is primarily a residential community of single-family detached homes. **Table 1** provides a detailed picture of the types of housing currently in Brookline.

<b>Table 1: HOUSING TYPES AVAILABLE IN BROOKLINE, 2006-2010 estimates</b>	
Housing	Count / Percent
1 unit detached structure	236 / 84.3%
1 unit attached structure	2 / 0.7%
2 units in a structure	11 / 3.9%
3-9 units in a structure	0
10 or more units in a structure	0
Mobile homes	31
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>280</b>
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey, Selected Housing Characteristics	

#### B. HOUSING OCCUPANCY

According to the 2010 Census, Brookline had a total of 206 households in 2010, up from 186 in 2000. The average household size has remained the same, around 2.57 persons per household during those same years. **Table 2** describes the occupancy of Brookline's housing as well as trends in total number of housing units from 2000-2010.

Unit Type	2000	2006-2010	2010 Type as		
			% of Total	1990-2000	2000-2010
Owner Occupied	164	171	58%	19%	4%
Renter Occupied	22	35	12%	0%	59%
Vacant, Seasonal	76	76	26%	-24%	0%
Vacant, Not Seasonal	12	12	4%	50%	0%
<b>Total Units</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>7.2%</b>
Source: 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, General Housing Characteristics					

### C. AGE OF HOUSING

As shown in Table 3, approximately half of Brookline's housing stock was built after 1969. Home construction has fluctuated over the years, but the Town never experienced a dramatic decrease or decrease in home construction activity. Thirty-three new houses have been built since 2000, accounting for 11.7 percent of the Town's houses.

<b>Table 3: AGE OF HOUSING IN BROOKLINE 5-Year Estimates</b>		
Year Built	Number of Houses	Percentage
prior to 1939	65	23.5
1940-1959	47	16.8
1960-1969	31	11.1
1970-1979	52	18.6
1980-1989	43	15.5
1990-1999	9	3.2
2000-2004	28	10.0
2005 or later	5	1.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey, Selected Housing Characteristics, 5-Year Estimates

#### ***Housing Policies:***

1. Support a diversity of housing that meets the various needs of household types and income groups in Brookline.
2. Support housing which meets the needs of special groups such as the elderly and handicapped.
3. Assure that housing development is coordinated with the adequate provision of public services, facilities and utilities. Because seasonal/vacation homes are often converted to permanent homes, permanent and seasonal/vacation homes shall be evaluated by the same standards.
4. Continue to enforce State "Waste Water System and Potable Water Supply Rule" in order to minimize pollution of Brookline's soils and water resources, and to reduce any public health problems resulting from residential development. All housing development, whether permanent or seasonal/vacation should occur on sites capable of maintaining permanently functioning on-site sewage and water facilities.

***Housing Recommendations:***

1. Continue to monitor and assess the housing needs of residents and continue to promote the housing rehabilitation program for moderate to low income Town residents.
2. Encourage property compliance with Water and Septic Regulations as appropriate through support of local and state water and septic/sewage officers.
3. Support development of housing for elderly residents and people with disabilities in the West River Valley such as Valley Cares, associated with Grace Cottage Hospital in Townshend.

## **IV. ENERGY**

### **A. CONVENTIONAL SOURCES**

Conventional sources of energy are readily available in the town. Electric service comes from Green Mountain Power. Electricity currently abundant for the New England area and Brookline's needs are adequately served. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, General Housing Characteristics, the primary sources for home heating in Brookline are wood, fuel oil, propane, and kerosene. Wood accounted for 44.3% and fuel oil, propane, and kerosene accounted for 39.9%. Heating oil and propane are available from dealers in Brattleboro, Bellows Falls, Jamaica, Keene and Greenfield. The availability of both of these fuels is adequate.

### **B. CONSERVATION OF ENERGY**

Energy production and use has become a major issue in the viability of our economy as well as a major environmental issue in recent years. Energy usage has traditionally increased with economic and population growth. One of the challenges we face is to continue to maintain our standard of living and quality of life without sacrificing environmental quality for future generations. Part of our response to this challenge lies in our ability to manage limited energy resources wisely. New England currently has some of the highest energy costs in the nation. To keep costs down, we utilize this resource judiciously. Our energy use comes with our lifestyle, from our homes, businesses, schools and transportation. Energy conservation does not have to mean a sacrifice in quality of lifestyle. It may mean more efficient use of energy through cost consciousness and it may mean the encouragement of more efficient power devices.

### **C. ALTERNATIVE SOURCES**

Cord wood is available from several suppliers in Town and in neighboring communities. Many Town residents have wood stoves and wood boilers as primary or secondary heating sources. Brookline's abundant forest land makes this a plentiful alternative energy source for Town residents.

Of the sources available in Brookline, solar and wind energy offers the greatest untapped, long-term energy. Solar energy can be used in a number of different ways, but the most likely for widespread use is passive solar heating.

Wind energy is a clean and renewable resource. In Vermont, there has been development of wind energy systems at both the residential level and at the commercial level. Commercial wind development will most likely be along ridgelines or mountaintops with elevations of 2000-3500 feet. The challenge for communities will be to determine which ridgelines and hillsides are best suited for the development of a wind energy facility. These will most likely be ridgelines that are not scenic focal points or in the foreground of predominantly natural views and landscapes. It is important that wind turbines do not compete with important scenic views, focal points or bird migration routes.

It is helpful to think of potential commercial wind energy facilities as either “least suitable or sensitive,” “potentially suitable,” or “most suitable.” Least suitable sites are those that have one, all, or a combination of traits that make the site poorly suited for the development of a wind energy facility. These include: areas of important plant and Wildlife habitats, ridgelines with prominent and highly visible peaks, along scenic corridors, recreation areas, designated natural areas or wilderness areas.

### ***Energy Policies***

1. Encourage new developments, including new public buildings, which are planned and designed so as to minimize demands on limited and/or costly energy resources, and to encourage practical conservation measures where applicable.
2. Support recycling efforts to increase the percentage of material recycled.
3. Residential connection of solar and or wind energy systems to the electric power grid under “net-metering” shall not be considered a commercial use.

### ***Energy Recommendations:***

1. Encourage the use of less energy intensive means of transportation including public transportation, carpools and non motorized transportation.

## V. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

### A. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Providing quality educational opportunities for its residents is one of the most important services of the Town of Brookline. The residents have a strong tradition of providing support for the school system. Maintaining and improving the educational opportunities is vital to the development of the Town and is consistent with the qualities desired for the Town.

Children in grades K-6 attend the NewBrook Elementary School located in Newfane, VT. Children in grades 7-12 attend Leland & Gray Union High School in Townshend, Vermont. Access to a broad spectrum of adult educational opportunities, including online classes, is also available at the Windham Regional Career Center, Vermont Adult Learning, Community College of Vermont, Norwich University and on Interactive TV all located in Brattleboro, Vermont. Since November of 2003, the Brookline Community Group has offered a mini-grant program in support of continuing education for town residents, with monies raised in local special events fundraising. LAFTER, an afterschool educational program, is available for children K-12. LAFTER is currently in its second year of a federally funded grant.

#### ***Educational Policies:***

1. Support the School Directors in developing and maintaining the highest quality educational opportunities possible consistent with the financial capabilities of the community.
2. Encourage the Brookline Community to provide leadership for ensuring that the best opportunities exist for Leland & Gray students from Brookline through representation on the Leland & Gray School Board.
3. Encourage the maximum use of the school facilities by community groups for educational, recreational and other uses.
4. Encourage the utilization of the community's resources - people, businesses, farms, etc. in the day to day educational process.

#### ***Educational Recommendations:***

1. Continually monitor the number of elementary school age children to ensure adequate facilities are available.
2. Develop alternatives that can be implemented in the event of overcrowding or under-enrollment at NewBrook Elementary School and Leland & Gray High School.
3. Support early education opportunities for pre-school age children.
4. Increase after school opportunities such as Big Brother Big Sister, Boy Scouts, 4-H and other after school sponsored activities.
5. Support the continuation of the Brookline Community Group mini-grant program for continuing education.
6. Encourage active participation in local school boards.

## **B. CHILD CARE**

In 2010, 43.5% of the Brookline families had related children under the age of 18. 31.0% of Brookline households had related children under 18 years of age.

According to Windham County Vermont Child Care Needs Assessment, compared to the national average, Vermont has a larger percentage of women in the workforce. If these trends continue it is possible that there will be an increase in the number of families needing child care.

As of June 2012, there is a registered family child care facility at the former Brookline Elementary School Building according to the Vermont Department for Children and Families. Sunny Lane Daycare provides an infant program, pre-school program and after-school program. Child care facilities are found in all of the towns that surround Brookline, as well as in the two regional centers of Brattleboro and Rockingham.

### ***Child Care Policies:***

Encourage the provision of quality childcare services and facilities to meet the needs of the area residents, workforce, and employers.  
Support town and regional efforts to increase the availability and affordability of child care.

### ***Child Care Recommendations:***

1. Maintain an inventory of all child care programs in the town and their capacity.
2. Conduct a child care needs assessment to determine the supply and demand for child care in Brookline.

## **C. TRANSPORTATION**

Many Brookline residents commute to surrounding towns for employment, leisure and other activities. Private transportation is primarily the sole means of commuting and is likely to remain so in the foreseeable future. Connecticut River Transportation and other taxi type services are available. The town's roadways consist of two primary roads, Grassy Brook Road and Hill Road. The secondary roads include Putney Mountain Road, Whitney Hill Road, Ellen Ware Road, Kirsch Road, Parker Road, Greer Road and Harris Hill Road.

The State of Vermont has developed a classification system for the purposes of Town Highway Mapping and Inventories, maintenance schedules and State Aid. These design classifications are defined in Section 302 of VSA 19 as:

### Classifications of Town Highways

Class 1: Those town highways which form the extension of a state highway route and which carry a state highway route number.

Class 2: Those town highways selected as the most important highways in each town. As far as practicable they shall be selected with the purposes of securing

trunk lines of improved highways from town to town and to places which by their nature have more than a normal amount of traffic.

Class 3: All traveled town highways other than class 1 or 2 highways. The minimum standards for Class 3 highways are a highway negotiable under normal conditions all seasons of the year by a standard manufactured pleasure car. A highway not meeting this standard be classified as a provisional Class 3 highway if within five years of the determination, it will meet all Class 3 highway standards.

Class 4: All other town highways.

State Highways funding rates differ per road class. The rate is applied to the number of miles of roadway in each of the classes 1-3, with Class 1 receiving the highest funding rate per mile.

BROOKLINE TOWN HIGHWAYS MILEAGE BY CLASS				
CLASS 1	CLASS 2	CLASS 3	CLASS 4	TOTAL
0.00	4.95	12.07	2.12	19.14

#### The Green Iron Bridge

The maintenance and repair of bridges, particularly the Brookline/Newfane "Green Iron" Bridge across the West River, is an important transportation issue for the Town. This bridge is critical to the Town, as it provides the main access to Brookline – especially for fire and police protection. The cost of maintaining this bridge has a long and interesting history. In 1832, the County Court mandated that the Towns of Putney (4/20), Westminster (2/20), Newfane (7/20) and Brookline (7/20) share in the cost of its maintenance in the noted portions. In 1886, a law was passed that states that no town is responsible to pay toward a bridge which is wholly in another town. The bridge is located in both Newfane and Brookline. Therefore, according to this law, the towns of Westminster and Putney have been resolved of their portion of upkeep costs.

In August of 1999, the citizens of Brookline voted by Australian ballot to renovate the historic Green Iron Bridge. The vote was 110 in favor of the reconstruction, with 87 opposed. Ninety percent of the reconstruction costs will be paid by the State of Vermont. The bridge reconstruction project began in November of 2003. The bridge reopened for traffic in December of 2004, and completed in the summer of 2005.

There is one Legal Trail in Town, The Windmill Hill Trail, which goes from Grassy Brook Road to Westminster (formerly known as Windmill Hill Road). Brookline also has a legal access trail known as the Cascade trail. A Legal Trail is defined as: a public right-of-way which is not a highway and which:

(a) previously was designated town highway having the same width as the designated town highway, or a lesser width if so designated; or

(b) a new public right-of-way laid out as a trail by the Selectboard for the purpose of providing access to abutting properties for recreational use. Nothing in this section shall be deemed to independently authorize the condemnation of land for

recreation purposes or to affect the authority of the Selectboard to reasonably regulate the uses of recreational trails. VSA 19 S.301 (8)

The town is not responsible for the upkeep of a legal trail, according to State Statutes.

**Transportation *Policies:***

1. Assure that Brookline's roads, bridges and culverts are adequately maintained in order to accommodate the increasing amount of automobile, truck and bus traffic associated with the increasing residential housing and small business development in the town and surrounding towns.
2. Assure that construction of new development roads is carried out in conformance with Town road specifications as deemed necessary.
3. Coordinate with the Agency of Transportation in planning for road improvements along Grassy Brook Road to ensure adequate road capacities without damage to the rural residential environment of the Town.
4. Assure that new construction or major reconstruction of roads when feasible, include shoulders for bicycles and pedestrians or other non-motorized means of transportation in order to insure the safety of the Town's residents and visitors.
5. Development and major construction shall not result in a financial burden on the Town's existing budget for roads, bridges, culverts and equipment.
6. Consider Town roads which are currently used as trails, or may be changed to trail status, available to the public for cross-country skiing, hiking or other recreational purposes. Consider improving and maintaining these trails for recreational use.
7. Traffic flow through Brookline is an increasing concern. It is the policy of Brookline to provide for the smooth and safe flow of traffic within the Town, consistent with the rural residential nature of the Town.

**Transportation *Recommendations:***

1. Review and update all road and bridge condition status annually to reflect the priority of needed improvements. Make recommendations for short and long-term improvements and implement projects on a consistent basis, including the Green Iron Bridge.
2. Continue to update and implement the budget for road and bridge improvements and for road equipment.
3. maintain an inventory Class 4 Roads, Pent Roads and trails. Determine their suitability for town recreational trail use.
4. Financially support community services which provide transportation to the elderly and physically handicapped population.
5. Review all development for its impact on current roadways and future transportation needs and to ensure that the Town's minimum road specifications for construction of new roads are adhered to.
6. Work with the Windham Regional Commission and neighboring towns to develop a regional transportation plan which will serve the needs of Brookline residents.
7. Assess road conditions and traffic patterns and signage to improve safety.

**D.POLICE PROTECTION**

The police protection in Brookline is provided by the Sheriff's Department in 2012. The Vermont State Police will be involved in any major crime. Adequate police protection is a

significant concern for residents. Police protection is contracted by the Selectboard annually.

***Police Protection Policies:***

1. The Selectboard shall annually assess the needs of the town and procure services to meet the assessment.
2. Assure that the Town's speed limit ordinance is strictly enforced to ensure public safety.

***Police Protection Recommendations:***

1. Encourage residents to be alert to unusual or unfamiliar events or people and to exhibit the neighborly concern which is currently prevalent throughout the Town. Formation of a local watch program would be advantageous.
2. Selectboard to meet with the Vermont State Police and or Windham County Sheriff Department as needed.

**E. FIRE PROTECTION**

Brookline receives its fire protection from the NewBrook Volunteer Fire Department on Route 30, north of Newfane Village. Many of the volunteer firefighters are Brookline residents.

***Fire Protection Policy:***

1. Brookline shall encourage and assist the NewBrook Volunteer Fire Department through financial support.

***Fire Protection Recommendations;***

1. Recognizing the need for the value of regional cooperation among towns with respect to fire protection, Brookline encourages the Fire Department to maintain its membership in the Southwestern New Hampshire Mutual Aid System or similar cooperative bodies, and to take all possible steps to strengthen cooperation among fire departments in surrounding towns.
2. Child and elderly alert stickers shall be made available at the NewBrook Fire Department upon request.

**F. EMERGENCY PLANNING AND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS**

The Town of Brookline supports emergency planning and disaster preparedness. Planning and preparedness may help reduce the risk to life and health, the damage to public and private property and the environmental damage that often occurs as a result of a disaster. Also, this encourages the Town to prepare calmly and realistically for likely emergencies; to know the location of resources and equipment that will be needed; to inform residents of the potential dangers and the ways to avoid these potential dangers; and to quickly arrange for help when it is needed.

The Federal Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act has a requirement that when certain quantities of hazardous materials are stored at a facility, they must be reported to state and local officials. Currently, there are no sites in Brookline on the State's Hazardous Materials list.

In 2008, Brookline adopted Flood Hazard Bylaw, enabling the town to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The NFIP is a Federal program enabling property owners in participating communities to purchase insurance protection against losses from flooding. This insurance is designed to provide an insurance alternative to disaster assistance to meet the escalating costs of repairing damage to buildings and their contents caused by floods. Participation in the NFIP is based on an agreement between the Town and the Federal Government that states if a community will adopt and enforce a floodplain management ordinance to reduce future flood risks to new construction in Special Flood Hazard Areas, the Federal Government will make flood insurance available within the community as a financial protection against flood losses.

Brookline has adopted town road and bridge standards and has conducted a culvert inventory. Many towns in the Windham Region have implemented a Road Surface Management System (RSMS), which is a program for inventorying roads and that includes costing, prioritization, and work tracking components for road repairs. Since Brookline does not have many paved roads, this system may not be necessary. However, a system of road inventorying might be useful for RSMS planning purposes.

#### ***Emergency Planning Policies:***

1. Require that all new public and private roads and driveways be properly constructed so do not contribute to the damage of Town roads from run-off.
2. Continue improving existing roads, culverts and bridges to carry at least the 25-year storm event without major damage.
3. Develop and periodically review emergency evacuation plans.
4. Require that the Town annually update the Basic Emergency Operations Plan
5. Require that all development can be accessed by public safety response agencies
6. Continue to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program.
7. Review and update Material Safety Data Sheets in all Brookline municipal buildings for compliance with the Federal Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act.
8. Adopt an all hazards pre-disaster mitigation plan.
9. Adopt the regional multi-jurisdictional pre-disaster mitigation plan for the town and school.

#### ***Emergency Planning Recommendations:***

1. Work to identify at-risk populations.
2. Continue conducting a road surface inventory.
3. Work with State and local emergency preparedness organizations.

## **G. HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH, AND EMERGENCY SERVICES**

The Town of Brookline currently depends on organizations located in surrounding towns in the West River Valley, and in the southeastern Vermont region for health, mental health and emergency services.

### Health

Otis Health Care Center – including Grace Cottage Hospital, Valley Health Council; Wolff Outpatient Building, Valley Cares: Independent and Assisted Living and Messenger Valley Pharmacy are located in Townshend. These facilities provide emergency room; inpatient and outpatient medical services; physical, occupational and speech therapy; general psychiatry; pharmacy, homemaker and transportation services; adult day services; meals on wheels and up to level three residential home care. Many Brookline residents also receive health services from Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, Cheshire Medical in Keene, NH and Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, NH.

### Mental Health

Health Care & Rehabilitation Services of Southeastern Vermont (HCRS) is a private, non-profit community mental health center serving residents of Windham and Windsor counties. HCRS services include emergency services, outpatient mental health and substance abuse services, developmental services and children's programs.

Youth Services funds, directs and operates the Big Brother Big Sister program for the area in addition to offering programs handling Substance Abuse Prevention, Restorative Justice, Youth and Parenting Program, Youth Development Program to include Case Management Services, Crisis Calls, Mediation, Youth Development and Summer Employment. Youth Services also offers Street Outreach Programs and Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs.

### Emergency Services

Emergency rescue services are provided by NewBrook Fire Department Rescue Squad; Rescue, Inc in Brattleboro and in Townshend. The Town of Brookline has been served by the statewide Enhanced 9-1-1 system for fire, police and medical emergencies since the system became operational on November 17, 1998.

In the event of an emergency, it is helpful for emergency responders to know if someone with a disability is located at the place where an emergency is reported. The State of Vermont has in place two systems in which residents can provide disability information for first responders. The first system is through Vermont E-911. An application for disability designation can be filled out and returned to Fairpoint New England. The E-911 call taker will be alerted to a disability in the household. The following disability designations are available: life support system, blind, mobility impaired, deaf and hard of hearing, teletypewriter, speech impaired, or developmentally disabled. The second program for is filled out and returned to the NewBrook Fire Station. This card covers disabilities and special needs that would need to be attended to in the event of a public emergency notification is in conjunction with Vermont Emergency Management. A special needs card (i.e. no transportation available, medically prescribed diet, difficulty closing doors, windows, and vents).

Health, Mental Health, and Emergency Services Policy:

1. Continue to support and utilize regional and local facilities, services and organizations and area hospitals.

*Health, Mental Health, and Emergency Services Recommendations:*

1. Monitor health and emergency service needs in the community to ensure that adequate services are available to Town residents.
2. Make available to the public forms for the disability designation and special needs cards.
3. Increase community education in regards to emergency services.

## **H. SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL**

Solid waste in Brookline is managed in cooperation with the Windham Solid Waste Management District (WSWMD), a special purpose municipality that was established in 1988. The District is overseen by a Board of Supervisors representing its member towns. Membership in the District establishes a guaranteed waste disposal option for the town.

The Windham Solid Waste Management District operates a recycling drop off facility in Brookline. It is located on Grassy Brook Road, south of the Elementary School. The recycling program accommodates mixed paper, cardboard, and containers (including tin, aluminum, glass, and plastic bottles). Solid waste is handled at either the WSWMD Convenience Center located in Brattleboro, or through private companies which provide service throughout the region. Other services that are provided through the WSWMD include Hazardous Waste Collection days and a Swap Shop located in Brattleboro. WSWMD has contracted with Brattleboro Carbon Harvest to reduce carbon emissions.

***Solid Waste Disposal Policies:***

1. Retain membership in the Windham Solid Waste Management District and support the District's efforts to solve solid waste problems in the district.
2. Support and encourage local recycling efforts.
3. Eliminate garbage from being deposited in the containers.

***Solid Waste Disposal Recommendations:***

1. Continue to promote community awareness of recycling procedures and opportunities, and other solid waste issues.
2. Post notice of public recycling events, Green Up Day, and Hazardous Waste Collection dates.
3. Further inform patrons that the containers are for recyclables only.

## I. TOWN GOVERNMENT

The Brookline Town Office is located at 736 Grassy Brook Road. Elected at the annual Town Meeting in March are a five member Selectboard, Town Clerk, Town Treasurer, Tax Collector, three Auditors and three Listers. These elected officials together with appointed officials, such as the Planning Commission, are responsible for conducting the Town's business throughout the year. Also elected are three (3) School Directors for the Brookline / Newfane joint school board. (1) School Director for Leland and Gray Union High School. The policies and budget of the Town are determined at Town Meeting. As Brookline continues to grow, administration of the Town is becoming increasingly complex and time consuming.

Brookline's website is <http://www.brooklinevt.com>. Government news updates can be found here.

### ***Town Government Policies:***

1. All possible steps should be taken to encourage the maximum participation of Brookline residents and organizations in meeting the needs of the Town.
2. The Town should encourage adequate administration and compliance with the provisions of the Town Plan and any future adopted regulations by appropriations to the budget and by adequate permit fees.
3. Publicize meetings of Town boards and committees through all appropriate media outlets including the newspaper, community website, and email lists.

### ***Town Government Recommendation:***

1. Town residents should periodically review the size and scope of Town Government to ensure that the administrative needs of the Town are being met.

## J. TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Access to wireless communications is becoming more important. The high-speed exchange of information has dramatically changed the methods of communication. . Over time, as wireless communication companies look to expand their services, cellular towers may be erected in the town. Currently, no telecommunication towers are located in Brookline. Brookline does have a Telecommunications Ordinance in effect; however the Select board will review the erection of cell towers on a case by case basis

Due to the increase use of wireless communication, the construction of telecommunication towers is an issue that towns are addressing more often. Many towns now realize the potential for adverse impacts caused by the placement of towers and related infrastructure, and seek the cooperation of all parties in resolving these concerns. The Town of Brookline has concerns about the aesthetic and environmental impacts of tower facilities.

High speed internet access is available in nearly all of Brookline. One of the benefits of high speed internet service is that it can make it easier for people to work from their homes.

***Telecommunications Policies:***

1. The Town should enable economic opportunities through the use of telecommunications and support the expansion of such technologies and networks into Brookline when such facilities do not have undue adverse environmental or aesthetic impacts
2. Discourage location of telecommunication facilities and towers on regionally prominent physical features and landscapes.
3. Minimize the proliferation of towers and dishes by promoting consolidated communication facilities.
4. Pursue cell phone service for all areas of the Town.

***Telecommunications Recommendation:***

1. Review the Telecommunication Ordinance as new model ordinances become available and update the Ordinance as appropriate.

## VI. NATURAL RESOURCES

### A. WATER RESOURCES: CONSERVATION AND USE

Brookline, due to its topography and hydrology, and low levels of development patterns, has excellent groundwater and surface water quality. Surface water in the town is an aesthetic centerpiece, since the town contours the Grassy Brook throughout its length; and the West River forms the southwestern boundary. It is important to the mental and physical health of the town residents to tenaciously protect this high quality resource. Intense development along some of the other tributaries to the West River has resulted in widely known surface water quality problems. The following surface water features are considered important for protection:

- **Shorelands** - The lands adjacent to surface waters, when left in their natural, vegetated state, are important for maintaining water quality, providing wildlife habitat; and reducing soil erosion.
- **Wetlands** - Those areas that are inundated by surface or groundwater with a frequency sufficient to support vegetation or aquatic life that depend on saturated soils for growth and reproduction. Such areas include, but are not limited to, marshes, swamps, sloughs, potholes, fens, river and lake overflows, mud flats, bogs and ponds, but excluding such areas that grow food or crops in connection with farming activities (VSA 24, Section 4303). Wetland benefits include fish and wildlife habitat, flood and erosion protection, nutrient and pollution filtration, groundwater recharge and sites for educational activities, recreational and scenic enjoyment. Wetlands are identified on the National Wetland Inventory Maps, and the town plan's Natural Resources map.
- **Floodplains** - Certain areas in town are subject to periodic flooding. These areas are identified as within Zone A on the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) and defined as being within the 100 year flood elevation.

Ground water is the primary source of drinking water in Brookline. Both surface water and ground water sources face threats to their water quality. The two main categories of pollution are point source and non-point source pollution. Point sources are those that can be traced to a specific source, such as a pipe or sewer outfall. Non-point sources of pollution are more diffuse in origin. They can include storm water runoff, septic system effluent, snow dumps, road salt, soil erosion, etc. The State of Vermont regulates the construction and use of individual On-Site Sewage Disposal Systems. Brookline currently enforces a Health Ordinance for compliance with State regulations for Septic Systems. Engineered runoff control systems are another way to protect water quality.

The Southeastern Vermont Watershed Association (formerly the West River Watershed Alliance) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection of and

education about the resources of the West River watershed. It works in conjunction with the Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District and the Windham Regional Commission, and was instrumental in the development and approval (June 2008) of the Vt. Agency of Natural Resource's Basin 11 Management Plan. They are currently working to protect and enhance existing natural and cultural resources of the West River Watershed and other nearby waters.

***Water Resources Policies:***

1. Protect ground and surface waters by requiring, to the maximum extent feasible, that development minimize impact on:
  - a. Watersheds of upland streams
  - b. Watersheds characterized by steep slopes and shallow soils
  - c. Areas supplying large amounts of recharge waters to aquifers
  - d. Watersheds of any public water supplies
2. Plan development in order to conserve the Town's water resources and to minimize the cost of waste disposal systems.
3. Provide a water supply sufficient to serve all units within a subdivision, as well as to provide for fire protection.
4. Assure that any new water supply system does not diminish, and any waste disposal system does not contaminate, an existing water supply.
5. Assure that any individual storing, using or transporting hazardous chemicals does so in such a manner so as not to have any adverse effects on streams or sources of water in the Town.
6. Assure watercourses, ponds, and shorelands are retained and maintained in a natural state by maintaining an undisturbed buffer of vegetation along the watercourse.
7. Significant wetlands should be protected from development by maintaining an undisturbed, naturally vegetated buffer strip around the wetland edge sufficient to ensure the integrity of the wetland.
8. Support surface water classification and management strategies which are consistent with town and regional planning objectives for the affected watershed, and which will also effectively maintain or enhance existing water quality.

***Water Resources Recommendations:***

1. Support state efforts to collect data for the protection of all ground and surface waters.
2. Assess any pollution problems arising from the presence of septic systems. Care must be taken in permitting new development in order to protect the Town's water supply.
3. Work with state, regional and local efforts to inventory and map aquifer recharge areas and wetlands.
4. Investigate the possibility of developing a "Brook Watch" Program through the NewBrook Elementary School and community to monitor pollution in the water ways,
5. Work cooperatively with neighboring towns and other groups such as the Southeastern Vermont Watershed Alliance to educate the public about threats to surface water resources and best management practices that reduce human

impact, and work to remediate and restore impaired, eroded, or polluted surface water resources.

## **B. FLOOD HAZARD AREAS**

A flood hazard area may be defined as the land areas adjacent to rivers and streams that are periodically inundated during periods of high surface water runoff. The Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973 states that towns regulate development in designated flood areas and that property owners in flood plain areas purchase flood insurance. Should the community or property owners fail to meet these requirements, any federal and federally related financial assistance for buildings in the flood plain will be unavailable to either the community or property owners.

In the summer of 2008, the Selectboard approved the Brookline Flood Hazard Bylaw. According to the Flood Insurance Rate Maps, revised 2008, the Town does have lands which are considered FEMA-designated Special Flood Hazard Areas. Lands located along the West River and along the Grassy Brook from the West River to Grassy Brook Road have not experienced significant flooding since the flood control dams on the West River were built in the 1960's. However, this does not mean that there is no chance of flooding in these areas in the future. Floodplains often contain primary agricultural soils, as is the case in Brookline, and can provide important water storage areas in case of flooding.

### ***Flood Hazard Areas Policies:***

1. Assure that lands along the Grassy Brook and West River are devoted to agricultural and open space uses whenever feasible.
2. Limit development within the Special Flood Hazard Areas, as identified on the Digital Flood Hazard Plan, subject to flooding to agricultural and open space use.
3. Periodically review the Special Flood Hazard Areas for compliance with the Flood Hazard Bylaw as required by law in order to maintain eligibility in the National Flood Insurance Program.

## **C. FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES**

The following general habitats have been identified in Brookline:

1. **Upland habitats** - include forested areas on steep slopes or coniferous or mixed forests which provide substantial winter cover for a variety of wildlife. Areas known to provide winter shelter and browse for deer and other wildlife are particularly important. As wildlife habitats are constantly changing, current information as to habitat locations can be obtained from the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife. Activities which can destroy or greatly diminish capacities of wildlife habitats include housing, recreational and industrial development and highway construction.

2. **Water habitats** - include small ponds and watercourses which provide the conditions necessary for healthy fish life, and may be attractive to a variety of migratory waterfowl.
3. **Shoreland habitats** - include shoreline areas which are undeveloped and are otherwise attractive to a variety of amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals.
4. **Wetland habitats** - include wetlands which are important for a wide variety of song birds, game birds and other wildlife including beaver.

The Vermont Natural Heritage Program has identified and mapped seven specific areas in Brookline which are known to have rare species and state significant natural communities. The species and communities which are found in these areas are:

- the Brook Floater, a state threatened mussel;
- the Three Bird Orchid, a state endangered upland plant;
- the Tubercled Orchid, a state threatened plant found along shorelands;
- the RiverWeed, a rare aquatic plant;
- the Barbed-bristle Bulrush, a federal and state endangered plant;
- Canada Burnet, a rare plant found in wet areas;
- Dwarf Bilberry, a rare plant found in dry habitats;
- Massachusetts Fern, a rare fern found in bogs and swamps;
- Tapertip Rush, a rare plant found in wet areas;
- the Rivershore Grassland Community and the Bivalve Community, both are significant natural communities.

***Fish and Wildlife Resources Policies:***

1. Plan development to minimize impact upon necessary fish and wildlife habitat.
2. Minimize fragmentation of large blocks of necessary wildlife habitat and maintain connectivity between habitat blocks as corridors for wildlife migration.
3. Habitats of threatened, endangered and economically significant species shall be identified and protected.

***Fish and Wildlife Resources Recommendations:***

1. Work with area residents with specific knowledge of the community, wildlife habitats and natural areas, and the State District Wildlife and Fisheries Biologists and the Vermont Heritage Program to better identify and map significant wildlife habitats in the Town.
2. Conduct a Natural Resources Inventory to identify important lands for protection and to strategize means of protection (i.e. conservation easements, purchase of development right, and land trusts).

**D. SOILS AND TOPOGRAPHY**

Soils are the most important determinate of the land's development capability, especially in areas with no municipal underground infrastructure. A soil's depth to water table, susceptibility to flooding, depth to bedrock, stone content, and permeability present potential constraints to the construction of roads, buildings, and septic systems. Generally, the moderate and well-suited soils are found to the east and along Grassy Brook Road with some additional areas along Putney Mountain Road and Bennett Road. Concentrations of soils that are not suited to support septic systems are found along the ridgeline of Putney Mountain and at other higher elevations in Town.

Topography can be described in terms of elevation and slope. Elevations range from 370 feet to 1683 feet in Brookline. Although elevation alone does not constrain development, higher elevations tend to coincide with thinner soils and steeper slopes. The slope of the land is an important determinant of development capability. Slopes of less than 8 percent are generally most suitable for building. The erosion potential of such slightly sloping land is low, its ability to absorb runoff is high, and soils are usually of adequate depth and composition for septic systems. Exceptions are extremely flat areas, some of which may be classified as wetlands, where drainage is poor. As slopes increase, the suitability of the land for development decreases. In areas of steep slopes, the velocity of runoff, and therefore the potential for erosion, increases. The ability of the soil to filter septic leachate is decreased. Overcoming site constraints becomes increasingly costly. Slopes of 15 to 25% present significant constraints to development and slopes exceeding 25% present severe constraints and should be avoided.

***Soil and Topography Policies:***

1. Avoid development in areas dominated by slopes greater than 25 percent.
2. Minimize areas of earth disturbance, grading, and clearing of vegetation on slopes over 15 percent.
3. Land clearing, grading, and filling practices shall minimize erosion and sedimentation into streams, wetlands and other waters.

**E. AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST RESOURCES**

Primary agricultural soils are those which have high potential for growing food or forage crops, and are sufficiently well drained and fertile or are highly responsive to the use of fertilizer. Primary agricultural soils are on lands with less than 15% average slope and on lands of a size capable of supporting or contributing to an economical agricultural operation. Most of the primary agricultural soils in Brookline are located in the valley areas. Forest and secondary agricultural soils are on the remaining undeveloped lands of the Town and have significant potential for forestry or agricultural. These soils are often well suited for commercial forestry, pasturage or specialized farming. Brookline has a significant amount of high quality woodland soil.

As of 2011, there are approximately 3267 acres of land (nearly 40% of the total land area) in Brookline enrolled in the Use Value Appraisal Program. Over 90% of the land in the Program is forested. The remainder is classified as agricultural structures

and non-productive forest. The Use Value Appraisal Program, also commonly known as Current Use, is an effective way to provide tax relief to landowners who, in exchange, agree not to develop their land and to manage their land in accordance with a carefully prepared plan. A parcel of land in the program must be a minimum of 25 acres, except in the circumstance of a high yielding agricultural use.

***Agricultural and Forest Resources Policies:***

1. Help to preserve and maintain farms, agricultural land and related agricultural services required to ensure a viable agricultural community, i.e. by supporting current use program.
2. Encourage the wise use of forest land for wood products, maple syrup, recreation, wildlife habitat and scenery
3. Construction or extension of public services and utilities by the Town (e.g. roads, recreation areas), state (highways) and private companies (energy generation or transmission distribution facilities) shall be permitted only where such construction or extension will not discourage agricultural activities or will be compatible with important agricultural land and in keeping with the aesthetics of the area.
4. Timber harvesting should follow a professionally prepared management plan. Timber harvesting practices shall protect surface waters, shorelines, and stream banks, and should minimize adverse short-term and long-term environmental impacts, including those on neighboring properties and Town roads.

***Agricultural and Forest Resources Recommendations:***

1. The Town should support development that will not hinder the productivity of these soils or preclude their future use for agriculture and forestry.
2. Identify and map significant agricultural and forest parcels in Brookline.
3. Continue to inform landowners of the Vermont Current Land Use Value Program.
4. Any non-agricultural development proposed to be located on important agricultural lands should be reviewed to minimize any adverse impact on existing or potential agricultural uses. Clustering structures to minimize impacts to agricultural lands shall be encouraged.
5. Make available a list of qualified consultants who prepare woodland management plans.
6. Support the development of local industries which produce "value added" agricultural and forest products

**F. EARTH AND MINERAL RESOURCES**

The West River Valley was at the north end of the post-glacial Lake Hitchcock, which was an enormous lake extending from Lyme, Connecticut northward up the Connecticut River Valley, which was fed by the melting glaciers of what is now Northern Vermont and New Hampshire. Sediments from water standing in the lake produced deep, rich overburden soil, high in clay content from southern Vermont southward in what is now the Connecticut River Valley. The soils in Brookline are characterized by heavier sediments which settled out first as waters flowed into Lake

Hitchcock. These sediments settled in the river valleys throughout our region and gave us the characteristic well-drained sandy/silty soil plains between mountain tops, ideal for agricultural activities. In many areas excellent well-sorted sand deposits have occurred, ideal for mining for various construction activities.

At this time, gravel and sand deposits represent an important current or potential source for fill, aggregate and road construction materials. Some rock deposits in Brookline exhibit angularity which makes the rock very useful for landscaping and building. As of the writing of this Plan, there are three operational gravel pits in Brookline.

***Earth and Mineral Resources Policies:***

1. Assure that lands with high potential for the extraction of mineral and earth resources not be developed in such a manner that will adversely effect future extraction or processing.
2. Assure that the extraction or processing of minerals and earth resources does not have an adverse environmental impact, resulting in inconvenience to neighboring property owners nor represent a burden on municipal services or facilities.
3. All proposals for earth and mineral extraction shall include a site rehabilitation plan that ensures the possibility of future use of the land and prevents erosion and siltation.

***Earth and Mineral Resources Recommendations:***

1. Work with the Agency of Natural Resources and the Vermont State Geologist to identify and map important earth and mineral resources in the Town.
2. Make available information on acceptable land reclamation practices.

## VII. CULTURAL AND SCENIC RESOURCES

### A. OUTDOOR RECREATION

Town-owned recreational facilities are limited to the school grounds, which include a playground with gym set and swings, small soccer/baseball field and basketball hoops. Various individual and group recreational activities are available in surrounding communities, and their use should be encouraged through public awareness.

Brookline offers a wealth of outdoor opportunities. Hiking, biking, birding, hunting, skiing, and horseback riding are just some of the many activities that Brookline's natural landscape supports. In fact, the 2008 Town Survey showed that over 90% of the respondents favored using the Town's natural resources for wildlife/plant habitat and recreation.

There is one legal town trail (a public right of way that is not a town highway) in Brookline, The Windmill Hill Trail, that is located near the intersection of Grassy Brook Road and Parker Road. This legal town trail has been incorporated into Putney Mountain Association's (PMA) trail system and gives residents and visitors access to the ridge and summit from town. At the North end of Brookline there is one legal access trail, The Cascade Trail. One of the most visited sites along Putney Mountain, the summit, is located within the town borders, and is accessible from the PMA's trail system. To view maps of the trail system, visit [www.windmillhillpinnacle.org](http://www.windmillhillpinnacle.org) and [www.putneymountain.org](http://www.putneymountain.org).

#### ***Recreation Resource Recommendations:***

1. Support the Brookline Community Group and request guidelines and recommendations to the Planning Commission and Selectboard, for the development and preservation of recreational areas and facilities within the Town.
2. Encourage non-motorized outdoor recreation uses on Town owned lands.
3. The use and development of land and water should support the availability of outdoor recreational activities including hunting, swimming, fishing, hiking, skiing, snowmobiling, canoeing and boating, horseback riding and other activities.
4. Encourage preservation of large tracts of contiguous land for the continued use of the land for recreation.

### B. HISTORIC SITES

Places of special historic interest located in the Town of Brookline include:

Brookline Round School House (1822): As further discussed in Appendix A, the Round School is a unique historic structure in Brookline that is an integral part of the community's identity. The structure was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. The Round School House received repairs to the attached shed and outhouse in 2009.

Cemeteries: There are six cemeteries in Brookline. Several of these cemeteries do not have official names, but rather are called by the name of the landowner(s) on whose land the cemetery is located or abuts. They are:

- a. Riverside Cemetery
- b. Austin Cemetery
- c. Harwood Cemetery
- d. North Cemetery
- e. Ezequelle Cemetery
- f. Bennett/Kingsbury Cemetery

Baptist Church (1836): The Baptist Church, now known as the Historic Brookline Church, was organized in 1785 and the present building, located at 632 Grassy Brook Road, was erected in 1836 at a cost of \$1700. The Historic Brookline Church Preservation Initiative, Inc is a non-profit, volunteer-supported corporation dedicated to providing a venue for community use and enjoyment by renovating the historic church building.

Old Homes: Several old homes date back to the late eighteenth century, including the building where the original Town Charter was signed in 1794.

Brookline has an historical society. The group has actively been involved with fundraising efforts for the required improvements to the Round School House. In addition, the Historical Society opens the Round School House up to visitors during several weekends throughout the year.

***Cultural Resource Policies:***

1. Assure that lands adjacent to or including areas of historical, educational, cultural, scientific, architectural, or archeological value are used in a manner that will not destroy the value of the site or area.
2. Assure that wherever architecturally and historically significant structures become obsolete for their original use, new and compatible uses are found which will allow them to continue as a visual and cultural asset to the community.
3. Preserve the Round Schoolhouse.
4. Protect historic structures from destruction, incongruous alteration, and the introduction of incongruous elements.

***Cultural Resource Recommendations:***

1. Pursue grants and other funding sources for the preservation of the Round School House, and other historic structures as needed.
2. Support the Brookline Historical Society and its educational programs.
3. Nominate the Historic Brookline Church to the National Register of Historic Places.
4. Protect the stone walls along the roadsides from road operations and maintenance.

**C. SCENIC RESOURCES**

The maintenance of Brookline’s attractive rural environment is of importance to the people of Brookline. The landscape, including the open lands, water bodies, and ridgelines are extremely important to its scenic character. These features should be an important consideration in the planning and design of development so the quality of life in Brookline is maintained.

Putney Mountain ridge provides a scenic backdrop to the Town. Development on the ridge top may have a great visual impact and should be sited and landscaped to minimize incompatibility with the natural landscape. The clearing of land along the ridge top and the lighting of structures along ridgelines have the potential to disrupt the scenic views. The

summit of Putney Mountain is located in Brookline. This is an important view point that is located on land that is conserved by the Putney Mountain Association.

No public roads in Brookline have been designated as scenic under Vermont's 1977 Scenic Highway Law. However, an informal inventory indicates three specific highway locations with particularly significant vistas. The first is the portion of Grassy Brook Road that begins at the Town line with Newfane and winds along the West River to the intersection with Putney Mountain Road. This stretch of road affords a beautiful view of open fields and the river. The second is the portion of Ellen Ware Road that runs along the West River near the Town border with Townshend. This Class III road is a popular area for walking, skiing, and other recreation. The third is a portion of Grassy Brook Road near the Town Offices where there are views across pastureland. Highway construction and maintenance along these roads and site designs for future development of adjacent lands should take into consideration their exceptional scenic qualities.

There are some other significant views within Brookline that are also worthy of preserving in order to protect the rural character of the Town. These include: the land that lies in between Hill Road and Grassy Brook Road and the ridge located in the northwest area of Town which is in the viewshed of the summit of Pinnacle Mountain, another popular hiking area located just over the border in Westminster. All of these areas are highlighted on the Scenic Resources Map.

#### ***Scenic Resource Policies:***

1. The natural and man-made features which contribute to the scenic beauty of Brookline include historic buildings, stone walls, working agricultural lands and farmsteads, waterways and views which should be protected, particularly along Grassy Brook, the West River, and Putney Mountain.
2. Protect the Town appearance through careful siting of all development and camp conversions, so that the sense of a rural Vermont community is maintained.
3. Consider the visual impact of development in relation to the exterior design of buildings, landscaping, and parking. Highly vulnerable landscapes and scenic corridors should be given special consideration.
4. Protect ridgelines and open fields from development that will have undue adverse affect on scenic values.
5. Discourage exterior illumination of prominent physical features and landscapes. Ensure that any such illumination will not significantly reduce the natural appearance of the nighttime landscape, will not be obtrusive in the viewshed, and will not distract unduly from the nighttime horizon or night sky.

#### ***Scenic Resource Recommendations:***

1. Inventory scenic roads and determine the best level of protection (i.e. local scenic road designation, state scenic road designation)
2. Explore non-regulatory protection measures, such as public or private conservation and easements to preserve important scenic areas and views.
3. Work with the Putney Mountain Association and the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association to encourage the preservation of land along the ridgelines of Putney Mountain and Windmill Mountain.

4. Arrange all exterior lighting so that the light source (lamp) is not directly visible from public roads, adjacent residences or distant vantage points. Shield exterior lighting so that source light does not project above the lamp.
5. Encourage siting, design, and access of towers or structures, in all cases, to minimize negative impacts on natural and scenic resources.
6. Maintain the telecommunication ordinance as one means to protect scenic resources. The select board will review future cellular phone towers on a case by case basis.
7. Wind energy turbines should be sited to minimize negative impacts on natural and scenic resources.
8. Coordinate with Putney and Westminster regarding any development that takes place on Putney Mountain or Windmill Ridge.

## VIII. LAND USE PLANNING

### A. EXISTING LAND USE

The Town of Brookline is primarily rural with a variety of land uses. The vast majority of Town land is forested with limited access to the Town's roads. The areas in close proximity or directly accessible from Town roads are primarily developed as residential. The forest lands provide a scenic backdrop for the Town and provide land for the practice of silviculture, game hunting, and recreation. The higher reaches of Brookline's forested hillsides provide shelter and forage for a variety of larger game including bear, moose, and deer. There are development constraints along the eastern portion of Town, specifically along the slopes of Putney Mountain that have, at least for the time being, prevented excessive growth. Putney Mountain Road is not accessible during all seasons. Steep slopes, those greater than 25%, present challenges for siting residences and providing on-site waste disposal. Several large parcels of land have already been conserved through public conservation efforts (Putney Town Forest, Silvio Conte Reserve) and private conservation efforts (Putney Mountain Association and the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association).

The majority of residential areas are developed in a linear pattern along the Town's roads. This is likely due to a variety of factors including:

- The topography of Brookline;
- Availability of residential lots in the Town;
- Location of Brookline within easy commute of Brattleboro, Bellows Falls and other employment centers; and
- Lack of building codes, zoning regulations or other barriers that increase the cost of home construction.

The large parcels of undeveloped land along the hillsides of the Town provide a great scenic resource to the residents, but contrast with the relatively concentrated linear development pattern occurring along the Town roads. This type of development pattern contrasts to the typical New England village pattern, that of a concentrated village center surrounded by open lands. There are areas of concentrated development around the intersection of Grassy Brook Road and Putney Mountain Road, Merrill Drive and Grassy Brook Road and Whitney Hill Road.

Brookline has not experienced any measurable industrial or commercial development. The Town's industries have tended to be small in scale and are generally related to primary residences.

## B. FUTURE LAND USE

The Brookline Town Plan, including the policies in this Future Land Use Plan, is not a regulatory device, except for the possible application in the Act 250 review process. The Plan can also inform, without regulatory authority, the Public Service Board in Section 248 proceedings, i.e. a Certificate of Public Good for telecommunication and power lines. Its implementation will require further definition, adjustment, and clarification as the Town considers how it will choose to reach its objectives, as outlined in the various recommendations presented throughout this Plan. The classification of Brookline's lands into various districts described below is consistent with the Town Plan maps that identify resources, opportunities and limitations for development.

The land use plan described herein is intended to protect Brookline's rural character that has defined the Town for centuries. Additionally, it provides for the protection of the natural resources and scenic areas as well as provides for economic growth. The proposed land use areas represent a vision for the future use and development of lands in Brookline. The delineated areas of use are for general planning and represent ideas, not hard physical boundaries.

Existing land use patterns show the development of two general areas in which a higher density of development is taking place North and Southern ends of town. These areas are relatively flat, have good road access and potentially good septic soils. These factors would indicate that a denser development may be possible in these areas.

As the Town grows and develops, its need for services may also grow. The Town Office, The Brookline School and historic public building, are centrally located and would be a good location for the Town to expand services, social and cultural activities. Most New England towns have an area which is clearly the town center, and keeping services in a central location is more efficient. This area is also relatively flat and easy to access.

The Town Center should be maintained as that of a rural community with high scenic and historic value. Existing structures, including the Town Office and Brookline School Building, should be able to expand or be redeveloped within the context of the character of the surrounding structures. New structures within the Town Center area should be designed to enhance the character of the existing structures and should avoid traffic congestion and difficulties with water supply or sewage disposal. A wide variety of land uses within the Town Center should be allowed in order to support the intended function of this area, which is to provide services for the local community.

### Rural/Residential Lands

These include lands which have already been committed to residential development, are easily accessible from the existing road system, or have the potential to be developed at a moderate density. These areas should accommodate low to moderate densities of mixed use development which is compatible with existing land uses and sensitive to the limitations of the land. Rural land uses such as agriculture, forestry, recreation, should be maintained and encouraged.

Commercial and light industrial uses may be appropriate. However, uses other than residential should be carefully controlled to prevent adverse impacts such as noise, light, and heavy traffic from affecting adjacent properties. Road construction should be carefully planned so as to respect the natural environment and to promote the clustering of houses

on appropriate sites. Long roads, whether public or private, should be designed to serve more than one property.

#### Resource Lands

Resource land areas in the Town of Brookline have special value and should be preserved and protected to the extent possible. Any development which occurs in these areas should be designed to have minimal impact on the resource area. Resource lands include essentially undeveloped forest lands which have limited access to an improved public road, areas with steep slopes, wetlands, scenic areas and agricultural lands.

Use development is to be primarily agriculture and forestry, large lot, low density residential development, and recreational activities. Greater density development may be accomplished if carefully defined design standards, such as clustering, are followed.

#### Conservation Lands

Conservation lands are so designated because of their special and unique value to the public and the region's ecosystem. These lands have high natural, scenic, wildlife, recreation or other resource values, and are not yet committed to development at intensities that reduce the land's value or function. This land use category includes all lands which are currently in conservation by public ownership or have restrictive easements on them. The Conservation area that runs along Putney Mountain is designated by elevation and is characterized by steep slopes with thin soil and ledge outcroppings. Development of these areas would be limited by difficult and/or costly access for road, electricity and emergency services.

While some residential development has already occurred in these areas, it is not encouraged. Any development that occurs in these areas shall be designed to have minimal impact on the special resource values of the area. When evaluating the special resource value of the area, the view from off-site must be taken into account. These areas are more suitable for recreation, forest growth, and wildlife habitat.

#### ***Land Use Policies:***

1. Manage growth and development in a manner that protects Brookline's natural resources, preserves the area's rural character and does not negatively impact municipal facilities and services, or property taxes.
2. Support the retention and acquisition of public or private conservation lands to promote recreation, reforestation, water conservation and suitable forest practices.
3. Require that public utilities and transportation facilities use the same corridors in order to minimize the impact on the environment and to assist desired development patterns.
4. Maintain and encourage agriculture, forestry, open space and recreational land uses.
5. Development shall be limited, restricted, or prohibited on lands where soil conditions and topography may cause failure of waste disposal systems or where development activity may cause pollution or contamination of ground or surface water.
6. To safeguard public investment, lands adjacent to public facilities, services, or lands shall be planned and used in a manner that will not jeopardize or interfere with the public's use or enjoyment of or access to the facility, service or lands. These include but are not limited to the town office building, school, town garage, cemeteries, and the Round School House.
7. Ridge tops are designated to accommodate only very low density development

**Land Use Recommendations:**

1. Adopt a Construction Notification System to inform the Selectboard, Schoolboard, Listers, Health and Officer and Emergency Services of any new construction, alterations to existing buildings or installation of mobile homes This would be used as a method of tracking for the Listers, Schoolboard, Road Commissioner and Emergency Service Providers.
2. Continue to study changes in land uses such as: camp conversions, subdivisions of land, and new development to better understand land use patterns in Town.
3. Encourage voluntary action to ensure the policies of the Land Use section of the Brookline Town Plan are implemented.
4. Encourage the use of existing non-profit land trusts (e.g. Vermont Land Trust) to acquire or hold conservation easements on resource and conservation lands.
5. Encourage participation in Act 250 review process.
6. Encourage participation in the Town planning process by residents and property owners.
7. Encourage the Town to purchase or accept donations of properties that have high public value.

## C. EXPLANATION OF TOWN PLAN MAPS

Appendix II presents various maps of the Town of Brookline prepared by the Windham Regional Commission under the direction of the Brookline Planning Commission. The maps were prepared to show where and how Town Plan policies should influence future land use and development in Brookline. Together with Town Plan policies, these maps will be used by the Planning Commission as a guide for appropriate bylaws and other measures necessary to implement this Plan.

Users of these maps (town officials, other authorities, or private individuals) should take into account their general accuracy and allow for the refinement of data and interpretation, based on more detailed studies of particular sites in question.

### 1. Transportation, Community Facilities and Utility Map

This map identifies the transportation network, utility corridors, location of education facilities, cemeteries, historic structures, and other important community facilities and services in Brookline.

### 2. Natural Resources Map

This map identifies resource areas and sites in Brookline which should be protected from development which degrades or diminishes the natural function or value of the resource. The following resources are mapped: surface water features, deer wintering areas, floodplain areas, and natural heritage areas.

### 3. Earth Resources Map

This map identifies areas in Brookline that contain important earth resources. Areas designated as having agricultural value should be protected as far as possible for future farm use. Sand/gravel deposits are identified because of their importance as current or potential sources for fill, aggregate, and road construction materials. Steep slopes, those areas defined as having a slope of 25% or greater, are also represented on the map. Generally these are areas of shallow soils and rock outcrops which both can present challenges to development.

### 4. Scenic Resources Map

The Scenic Resources Map highlights areas that are discussed in Section VII of this Plan. These are areas that have been designated as having significant local value and that contribute to the visual character of the Town. Maintaining these areas is important to protecting the landscape of Brookline.

### 5. Existing Land Use Map

Existing land use and land cover within the Town of Brookline is depicted on this map. This map provides a generalized snapshot of land use, vegetative cover, and structures throughout the Town. Lands have been classified as agriculture, forest, residential or other built-up, water, wetland, barren, or open land.

6. Future Land Use Map

This map sets forth a land classification system for the Town, which reflects Town Plan policies and presents a generalized picture of how Brookline should develop. The classifications place Brookline lands into Resource Areas, Conservation Areas, more populated areas, and Rural Residential. The map has been formulated to be generally consistent with the maps that show Physical Limitations to Development and the Resource Areas map and should be used in conjunction with them. Further descriptions of the Future Land Use Districts are found in Section VIII of this Plan.

7. Septic Suitability

This map depicts lands that are suitable in various ranges for conventional septic systems and mound systems.

## IX. TOWN PLAN IMPLEMENTATION METHODS

The Plan and its policies are not a regulatory device, except for its possible application to the Act 250 review process. Effective implementation of the Plan requires careful consideration and action by the townspeople, the Selectboard and Planning Commission and other local organizations. Among the many available methods which should be considered are the following:

1. Act 250. Participation in the Act 250 development review process is a significant opportunity to shape large-scale development projects. Act 250 helps insure that development does not have an undue, adverse impact on important environmental resources and community facilities, and is in conformance with local and regional plans. The Town is automatically a party to Act 250 proceedings involving development in the community.
2. Planning Commission Work Program. Many of the Town Plan policies and priorities for action can be accomplished through the activities of the Planning Commission. The Plan can and should be used to form the framework for the Planning Commission's work program for the life of the Plan. Some of these activities include:
  - a. Coordination with neighboring towns – Brookline must take the initiative to work with its neighbors on the issues that cross town borders. This is particularly important with dealing with such issues as transportation, education and land use.
  - b. Identification and mapping of important resource areas – Working with area residents and the State to identify important resource areas will provide the necessary information for resource mapping. This will enable the Town to plan for resource protection.
  - c. Examination of protection measures – On-going examination of existing and innovative regulatory and non-regulatory measures will provide the Town with the tools needed to create a viable protection plan.
  - d. Conduct periodic surveys to assess the changing needs for the Town.
3. Regional Cooperation. Cooperation with the state, neighboring municipalities, regional entities, and the non-profit and private sectors will be absolutely necessary for many of the policies in this plan to be successfully implemented. Pooling resources can make regional solutions more cost efficient and effective. As a small town, Brookline depends on regional coordination for many of the day to day activities of citizens including, but not limited to education, solid waste management, and health and safety services.
4. Land Use Regulations. Zoning bylaws, including flood hazard, shoreland, and wetland regulations, and subdivision regulations should be used to promote the public health and safety, environmental quality and protection of the quality of life.
5. Land Conservation. Acquisition by the Town, State or Federal agencies, or private conservation organizations (e.g. Putney Mountain Association or Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association) in fee simple, by lease, by easements of development rights, or by gift is the most certain methods for protecting and assuring access and enjoyment of valuable recreational and scenic lands. Landowners can also negotiate conservation agreements with organizations such as the Vermont Land Trust, the Nature Conservancy and the Weston Land and Conservation Trust to protect productive agricultural and forestlands, protect wildlife habitat, natural areas, or public recreation lands.

6. Taxation. Vermont's Use Value Appraisal Program encourages long-term agriculture and forestry uses of property through tax incentives. The Program encourages the maintenance of undeveloped land for farming, forestry, and public recreation. The Town may also provide property tax relief for qualifying farm, forest, and open space landowners by adopting local tax stabilization programs to reduce local property tax burden. For general purposes, the assessing and taxing of land shall seek to strengthen the policies spelled out in this Town Plan.

7. Voluntary Action. The following methods would ensure Plan implementation:
- a. Privately agreed restrictive covenants binding on purchases of land;
  - b. Special attention and consideration given by private landowners to the objectives of the Plan and its policies when they decide to build or subdivide;
  - c. Formation of a non-profit conservation land trust to acquire resource lands;
  - d. Participation in the Act 250 review process by abutting landowners; and
  - e. Participation in the town planning process and in organizations concerned with the future of Brookline.

## **X. RELATIONSHIP WITH ADJACENT TOWNS AND COMPATIBILITY WITH OTHER PLANS**

### **A. COMPATIBILITY WITH ADOPTED TOWN PLANS**

Brookline shares borders with Athens, Dummerston, Newfane, Putney, Townshend, and Westminster. Brookline relies directly on its neighbors and the other towns in the Windham Region to provide many of the services that townspeople depend on. Therefore, this plan strives to strengthen the relationships with the neighboring towns, as Brookline shares rivers, roads, solid waste and recreation facilities, as well as education and safety services with its neighbors.

Athens: The Town of Athens does not have a Town Plan as of this printing.

Dummerston (September 2010): Brookline shares its southern border with Dummerston. Dummerston's previous town plan, adopted in August 2004, has expired. The Town is working on a new town plan and anticipates its adoption in 2010. The future land use districts as proposed by both towns are compatible. Both towns recognize the lands along the border as essentially undeveloped and support low density development. Dummerston's future land use and overall policies and recommendations are compatible with Brookline's visions for this area.

Newfane (expired): Newfane is working on a new Town Plan. Brookline shares a border with Newfane on the central to southern western edge of the Town. The West River separates the two towns. Newfane's vision for this area emphasizes the rural and agricultural landscape in the area as well as the protection of water quality of surface waters and the natural communities that are found along the West River. These policies are compatible with Brookline's.

Putney (readopted January 2006 in January 2011): Brookline shares a border with Putney along its southeastern edge, along the ridge of Putney Mountain. The towns have proposed compatible land use districts and uses within those districts. Putney, like Brookline, supports managing the forest by supporting the acquisition of lands by conservation organizations and encouraging the preservation of large tracts of land.

Townshend (March 2011): Brookline shares a border with Townshend along the northwestern edge of Town. Townshend proposes the bordering lands as a Resource district, similar to what Brookline proposes. Townshend advocates for protecting the resources of those areas and does not support the extension of services into the areas. This is compatible with Brookline's intent for this area.

Westminster (September 2007): Brookline shares its northeastern boundary with Westminster. Both Towns have recognized the natural constraints to developing this area and allow for low intensity development that focuses on recreation and forestry uses. Both towns support conservation efforts in these areas as a way to protect the land from fragmentation. Brookline's Town Plan is compatible with Westminster's Town Plan.

### **B. COMPATIBILITY WITH THE REGIONAL PLAN**

The Regional Plan is intended to provide guidelines for planning and coordination of change and development which will, in accordance with present and future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of the region. As proposed, the Planning Commission believes the Brookline Town Plan is compatible with the Windham Regional Plan, which was adopted in October 2006.

# XI. APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### HISTORICAL REPRINT

Permission has been obtained to reprint the following document that was written by Marie and Anna Rink and sold to raise money for the Ladies Benevolent Society on the history of Brookline. The original issue was printed in March 1941 and reprinted in 1994 in honor of the bicentennial. This document is available at the Town office for a nominal fee.

#### **Historical Sketch of BROOKLINE, VERMONT**

by  
Marie and Anna Rink

The Town of Brookline comprises a valley six miles long and two or three miles wide. It originally formed parts of Putney, Athens and Newfane; nearly three miles in length belonged to Athens on the northern side, the southern part to Putney and the southwestern part bordering West River, to Newfane.

It was named Grassy Brook after the little stream which runs the length of the town, starting at Lily Pond and Hedge Hog Hill in Athens. Other smaller brooks flow into it until it reaches the south end of the town where it flows into the West River. Spreading from its banks are large, fertile meadows producing grass and hay for livestock, thus naming the stream, Grassy Brook.

The town is geographically a little to the east and to the north of the society of Windham County and seven miles west of the Connecticut River; about equal distance from Bellows Falls north and Brattleboro south, the township seems to have been separated by natural divisional lines with a range of hills east and west, the highest point in the eastern range being 1,000 feet from the valley below. It is a picturesque valley with its fertile meadows, verdant hillsides and primeval forests, so alluring to the early settlers.

Settlements were made, it is supposed, prior to 1777. Lamach Blandin is believed to have been the first settler. It is said he had the choice of all the lands for twenty cents an acre, and he made his choice in the northern part of town near the farm now owned by Joe De Sautel. Others who made locations about the same time were Timothy Wellman and Jonathan Boynton in the northern end close to Athens. Daniel Bixby, Richard Whitney and Rosebrook Crawford settled on what is now called Whitney Hill and Francis Drake on Bemis Hill. In the southern part of town William Robbins settled on the farm now belonging to Willard Knapp, Daniel Benson, south of this farm and Peter Benson on the Spring farm. Those who settled on the borders of West River were Benjamin Flint on the present William Coleman farm, Ebenezer Ober on what is known as the Ellen Ware place, Christopher Osgood on the Osgood farm (there has always been a "Christopher" on the Osgood farm), Luke B. Osgood on the present West River Camp and James Walden on the present Harry Greenleaf place. From 1780 to 1790 others came in thick and fast, and the population was greater than at any other time in the period of the town's history.

## Move Toward Town Organization

Prior to 1794 the town had no political rights. The citizens were governed by the bordering towns to which they had to go to vote. To seek relief from this they appealed to the Legislature and on October 30, 1794, they obtained equal rights with their neighbors, excepting the right to send a Representative to the Legislature and Conventions.

### First Town Meeting

In 1795 they organized and held their first Town Meeting, at the home now owned by H. Sparling and M. Fait. The following men were chosen for the first town officers:

Moderator_____	Peter Benson
Town Clerk _____	John Waters
Selectmen_____	Peter Benson
	Lamach Blandin
	Jotham Stebbins
Town Treasurer_____	Obijah Moore
Constable and Tax Collector_____	Thomas Walker
Listers _____	Ebenezer Bugbee
	William Hills
	John Blandin
Leather Sealer_____	Benjamin Farmer
Grand Juror _____	Ebenezer Wellman
Tithingmen_____	Benjamin Farmer
	Ebenezer Bugbee
Poundkeeper_____	Ebenezer Harwood
Hayward _____	Samuel Blandin
Highway Surveyors_____	Jonathan Ellenward
	Benjamin Farmer
	Cyrus Whitcomb
	Ebenezer Bugbee
Fence Viewers_____	Delvis Briggs
	Jonathan Ellenward
	Joseph Root
Sealer of Weights and Measures____	William Hills

## Schools and The Sabbath

Until the organization of the town in 1794 there were no schools or churches. Classes were conducted in the dwelling houses and such places as were convenient for all to attend. The Sabbath was observed in much the same way. Those who wished to worship gathered together with due solemnity and the one most gifted would conduct the services.

## Productiveness

From 1794 until 1824 the land had been cleared and the rich soil yielded bountifully. Roads had been laid out and paying business was being carried on. Within this period the town contained: 3 Stores, 2 Hotels, 2 Blacksmith shops, 3 Saw mills, 2 Grist mills, 1 Tannery , 1 Potashery , 1 Doctor and 1 Counselor at Law.

Wood was cut and burned in kilns and from the ashes salts of lye was made; packed in wooden troughs, it was carried on backs over the hill to Putney where it was exchanged for other necessities at the settlement on the Connecticut River.

Samuel Whet is supposed to have owned the first store which was last occupied by Ephraim H. Mason. Anthony Jones, Isaac Palmer and Jones Palmer were other merchants. Jones Palmer failed in 1817, was arrested and put in jail, but broke out and was never again seen in the neighborhood.

The place now owned by C.A. Siepmanns is one of the oldest houses in town. It was originally built and run as a hotel until 1853. Isaac Taft is supposed to have kept the first tavern and also a store. A saw-and-grist mill was owned by William Moore. Jotham Stebbins also built a saw mill at an early date, and a fourth, another saw-and-grist mill was built in the northern part of town by Elijah Davis. In 1868 Lorenzo W. Bush bought the Davis mill and moved it to his own property .Three times the Spring freshets in Grassy Brook washed away his dam, but being a man of energy, he rebuilt.

The first Doctor in town was Dr. William Perry who came from Putney some time prior to 1815. He was a successful practitioner and did much in helping to build the town. He was Grandfather to Arthur C. Wellman, still living here and helping the town as did his grandfather then.

On September 20, 1819, a town meeting was held to annex to Brookline a part of Newfane that was lying on the east side of the West River. This idea had a strange origin. While the men were in Newfane voting the ice went out of the river and since there was no bridge they had to ford the river to get home again. This inconvenience gave birth to the plan of annexation. The idea proved acceptable and on October 7, 1829, it was voted to receive as citizens of Brookline all persons residing in that part of Newfane.

Two catastrophes marked the year 1821, both happening in June. A visitation of grasshoppers almost completely destroyed the crops. Only a few acres of grain were saved by drawing ropes across the fields two or three times a day. But the "June Freshet" of June 20, 1821, is the most memorable day of adversity for Brookline. The morning was beautiful and clear, but dark and foreboding. Terrific peals of thunder were heard and soon the rain came down in torrents. Every bridge was swept away; in many places the roads were completely washed out, and acres and acres of rich soil became beds of stone and gravel. Most of the crops were gone and the people were deeply affected. Since the roads had to be closed, stores were abandoned, some farms were sold and many hillside dwellings were deserted.

## First Representative

The town had now been organized for thirty years without the right to elect a representative. In 1823 a charter was granted giving to Brookline all rights belonging to every town, and in 1824 it elected Benjamin Ormsbee to serve as Representative in the State Legislature. At this meeting a poll of 80 was counted.

## Schools

A school house, supposedly the first one, though the date is not known, was built at the foot of Whitney Hill. There were also two others, one a little north of where the Round School now stands, and the other across the road from where the Olie Coles now live. All three earliest school houses have been torn down and no marks are left to identify where they once were.

In 1821 plans for the Round School house were made by Dr. Wilson, alias "Old Thunderbolt", and submitted to a building committee composed of Dr. William Perry and Samuel Stebbins. It is the oldest school house now standing although no longer used for that purpose. It serves as Town Hall and all town meetings and public gatherings are held there. It is never to be forgotten for its uniqueness by those who live in or pass through the town. According to modern standards the Round School house was improperly lighted and to have installed a modern system of lighting would have ruined its original and unique structure, so in 1928 a standard school house was built and in March, 1929 the Round School house was given to the town to be used as a Town Hall.

## The First Post Office

The first Post Office was established in the home now owned by C.A. Siepmann. To 1737 there was no local Post Office and the people were somewhat troubled with the uncertainty of finding their mail either at Athens, or Putney, or Newfane. Brizillai Stickney " and Alvin Boyden, becoming convinced that better facilities should be possible, succeeded in enlisting the interest of General Martin Field of Newfane, a prominent man of Windham County, which resulted in a route being started from Bellows Falls, by way of Saxtons River to Brookline on August 29, 1837. After 1850 this special service was discontinued and Brookline was given only a side mail from Newfane, and this form of delivery is still in operation. The present rural carrier is George B. Bush, who for 32 years has faithfully served in this capacity.

## Churches

The Methodist Church, lately demolished, was built in 1836 on property now owned by the C.A. Siepmann. For 25 years the Church was prosperous. In the same year the brick structure of the Baptist Church was erected. It was not possible for a declining population to support two churches and gradually the Methodist Church was abandoned. The Baptist Church is still used in the summer time and at present a student from Andover Newton Theological School conducts the services. The "Ladies Benevolent Society" does much to keep the church in repair by donating

the proceeds of their "Annual Harvest Supper" to that purpose. These suppers are famous for miles around. The women of Brookline are noted for being good cooks and for having plenty of good things to eat.

#### Patriotism

The Revolutionary War took seven young men from among the earliest settlers. When the Union call came for volunteers in the Civil War, a large percentage of the men, 30 or more, responded. Some were killed, some wounded, but many returned to the small valley to start their life anew in home surroundings. The World War's call was answered equally promptly but with fewer men as the population had rapidly decreased. Brookline is proud of her record of devotion to her country.

#### Putney Mountain

Half way up Putney Mountain and across the road from the Spring farm house, nature has provided a feature of great interest. It is a mineral spring with strong properties of iron, and many people go there to fill bottles and jugs with the water to carry away. This water is said to help clear the system of impurities and to be beneficial to use for minor ailments, such as poison ivy, etc. Summer people like to go to the top of Putney Mountain to enjoy the unsurpassed view, the West River valley on one side for miles, the Connecticut Valley on the other, while higher mountains, such as Monadnock and Stratton can be seen in the distance. The Indians used to travel this ridge and many stories are told of people who on hearing the Indian war whoops left everything and crossed over to Putney where there was a larger settlement.

In November 1927, a terrible flood carried away the wooden covered bridge connecting Brookline with Newfane. Two temporary bridges were built, but they too went out in the January thaws. This was real hardship for Brookline because the principal road was wrecked and an abandoned road, many miles out of the way, had to be restored as well as possible in order to carry on any business at all. The people were very patient in bearing this inconvenience and were glad when the present iron and cement bridge was ready for their use in the Spring of 1928.

A spring freshet and ice jams did much damage to the river farms in 1936, and in 1938 the whole West River Valley was swept by a hurricane and flood. Strips of trees were blown down as the ground was soft from excessive rain. The raging waster washed out the roads so badly that in many places they resembled brook beds.

The winter of 1939-40 was a freak. Some old-timers could not remember such a long cold winter, and many farmers had to cut extra wood and buy more hay to keep on going. The spring was very late and summer came in with a temperature of 38 degrees.

Around 1930 a few back farms were sold to city people for summer homes. More and more have been bought and renovated until now only a very small number are available for purchase.

The old George Ware farm is now a summer camp with cabins built in the pines on a height overlooking the West River. Other camps and houses have also been built in neighboring pleasant spots and are occupied during the summer.

At present there are only 60 voters in town with a population of 104. The Grammar School has 15 pupils. Six High School students are carried by bus to attend Leland and Gray Seminary at Townshend.

Brookline is a small town but well managed and well preserved. The people are friendly and always willing to help a neighbor. This means more to us who live here than material wealth, which none of us possess.

## The Round School House

In Brookline, Vermont, there is the only round school house in the country. It is well known because of its history and quaintness. The plan for its erection was made by Dr. John Wilson and presented to the building committee, Dr. William Perry and Samuel Stebbins, in 1821. The site was deeded to the town by Peter Benson, August 10, 1821, for the sum of Five Dollars. It was built during the year 1822 to replace a log school house situated a little south of where the Round School House now stands. One of its greatest distinctions is, that instead of being rectangular in shape as is usual, it was made round, like a silo, a single room with five windows and one door and was heated by a stove, the chimney running through the center of the roof. Dr. John Wilson, otherwise known as "Thunderbolt", and Michael Martin, called "Lightfoot", were two highwaymen who came from Scotland to escape the punishment due them. "Thunderbolt" wanted the school house round so that he could see from any position, all possible intruders; neither could he be "cornered", since he kept his gun handy, and thus was comparatively sage. Dr. Wilson taught the first term of school. His desk was at the back facing the door. This gave him a chance to escape if any suspicious caller approached. Benches for the children were made of oak and placed in a circular position; there were sixty desks and enough pupils in the district to fill them. In 1864 forty-four new single desks took the place of the old ones. In 1910 many repairs were made: new floor, new windows, new chimney, twenty-five new desks and even a new wood-shed was added at this time, but the original structure was allowed to keep its originality and in 1923 Brookline celebrated the One Hundredth Anniversary of the famous Round School House. Former teachers and pupils, some of whom had graduated fifty or more years before, returned for the centennial. Some people came because of its curious history. There was much interesting reminiscing of times long gone, of how the town had changed, of many families moved away and of farms now deserted. The success of this reunion was greatly due to the numerous invitations and notices sent out by Mr. and Mrs. A.C. Wellman and Mr. and Mrs. George B. Bush. A few years later the Educational Department of the State made a ruling that all schools should have proper lighting. To install a modern lighting system would ruin the traditional lines of this most interesting school house; rather than do that the town voted to erect a new school building, which was built in 1928, south of the Baptist Church, and on March 5th 1929, the Round School House in its original form was turned over to the town for a Town Hall. In 1938 it was wired for electricity, but nothing has been done that might destroy its uniqueness, and it is astonishing to learn how many gifted sons and daughters went forth from its teachings to become distinguished in various chosen fields sometimes far from the old oak bench where they scuffed their heels learning the three "R's".

The story of Dr. Wilson is one of perennial interest. Though he led a quiet life in Brookline, he was always under suspicion, for circumstantial evidence proved him to be a notorious highwayman who had escaped from Scotland. Strangely enough, he was the son of a pious and respectable blacksmith of Muirkirk, Scotland. He seems to have moved about considerably, at one time settling in Dummerston, Vermont, for two or three years located in Newfane, Vermont, where he established a physician's practice. In 1836 he moved from Newfane to Brattleboro, Vermont, and building a house in a retired spot on the bank of the Connecticut River, near the present railroad yards, settled for the rest of his life. He married a Miss Chamberlin of Brattleboro who a few years later

secured a divorce because of certain facts she learned concerning him. One son was born to them, of whom nothing is known. When "Thunderbolt" died various scars disclosed why he had always worn a kerchief around his neck, and chain-marks gave evidence of imprisonment. Among his possessions were found two double-barreled shot guns, two

pairs of horse pistols, two or three dueling pistols, a number of swords, a variety of powder horns, shot bags, bullet pouches, etc. He was buried in Prospect Hill cemetery in Brattleboro where his grave and headstone are pointed out to interested visitors.

His companion, Michael Martin, called "Lightfoot" came to this country in 1819 under agreement to separate from "Thunderbolt" and reform; but returning to his old lawless habits was hanged for highway robbery in 1821 at Cambridge, Massachusetts. In a confession previous to execution he acknowledged that his career had been one of crime, and revealed that Dr. Wilson was "Thunderbolt". Thus ended the careers of two unworthy men,, one of whom did much to help make colorful history for the town of Brookline.

## THE OLD ROUND SCHOOL HOUSE SPEAKS

By  
Agnes Casey Marsh

I woke up this morning, the sun gay and bright  
Was warming by walls after a cold, moonlit night.  
And I felt gladdened and gay as I first realized  
That a new Spring was here with its glad, cheerful skies.

Through the long days of winter, I'd brooded away  
On the many dear years since I first came to stay  
In this little old town with its valleys and hills,  
And the roles through the years I'd been called on to fill.

For more than a century, I've stood up with pride,  
With old "Grassy Brook" rambling along at my side.  
A grand friend it's been, just murmuring along,  
So seldom getting angry, or changing its song.

I often get blue remembering the years  
When gay, charming youngsters, with smiles, songs and tears  
Came early each morning their lessons to learn,  
And homeward at night, tired faces did turn.

Each Fall brought new faces, new interests and books,  
And often a teacher with a stern, learned look.  
Each Spring I felt sad, as the older ones all  
Left me, and went forth to worldly duties which called.

How often I smile at pranks that were played—  
The comical faces, and remarks that were made,  
The teacher himself often felt quite amused,  
And inwardly hated much sternness to use.

For many glorious years, I was happy at heart  
That in the world of education, I could play a small part,  
That "old Glory" the Flag, our honor and pride,  
Had flown in the breeze for so long at my side.

I've grown aged and weary, and saddest of all  
Is the fact, that a "schoolhouse" I not always am called;  
Except for Town Meetings, I seldom am used,  
And without these glad memories, I'd siree fee; abused!

When March does arrive, and Town Meeting takes place,  
I long for the sight of a familiar, dear face.  
The echoes of laughter, the comments galore  
Make me glad that in duty I may help just once more.

Each summer I'm glad when tourist season arrives,

For on many bright days, my joy is fit for the skies—  
As many sleek cars to by doorway do come  
Any many gay voices with old memories do hum.

It may be an old friend, a scholar of yore  
Recalling the glad days spent within my old door;  
So often there's a sigh, or maybe some tears,  
As they explain to their children about those past years.

Or it may be some new friends called here by the fame  
And all of the oddities that go with my name.  
However, for me, it's "Welcome" to all!  
And may friends, old and new, continue to call.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **TOWN PLAN MAPS**

1. Transportation, Community Facilities, and Utilities
2. Natural Resources
3. Earth Resources
4. Scenic Resources
5. Existing Land Use
6. Future Land Use
7. Septic Suitability of Soils