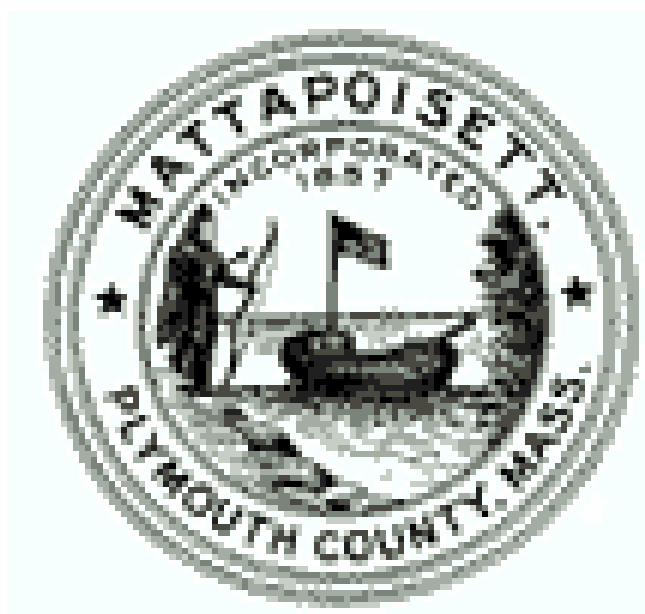


MUNICIPAL MANAGEMENT FOR THE FUTURE

A Report to the Mattapoissett Board of Selectmen



CENTER FOR POLICY ANALYSIS
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

October 2002

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS DARTMOUTH
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Based on a survey of standard and best practices and an analysis of the organizational characteristics and operating procedures of peer communities in Massachusetts, the Consultant recommends several structural changes to the municipal management structure in the Town of Mattapoissett. The town is likely to benefit from improved management and fiscal coordination by converting the Executive Secretary's position into a Town Administrator and by creating a town Finance Director. However, the long-term effectiveness of these two major management reforms will also require that the Highway Surveyor and Treasurer/Collector positions be converted from elective to appointed offices with strict professional qualifications for future appointees. Finally, we recommend minor changes in the Building Department and the Personnel Board to facilitate better coordination with the fiscal side of town management and the reactivation of an on-going capital planning process.

The Consultant suggests that the recommended changes to town management be implemented in two phases starting immediately with all recommendations implemented in no more than 2 to 3 years. Each phase is segmented into distinct steps that can be implemented individually or *in toto*. Phase I involves restructuring the town's general and financial management. Phase II is focused on improvements to the management of public facilities and infrastructure.

Phase I: General and Financial Management

The Consultant has identified changes to the position of chief administrative officer (Executive Secretary) and Treasurer/Collector as the two most important management improvements to be pursued immediately by the Town of Mattapoissett.

Recommendation 1. The Executive Secretary position should be converted to a Town Administrator with appropriate powers and responsibilities, credentials, compensation, contract status, performance evaluation and contract renewal.

(Recommendation 1 requires that Article 2.8 of the Mattapoissett General By-Laws be amended).

Recommendation 2. The Selectmen should create a new Department of Finance.

Recommendation 2a. The new Finance Department should be headed by a Finance Director/Town Accountant with appropriate powers and responsibilities, credentials, compensation, contract status, performance evaluation and contract renewal.

(Recommendation 2a does not require any change to the General By-Laws, but it will require an adjustment to the Town Accountant's written job description and compensation).

Recommendation 2b. The Treasurer/Collector position should be converted from an elected to an appointed position with appropriate credentials powers and responsibilities, compensation, contract status, performance evaluation and contract renewal.

(Recommendation 2b requires that Article 1.3 of the Mattapoisett General By-Laws be amended).

Recommendation 2c. All revenue collections should be centralized with the Treasurer/Collector.

Recommendation 2c is a cash management protocol that can be established by the Finance Director with the approval of the Selectmen.

Recommendation 2d. The Town Administrator and Finance Department should assist the Selectmen in conducting a systematic review of all fees collected by the town and this review should be conducted at least every three years.

Recommendation 3. The Selectmen should create a new position of Administrative Assistant or Senior Clerk to assume many of the work tasks currently performed by the Executive Secretary. This position could be filled by upgrading the clerical position currently in the Selectmen's office.

Recommendation 4. As a matter of practice, the Consultant recommends that the Selectmen appoint three citizens-at-large and two members of the Finance Committee to the Personnel Board.

(The relevant provisions of the Personnel By-Law are Articles 1.1.4 and Articles 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 Recommendation 4 can be implemented by action of the Board of Selectmen).

Recommendation 5. The Selectmen should adopt a formal Policies and Procedures to guide the operations of the Board of Selectmen and its relationships to other town agencies and personnel.

(Recommendation 5 can be implemented by action of the Board of Selectmen).

Recommendation 6. The town should establish a Capital Planning Committee to replace its existing Capital Needs Committee and the Committee should be structured and charged by statute with developing and updating a 5-year capital plan.

(Recommendation 6 requires an amendment to Article 2.3 of the Mattapoissett General By-Laws if the recommendation is fully implemented as proposed by the Consultant).

Recommendation 7. The Selectmen should routinely evaluate and enhance the operation of the Town's numerous Appointive Committees.

(Recommendation 7 can be implemented by action of the Board of Selectmen).

Phase II: Public Facilities and Infrastructure

Elected Highway Surveyors have been abolished by most towns in Massachusetts and replaced by individuals with educational credentials and expertise in civil engineering or highway engineering. There is also a clear trend toward consolidating all inspectional services under a Department of Inspectional Services.

Recommendation 8. The elected Highway Surveyor position should be converted to an appointed Department of Highways, Parks, and Trees.

Recommendation 8a. The new department will be headed by an appointed Superintendent of Highways, Parks, and Trees, who will be responsible for all functions previously performed by the Highway Surveyor.

(Recommendation 8a requires an amendment to Article 1.3 of the Mattapoissett General By-Laws. All subsidiary recommendations, except 8c can be implemented by action of the Board of Selectmen).

Recommendation 8b. The town's Forest Warden should report to the Superintendent of Highways, Parks, and Trees.

Recommendation 8c. The town's Caretaker of Veteran's Graves should report to the Superintendent of Highways, Parks, and Trees.

(Recommendation 8c requires an amendment to Article 1.3 of the Mattapoissett General By-Laws).

Recommendation 8d. The town's Tree Warden should report to the Superintendent of Highways, Parks, and Trees.

Recommendation 8e. The management (not regulation) of the town's transfer station, the SEMASS contract, and any future landfill should be the responsibility of the Superintendent of Highways, Parks, and Trees.

Recommendation 8f. The Superintendent of Highways, Parks, and Trees will also serve as the Town Engineer and provide engineering support to other departments as directed by the Town Administrator.

(Recommendation 8f can be implemented through the hiring process by requiring the appointee to have a bachelor's degree in civil or highway engineering and to be a registered professional engineer in the state of Massachusetts).

Recommendation 9. The Selectmen should create a new Department of Inspectional Services.

Recommendation 9a. The Department of Inspectional Services will be headed by the Building Inspector.

Recommendation 9b. The Plumbing Inspector, Gas Inspectors, Wire Inspector, Sealer of Weights and Measures, Weighers of Hay and Coal, and Measurer of Wood and Bark will be located in the Department of Inspectional Services and report to the Building Inspector:

(Recommendation 9 (and all subsidiary recommendations) can be implemented by action of the Board of Selectmen).

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1.00 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1.10 BACKGROUND

There are more than 80,000 local governments in the United States and ninety-five percent (95%) of these governments serve populations of less than 25,000. Nationally, many small towns have been growing rapidly as residents leave established cities in search of a better quality of life, good schools, low crime, and high rates of municipal service delivery without onerous tax burdens. Southeastern Massachusetts exemplifies the national trend in many ways (Barrow 1998).¹

Since 1960, Southeastern Massachusetts has been adding approximately 10,000 new residents each year, resulting in a fifty percent (50%) population increase over the last four decades. Population growth has produced an additional 3,500 housing units per year, 27,650 additional vehicles trips per day, the consumption of an additional 710,000 gallons of water each day, and increases in public school enrollments of 2,157 students per year. To accommodate this growth, the region has been developing 4.7 square miles of vacant land annually for the past 30 years. Moreover, new transportation improvements, such as commuter rail extensions and upgrades to Routes 3, 24, and 44, are attracting more residents, particularly Boston commuters, to the region.

However, population expansion and residential development have been uneven within the region, especially within the South Coast area that extends from Seekonk to Wareham along I-195 and includes the Town of Mattapoisett.² The populations of the Cities of Fall River and New Bedford declined by 6.5% (-12,969) between 1970 and 2000, while the SouthCoast's towns experienced population growth of more than forty-one percent (41.1%) during the same period. Although the SouthCoast's two cities account for 53.7% of the area's population, they issued only 22.2% of the building permits for new housing construction from 1991 to 2001. In contrast, the SouthCoast's suburban towns with 46.3% of the area's population issued 77.8% of all building permits for new housing construction over the last decade. The area's uneven growth pattern is putting pressure on the physical infrastructure, schools systems, and administrative capacities of many local governments, particularly in rural and suburban towns.

These problems have been the stimulus for "The Visions 2020 Task Force" convened in 1998 by the three regional planning agencies serving municipalities in Southeastern Massachusetts. The purpose of the Task Force was to develop comprehensive regional land use and policy recommendations to guide local policymakers over the next two decades. In its final report, *Southeastern Massachusetts Vision 2020: An Agenda for the*

¹ The Southeastern Massachusetts region includes the 48 towns and cities in Bristol and Plymouth Counties.

² The SouthCoast area of Southeastern Massachusetts is defined as Acushnet, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, Fall River, Freetown, Lakeville, Mattapoisett, Marion, New Bedford, Rochester, Somerset, Swansea, Wareham, and Westport

Future, the Task Force recommends that Southeastern Massachusetts embrace a development strategy that emphasizes urban redevelopment, the preservation of open space and agricultural lands, and the preservation of historic districts, waterfronts, and small town villages. The Task Force recommends that each town or city in the region adopt a set of goals, policies, and institutions consistent with this vision, but tailored to the objectives, needs, and capacities of each municipality.

1.20 MATTAPOISETT: THE CITIZENS' VISION

The Town of Mattapoisett has identified long-term development goals in its two most recent planning documents consistent with this broader regional vision. The *Town of Mattapoisett Master Plan 2000* (2000, 1) finds that “despite every-increasing numbers of people being attracted to the South Coast, Mattapoisett has not grown as fast as its neighbors primarily because of a large percentage of un-buildable land,” such as wetlands or soils that will not percolate. During the last decade (1992-2001), Mattapoisett issued fewer building permits for new housing construction than any of its neighboring communities, including Acushnet, Marion, Rochester, and Wareham (see Figure 1). Furthermore, while the rate of new housing construction has been accelerating in many neighboring communities (e.g., Acushnet, Rochester, and Wareham), the rate of new housing construction in Mattapoisett has slowed during the last five years (see Figure 2).

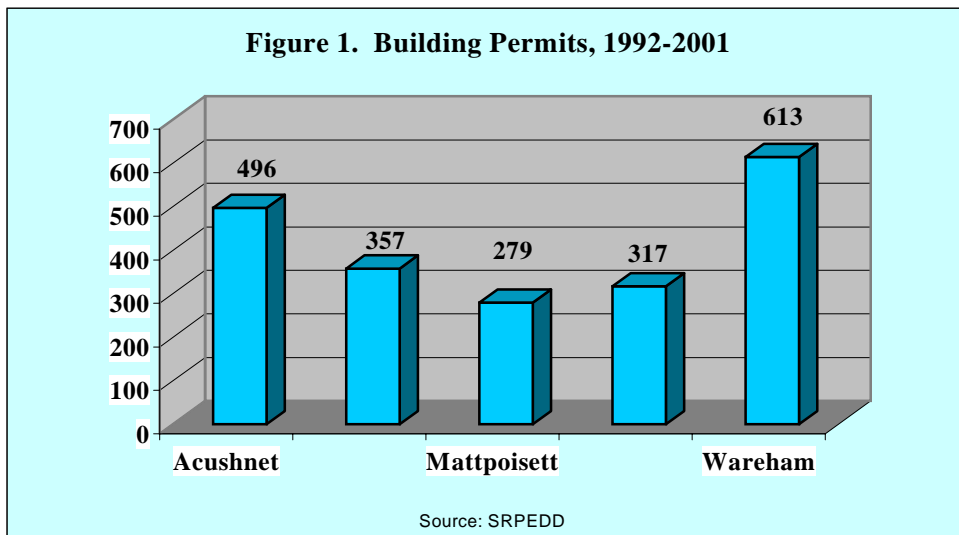
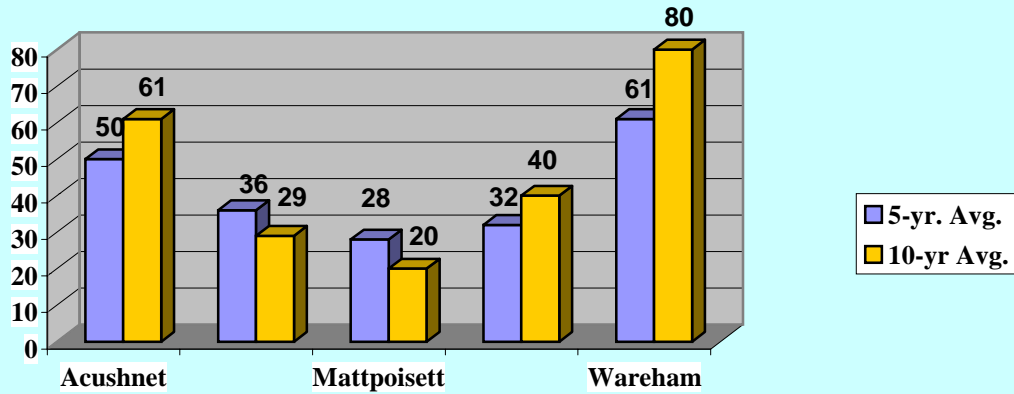


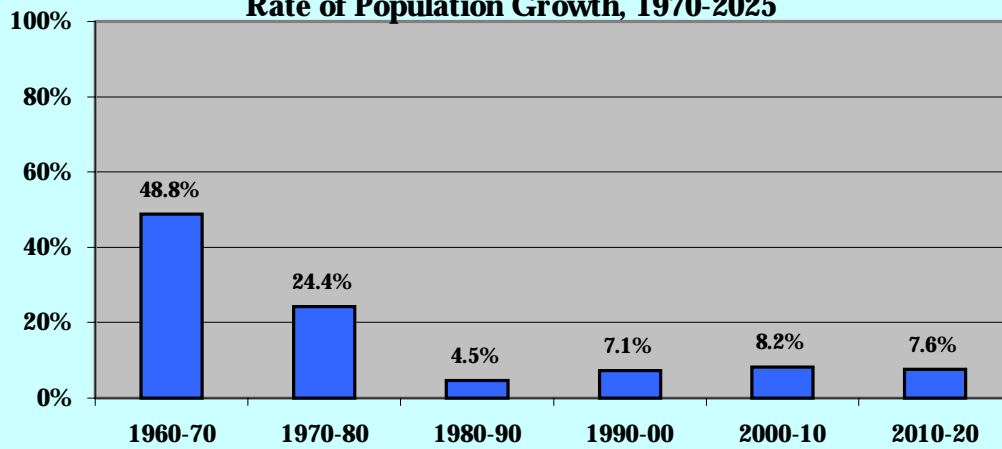
Figure 2. Building Permits Issued, 10-Year (1992-2001) & 5-year (1997-2001) Average



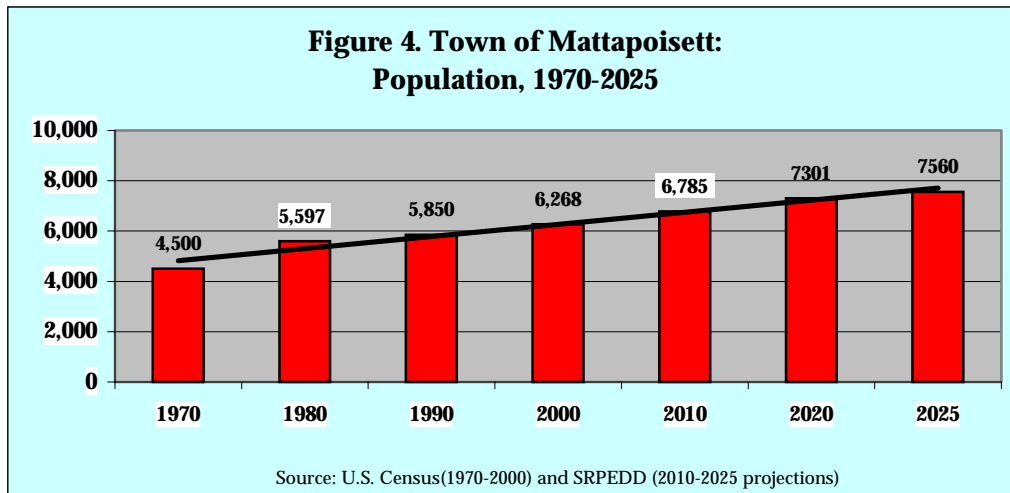
Source: SRPEDD & Center for Policy Analysis

Mattapoisett's population growth has been sporadic over the last 40 years, which makes it exceptionally difficult to project long-term population growth (see Figure 3). Mattapoisett's population increased by 1,768 persons (39.3%) from 1970 to 2000 and SRPEDD's conservative projection is that the town's population will increase by another 1,033 persons (16.5%) by 2020 (see Figure 4).

Figure 3. Town of Mattapoisett: Rate of Population Growth, 1970-2025



Source: U.S. Census (1960-2000) and SRPEDD (2010-2020 projections)



Population growth creates additional demands on town services that must grow in proportion to the population of the Town. Population growth not only creates land use pressures, it generates additional demand for town services such as water supply, sewer connections and wastewater treatment capacity, police and fire protection, emergency medical response, new streets and street repair, solid waste disposal, schools, and recreational facilities. Town governments are also responsible for conducting an array of building, plumbing, gas, electrical, sanitary, and septic inspections as well as zoning and code enforcement. These demands increase with population growth and business development.

Although recent population pressures have not been as dramatic in Mattapoissett as in neighboring towns, the *Town of Mattapoissett Master Plan* finds that population growth has also been accompanied by an increase in citizens' demands on town government: "Townspeople want all the amenities, but they do not want the town to change very much" (2000, 1). As a result, the town has undertaken many ambitious capital projects that may stimulate future growth, while other projects are trying simultaneously to preserve the town's historic character.

The Mattapoissett Water & Sewer Commission is implementing a multi-phase expansion of the town's sewerage system that will eventually increase the ratio of homes connected to town sewerage from 14 percent (590 homes) to approximately 45 percent (1,470 homes). However, in addition to the cost of this important project, each completed sewer line also creates the possibility of additional population and business growth. Many of the new sewer lines will not only service existing homes, but have the potential to open large amounts of land to new development which was previously unbuildable only because of local percolation requirements (*Master Plan 2000*, 2). The Town of Mattapoissett has also financed several other major capital improvements, including a major expansion of the regional high school, a new elementary school, and a new police station. The town is currently planning to construct a new fire station and a new facility for the water and sewer commission.

While these new amenities make the town more attractive to residential and business development, the town's *Open Space and Recreation Plan* (1998, 5-7) has established five major goals designed to maintain Mattapoissett's "unique small town atmosphere and rural character." The Mattapoissett Open Space Study Committee recommends significant additional expenditures to implement its recommendations, including the acquisition of undeveloped lands in the Mattapoissett River Valley, new and improved outdoor recreational facilities, the enhancement of rural and historic roads, conservation education, the acquisition of important wildlife habitats, and the development of a town Geographic Information System (GIS). It will prove difficult enough to manage the competing political demands of development with preservation, but both sets of issues are also placing significant pressure on the town's fiscal capacity and its financial management resources.

1.30 MATTAPOISETT: THE MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE

Municipal management in the Town of Mattapoissett is under pressure as the town enters the twenty-first century, but this situation is not peculiar to Mattapoissett. In addition to the incremental expansion of traditional municipal services that comes with a growing population, town governments throughout Massachusetts and New England have assumed new responsibilities and functions over the last three decades partly in response to increased demands by citizens and partly as a result of new state and federal mandates.

Town governments have assumed responsibility for administering state and federal programs related to veterans, the elderly, historic preservation, recreation, and cultural affairs. Town governments must comply with increasingly complex state regulations and mandates, including more stringent financial reporting, grant writing and program evaluation, and a wide range of technical environmental regulations related to solid waste disposal, water supply management, sewerage, and the operation of wastewater treatment plants. The responsibilities of part-time police departments and volunteer fire departments have become round-the-clock professional operations that have expanded to include emergency medical services, crime and fire prevention, oil spill and toxic chemical response, and anti-terrorism preparedness.

The physical plant of many municipalities such as Mattapoissett is either deteriorating or inadequate to accommodate the demands placed on town governments with century-old town halls that lack sufficient office space, storage room, modern security controls, access for the disabled, electrical capacity, and hardwired computing networks. Technology has also placed increased pressure on towns to deliver services in new ways. Computers and up-to-date software can radically change the way local government operates, while increasing citizens' expectations for an efficient, rapid, and effective response to their many demands on government. In short, the scope, complexity, and technical demands of managing town government have changed

considerably since most Massachusetts towns were incorporated more than a century ago (MMA 1996).

Like many towns in Massachusetts, Mattapoisett has managed incremental increases in service demand and the expansion of municipal functions with a highly decentralized and fragmented form of municipal management that was literally designed for small rural communities of the sort that proliferated in New England from the late 1700s to the mid-nineteenth century. However, as the scope and complexity of the demands on town government continue to increase, this traditional municipal management structure has often responded to long-term challenges with short-term *ad hoc* solutions.

For example, it is often the case that an individual or department is temporarily or informally assigned responsibility for a new function that gradually becomes a permanent part of that individual's or department's responsibilities.³ Functional accretion may also occur because a new function arises that town government is not otherwise prepared to meet in the short time frame demanded and an individual or department will take the initiative in that area simply to "get the job done."⁴ In many cases, where there is insufficient management capacity or a lack of professional expertise in town government, important functions may go unattended for long periods of time, which leads to management drift.⁵ Management drift occurs when significant functions go unattended in government, when the functions of government lack coordination or direction, and when the technical demands of government outstrip the expert capacities of town officials. Management drift is often compounded in New England town governments by the numerous elective department heads, boards, and commissions, which become independent "policy silos" without common direction or coordination.

The *Town of Mattapoisett Master Plan 2000* (2000, 1) has already identified many challenges to the effectiveness of town government and concludes that:

³ It is not uncommon for a town's Executive Secretary to "temporarily" fill gaps that emerge due to retirements or turnover, which gradually become permanent responsibilities due to fiscal constraints on hiring. Depending upon their education, background, and skills, Executive Secretaries in Massachusetts frequently double as building inspector, economic development officer, town planner, or budget director.

⁴ For example, it is quite common in Massachusetts for Town Accountants to evolve into the town's information services manager simply because their offices are the first to computerize and because other departments must be linked into their accounting and financial management software.

⁵ Most towns in Massachusetts vest responsibility for many important functions in part-time volunteer boards or commissions (e.g., planning, health, conservation, assessors) that often do not have adequate clerical support or professional staff. For example, many towns do not have a professional planner and/or conservation agent, despite rapid residential and economic development. Most towns do not have a management information services department despite increased computerization, while others lack coordinated financial management organizations.

“Town government is strained and under pressure to keep costs and taxes down. It is still being run by independently elected officials, volunteer boards, and part-time personnel..[and by] overworked Town boards and committees.”

While the town’s *Master Plan* is primarily concerned with land use issues such as residential development, water supply, sewer extensions, traffic, and open space preservation, it recognizes that effective, coordinated, and professional municipal management will be crucial to Mattapoissett’s ability to deal with these challenges in the coming decade.

Thus, among the many recommendations contained in the *Town of Mattapoissett Master Plan 2000* is a recommendation that an outside third party be retained to conduct a study of town government for the purpose of making recommendations:

“..to provide for greater efficiency and accountability [in town government]. This study would include, among other subjects, the need for a town manager, a town planner, and an evaluation of our town charter” (2000, 3).

As part of the *Master Plan*’s on-going implementation, the Mattapoissett Board of Selectmen retained the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Policy Analysis on June 19, 2002, to conduct a study of municipal management in the Town of Mattapoissett. The purpose of the study is to develop recommendations concerning possible changes in the management structure and functional responsibilities of existing departments in town government with special emphasis on the Executive Secretary’s position. The scope and responsibility of the Executive Secretary has changed dramatically in many towns during the last 10 to 15 years. As town governments increase their delivery of traditional municipal services, add new functions, and interact more extensively with state and federal governments, town administration has emerged as a full-time certified profession within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

This report is the first study to deal specifically with the question of whether Mattapoissett’s municipal management structure and existing job descriptions are adequate to manage a growing town into the twenty-first century. For purposes of this study, the town’s major management positions are defined as the:

Executive Secretary
Chief of Police
Fire Chief
Harbor Master
Building Inspector
Recreation Director

Town Accountant
Town Clerk (elected)
Highway Surveyor (elected)
Treasurer/Collector (elected)
Superintendent of Water & Sewer
(appointed by elected Commission)

Most of the management positions included in this study are appointed by the Board of Selectmen with the exception of the Town Clerk, Highway Surveyor, and Treasurer/Collector, which are elective offices, and the Superintendent of Water & Sewer, who is appointed by an elective Water and Sewer Commission.

The specific scope of work for the study was defined to include:

1. A review and update of the Town's municipal organization chart,
2. A review of the professional literature on town management to identify generally accepted or best practices in municipal management for comparable towns,
3. An identification and description of town management structures in five comparable towns in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts,
4. Recommendations concerning possible alternatives for municipal management consistent with best practices as determined in Items 2 and 3, and consistent with relevant provisions of the Massachusetts General Laws. In addition to general issues of municipal management, the recommendations were required to consider:
 - a. transitional problems that might be encountered while implementing recommendations,
 - b. timing for the implementation of recommendations,
 - c. issues and challenges that might arise from the regionalization of basic services, such as solid waste disposal; police, fire, and emergency medical services; water and sewerage utilities.

2.00 MUNICIPAL & FISCAL MANAGEMENT IN MASSACHUSETTS

2.10 Municipal Forms of Government

There are five general forms of municipal government in the United States. The five forms are the mayor-council, council-manager, commission, open town meeting, and representative town meeting. While each of these forms is defined by distinct institutional characteristics, there has been a general convergence of the different forms over the past several decades, particularly with respect to the role of the chief administrative officer, who is responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of municipal government.

The mayor-council form of government is the predominant form of municipal government in the United States, although an increasing number of small- and medium-sized cities are adopting the council-manager form of government. The council-manager form of government is now used by a majority of municipalities in the United States with populations over 10,000. The majority (55%) of suburbs in the nation's 305 largest metropolitan areas also use the council-manager form of government.

In Massachusetts, 49 of the state's 351 municipalities have a city form of government. Under Chapter 43 of the General Laws of Massachusetts, a city form of government is available only to municipalities with 12,000 or more residents. Among these 49 municipalities, 41 cities are currently governed with a mayor-council form of government⁶; 6 cities have adopted the council-manager form of government; and 2 cities have town councils only (MMA 2002) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Forms of Municipal Government in Massachusetts, 2001

Type of Elected Body	Total
Mayor-Council	35
Mayor-Council-Aldermen	1
Council-Manager	2
Mayor-Council-Manager	4
Town Council	2
Selectmen	302
Mayor-Aldermen	5

Source: Massachusetts Municipal Association (2002).

2.11 Mayor-Council

In a mayor-council form of government, there is an elective city or town council and a separately elected chief executive or mayor. There are two types of mayor-council government, which depends on the administrative duties and charter powers granted to

⁶ This number includes 5 cities with a Mayor and Aldermen.

the mayor. These are known as the *weak-mayor* and *strong-mayor* types of mayor-council government. In a weak-mayor form of government, the elected chief executive officer (mayor) has limited powers in the areas of budget preparation, day-to-day administrative operations, and appointments to other municipal offices. The weak mayor form of government is used most commonly in small cities (ICMA 1987). Chapter 43 of the Massachusetts General Laws establishes two model city charters for a weak mayor type of government known as Plan C, although no cities have actually adopted this model.

The strong mayor type of city government centralizes executive and administrative powers in an independently elected mayor, while reducing the relative importance of the legislative body (i.e., council, aldermen). In this type of municipal government, the mayor has the authority to prepare and administer the city budget, appoint and remove department heads, and direct the activities of city departments on a day-to-day basis. However, as the demands of this office have increased, even strong mayors are opting to appoint a Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) who serves at the pleasure of the mayor (ICMA 1994).⁷ The CAO is responsible for supervising the details of day-to-day municipal administration such as budget preparation and personnel management, which frees the mayor to concentrate on broader municipal goals and policy objectives (ICMA 1987). Beginning in the 1980's, the strong mayor type of government became the most common form of municipal government in the nation's cities. Chapter 43 of the Massachusetts General Laws establishes two model city charters for a strong mayor type of government known as Plan A and Plan B.⁸

2.12 Council-Manager

The council-manager form of municipal government is also found in many cities throughout the United States. Council-manager government combines the strong political leadership of elected officials with the strong managerial leadership of an appointed professional manager (ICMA 1995). This form of government vests policy making in the hands of the elected legislative body (the council), but a professional manager (CAO), serving at the pleasure of the council, is charged with the day-to-day administration of municipal government. The manager commonly has the authority to direct administrative operations, appoint department heads and administrative officers, advise the council on matters of policy, and answer to the council for the performance of all administrative departments.

Although many council-manager governments have an elected mayor, these mayors are usually elected by the legislative body and have limited powers such as presiding over council meetings and making appointments to boards or commissions (ICMA 1994). The mayor is part of the council and votes as a regular member. In contrast to the strong mayor type of government, the mayor in a council-manager government

⁷ The City of Fall River is an example.

⁸ The City of Fall River is a Plan A strong mayor-council type of government, while the City of New Bedford is a Plan B strong mayor-council type of government.

does not exercise any veto power. Chapter 43 of the Massachusetts General Laws establishes two model city charters for a council-manager form of government known as Plan D and Plan E.⁹

2.13 Commission

Cities and towns with a commission form of government elect commissioners to serve as the legislative body and to simultaneously head various administrative departments. This form of municipal government fully centralizes the legislative and executive powers in an elected commission, which both makes policy and directs the administrative operations of local government. However, this form of government, with its origin dating back to the early twentieth century, continues to decline in usage and is currently found in only a few communities nationwide.

2.14 Open Town Meeting and Representative Town Meeting

The town meetings of New England are often considered one of the last modern day examples of direct democracy. This distinction derives from the fact that the town holds public meetings, where any registered voter of the jurisdiction may attend, speak, and vote on a variety of policy, administrative, and financial issues. The town meeting, as practiced in New England, can be traced back to the Massachusetts Bay Colony of the late 1620's (Zimmerman 1984). The town meeting form of government is found only in the New England states of Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, and Connecticut.

In Massachusetts, open town meeting (OTM) is the predominant form of municipal government with 262 (75%) of state's 351 municipalities still using the open town meeting form of government (DeSantis 1998). Under the OTM form of government, the town meeting acts as the legislative body with the authority to pass by-laws and to raise and appropriate revenues. The General Laws of Massachusetts General Laws require any town with an OTM to hold at least an annual town meeting, but the town may hold as many additional meetings (i.e., special town meetings) as deemed necessary to conduct the town's business. A warrant (from the term warning) is issued to townspeople stating the date, time, place, and itemized agenda for annual and special town meetings. By statute, no business outside the warrant may be conducted and the warrant must be issued to residents at least seven days in advance of the town meeting. An elected Town Moderator presides over the town meeting and has wide latitude in directing the debate and business of the meeting.

During the remainder of the year, the elected Board of Selectmen oversees the operations of town government. Currently, 173 (57%) of the 302 towns in Massachusetts operate with a three-member Board of Selectmen, while 128 towns (42%) have adopted a

⁹ The Cities of Cambridge and Lowell are examples of Plan E cities. No cities in Massachusetts have adopted the Plan D charter.

five-member board. One town has a seven-member board of selectmen. Boards of Selectmen exercise many appointing, financial, and licensing powers granted to them by the town meeting. There is evidence of a slight trend in Massachusetts toward elected town councils and representative town meetings, but there is certainly no widespread movement in the state toward abandoning the open town meeting (Renner and DeSantis 1993; Zimmerman 1984). The open town meeting is still employed by the vast majority of the state's towns.

The representative town meeting (RTM) is used in only 39 (11%) of the state's 351 municipalities. The representative town meeting requires voters to select a limited number of citizens to represent them at town meetings. Only towns with 6,000 or more inhabitants may adopt the RTM form of government (Massachusetts General Laws 43A: 1-12). All citizens may attend the town meeting and participate in the debate, but only duly elected representatives may vote.

2.20 The Chief Administrative Officer

In an effort to deal more effectively with growth and service delivery issues, many towns in New England have experienced substantial pressure to alter their basic forms of government. Recent research indicates that municipalities which use the open town meeting and representative town meeting are somewhat more likely to experience attempts to change their government structures than mayor-council, council-manager, or commission forms of government (Renner and DeSantis 1993). However, additional research finds that the town meeting form of government is quite stable and continues to enjoy citizen support. Very few town meeting communities have enacted term limits for board members and they are more likely to re-elect their incumbent officeholders than municipalities with other structures (DeSantis and Renner 1994).

Thus, many New England towns are balancing the popularity and stability of town government against the demands of growth and change by adopting incremental changes in the structure of municipal management. This strategy allows towns to meet the challenges of growth without abandoning the town meeting form of government. A central element of this strategy is to hire a full-time professional chief administrative officer (Renner and DeSantis 1993). The addition of professional management expertise may alter the day-to-day administration of a local government, but it does not alter the basic structure of the town form of government.

Many towns in Massachusetts have created the positions of Administrative Assistant, Town Coordinator, Executive Secretary, Town Manager, Executive Administrator, or Town Administrator to provide full-time professional support to the Board of Selectmen. At present, 255 (84%) of the state's 302 towns employ some type of full-time administrator to assist the Board of Selectmen, while the number of towns without any full-time administrative assistance has steadily declined from 67 to 47 towns in only the last four years (see Table 2).

Despite a proliferation of new titles in recent years, the Massachusetts General Laws actually defines only three major types of chief administrator officer (CAO) in terms of functional responsibilities: Executive Secretary, Town Administrator, and Town Manager. There has been a definite trend over the last five years to upgrade the CAO position in growing towns. This trend is most evident in the declining number of Administrative Assistants and Executive Secretaries serving as chief administrative officers and a rapid increase in the number of new Town Administrators.

Table 2. Professional Administrators in Massachusetts Towns, 1997-2001			
Title or Position	1997	1998	2001
Administrative Assistant	38	38	27
Town Coordinator	5	6	6
Executive Secretary	53	46	30
Town Manager	45	46	47
Executive Administrator	5	5	3
Town Administrator	85	94	131
Other Title	10	9	11
None Employed	67	61	47

Source: Massachusetts Municipal Association (1998, 1999, 2002)

Only thirty (30) towns now employ an Executive Secretary compared to 53 towns in 1997, while the number of Administrative Assistants serving as a CAO has declined from 38 to 27 during the same time. One-hundred-thirty-one (131) towns now employ a Town Administrator compared to 85 in 1997, while three (3) towns employ an Executive Administrator. The number of towns with a Town Manager has increased from forty-five (45) to forty-seven (47) since 1997.

The positions of Executive Secretary and Town Administrator are authorized by the Massachusetts General Laws (Chapter 41, Section 23A) as follows:

“A town may by vote or by-law authorize and empower the selectmen to appoint an executive secretary or town administrator who may be appointed by them for a term of one or three years and to remove him at their discretion. An executive secretary or town administrator appointed under the provisions of this section shall be sworn to the faithful performance of his duties..He shall act by and for the selectmen in any matter which they may assign to him relating to the administration of the affairs of the town or of any town office or department under their supervision and control, or, with the approval of the selectmen, may perform such other duties as may be requested of him by any other town officer, board, committee, or commission.”

The Massachusetts General Laws do not define the duties of an Executive Secretary beyond the enabling provision that such individuals “shall act by and for the selectmen in any matter which they may assign to him.” State law grants the Board of

Selectmen a great deal of latitude in defining the positions so that job descriptions may include “any matter which they [the selectmen] may assign to him relating to the administration of the affairs of the town or of any town office or department under their supervision and control, or, with the approval of the selectmen, may perform such other duties as may be requested of him by any other town officer, board, committee, or commission.”

In practice, therefore, the actual job description, duties, and day-to-day authority of the Executive Secretary can vary widely from one municipality to another in Massachusetts. The Executive Secretary’s role in town government depends largely on what the Board of Selectmen delegate to the Executive Secretary and in principle the duties of an Executive Secretary can actually vary with different Boards of Selectmen depending on how much detail is included in the town charter or an individual’s employment contract. Consequently, there is a wide spectrum to the scope and latitude of the Executive Secretary’s role in town government that ranges from primarily secretarial and clerical responsibilities of the sort performed by an administrative assistant to those of a professional chief administrator.

However, as the demands on town government increase throughout Massachusetts, there has been a clear trend toward converting the Executive Secretary into a chief administrative officer with other department heads reporting to the Executive Secretary on a day-to-day basis, rather than directly to the Board of Selectmen. This allows the selectmen to focus on larger issues of policy and development, while the Executive Secretary assumes responsibility for the day-to-day management of town government.

To both recognize and facilitate this development, the Massachusetts General Laws (Chapter 41, Section 23A) were only recently amended to authorize the appointment of a Town Administrator as an alternative to the Executive Secretary. The title of Town Administrator more accurately reflects the expanding professional role of the Selectmen’s chief administrative officer and thus many municipalities are shifting from an Executive Secretary to a Town Administrator. It is now the single most frequently used title among the state’s towns (43%) and additional towns are adopting it each year. In the last four years alone (1997-2001), the number of towns with an Executive Secretary declined from 53 to 30, while the number of municipalities with a Town Administrator increased from 85 to 131.

A Town Administrator’s responsibilities continue to be defined by the Board of Selectmen, although there is a clear movement in the state toward defining these responsibilities more precisely in a 3-year written contract between the Board of Selectmen and their chief administrative officer. The appointee continues to act as an agent of the Selectmen, as specified in the Massachusetts General Laws, and the individual remains directly accountable to the Selectmen. Unlike a Town Manager, a Town Administrator does not have the authority to appoint other department heads; a power that remains with the Board of Selectmen. The title is also viewed more favorably

among professional CAO's and individuals holding this title typically have specialized educational credentials in public administration, business administration, or a related profession (e.g., law, human resources, planning).

In contrast, the position of Town Manager can only be created through a home rule petition or a special act of the state legislature that defines the authority and responsibilities of the position (MMA 1998). A Town Manager can have a relatively strong or weak role in town government depending on the legal description of the position included in the charter or special act (e.g., Town of Lenox 1991). However, towns that create a Town Manager usually do so for the purpose of vesting the position with a great deal of independence and autonomy, including the authority to appoint and dismiss department heads as well as the members of many boards and commissions. Because the Town Manager's authority is defined by home rule petition, the Town Manager has wide latitude to exercise discretion within the definition of the position and without the prior consent or approval from the Board of Selectmen.

2.21 Common Duties of the Chief Administrative Officer

The specific duties and responsibilities of the Executive Secretary and Town Administrator position may vary from one community to another, but the Center for Policy Analysis has examined a wide sampling of job descriptions and town charters, which suggest that there a core set of responsibilities is emerging for the chief administrative officer in most communities. The new Chief Administrative Officer in Massachusetts town government typically administers and supervises all phases of town government under the direction of the Board of Selectmen. The CAO provides day-to-day administrative coordination and direction to the department heads under the jurisdiction of the Board of Selectmen, as well as to all boards and commissions that report to the Board of Selectmen. The CAO also serves as the Selectmen's liaison to other town departments and boards and works to coordinate any activities that involve more than one department.

A Chief Administrative Officer typically has supervisory authority in the areas of general administration, personnel and labor relations, budgeting and finance, legal affairs, and facilities management. Other miscellaneous duties may include planning support, grant writing, economic development, and intergovernmental relations depending on the scope of responsibilities assigned to an CAO and the individual's professional background and expertise.

2.21a Administration and General Management

The Chief Administrative Officer's responsibilities for general management and administration may include:

- Managing the office of the Board of Selectmen, including:

- direct supervision and evaluation of any employees in the Selectmen's office (e.g., administrative assistants and clerks),
 - receiving and making appropriate disposition of all correspondence and communications,
 - initiate appropriate municipal responses to citizen inquiries and correspondence,
 - hear and investigate citizen and other complaints and make appropriate reports to the Board of Selectmen,
 - provide assistance to individual members of the Board of Selectmen as required,
- Serve as the Town's Chief Procurement Officer per MGL Chapter 30B:
 - prepare requests for proposals and bid specifications,
 - oversee the bidding process and assist with bid analysis,
 - act as contract administrator for all services contracted by the Board of Selectmen, and
 - monitor the work of contractors and Consultants hired under the Selectmen's jurisdiction.
- Make all procedural and substantive preparation for meetings of the Board of Selectmen:
 - prepare the agenda for meetings of the Board of Selectmen and bring before them all matters requiring their attention,
 - attend all Selectmen's meetings prepared to discuss recommendations and alternatives for their discussion and decision,
 - inform Selectmen of all relevant statutory and regulatory changes pertinent to their decisions,
 - ascertain that all decisions of the board are efficiently and effectively carried out,
 - keep the Selectmen fully informed on the long range needs of the town and provide reliable data or municipal research to support suggested courses of action,
- General supervision of other departments under the control of the Board of Selectmen (and appointing department heads in the case of a Town Manager):
 - department heads and other employees report to the Selectmen through the chief administrative officer,
 - communicates the Selectmen's policy to all departments and town personnel under the control of the Selectmen,
 - coordinates and participates in the evaluation of performance and goal setting for department heads under the control of the Selectmen,

- Establish effective working relationships among all town boards, departments, commissions, and committees:
 - work with Town boards, commissions, and committees in an advisory or support capacity,
 - provide reports on various Town projects,
- Work with regional, state, and federal officials and projects involving the town and to further the best interests of the town,
- Prepare town warrants and materials necessary for town meeting(s),
- Prepare applications for grants and administer grants received,
- Administer procedures for license and permits issued by the Board of Selectmen,
- Attend professional meetings and otherwise keep abreast of modern developments in municipal government and make appropriate reports to the Board of Selectmen,
- Prepare the town Annual Report.

2.21b Personnel and Labor Relations

The Chief Administrative Officer's responsibilities for personnel and labor relations may include:

- Act as the Town's personnel administrator under the direction of the Personnel Board and the Board of Selectmen,
- Coordinate the interviews of applicants for key administrative positions and conduct the necessary checks on applicants,
- Provide performance evaluations to the Board of Selectmen on all department heads and other personnel appointed by the Board of Selectmen,
- Participate as a member or chief negotiator of the management collective bargaining team,
- Oversee all insurance policies and practices, including property and liability insurance and workers compensation,

- Act as the town's affirmative action officer and disability coordinator and ensure compliance with all federal and state regulations for affirmative action, equal opportunity, and disability,
- Hear grievances filed by town employees.

2.21c Finance and Budgeting

The Chief Administrative Officer's responsibilities in the area of finance and budgeting may include:

- Work with the Finance Director and/or Finance Committee on behalf of the Selectmen to coordinate budget preparation for all town departments that report to the Selectmen,
- Review and make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen on all budget requests of departments, boards, and commissions that report to the Selectmen,
- Serve as the Selectmen's liaison to the Finance Committee,
- Monitor and report actual expenditures during the year to the Board of Selectmen.

2.21d Legal Affairs

The Chief Administrative Officer's responsibilities in the area of legal affairs may include:

- Implement the requirements of the General Laws of Massachusetts, Town By-Laws, and approved policies of the town boards, commissions, and committees,
- Organize proposed Warrant Articles for Town Meeting(s),
- Conduct Warrant Article research as requested by the Board of Selectmen,
- Attend Town Meeting(s) and provide information to the Selectmen, Town Counsel, and other individuals as directed by the Selectmen,
- Work closely with the Town Counsel in the preparation of legal research and on all legal matters as directed by the Selectmen.

2.21e Facilities Management

The Chief Administrative Officer's miscellaneous responsibilities may include:

- Maintain an inventory of town buildings and property,
- Manage facilities and equipment under the jurisdiction of the Board of Selectmen,
- Act as liaison with public utility companies.

2.22 Qualifications of Chief Administrative Officers

The position of chief administrative officer -- particularly as exemplified in the transition from Executive Secretary to Town Administrator -- has changed dramatically over the last thirty years. The position previously called for clerical and administrative skills or a background in engineering and public works depending on the needs of the particular town. The Department of Public Works is often the largest department in town government and when it involves water and sewage treatment it is also one of the most technically demanding departments. Hence, between 1970 and 1980, it was fairly common for towns to hire their first Executive Secretaries with an engineering or public works background, because as department heads they had more expertise in operations and capital budgeting, procurement, personnel, state and federal regulations, and intergovernmental relations than other town employees. In towns like Mattapoisett, where solid waste disposal is privately contracted and town sewerage was virtually nonexistent, it was quite common 10 or 20 years ago for a senior clerk to advance through the management ranks to become an Executive Secretary, since administrative, procurement, and interpersonal skills were the main demands of the position.

Today, the CAO's position has evolved into a multi-faceted position that requires skills in general management, collective bargaining and personnel administration, budgeting, grant writing, and intergovernmental relations. A town's chief administrative officer must provide administrative and policy support to the Selectmen, while overseeing service delivery in areas ranging from public works to public safety to human and social services. As the CAO position has become more complex, Selectmen have demanded that CAOs have more advanced and specialized educational credentials in addition to previous experience in public sector management.

The professionalization of the CAO's position may occur by offering enhanced professional development opportunities to an incumbent office holder, elevating the requirements for the position when a vacancy occurs, or simply changing the title and job description of the position to reflect the professional standing of an incumbent office holder. It is estimated that approximately 70 percent of the chief administrative officers in municipal government nationwide now have a Master's degree. A Master's of Public

Administration (M.P.A.) is the most common degree held by municipal CAOs, although many have a Master's degree in Business Administration, Public Policy, or a related field such as Human Resources, Law, or Urban Planning.

The Center for Policy Analysis examined all classified advertisements for chief administrative officers listed in *The Beacon* from January 1999 through September 2002. *The Beacon* is published by the Massachusetts Municipal Association and it is the leading source of information on job openings for municipal managers in the state. During this 45-month period, towns in Massachusetts posted 79 advertisements for town managers (16), town administrators (48), and executive secretaries (15). Most of the positions posted (87%) listed a bachelor's degree as a minimum qualification, while 13% listed a Master's degree as a minimum qualification. An additional 61 percent of the positions identified a Master's degree as a "preferred qualification." Most of the postings listed a degree in Public Administration (62%), Business Administration (24%), or a related field as a minimum qualification. Finally, the new CAO is usually expected to have previous administrative and supervisory experience in municipal government, including some years as a CAO in a smaller town, as Assistant CAO, or in progressively more responsible positions (e.g., major department head). More than three-quarters (77%) of the listings examined for Massachusetts require 3 to 5 years of prior experience in municipal management, while another 14 percent of the postings required 5 years or more of prior experience.

There is a general expectation that chief administrative officers, especially in small towns, will play a leadership role as the town's collective bargaining agent, personnel administrator, and procurement officer. The chief administrative officer is expected to have strong oral and written communications skills, as well as strong interpersonal skills. In addition, however, most municipal CAOs also exercise supervisory authority over budgeting and finance, legal affairs, facilities management and sometimes play a role in supporting planning and economic development functions. No single individual is equally expert in all of these areas and, consequently, the Selectmen must clearly identify the one or two major skill sets most required for the position (e.g., general management, personnel, budgeting, legal, planning, etc.) in their town, while seeking to complement and support the CAOs strengths with the expertise of department heads or in some cases Consultants (e.g., town engineer, town counsel).

2.23 Compensation of Chief Administrative Officers

The best available data on the compensation of chief administrative officers in Massachusetts is the *Benchmark Title Salary Survey* conducted by the Massachusetts Municipal Personnel Association (MMPA). The average salary levels of municipal CAOs are closely correlated with the prestige of formal title¹⁰ and the size of the community. As shown in Table 3, Town Managers have the highest mean salary data at \$93,275, followed

¹⁰ The differences in compensation by title are due to the increased scope of duties, power, and responsibility associated with the title.

by the position of Town Administrator with a mean salary of \$74,823 and Executive Secretary with a mean salary of \$55,125. However, as Table 4 shows, the average salaries of CAOs vary considerably with the size of the community. There is a 50 percent variance in average salaries between towns with over 50,000 population, where CAOs receive an average salary of \$93,371 and communities with less than \$10,000 population, where CAOs receive an average salary of \$62,231.

Table 3. Chief Administrator Salary by Type of Position, FY 2002

Title	No. Responding	Mean Salary
Town Manager	33	\$93,275
Town Administrator	68	\$74,823
Executive Secretary	7	\$55,125
Administrative Assistant	6	\$37,176
Other Title	4	\$92,923
Total	118	\$77,514

Source: *Benchmark Title Salary Survey*, Massachusetts Municipal Personnel Association, January 2002.

Table 4. Chief Administrator Salary by Population, FY 2002

Town Population	No. Responding	Mean Salary
Under 10,000	46	\$62,231
10,000 - 19,999	47	\$78,808
20,000 - 50,000	41	\$88,231
Over 50,000	12	\$93,371
Total	146	\$77,428

Source: *Benchmark Title Salary Survey*, Massachusetts Municipal Personnel Association, January 2002.

There has been a rapid escalation in the starting salaries of municipal CAOs over the last decade. This is because many towns are creating CAO positions for the first time. Most towns are upgrading the professional credentials required for the position and many towns are increasing the scope of responsibilities and duties for CAOs as they replace Executive Secretaries with Town Administrators or Town Managers.

Consequently, the CFPA also examined the starting salary offers for CAOs advertised in *The Beacon* for calendar years 2001 and 2002. During this time, there were 49 postings for Executive Secretary (6), Town Administrator (33), and Town Manager (10). The average starting salary offered for an Executive Secretary with 3 to 5 years prior experience is \$59,000. The average starting salary offered for a Town Administrator with 3 to 5 years prior experience is \$78,730 and the starting salary offered for a Town Manager is \$81,250.¹¹

¹¹ The CFPA staff has interviewed nearly fifty chief administrative officers and selectmen over the last four years. It is widely agreed that CAOs seeking new positions most frequently consult *The Beacon* and *The Boston Globe* for job listings.

The starting salaries for Town Administrators show a great deal of variance with starting offers in the \$95,000 to \$120,000 range for affluent communities around Boston’s high technology loop and in high cost communities on the Cape and Islands. For communities comparable to Mattapoisett, the starting salary for a Town Administrator appears to be in the \$65,000 to \$75,000 range. However, there is vigorous competition for Town Administrators with professional credential and prior experience so it is increasingly common for communities to advertise these positions with salaries dependent on qualifications (DOQ), with a \$10,000 to \$20,000 negotiable salary range, or with a minimum plus DOQ (e.g., “\$75,000 + depending on qualifications”). The Consultants note that some communities have been forced back to market two or more times in the last two years, because of inadequate starting salary offers.

2.30 Comparison with Peer Communities

The 351 towns and cities in Massachusetts were filtered through a series of comparability screens to identify “peer communities” that are comparable to Mattapoisett in terms of (1) population, (2) total equalized assessed property values per capita, and (3) kind of community. The Center for Policy Analysis identified twelve peer communities for Mattapoisett based on these criteria. This list was narrowed to five peer communities with the goal of selecting of a geographic cross-section that would allow for comparisons from across the state. The five municipalities that best conform to the screening criteria, while providing a geographic cross-section of communities are Harvard, Lenox, Salisbury, Topsfield, and West Bridgewater (see Table 5).

Table 5. Peer Communities				
Town	Population 2000	EQV Per Capita 2000	Kind of Community	Region
Harvard	5,981	\$ 111,799	Growth	North Central
Lenox	5,077	\$ 106,529	Growth	Western
Salisbury	7,827	\$ 81,925	Growth	Northeast
Mattapoisett	6,268	\$ 113,024	Growth Community	Southeast
Topsfield	6,141	\$ 114,879	Residential Suburb	Northeast
West Bridgewater	6,634	\$ 95,778	Rural Economic Center	Southeast
Source: U.S. Census, 2000; MDOR Municipal Data Base, 2002.				

The Center for Policy Analysis consulting team conducted a series of interviews with the Selectmen, major department heads, and board or commission chairmen in Mattapoisett and with the chief administrative officers in the five peer communities. The consulting team also reviewed copies of the towns’ most recent annual reports and other documents useful for comparing Mattapoisett to its peer communities such as CAO job descriptions, personnel by-laws, comprehensive master plans, and open space and recreation plans.

However, municipalities that are similar statistically often differ considerably in their basic values and, therefore, in their response to development pressures and their commitment to provide citizens with high quality municipal services. Thus, in evaluating the relevance of peer communities for a study of Mattapoisett, the Center for Policy Analysis compared peer communities on the basis of several performance measures designed to insure that the peers selected were also successful municipal governments.

2.30 Citizen Participation

Town government was established in Massachusetts as a model of direct democracy that relies on active citizen participation. Thus, one measure of the success of town government is the extent to which citizens register to vote and then subsequently vote in elections. Mattapoisett and most of the identified peer communities have moderate rates of voter turnout in comparison to national and state averages. Among its peer communities, Mattapoisett had the third highest rate of voter turnout in the 1998 state elections (60.4%) and the 2000 U.S. Presidential primary election (34.5%) (see Table 6).

Table 6. Voter Turnout	1998	2000
Harvard	62.5%	44.3%
Lenox	59.2%	28.2%
Mattapoisett	60.4%	34.5%
Salisbury	49.1%	29.1%
Topsfield	70.5%	44.0%
West Bridgewater	49.3%	26.9%
<small>Source: Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth (1998, 2000).</small>		

2.50 Fiscal Effort

A municipality's *fiscal effort* is typically measured with a fiscal effort index. A fiscal effort index measures the ratio of own-source revenue collections by a municipality in comparison to other municipalities. The standard indices of fiscal effort measure how intensively a particular unit of government utilizes its tax and fee base compared to similar units of government. In this respect, fiscal effort indices provide a basis for evaluating how heavily citizens are burdened by revenue collections in comparison to the citizens of similar governmental units. For the purpose of measuring municipal fiscal effort, property tax rates and the ratio of property tax levies to total assessed property values are considered the most important indices of fiscal effort.

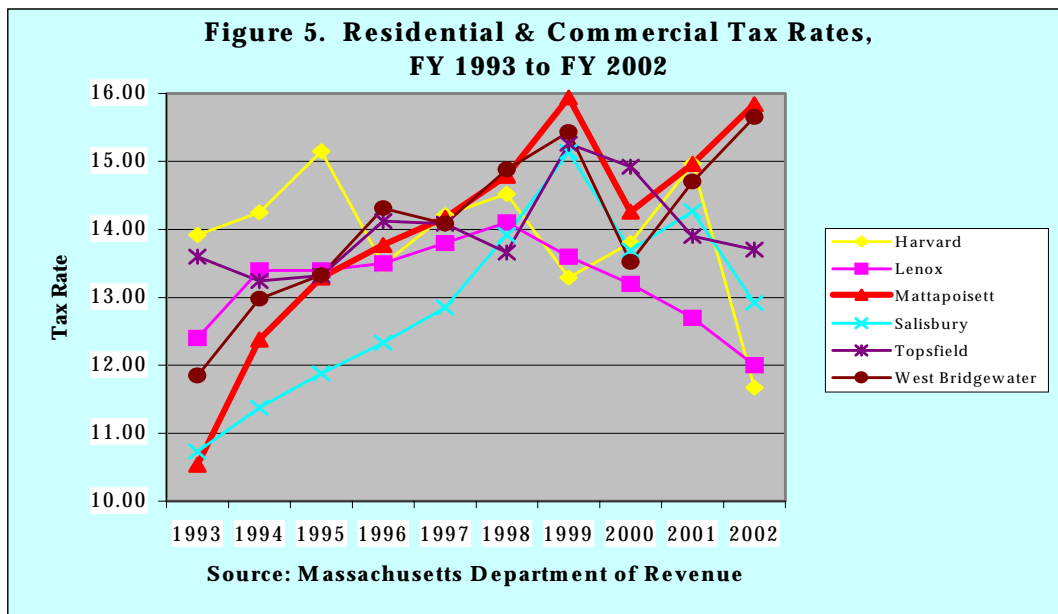
Property tax rates among Mattapoisett's peer communities show a wide variance between a low of \$11.67 per \$1,000 in valuation in Harvard to a high of \$15.84 per \$1,000 in valuation in Mattapoisett (See Table 7 and Figure 5). However, since FY 1993, Mattapoisett's property tax rate has risen from being the lowest rate among its peer

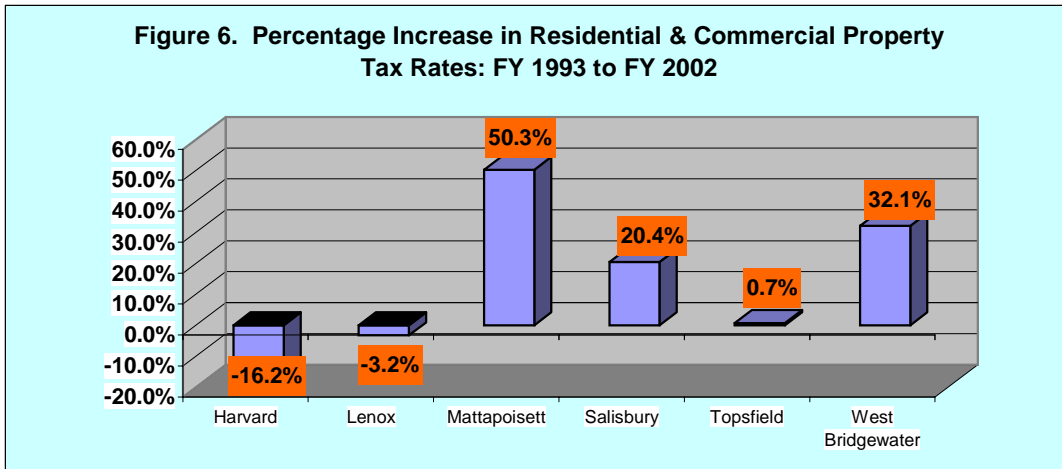
communities to the highest rate among its peer communities. Mattapoisett's property tax rate increased by 50.3 percent from FY 1993 to FY 2002 (see Figure 6).

West Bridgewater is the only town among Mattapoisett's peer communities to have a split tax rate of \$20.90 on commercial and industrial property.

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Harvard	13.92	14.25	15.15	13.48	14.21	14.52	13.29	13.80	14.96	11.67
Lenox	12.40	13.40	13.40	13.50	13.80	14.10	13.60	13.20	12.70	12.00
Mattapoisett	10.54	12.38	13.29	13.77	14.17	14.79	15.94	14.26	14.96	15.84
Salisbury	10.73	11.38	11.88	12.33	12.85	13.92	15.14	13.69	14.27	12.92
Topsfield	13.60	13.24	13.32	14.12	14.08	13.66	15.26	14.92	13.90	13.70
West Bridgewater	11.85	12.98	13.33	14.31	14.08	14.88	15.43	13.52	14.70	15.65

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Municipal Data Base.
 Note: W. Bridgewater has a split tax rate of \$20.90 on commercial & industrial property.



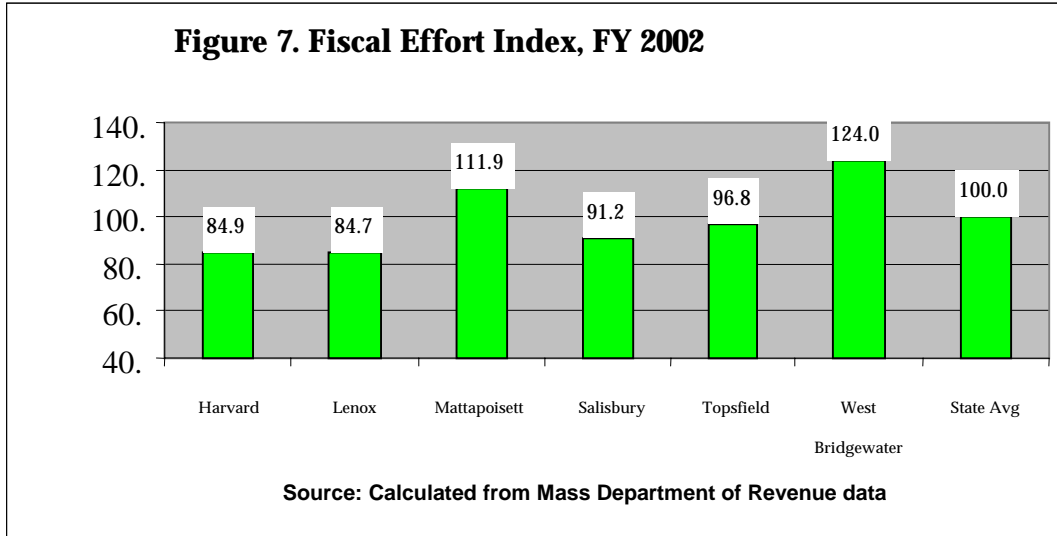


A second standard measure of municipal fiscal effort is the ratio of property tax levies to total assessed property values. For purposes of comparison, a fiscal effort index has been constructed for the 351 municipalities in Massachusetts by calculating the ratio of property tax levies to the town or city's total assessed property values. This ratio is then divided by the state average ratio to develop an index of municipal fiscal effort. A fiscal effort rating of 100 indicates that a municipality is exerting an average fiscal effort compared to other towns and cities in Massachusetts. A rating above 100 indicates that a municipality is making a higher than average fiscal effort compared to other towns and cities in Massachusetts. A rating below 100 indicates that a municipality is exerting less than the average fiscal effort compared to other towns and cities in Massachusetts.

The 351 towns and cities in Massachusetts range from a low fiscal effort of 12.5 for the Town of Chilmark to a high of 176.5 for the City of Holyoke. In general, towns with a small year-round population such as those on the Cape & Islands, but with high per capita total assessed property values make the least fiscal effort in financing municipal government. In contrast, older cities with large populations, low levels of educational attainment, and low per capita property values exert the greatest fiscal effort in financing municipal government.

The municipal fiscal effort index reveals that Mattapoisett residents are making a tax effort that is now slightly above the statewide average. In 2002, Mattapoisett was making a tax effort of 111.9, which ranks 129th among the state's 351 municipalities. In 1998, Mattapoisett's tax effort index number was a below average 86.4 (Barrow, DeSantis, Borges, Melanson 1998, 14). The town's rapidly increasing tax rates are translating into increased fiscal effort by residents, since the town has very little commercial and industrial property. Mattapoisett's tax base is highly constrained by its reliance on residential property, which accounts for 92.1 percent of its total assessed property values (compared to 80 percent statewide).

The fiscal effort indices of Harvard, Lenox, Topsfield, and Salisbury are all below average, while only West Bridgewater exerts more fiscal effort (124.0) than Mattapoisett (111.9) among the peer communities (see Figure 7).



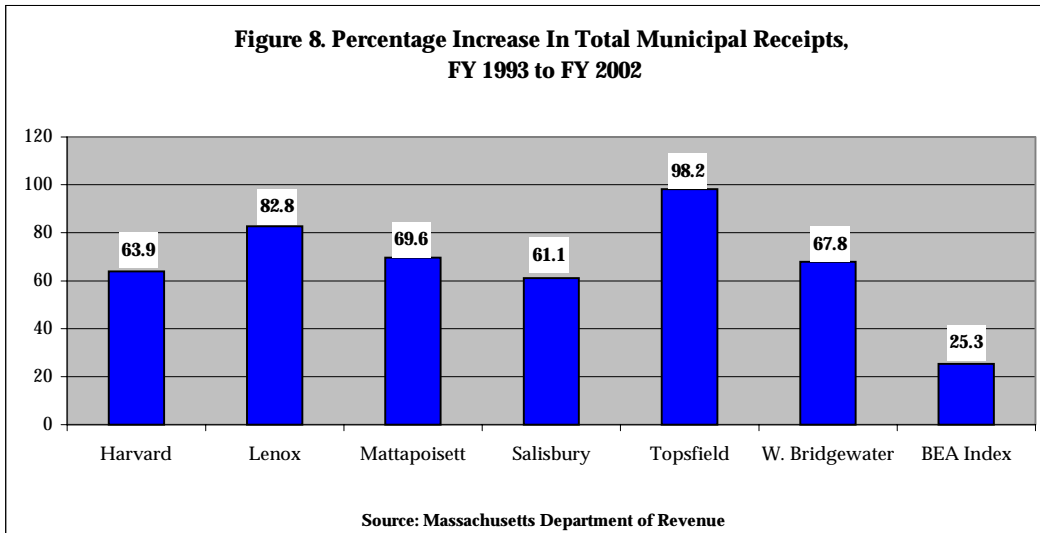
2.60 State and Local Price Index

The maintenance of comparatively low rates of taxation must be balanced against the need to maintain municipal services at the level and quality demanded by citizens. Thus, even without the expansion of governmental functions, municipal revenues must still keep pace with *inflation* and *population growth* from year to year simply to maintain the existing level and quality of municipal services. When citizens perceive government as efficient and effective in its delivery of services, a municipality is likely to find it easier to generate tax revenues at, or in excess of the rate of inflation, without significant political conflict. In municipalities where citizens sense they are “getting what they pay for,” and where municipal services are a highly valued public good, this is reflected in the town’s *fiscal effort* and its ability to raise tax rates to keep pace with inflation. Hence, an additional measure of successful government is whether municipal expenditures have kept pace with inflation. For purposes of measuring inflation, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis has developed a State and Local Price Index which measures inflation based specifically on the “basket” of goods and services purchased by state and local governments in the United States.

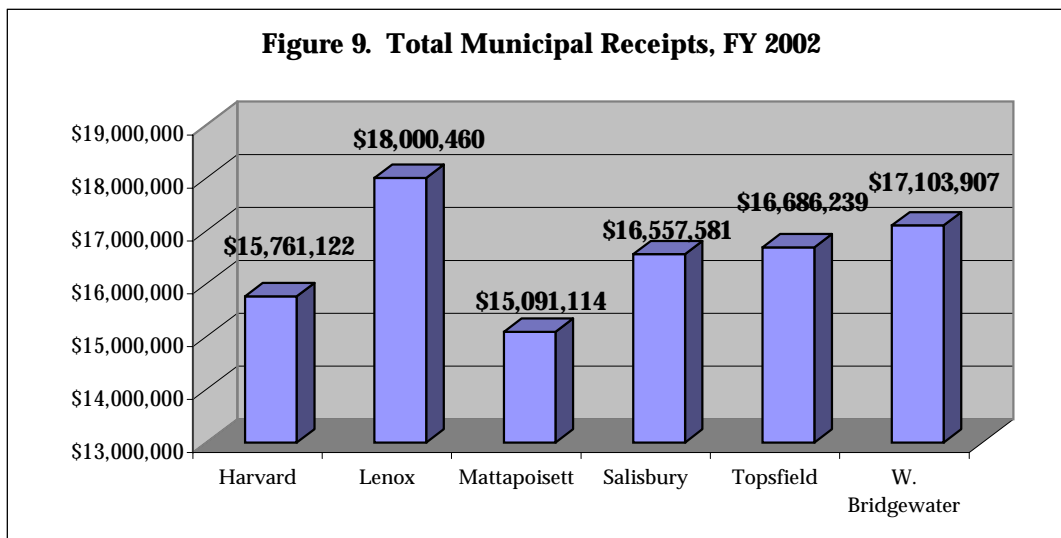
2.61 Total Revenues Collected, FY 1993 to FY 2002

The State and Local Price Index increased by 25.3% from Fiscal Year 1993 through Fiscal Year 2002. Mattapoisett’s total municipal revenues, from all sources, increased by 69.6% during this time, mainly because of residential population growth, the expansion of municipal sewerage, and increased debt service for schools and other public facilities (see

Figure 8). Each of the town's peer communities also received municipal revenues that exceeded inflation and population growth. Mattapoissett's peer communities increased total revenue collections during the previous decade between 61.1% (Salisbury) and 96.2% (Topsfield).

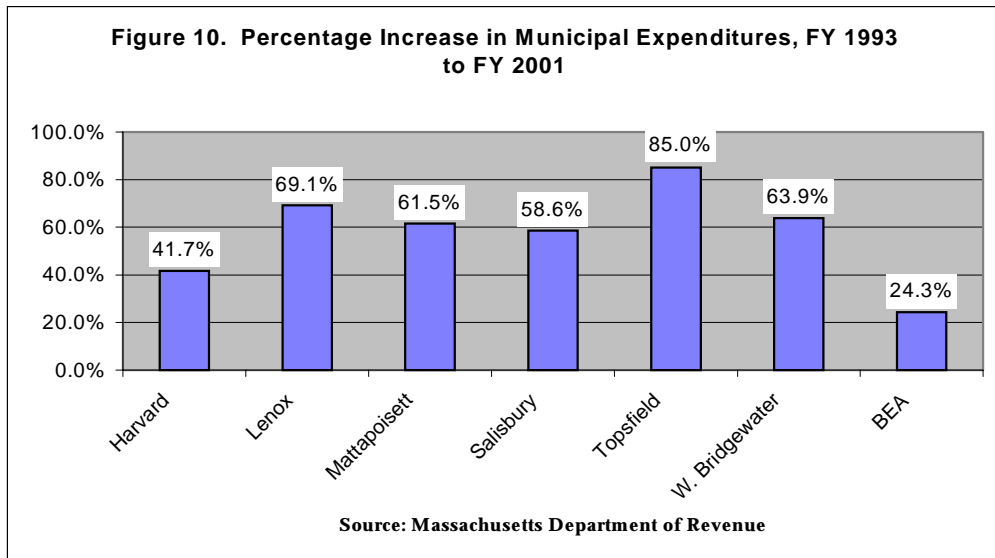


However, the constraints on Mattapoissett's tax base are evident in the fact that it collects less total revenue -- \$15.1 million in FY 2002 -- than any of its peer communities despite a substantial increase in its tax effort during the last decade. Mattapoissett (see Figure 9).

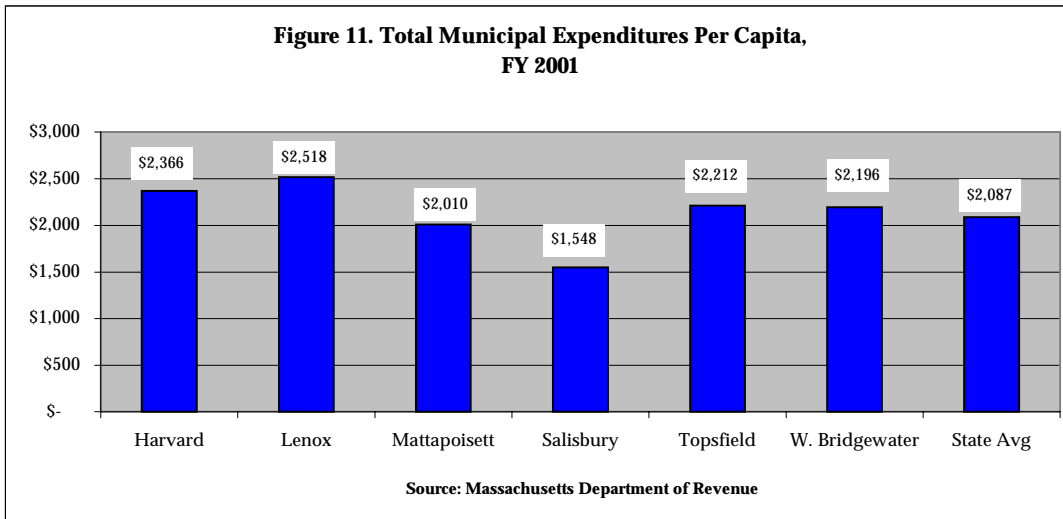


2.62 Total Municipal Expenditures, FY 1993 to FY 2001

Mattapoisett's total municipal expenditures, for all purposes, increased by 61.5% from FY 1993 through FY 2001, partly to keep pace with a 24.3% inflation rate, but also to accommodate increased population growth, debt service, and sewerage extensions (see Figure 10). Each of the town's peer communities maintained total expenditures that kept pace with inflation and population growth. Mattapoisett's peer communities increased total municipal expenditures during the ten year period from between 41.7% (Harvard) and 85.0% (Topsfield).



Mattapoisett's per capita municipal expenditures are nearly the lowest among its peer communities and are lower than the state average (see Figure 11). All but one of Mattapoisett's peer communities report expenditures per capita that are higher than the state average.



2.63 Bond Ratings

A municipality's bond rating provides an additional measure of fiscal capacity and fiscal effort. Municipalities usually incur long-term (20-year) debt by issuing general obligation bonds. General obligation bonds pledge a municipality's general revenues (i.e., its fiscal capacity) for the repayment of principal and interest on the bonds. The bonds of most municipalities in Massachusetts are rated by Moody's Investors Service with a system of lettered gradations that range from a high of "Aaa" to a low of "C." The purpose of these ratings is to provide investors with a comparative assessment of bond quality (Moody's 1993, 367). Numerous factors are considered when issuing a bond rating, but the ratio of total outstanding debt to a municipality's fiscal capacity is among the most important factors.

At the end of 2001, 239 of the state's 351 municipalities reported current Moody's bond ratings to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue.¹² The bond ratings distribution for those municipalities is shown in Table 8. The median and mean rating for Massachusetts municipalities is an "A1" (see Table 8). Mattapoisett's bond rating is A2, which is slightly above the median (see Table 9)

¹² There are 69 municipalities in Massachusetts that have bond ratings from Standard & Poor's. The Massachusetts Department of Revenue does not record a bond rating for 43 municipalities in the state, mainly because they do not have any outstanding debt. However, for some communities, the absence of a bond rating may be for any of the following reasons: (1) an application for a rating was not received or accepted, (2) the issue or issuer belongs to a group of securities that are not rated by Moody's or Standard and Poor's as a matter of policy, (3) there is a lack of essential data pertaining to the issue or issuer, or (4) the issue was privately placed (Moody's 1993, 367).

Three of the peer communities have bond ratings that are slightly higher than Mattapoisett's, while two of the peer communities have the same bond rating as Mattapoisett.

Moody's Rating	Number of Municipalities	Moody's Rating	Number of Municipalities
Aaa	9	Baa3	2
Aa3	32	Baa2	4
Aa2	21	Baa1	15
Aa1	6	Baa	10
Aa	0	Ba2	1
A3	38	Ba1	2
A2	58	Ba	0
A1	54	B	0
A	0	Total	239

Municipality	Moody's Rating
Harvard	A2
Lenox	AA3
Mattapoisett	A2
Salisbury	A3
Topsfield	Aa3
W. Bridgewater	A2

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

2.64 Total Outstanding Debt & Debt Ratios

Municipalities normally issue long-term (20 year) general obligation bonds to finance major capital projects and other major improvements. The standard measures of debt capacity are total outstanding debt per capita and total outstanding debt as a ratio of total assessed property values. Bond ratings depend on both a municipality's fiscal capacity and on its debt ratios. In Fiscal Year 2002, Mattapoisett had approximately \$17.9 million in total outstanding (unreimbursable) debt (see Table 10). The Town's carries \$2,853 in total outstanding (unreimbursable) debt per capita compared to a state average of \$1,207 per capita (see Figure 12).

However, since property taxes are the main own-source revenue for towns and cities, a municipality's debt capacity is heavily dependent on its total assessed property values (i.e., fiscal capacity). These values are so important to bond ratings that most states

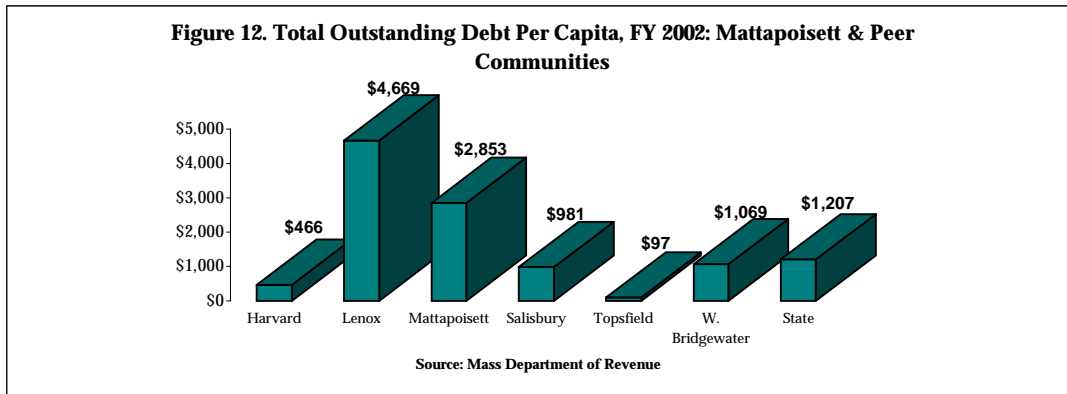
impose municipal debt ceilings based on the ratio total outstanding debt to total equalized assessed property values. The Massachusetts General Laws (Chapter 44, section 10) authorize towns to incur debt in amounts up to 5 percent of the town's equalized property values. Mattapoisett's total outstanding debt in FY 2000 was 0.5 percent of equalized assessed property values compared to a state average of 1.6 percent.

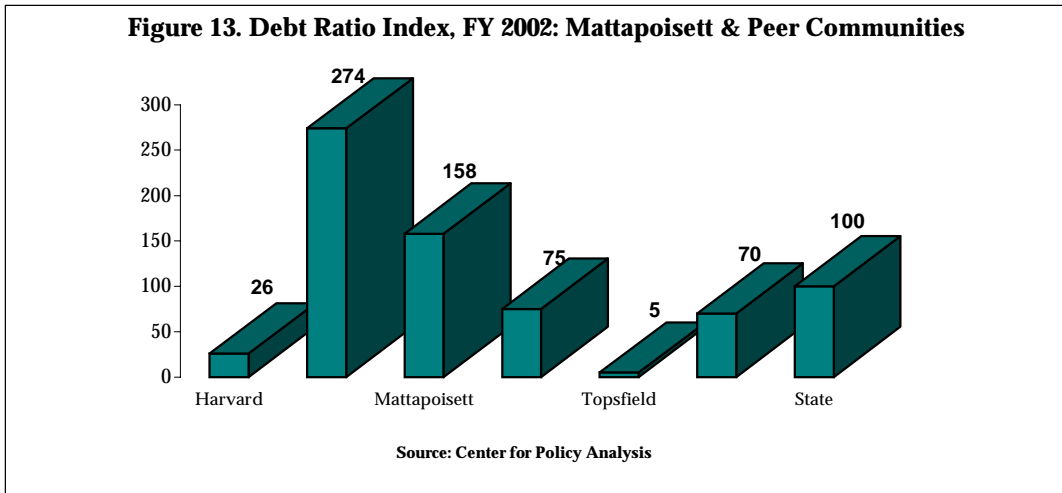
Figure 13 also compares Mattapoisett's debt ratio to other municipalities using an index in which "100" is the average debt to property value ratio for all municipalities in Massachusetts. The Town's FY 2002 debt ratio index is 158, which indicates that Mattapoisett's debt ratio was 58 percent above the state average in FY 2002 and above all of its peer communities except Lenox.

Table 10. Total Outstanding Long-Term Debt: Mattapoisett & Peer Communities

Name of Town	FY 2002 Total Outstanding Debt (est.)	FY 2002 Debt Per Capita	FY 2002 Debt as Percent of TAPV	Debt Ratio Index FY 2002
Harvard	2,790,000	\$466	0.4	26
Lenox	23,702,033	\$4,669	4.4	274
Mattapoisett	17,882,893	\$2,853	2.6	158
Salisbury	7,681,603	\$981	1.2	75
Topsfield	595,000	\$97	0.1	5
W. Bridgewater	7,092,000	\$1,069	1.1	70
State	7,309,341,160	\$1,207	1.6	100

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue & Center for Policy Analysis





2.65 Proposition 2 1/2 Overrides

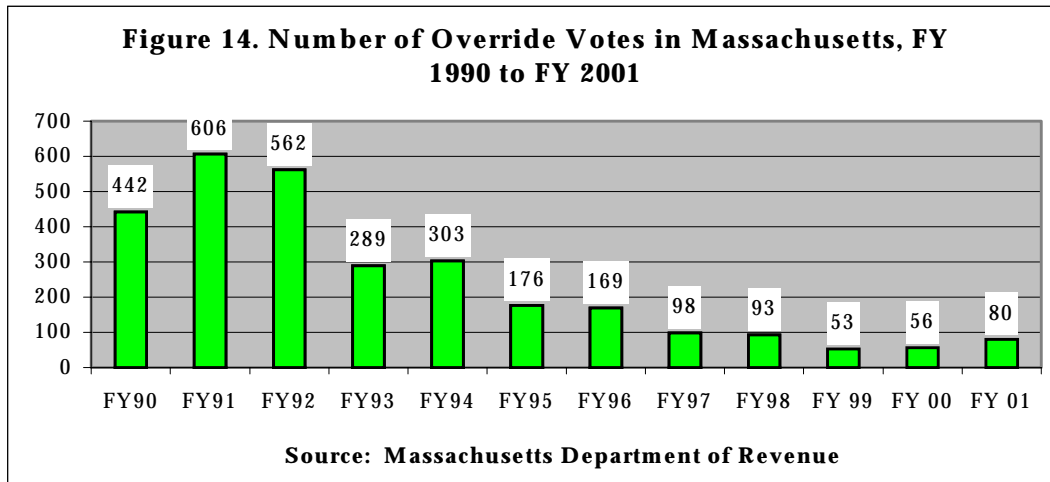
The adoption of Proposition 2½ has had a major impact on the financial operations of municipal government in Massachusetts by restricting their ability to raise property tax revenues to accommodate functional expansion, unfunded state and federal mandates, and inflation. However, Proposition 2½ allows local voters to “override” these limits by authorizing additional tax levies. Between 1990 and 2001, 282 of the state’s 351 municipalities placed a total of 2,927 Proposition 2½ overrides on the local ballot (not including debt and capital exclusion overrides). Nearly two-thirds (65.6%) of the proposed overrides placed on local ballots from 1990 to 2001 were rejected by voters. Moreover, no category of overrides has been particularly favored by voters, including schools and public safety (see Table 11).¹³

Table 11. Massachusetts Override Votes, 1990 to 1996

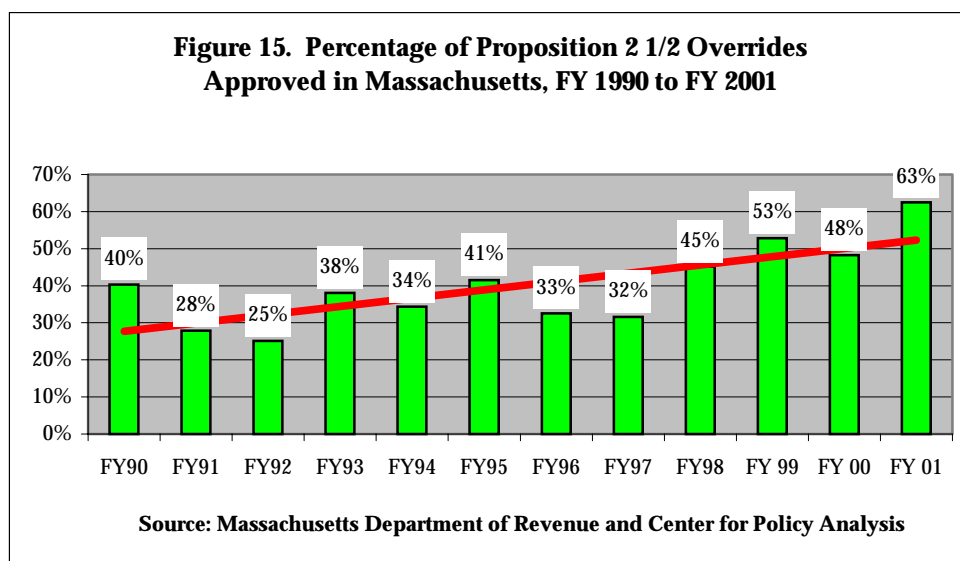
Purpose of Override	Total	Wins	Percent	Losses	Percent
General Operating	553	196	35.4%	357	64.6%
School	587	210	35.8%	377	64.2%
General Government	280	46	16.4%	234	83.6%
Public Safety	377	126	33.4%	251	66.6%
Public Works & Facilities	403	116	28.8%	287	71.2%
Health & Human Service	110	54	49.1%	56	50.9%
Culture & Recreation	194	70	36.1%	124	63.9%
Employee Benefits	24	6	25.0%	18	75.0%
Funds	17	13	76.5%	4	23.5%
Pre-Proposition 2 1/2 Debt	0	0		0	
Total	2545	837	32.9%	1708	67.1%

¹³ The Massachusetts Department of Revenue has not provided a standard classification of overrides since FY 1997.

One consequence of voters' consistent rejection of overrides is that elected officials have become increasingly reluctant to place them on local ballots. The number of overrides submitted to municipal voters has declined from a peak of 606 in Fiscal Year 1991 (the trough of the last recession) to an all-time low of only 53 in Fiscal Year 1999 (see Figure 14). The decline in the number of overrides submitted to voters is partially related to the state's improving economy, since the declining number of overrides on local ballots closely tracks the business cycle.



However, as elected officials have become more selective about the types of overrides proposed for local ballots, the percentage of overrides approved by voters has steadily increased since FY 1998. A majority of proposed overrides have been approved by voters statewide since FY 1999 (see Figure 15).



From 1990 to 2001 Mattapoisett placed 54 Proposition 2 ½ overrides on its local ballot and 22 (41%) of these overrides were approved by voters. Mattapoisett has approved a larger number of Proposition 2 ½ overrides than any of its peer communities (see Table 12).

Table 12. Proposition 2 1/2 Override Votes: Mattapoisett & Peer Communities, 1990 to 2001		
	<u>Override Attempts</u>	<u>Overrides Passed</u>
Harvard	17	13
Lenox	0	0
Mattapoisett	54	22
Salisbury	20	7
Topsfield	15	8
West Bridgewater	5	1
Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue		

Massachusetts voters have been more likely to approve items for Proposition 2½ debt exclusions and capital exclusions. From Fiscal Year 1990 through Fiscal Year 1999, 1,258 debt exclusions were placed on local ballots in Massachusetts. During the 1990s, voters approved 65.9% of the Proposition 2½ debt exclusions placed on local ballots. The willingness to approve debt exclusions has also increased steadily over the last decade. In Fiscal Year 1990, 48.6% of debt exclusions were approved by voters, but the approval rate has risen consistently to 79.9% in Fiscal Year 1999 (see Table 13).

Table 13. Proposition 2 1/2 Debt Exclusions, FY 1990 to FY 2001					
<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Attempts</u>	<u>Wins</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Losses</u>	<u>Percent</u>
FY90	257	125	48.6%	132	51.4%
FY91	151	90	59.6%	61	40.4%
FY92	104	72	69.2%	32	30.8%
FY93	172	108	62.8%	64	37.2%
FY94	171	99	57.9%	72	42.1%
FY95	193	131	67.9%	62	32.1%
FY96	196	149	76.0%	47	24.0%
FY97	131	93	71.0%	38	29.0%
FY98	114	91	79.8%	23	20.2%
FY 99	169	135	79.9%	34	20.1%
TOTAL	1658	1093	65.9%	565	34.1%
Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue					

From Fiscal Year 1990 through Fiscal Year 2001, there were 883 capital exclusions placed on local ballots in Massachusetts. During that time, 66.7% of all capital exclusions were been approved by municipal voters. The electorate’s willingness to approve capital exclusions began to increase dramatically in FY 1997. In Fiscal Year 1990, only 42.6% of

all capital exclusions were approved by municipal voters, but this number has risen to a high of 78.8% in Fiscal Year 1999 (see Table 14).

Table 14. Proposition 2 1/2 Capital Exclusions, FY 1990 to FY 2001					
Fiscal Year	Attempts	Wins	Percent	Losses	Percent
FY90	115	49	42.6%	66	57.4%
FY91	131	47	35.9%	84	64.1%
FY92	102	37	36.3%	65	63.7%
FY93	91	50	54.9%	41	45.1%
FY94	70	41	58.6%	29	41.4%
FY95	102	46	45.1%	56	54.9%
FY96	77	38	49.4%	39	50.6%
FY97	53	35	66.0%	18	34.0%
FY98	64	49	76.6%	15	23.4%
FY 99	45	35	77.8%	10	22.2%
FY 00	N/A	N/A		N/A	
FY 01	33	22	66.7%	11	33.3%
TOTAL	883	449	50.8%	434	49.2%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

The Town of Mattapoisett and its peer communities have been active in the statewide trend toward debt exclusion and capital exclusion overrides. Mattapoisett has placed 86 debt exclusion overrides on the local ballot from 1990 to 1999 and 65 (76%) of the proposed overrides have been approved by voters. While the total number of debt exclusion overrides approved in Mattapoisett far exceeds those of its peer communities, the total debt incurred as a result of these overrides is not out of line with the amounts approved in similar communities (see Table 15).

Mattapoisett has also been active in adopting capital exclusion overrides, although the total amounts of expenditures are comparative small (see Table 16).

Table 15. Proposition 2 1/2 Debt Exclusion Override Votes: Mattapoisett & Peer Communities, 1990 to 2001			
	<u>Override Attempts</u>	<u>Overrides Passed</u>	<u>New Debt Incurred</u>
Harvard	10	10	\$327,543
Lenox	11	11	\$4,413,385
Mattapoisett	86	65	\$2,241,982
Salisbury	7	5	\$1,956,002
Topsfield	14	12	\$1,486,135
West Bridgewater	5	4	\$1,147,115

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

Table 16. Proposition 2 1/2 Capital Exclusion Override Votes: Mattapoisett & Peer Communities, 1990 to 2001

	<u>Override Attempts</u>	<u>Overrides Passed</u>	<u>New Debt Incurred</u>
Harvard	13	12	\$11,033,200
Lenox	0	0	\$0
Mattapoisett	15	6	\$104,356
Salisbury	0	0	\$0
Topsfield	3	2	\$197,208
West Bridgewater	0	0	\$0
Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue			

3.00 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PEER COMMUNITIES

The Center for Policy Analysis consulting team conducted a series of interviews with municipal officials in Mattapoisett and the five peer communities identified in Section 2.00. The consulting team conducted one-hour interviews with each of Mattapoisett's three Selectmen, the Executive Secretary, and the town's major department heads, as well as the chairs of the Finance Committee, Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Personnel Board, and Computer Advisory Board. The consulting team also interviewed the chief administrative officer in each of the five peer communities. The consulting team supplemented these interviews with a review of annual town reports, charters, by-laws, master plans, and other municipal documents.

The key informant interviews and the documents review were both designed to solicit comparisons between Mattapoisett and its peer communities and, in particular, to identify the similarities and differences in management structure between Mattapoisett and the other five communities. These differences provide an additional basis for evaluating Mattapoisett's municipal management structure, particularly when interpreted in conjunction with the trends and data discussed in Section 2.00.

3.10 The Fiscal and Management Impact of Decentralization

Mattapoisett exemplifies the traditional model of decentralized town government originally established in the Massachusetts General Laws, including the fragmentation of decision-making authority intrinsic to that type of government (see Figure 16). In a previous study of Marion's town government, the CFPA analyzed organization and management practices in six communities, including Mattapoisett. The Consultants found that Mattapoisett was the only community in that peer group that had retained a highly decentralized town government despite a steady increase in municipal functions over the last two decades (Barrow, DeSantis et al 1998, 28-31).¹⁴ In our current review of five additional peer communities, we find that Mattapoisett is again the most decentralized and fragmented town government among its peers.

First, public works is often the largest department in town government, but in Mattapoisett Selectmen and their Executive Secretary have exercised little authority in the area of Public Works. Water and sewer are under the jurisdiction of an elected Water and Sewer Commission, which operates those systems on an Enterprise Fund basis. Wastewater treatment is provided through a contract with the Town of Fairhaven, which owns and operates a wastewater treatment facility. Solid waste disposal is also contracted out to a private firm (ABC Waste Disposal). Finally, Mattapoisett has an elected Highway Surveyor who is responsible for administering Chapter 90 street and highway funds received from the state.

¹⁴ The peer communities in the Town of Marion study were Mattapoisett, Rochester, Boxford, Marion, Middleton, and Mashpee.

[page left blank for Figure 16: Model of Decentralized Town Govt.]

Similarly, the town's financial operations are further decentralized among an elected Board of Assessors, an elected Treasurer/Collector, an elected Finance Committee, an appointed Personnel Board (which can impact salary expenditures), and an appointed Town Accountant. The budget is prepared by the Finance Committee, with some support from the Town Accountant, but there is little effective coordination of revenue estimates (Assessors), tax policy (Selectmen), revenue collection and management (Treasurer/Collector), personnel policy (Personnel Board), budget preparation (Finance Committee), and expenditures (Town Accountant).

The town's decentralized system of public works further exaggerates the its lack of effective fiscal and management coordination, because the Water and Sewer Commission and Highway Surveyor both have independent budgets and revenue. The Water and Sewer Commission has the authority to raise revenue in the form of water and sewer fees and to impose capital assessments for sewerage extensions. The state's Chapter 90 street and highway funds are allotted directly to elective Highway Surveyors, who have the exclusive authority to direct the expenditure of those funds. This means that neither Selectmen nor the Finance Committee have any capacity to direct the expenditure of these funds in a way that supports established town priorities or the priorities identified in the town's comprehensive master plan. These issues are all compounded by the town's rapidly growing long-term debt and the absence of any systematic or coordinated process for capital planning.

There is no short-term solution to Mattapoissett's fiscal pressures, which all key informants identify as the major challenge to town government over the next decade. Mattapoissett has a highly constrained tax base that relies heavily on residential property, while its income profile limits its eligibility for state aid in the form of general revenue sharing.¹⁵ However, it is possible to better manage these pressures with more effective coordination of town departments, more effective coordination of fiscal and debt policies, and a long-term capital planning process.

3.11 General Management

The specific powers and duties of an Executive Secretary are not defined in the Massachusetts General Laws (Chapter 41, section 23A) and, consequently, there is no standard job description for the position. The role of an Executive Secretary or other chief administrative officer is defined in several different ways: tradition and past practice, the town charter, special legislation (town manager), or a formal written job description. One or more of these mechanisms may be employed to provide varying degrees of specificity in assigning responsibilities to the chief administrative officer.

The traditional role of the Executive Secretary evolved out of the direct democracy and volunteer citizen government of small rural towns in New England where the

¹⁵ State aid from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts provides 28.1 percent of all municipal budgets, but accounts for only 19.3 of Mattapoissett's FY 2002 revenues.

demands on town government were minimal. The Board of Selectmen are charged with overseeing town government, but governing authority is also diffused among numerous elected boards and offices, including the Board of Assessors, Board of Health, Planning Board, Highway Surveyor, Town Clerk, and Treasurer/Collector. In this decentralized model of town government, selectmen are the most important elective board, but they remain merely one board among many others with decision-making authority.

The main role of the Executive Secretary in this traditional model of decentralized town government is to act as a liaison between citizens and the Board of Selectmen mainly by bringing citizen complaints and other business to the Selectmen's attention. The Executive Secretary provides administrative support to the Board of Selectmen by posting meetings, preparing the agenda for Selectmen's meetings, and acting as chief procurement officer. The Executive Secretary will forward or refer citizen questions to other boards when appropriate (e.g., health, assessors, planning). The Executive Secretary also coordinates the Selectmen's activities with other elected boards and may serve as a central scheduling officer for town government.

In this decentralized model, the Executive Secretary has no supervisory authority over other departments, since most department heads are appointed by the Selectmen and report directly to the Selectmen on a day-to-day basis (e.g., Building Inspector, Fire Chief, Harbormaster, Chief of Police, Town Accountant). Some departments are headed by independently elected officials (e.g., Town Clerk, Highway Surveyor), while others report directly to an elected volunteer board (e.g., Public Works, Assessors). Consequently, the Executive Secretary rarely acts without prior authorization from the Selectmen and operates on a day-to-day basis within tight restrictions defined by the Selectmen.

Mattapoissett's Executive Secretary has fulfilled the traditional role for that position despite the fact that Article 2.8 of the town's General By-Laws broadly authorize the Executive Secretary to:

act by and for the Selectmen in any matter which they shall assign to him relating to the administration of the town or of any town office or department under their supervision or control, or, with the approval of the Selectmen may perform such other duties as may be requested of him by any other board, officer, committee or commission.

Consequently, the limited role assigned to the town's executive secretary has been institutionalized almost exclusively through informal practice and the individual's employment contract (Section 14), which constitutes "the entire agreement between the parties" (i.e., Selectmen and Executive Secretary). The Executive Secretary's current contract does not include a specific list of responsibilities, but states only that the employee is:

“..to perform all required functions and duties and to perform other legally permissible and proper duties and functions as shall from time to time assign” (Section 1).

In practice, the Executive Secretary’s responsibilities include procurement, serving as the Selectmen’s clerk, serving as the parking clerk, providing liaison between citizens and the Selectmen, referring citizens to appropriate offices, and processing paperwork related to personnel hires, including acting as the town’s affirmative action officer. The Executive Secretary confers with the Selectmen on a daily basis and works with an informed understanding of the strict limits to the Executive Secretary’s decision-making authority. Other major department heads, such as the Building Inspector, Harbormaster, Fire Chief, Police Chief, Recreation Director, and Town Accountant report directly to the Board of Selectmen.

Mattapoissett occupies a rather anomalous position in comparison to its peers, since it is now one of only 30 towns in Massachusetts with an Executive Secretary. The Town of West Bridgewater (pop. 6,634) is the only community among Mattapoissett’s identified peers, where the CAO exercises responsibilities comparable to those of Mattapoissett’s Executive Secretary. The West Bridgewater CAO’s title was only recently changed from Administrative Assistant to Administrator to the Selectmen, with the individual holding a B.A. in political science. However, the West Bridgewater Selectmen exercise a wider span of authority than in Mattapoissett, particularly with respect to the Herring Inspector, Streets Superintendent, and Treasurer/Collector, which are appointed positions in that town (Town of West Bridgewater 2001).

In contrast to these communities, there is a clear trend in Massachusetts for the Executive Secretary to assume expanded roles and responsibilities as small towns grow in population and complexity. The emergence of “strong” Executive Secretaries in Massachusetts is partly behind the trend toward retitleing the position to Town Administrator and, in fact, it is not uncommon for younger Executive Secretaries to leave those positions to become Town Administrators in comparable towns.

The Town of Topsfield (pop. 6,141) is the only one of Mattapoissett’s five peer communities to still use the title of Executive Secretary for its chief administrative officer, but *the actual powers and responsibilities* exercised by that town’s Executive Secretary are much greater than those exercised by the Executive Secretary in Mattapoissett. Topsfield’s Executive Secretary has been in the town’s CAO position for sixteen years with a B.A. in political science and an M.P.A. Topsfield’s Executive Secretary exercises powers that are comparable to those of a Town Administrator and, thus, *in practice* it is a much stronger position than the one in Mattapoissett. For example, the Topsfield Executive Secretary is charged with:

“direct or general supervision of all department heads reporting to the Board of Selectmen..which includes: providing assistance in program planning, grantsmanship, and budget development..making

recommendations to the Board of Selectmen in conjunction with department heads..supervises, directs, and coordinates town services under the jurisdiction of the Board of Selectmen” (Town of Topsfield 1998).¹⁶

In Topsfield, the Board of Selectmen appoint the Animal Control Officer, Board of Health and Health Agent, Conservation Commission, Council on Aging, Fence Viewers, Finance Committee, Fire Chief, Forest Warden, Highway Superintendent, Inspectors (Building, Plumbing, Wire, Gas), Personnel Board, Principal Assessor, Sealer of Weights and Measures, Town Accountant, Treasurer/Collector, Tree Warden, Veteran’s Agent, Zoning Board of Appeals, and numerous citizen committees. The elected departments and boards include the Board of Assessors, Board of Water Commissioners, Road Commissioners, Park and Cemetery Commissioners, Town Clerk, and Planning Board (Town of Topsfield 2000).

The Town of Harvard (pop. 5,981) replaced what was formerly the Selectmen’s Administrative Assistant with a Town Administrator in 1990 mainly because the town needed day-to-day management that the Selectmen and volunteer boards could no longer provide on a consistent basis. Harvard’s current Town Administrator, who has a B.A. in economics and a Master’s of Public Policy, came to Harvard from a previous CAO position as Millville’s Executive Secretary. The Town Administrator in Harvard exercises the normal authority and duties of that position, including:

“Management of the Office of the Board of Selectmen, other departments under the control of the Board of Selectmen, and the establishment of effective working relationships amongst all Town boards, departments, commissions, and committees” (Town Harvard 2002a).

In Harvard, the Board of Selectmen appoint the Animal Control Officer, Conservation Commission, Council on Aging, Fence Viewers, Finance Committee, Finance Department (Finance Director, Treasurer/Collector, Assessor, Town Accountant), Fire and Police Chiefs, Inspection Services (Building, Zoning, Plumbing, Wire, Gas), Personnel Board, Public Works, Sealer of Weights and Measures, Zoning Board of Appeals, and numerous citizen committees. The elected departments and boards consist mainly of the Town Clerk, Planning Board, and Board of Health (Town of Harvard 2001).

In the most centralized form of town management, the Executive Secretary’s position is replaced by a Town Manager. The Town Manager’s position must be created either by a home rule charter or other special act of the legislature that describes the duties, responsibilities, and authority of the position. The main reason for creating a Town Manager is to centralize municipal functions under a strong chief administrative officer. One of the major differences between a Town Administrator and a Town

¹⁶ This position was upgraded from Administrative Assistant to Executive Secretary in 1998 without any substantial change in responsibilities.

Manager is that the latter position is vested with the exclusive authority to appoint department heads, town personnel, and even the members of many volunteer boards or commissions (see Figure 17).

The Town of Lenox (pop. 5,057) and the Town of Salisbury (pop. 7,827) both have Town Managers. In both towns, the drive to create a Town Manager was initiated by the Selectmen, who felt overwhelmed with the increased demands of population growth, fiscal and budget management, and the complexity of state and federal regulations in areas such as housing, zoning, financial reporting, environmental regulation, solid waste disposal, grant writing, and program evaluation. Consequently, both towns created the Town Manager's position in 1991 by a special act of the state legislature (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1991) in an effort to depoliticize and professionalize day-to-day town management so Selectmen could focus on the development of long-term policy.

In Lenox, the Town Manager *appoints* all department heads, including the Director of Public Works, Town Clerk/Treasurer, Collector, Fire Chief, Inspectors (building, wire, plumbing, gas), Police Chief, and Town Accountant/MIS Director, while also serving as the town's economic development officer (Town of Lenox 2001). Many of the town's appointive commissions (Conservation, Parks & Recreation) and citizen committees also report to the Town Manager even though they are appointed by the Selectmen. In Lenox, only the Board of Assessors, Board of Health, and Planning Board are independently elected and outside the Selectmen's and Town Manager's direct span of authority.

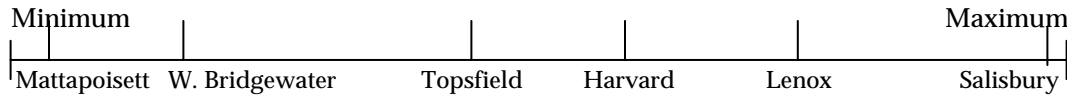
Lenox's Town Manager has a B.A. in policy studies and an M.S. in resource management and administration and accepted the position after serving as a Town Administrator and Director of Planning in Stowe, Vermont. The town specifically sought an individual with a planning background, since the town issues about 300 building permits per year, including 30 for new residential construction with the rest for commercial and residential renovations. The town is a resort community with a strong second home market and the site of a new tournament level golf course.

In Salisbury, the Town Manager *appoints* all department heads as well as the members of the Zoning Board of Appeals, Board of Health, Board of Assessors, Conservation Commission, the Town Planner, and the Council on Aging Director (Town of Salisbury 1999). Salisbury's Town Manager has a B.A. in political science and an M.P.A. and accepted the position after serving as a Town Manager in Ohio. Salisbury is also a beachfront resort community and the site of Salisbury State Beach.¹⁷

¹⁷ While maintaining their status as resort communities, Lenox generates 27.5 percent of its annual revenues from taxes on commercial and industrial property, and Salisbury 21.2 percent, compared to 8 percent for Mattapoissett. Due to their resort status, Lenox collects approximately \$2 million annually in room occupancy tax revenue, while Salisbury collects approximately \$2 million in parking fees from the state beach.

[page left blank for Figure 17: Model of Centralized Town Govt.]

Thus, within the spectrum of authority and responsibility that Selectmen may delegate to a chief administrative officer, the consulting team finds that Mattapoisett and Salisbury define the “minimum” and “maximum” roles possible under Massachusetts General Laws. Based on their interviews, a review town annual reports, and a review of comparable town charters, the consulting team finds that West Bridgewater, Topsfield, Harvard, and Lenox each occupy points along this sliding scale between the minimum and maximum roles:



There is an identifiable need for increased professional expertise in town management and for greater coordination of the town’s major departments. The town’s major departments currently function as separate islands in town government that each report independently to the Board of Selectmen and this centrifugal effect is compounded by the large number of policy-making positions that are elected in Mattapoisett. This means that Selectmen must be continually involved in the day-to-day administration of town government, rather than focused on larger policy issues such as budget and revenue objectives, economic development, and master planning. The town does not need to fundamentally alter its form of government, but bringing greater professionalization and coordination to town management does require major changes in the structure of town management beginning with the creation and appointment of a Town Administrator.

There are numerous consequences to not having a chief administrative officer in Mattapoisett who exercises the supervisory authority typical of a Town Administrator in Massachusetts. First, the town does not attract grants and intergovernmental revenues at a level comparable to many of its peer communities. Massachusetts municipalities collect revenues from the property tax levy, state aid, local receipts (e.g., sewer fees, beach stickers, parking fees), and other sources that include federal and state grants. In Fiscal Year 2002, Mattapoisett received only 6.13 % of its total revenues from “other sources” compared to 7.33% for Salisbury, 9.86% for Topsfield, and 11.21% for Lenox. The chief administrative officer is typically responsible for identifying and applying for grant monies and other intergovernmental revenues or supporting department heads in their applying for such funds. A Town Administrator capable of increasing the proportion of the municipal budget coming from state and federal grants by only 1 percent (\$125,000) would literally “pay for itself” with only one or two substantial grants.

Second, despite significant progress in improving the town’s financial departments, the process of budget preparation, routine budget oversight, and the review of budget objectives is not coordinated at the executive level. A chief administrative officer will typically receive requests from department heads and prepare a recommended budget for the Selectmen, which after their review and approval, is

submitted to the Finance Committee. A chief administrative officer is also normally responsible for continuously monitoring departmental budgets and acting as the Selectmen's budget manager. It is impossible to quantify the long-term efficiencies that might be achieved from implementing such practices, but a process of coordinated budget development, approval, and review should help the Selectmen achieve better control over strategic financial priorities.

Third, a Town Administrator (as opposed to an Executive Secretary) directs and supervises the administration of all offices, boards, committees, and commissions under the Board of Selectmen's jurisdiction. A significant component of this supervision usually includes a major role in collective bargaining, grievance handling, the evaluation of department heads, and affirmative action enforcement. It is impossible to quantify the long-term productivity improvements that are likely to occur through expert labor negotiations and performance review, but most experts consider it an essential step toward improving employee productivity (Luthy 1998; Risher 1998; Freyss 1999).

Finally, additional productivity improvements are likely to be implemented by a chief administrative officer with respect to the Town's information services. Many towns and cities have reduced the inefficient use of employee time with web pages that provide basic information on town government, email inquiries, forms-by-fax, or Internet submission of basic forms. By allowing citizens to make electronic inquiries without placing demands on employee time, many of the functions now performed by the Executive Secretary could be "automated" through various information services (Ulrich 1996).

3.12 Financial Management

Mattapoissett's financial operations are divided between an elected Board of Assessors, an elected Treasurer/Collector, an appointed Finance Committee, an appointed Personnel Board (which can impact salary expenditures), and an appointed Town Accountant. The budget is prepared by the Finance Committee, with some support from the Town Accountant, but there is little effective coordination of revenue estimates (Assessors), tax policy (Selectmen), revenue collection and management (Treasurer/Collector), personnel policy (Personnel Board), budget preparation (Finance Committee), expenditures (department heads, boards, commissions), and auditing (Town Accountant). Moreover, while voters rightly hold Selectmen accountable for the town's financial policy, the Selectmen have limited control of the town budget or its administration.

3.12a Treasurer/Collector

There is a clear trend toward converting the elected Treasurer/Collector position in Massachusetts to a professional level appointment made by the Selectmen. All of Mattapoissett's peer communities -- West Bridgewater, Topsfield, Harvard, Lenox, Salisbury -- have an appointed Treasurer/Collector. There are many reasons for this trend,

including the increased size and complexity of town budgets, the need to manage and separately track multiple sources of revenue (state and federal grants, state aid, property taxes, excise taxes), state reporting regulations, the growing importance of debt management and credibility with bond rating agencies, and the growing complexity of cash management practices. Elections simply do not guarantee that an office holder will have professional qualifications and financial management experience.

3.12b Finance Director

The appointment of a town Finance Director is another clear trend that has emerged during the last decade. The ideal textbook arrangement calls for the Finance Director to oversee all town financial officers, including the Assessor, Treasurer/Collector, and Town Accountant. The Finance Director often sits as an ex-officio member of the Finance Committee and Personnel Board or at a minimum works closely with the Town Administrator and Finance Committee to prepare a proposed budget for submission to town meeting. This creates a seamless financial operation from assessment through collection, cash and debt management, expenditures, and auditing.

This textbook arrangement is still rare in Massachusetts, partly because most towns are reluctant to give up an elected Board of Assessors, but also because this arrangement adds two additional high-cost professional employees to the payroll (i.e., Assessor, Finance Director). Nevertheless, Harvard and Topsfield are examples of towns that have adopted this increasingly accepted arrangement. Salisbury approximates this arrangement since the Board of Assessors and all other financial officers are appointed by the Town Manager. There is simply no other town among its peers with such a fragmented system for developing and implementing financial policy.

However, many towns are opting for improvements short of a fully consolidated Finance Department. This typically involves the creation a Finance Director/Town Accountant (or sometimes Finance Director/Treasurer/Collector), since in certain respects the Town Accountant already “supervises” or advises other financial officers. The Finance Director/Town Accountant will normally supervise the Treasurer/Collector, while working closely with the Town Administrator and Finance Committee to prepare the annual town budget. The Finance Director/Town Accountant also provides technical support to the Board of Assessors and the Assessor’s Clerk. While this is a “second best” arrangement it is easily implemented with nominal costs that are probably recovered through better financial management (e.g., improved bond rating, cash management and interest).

3.12c Capital Planning

The demands for municipal capital planning have escalated rapidly in small towns over the last two decades. Towns have undertaken additional water and sewerage expansion to accommodate population growth. Population growth, education reform, and aging schools are resulting in a stampede of new school construction throughout

Massachusetts. The physical plant of many municipalities is either deteriorating or inadequate to accommodate the new demands placed on town governments with century-old town halls that lack sufficient office space, storage room, modern security controls, access for the disabled, electrical capacity, and hardwired computing networks. Technology has also placed increased pressure on towns to deliver services in new ways. Computers and up-to-date software can radically change the way local government operates, while increasing citizens' expectations for an efficient, rapid, and effective response to their many demands on government.

Consequently, most towns in Massachusetts now have some type of "Capital Planning Committee" that is responsible for developing and regularly updating a five-year capital plan. A capital expenditure is any item that costs \$10,000 or more and has an expected life-span of five-years or longer: schools, town halls and municipal buildings, police cruisers, fire trucks, construction equipment, land, docks and marinas, and many other items (Bowyer 1993; Vaday, Young, and Daley 1993; MDOR 1997). Mattapoissett has a "Capital Needs Committee," which suggests a traditional approach to capital expenditures (i.e., need-based analysis and revenue-driven analysis) that has largely been abandoned over the last decade. In the needs-driven approach, a local government develops a wish list of needed capital projects and then tries to finance them. In a revenue-driven approach, a municipal government first determines its fiscal capacity and then develops a capital projects within the limits of its defined fiscal capacity.

Since the early 1990s, municipalities have adopted a non-traditional "scenario driven approach" to capital improvements, which is typically reflected in the creation of a Capital Planning Committee or a Capital Improvement Program. In a scenario-driven approach, a local government develops two or more scenarios using different assumptions about needs and revenues and then uses these scenarios to identify the best combination of capital improvements in conjunction with a long-term financing plan (Vaday, Young, and Daley 1993, 4-5). Regardless of the approach to capital planning that Mattapoissett chooses to adopt, the Consultants found that Mattapoissett's peer communities have far more active capital planning committees and these committees exercise a more authoritative role in identifying, vetting, and planning capital expenditures. These committees establish disciplined lists of five-year capital priorities that are updated each year and submitted to the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee adheres to these priorities as closely as possible, particularly with respect to the expenditure of free cash, the recommendation of Proposition 2 ½ overrides, and bonding. In many cases, the structure and charge of the Capital Needs Committee are established in the town by-laws.

There are numerous benefits to maintaining an active, consistent, and disciplined capital improvements program. These benefits include focusing citizen's and office holders attention on long-term community goals, needs, and financial capabilities and establishing a balance between them that achieves optimum use of the taxpayer's dollars. It also provides a mechanism for guiding future community growth in directions that are consistent with the town's long-term master plan. Finally, an active capital improvement

program insures that capital needs are identified on a timely basis and that public facilities are repaired or replaced before deteriorating to unacceptable levels. A capital improvement program can also enhance opportunities for a town to participate in federal and state grant-in-aid programs (Vaday et al 1993, 2).

3.20 Public Works

The Town of Mattapoisett and most of its peer communities act as direct providers of municipal services, particularly public works, to a lesser degree than many comparable communities in Massachusetts (e.g., Marion). The decision to act directly as a public vendor of municipal services has a significant impact on the configuration of town departments and on the chief administrative officer's responsibilities in managing town government. The comparative analysis of the departments listed below is not exhaustive, but is designed to highlight the most important differences between Mattapoisett and its identified peer communities.

A Department of Public Works provides some of the most basic municipal services in most towns. Towns configure their public works services differently, but they are likely to include many or all of the following types of services:

- Streets – design, construction, repair, maintenance, snow and ice removal, lighting
- Water – water system design, treatment, distribution system maintenance and repair, meter reading and billing
- Sewage – same as for water (except meter reading)
- Traffic – signal installation and maintenance, sign installation and maintenance
- Solid Waste – collection and disposal
- Engineering – relating to streets, water, sewer, traffic, etc.
- Building maintenance and custodial service
- Parks and grounds maintenance
- Cemetery maintenance
- Equipment maintenance

Mattapoisett's public works functions are divided between an elected Highway Surveyor, an elected Water & Sewer Commission, privately-contracted solid waste disposal (ABC, Inc.), an elected Board of Health, and a Town Engineering Consultant, while there is no department responsible for building maintenance and custodial service. The Highway Surveyor is responsible for streets, traffic, parks and grounds maintenance, cemetery maintenance, and equipment maintenance. The Water and Sewer Commission is responsible for town water and sewer, which is operated on an Enterprise Fund basis with independent fee setting authority. The Town of Fairhaven provides wastewater treatment for Mattapoisett on a contract basis. Individual households and businesses can contract with ABC, Inc. for curbside solid waste disposal or dispose of waste at a transfer station operated by the Board of Health. Town personnel are individually responsible for office maintenance, although no department regularly evaluates and maintains buildings.

3.21 Water and Sewer

The separate election of water and/or sewer commissioners is still quite common in Massachusetts mainly because water and sewer can be operated as financially self-sufficient enterprise funds. This arrangement shifts the full cost of service delivery – both capital investment and operating expenses – onto users and off the town’s general revenue ledger. This arrangement is generally considered more equitable because it places the full cost of service delivery on direct beneficiaries, but it is expected to produce greater long-term efficiency and accountability because the full costs of service delivery, including capital expenses, are more transparent to voters and service recipients. It also relieves the town’s chief administrative officer from responsibility for this highly technical administrative function and thus allows the CAO to focus their abilities on other aspects of town government that can benefit from professional management (e.g., personnel, budget management, grant writing, planning and economic development).

This is also the typical arrangement among Mattapoissett’s peer communities. Despite wide variations in other aspects of town management, West Bridgewater, Topsfield, and Harvard all have an elected Board of Water Commissioners with no town sewerage. Lenox and Salisbury, which both have a Town Manager, have an appointed (by Town Manager) Superintendent of Public Works who oversees streets and highways, cemeteries, water, and sewer.

On the other hand, elected Highway Surveyors have been abolished by most towns in Massachusetts and there has been a clear trend over the last twenty years to replace this position with an appointed (by Selectmen) Streets and Highways Superintendent.¹⁸ Only 20 (6.6%) towns in Massachusetts still have elected Highway Surveyors and most of those communities are tightly clustered in Central Massachusetts (10) and Southeastern Massachusetts (7) (see Table 17). None of Mattapoissett’s peer communities has an elected Highway Surveyor. Topsfield converted to a Highway Superintendent by vote of town meeting in 1988. West Bridgewater’s Superintendent of Streets is appointed by the Selectmen (Town of West Bridgewater 2001, 17-23). In Harvard, Lenox, and Salisbury, the streets superintendent reports to an appointed Director of Public Works (Town of Lenox 2001, 51; Town of Salisbury 1999, 44-47; Town Harvard 2001, 66-67).

3.22 Streets and Highways

The Mattapoissett Highway Surveyor is mainly responsible for streets and highways. The Town of Mattapoissett maintains 57.68 miles of public roads, which is less than Harvard (77.18.72 miles), Lenox (64.69 miles), and Topsfield (60.51 miles). West

¹⁸ The Highway Surveyor is created by Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 41, section 62, which states that: “If a highway surveyor be chosen, he shall have the exclusive control of the ordinary repair of public ways in his town without being subject to the authority of the selectmen.”

Bridgewater maintains 55.06 miles of public roads, while Salisbury maintains 54.06 miles of public roads (MDOR 2002). All of the towns provide snow removal, but the service is often delivered through individual private vendors.

3.23 Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling

Acushnet and its peer communities provide solid waste disposal through contracts with private vendors such as SEMASS, Wheelabrator, Waste Management, ABC, Inc. and Brown-Ferris Industries. In Mattapoisett, individual residents contract with SEMASS for solid waste disposal. Thus, service delivery in this area involves little more than contract administration and enforcement for the town's peer communities.

3.24 Town Engineering

In Harvard, Mattapoisett, Topsfield, and West Bridgewater, town engineering is obtained on a fee for service basis with a consulting registered professional engineer (R.P.E.). In Lenox and Salisbury, which have large multi-functional public works departments, the town has a staff engineer in that department, who also assists other town boards, commissions, and departments.

Table 17. Towns with Elected Highway Surveyors		
Town	Population	Region
Holland	2,185	Central
Millville	2,236	Central
Hardwick	2,385	Central
Warren	4,437	Central
Rowley	4,452	Northeastern
Rochester	4,581	Southeastern
Shirley	6,118	Central
Mattapoisett	6,268	Southeastern
Georgetown	6,384	Northeastern
Halifax	6,526	Southeastern
Chatham	6,579	Cape Cod
Monson	7,776	Central
Freetown	8,472	Southeastern
Hanson	9,028	Southeastern
Norwell	9,279	Southeastern
Lakeville	9,821	Southeastern
Groton	9,988	Central
Pepperell	10,098	Central
Millbury	12,228	Central
Milford	25,355	Central
Source: Massachusetts Municipal Association (2002).		

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on a survey of standard and best practices and an analysis of the organizational characteristics and operating procedures of peer communities in Massachusetts, the Consultants do not recommend a fully centralized (town manager) type of town management (see Figure 17), since the identified problems with general management and fiscal coordination can be addressed by converting the Executive Secretary's position into a Town Administrator and by creating a town Finance Director. However, the long-term effectiveness of these two major management reforms will also require that the Highway Surveyor and Treasurer/Collector positions be converted from elective to appointed offices with strict professional qualifications for future appointees. Finally, we recommend a minor change in the structure of the Personnel Board to facilitate better coordination with the fiscal side of town management and the reactivation of an on-going capital planning process.

The Consultant suggests that the recommended changes to town management be implemented in two phases starting immediately with all recommendations implemented in no more than 2 to 3 years. Each phase is segmented into distinct steps that can be implemented individually or *in toto*. Phase I involves restructuring the town's general and financial management. Phase II is focused on improvements to the management of public facilities and infrastructure.

4.10 Phase I: General and Financial Management

The Consultant has identified changes to the position of chief administrative officer (Executive Secretary) and Treasurer/Collector as the two most important management improvements to be pursued immediately by the Town of Mattapoisett.

Recommendation 1. The Executive Secretary position should be converted to a Town Administrator with appropriate powers and responsibilities, credentials, compensation, contract status, performance evaluation and contract renewal.

Recommendation 1 requires that Article 2.8 of the Mattapoisett General By-Laws be amended as follows:

2.8. The Board of Selectmen hereby is authorized and empowered to appoint a full time ~~executive secretary~~ town administrator who shall serve for the term of three years, such term to commence in April of each year. He may be removed from office at the discretion of the said Board of Selectmen. He shall be sworn to the faithful performance of his duties. He shall hold no elective office, but he may be appointed by the Board of Selectmen, or with their approval, by any other town officer, board, committee or commission to any other town office consistent with his office. He shall receive such compensation not exceeding the amount appropriated therefore, as the Selectmen shall determine. He shall act by

and for the Selectmen in any matter which they shall assign to him relating to the administration of the town or of any town office or department under their supervision or control, or, with the approval of the Selectmen may perform such other duties as may be requested of him by any other board, officer, committee or commission.

Rationale: The Massachusetts General Laws authorize towns to create the position of Town Administrator. This change was adopted by the state legislature to recognize the fact that Executive Secretaries throughout the state were increasingly exercising responsibilities far beyond those originally contemplated more than a century ago. By authorizing the position of Town Administrator, the state legislature has provided towns with an institutional mechanism to recognize their chief administrative officer's enhanced responsibilities without having to adopt the town manager form of government. The Mattapoissett General By-Laws authorize the Executive Secretary to exercise a range of powers and duties that are *de facto* the ones now assigned to Town Administrators, rather than Executive Secretaries. The creation of a Town Administrator is therefore consistent with the original intent of Article 2.8 to establish a chief administrator officer.

As a legislative body, the Selectmen are responsible for establishing the town's basic policies and regulations, while a Town Administrator is accountable to them for implementing those policies and for supervising day-to-day administrative operations. The hiring of a Town Administrator will facilitate effective town management by increasing the expertise available to the Selectmen and department heads and by allowing Selectmen to focus on their responsibilities as policy-makers, rather than administrators.

The Consultant's recommendation is consistent with the growing trend to further professionalize the management of small municipal governments across Massachusetts and the United States. As noted earlier, 131 towns in Massachusetts now have a Town Administrator. In the South Coast area, several adjacent communities have moved in this direction, including Wareham, Dartmouth, Seekonk, Swansea, Lakeville, Marion, Westport, and Acushnet.

The conversion to a Town Administrator will require Mattapoissett to offer an appropriate salary in return for minimum or preferred qualifications and substantial prior experience, but it is our conclusion that this would occur even if the town continues to call its chief administrative officer an Executive Secretary. Specifically, the Consultant offers the following suggestions as guidelines for future discussion by Selectmen and citizens:

- ◆ The Town Administrator's starting salary should be set at \$65,000+ (2002 dollars) depending on qualifications with a reasonable expectation that the actual starting salary could go as high as \$73,000.

- ◆ The minimum qualifications should include a bachelor's degree and three years prior experience in municipal management, with an M.P.A./M.B.A. or related degree preferred.
- ◆ The core experience and strengths of a new Town Administrator should be: (1) personnel administration and collective bargaining, (2) procurement, (3) effective communication and presentation skills for working with the public, (4) a record of successful grant writing with preference given to candidates with previous experience or background in planning or economic development.
- ◆ The Town Administrator's job description should include liaison with elected Boards and Commissions; supervision of the day-to-day operation of all appointed department heads and boards; and service as the Town's chief procurement officer as described earlier in the report.

The market for small town chief administrative officers has changed dramatically in New England since Mattapoisett last hired an Executive Secretary. The position has become a full-time professional career in most New England communities and the salary scale has been adjusted upward to reflect that reality. It should be noted that the Town of Lakeville offered a starting salary of \$70,000 for a new Town Administrator in 1999, while Westport just started a new Town Administrator at \$66,595 (Stewardson 2002)

Similarly, the education and background of Executive Secretaries and Town Administrators has undergone a dramatic shift over the last 20 years. In the past, it was not uncommon for a full-time Executive Secretary to have an engineering degree and prior experience in managing Public Works. This made sense at a time when the main activity of local government was focused predominantly on public works functions. Moreover, since Public Works was usually the largest department in town government, public works managers were more likely to have experience in supervising large staffs, managing large budgets, procurement, and navigating intergovernmental relations.

However, municipal government has assumed new functions, municipal workforces are now generally unionized, and local government activities have been subjected to increasing levels of intergovernmental regulation. As a consequence of these and other developments, the core "skill mix" of chief administrative officers has gradually shifted from public works and procurement to finance, personnel, and economic development planning. The educational background of Executive Secretaries and Town Administrators has come to reflect this changing skill mix.

Finally, the position of Executive Secretary/Town Administrator has become subject to increasing levels of political volatility partly, because the position remains poorly defined under Massachusetts General Laws. Therefore, Boards of Selectmen in different communities have different expectations of the position and, in some

communities, different Selectmen may have different or mutually incompatible expectations of the chief administrative officer. In addition, the contemporary Executive Secretary/Town Administrator must deal with a wider array of controversial public issues such as population and residential growth, business development, zoning and code enforcement, water quality, environmental regulations, and tax limits, among others.

Thus, as new chief administrative officers have entered the New England market, and as towns seek professional expertise from outside their immediate jurisdiction, the position of Executive Secretary/Town Administrator is undergoing a great deal of professionalization and formalization of job descriptions and evaluation. Many CAOs have come to expect a high level of professionalization and formalization, partly for their own protection, and partly to secure clear expectations, goals, and performance standards from the Selectmen who hire them.

As a result, the new market for chief administrative officers is characterized by:

- ◆ 3-year contracts that are renewable upon satisfactory performance of responsibilities. It is highly unlikely that the Town of Mattapoisett will be able to recruit or retain a qualified CAO with an annually renewable contract or with one that fails to specify powers, duties, and lines of authority with a fair amount of detail.
- ◆ The CAO employment contract typically specifies the terms of employment and compensation, dismissal and termination, job description, goals and expectations, and the criteria used to evaluate the performance of the CAO on either an annual or three-year basis.

Recommendation 2. The Selectmen should create a new Department of Finance.

Recommendation 2a. The new Finance Department should be headed by a Finance Director/Town Accountant with appropriate powers and responsibilities, credentials, compensation, contract status, performance evaluation and contract renewal.

Recommendation 2a does not require any change to the General By-Laws, but it will require an adjustment to the Town Accountant's written job description and compensation.

A typical list of duties for a Finance Director/Town Accountant includes the coordination of all financial activities of the town, development of financial policies and practices, maintenance of municipal accounting systems, financial forecasting and reporting, oversight of the town MIS functions, and participation in capital and operating budget development. Depending on the town, the Finance Director may supervise the assessing, collection, treasury, accounting, and MIS functions, while serving as either

Treasurer/Collector or Town Accountant. The skills most frequently sought in a Finance Director are a thorough knowledge of State Municipal Finance Law; considerable knowledge of statutory responsibilities of each division in the Finance Department; technical competence in Division of Local Services reporting requirements, analytical finance techniques, and computer software appropriate to financial analysis and management; and technical competence with the Massachusetts Uniform Accounting System and GASB.

The minimum qualification for a Finance Director is a bachelor's degree in accounting, finance, public or business administration with a Master's degree in any of the same fields sometimes preferred. Only two towns have advertised for a Finance Director in the last 21 months (January 2001 – September 2002) with an average starting salary of \$63,000.

The Consultant also recommends that the Finance Director sit as a member of the Finance Committee either ex-officio or by appointment. The structure of the town's Finance Committee is established in General By-Law 2.2:

A committee consisting of the Moderator of the Annual Town Meeting, the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, and the Chairman of the School Committee, shall, at the close of the Meeting, appoint a Committee of Finance, as follows:

One member from the center, one from the north, one from the east, and one from the west portions of the Town, and three members-at-large. Appointments shall be for three years. No person who holds an elective office shall be appointed. Said committee shall, after due consideration, prepare recommendations to present to the Town at the next annual town meeting as to appropriations proper to be made for the several departments and accounts, and may report and make recommendations on all Municipal questions for the ensuing year. Should a vacancy occur during the year, it shall be filled by a majority vote of the members of a committee consisting of the Moderator of the Annual Town Meeting, the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, and the Chairman of the School Committee.

The By-law prohibits the appointment of an elected official to the Finance Committee, but nothing in the by-law prevents the appointment of a town resident who is also a town employee. The Consultant recommends that the Finance Director/Town Accountant either be appointed as one of three members-at-large or the General By-Laws be amended to make the Finance Director an ex-officio member of the Finance Committee with two members-at-large (rather than three).

Recommendation 2b. The Treasurer/Collector position should be converted from an elected to an appointed position with appropriate credentials powers and responsibilities, compensation, contract status, performance evaluation and contract renewal.

The standard duties of an appointed Treasurer/Collector include collecting receipts, overseeing the town's investments, cash management, tax title, payroll, and benefits administration, reconciling bank statements, managing town debt service functions, and participating in the bond issuance process. In the last 21 months (January 2001 – September 2002), eight towns have advertised for a Treasurer/Collector in *The Beacon* and these listings establish a very consistent platform of minimum requirements, skills, and knowledge for the Treasurer/Collector. In all cases, the minimum requirements for a Treasurer/Collector are a bachelor's degree in business administration, finance, accounting, or related field and three to five years previous experience in business or financial management with a strong preference for previous experience in municipal finance. Most towns require an individual to obtain a Massachusetts Treasurers' and Collectors' Certification within 3 to 4 years of appointment.

The standard skills and knowledge required for a Treasurer/Collector are 3 to 5 years previous experience in cash management, knowledge of MUNIS software, knowledge of financial management, knowledge of the methods and procedures of municipal treasury and collection techniques, knowledge of federal and state regulations pertinent to payroll and borrowing, and the ability to prepare and maintain detailed financial reports and records. The starting salary offers for Treasurer/Collectors is highly variable depending on the size of the town, but the average range for the most recent advertised positions is \$53,000 to \$64,000.

Recommendation 2b requires that Article 1.3 of the Mattapoissett General By-Laws be amended as follows:

At the Annual Town Meeting the following officers shall be balloted for on one ballot, to wit: -- For One Year Term; Moderator.

1.3 For Three Year Term: -- One Selectman, Town Clerk, ~~Treasurer and Tax Collector~~, One Assessor, Highway Surveyor, Two Members of Mattapoissett School Committee, One Member of Old Rochester Regional District School Committee, Two Members of the Mattapoissett Library Trustees, One Water/Sewer Commissioner, One Member Board of Health, Two Constables, Tree Warden, Herring Inspector.

Recommendation 2c. All revenue collections should be centralized with the Treasurer/Collector.

Recommendation 2c is a cash management protocol that can be established by the Finance Director with the approval of the Selectmen. The Consultants recommend that all revenues, including real estate taxes, excise taxes, water and sewer fees, inspectional fees, license and document fees, harbor and mooring fees, beach stickers, and parking tickets should be collected by the Treasurer/Collector. The Treasurer/Collector can issue a receipt documenting payment of the fee, which allows the individual citizen to obtain the necessary document, sticker, service, etc. from the appropriate town office.

Rationale: This protocol will improve cash handling and reporting procedures and allow for greater security in cash handling. This process will also free up the clerk in the Selectmen's Office to perform the duties of an Administrative Assistant described in Recommendation 3 below.

Recommendation 2d. The Town Administrator and Finance Department should assist the Selectmen in conducting a systematic review of all fees collected by the town and this review should be conducted at least every three years.

Rationale: A regular and systematic fee analysis will allow the town to better manage its overall fee structure, while maximizing revenue. It will allow the Selectmen to make better informed decisions about the fees charged by comparable and neighboring towns and to adjust fees on a regular basis.

Recommendation 3. The Selectmen should create a new position of Administrative Assistant or Senior Clerk to assume many of the work tasks currently performed by the Executive Secretary. This position could be filled by upgrading the clerical position currently in the Selectmen's office.

Rationale: The Town Administrator's job description requires that person to perform a range of tasks that involve meeting attendance, grant writing, consultation with other elective boards, intergovernmental liaison, collective bargaining, grievance handling, budget preparation and budget review. This means that the tasks currently performed by the Executive Secretary will need to be filled by an Administrative Assistant if the new Town Administrator is to focus on these higher level responsibilities.

The Consultants found that most peer communities have at least one, and sometimes two, clerical support positions for the chief administrative officer. An Administrative Assistant (or senior clerk) is typically responsible for office management and processing personnel. The Administrative Assistant should perform general office and personnel functions, but also assist the Town Administrator with grant writing, budget preparation, and routine procurement. The Administrative Assistant's specific assignments could include routine purchasing (with sign off by Town Administrator),

referring citizens to appropriate offices, processing personnel hires and grievance filings, acting as clerk to the Selectmen, data collection for grant preparation, agenda preparation for the Selectmen's meetings, preparation of warrants for town meetings, and other tasks as assigned by the Town Administrator.

The Administrative Assistant should report to the Town Administrator. The Administrative Assistant should have strong interpersonal skills, as well as good oral and written communication skills.

Recommendation 4. As a matter of practice, the Consultant recommends that the Selectmen appoint three citizens-at-large and two members of the Finance Committee to the Personnel Board.

Rationale: All of Mattapoissett's peer communities have an appointed Personnel Board that evaluates non-union personnel and makes annual salary recommendations consistent with personnel policies and the town's financial capacity. The Personnel Board usually includes some combination of citizens, Selectmen, and Finance Committee members. A Personnel Board can help remove some of the worst political pressures from the Board of Selectmen by allowing others in town government to help monitor management performance and compensation. However, by linking this process to the Finance Committee, recommendations on management compensation can be integrated more effectively into the town's budgeting process. Article 1.1.4 of the town's Personnel By-Law explicitly requires the Board "to represent the interests of both taxpayers and town employees."

The relevant provisions of the Personnel By-Law are Articles 1.1.4 and Articles 3.1.1 and 3.1.2

1.1.4. Establish a Personnel Board to administer the plan, as hereinafter provided, and to represent the interests of both taxpayers and town employees.

. Membership

3.1.1. There shall be a Personnel Board, hereinafter called "the Board," consisting of five (5) unpaid Mattapoissett residents who shall be appointed by the Board of Selectmen.

3.1.2. The Board shall not include any employees or elected officials of the Town.

Recommendation 4 can be implemented by action of the Board of Selectmen.

Recommendation 5. The Selectmen should adopt a formal Policies and Procedures to guide the operations of the Board of Selectmen and its relationships to other town agencies and personnel.

Rationale: The hiring of a Town Administrator will redefine existing relationships between the Board and the chief administrator officer, department heads, and other elective boards. It will also allow the Selectmen to refocus their energies on the town's long-term policies and objectives. The Selectmen should use this opportunity to codify the traditional and accepted working relationships among members of the Board, between the Board and the Town Administrator, and between the Board and other Town boards, committees, officials, and citizens.

A "Selectmen's Policies and Procedures" normally clarifies employee relationships to the Board (particularly the Town Administrator), codifies procedures for making appointments, for hearing grievances, for conducting meetings, for establishing agendas, and for conducting hearings, among other items. The Consultant recommends the Town of Leicester procedures as an example, which can be modified by the Mattapoissett Selectmen or adopted as they stand (Town of Leicester 1999). A set of published written policies and procedures may assist in avoiding misunderstanding as the municipal administration adjusts to the presence of its first Town Administrator.

Recommendation 5 can be implemented by action of the Board of Selectmen.

Recommendation 6. The town should establish a Capital Planning Committee to replace its existing Capital Needs Committee and the Committee should be structured and charged by statute with developing and updating a 5-year capital plan.

Rationale: The Town of Mattapoissett has extensive capital needs that include open space acquisition, a new Town Hall, additional sewer connections, school improvements, water and sewer commission facility, fire station, information technology improvements, and potentially many other items. The Town has not maintained a systematic process for identifying, updating, and prioritizing its capital needs. The Capital Planning Committee may also start the process of identifying state and federal grants that may be available to assist with financing these items. The capital plan will help to focus grant writing activities on those items that are considered most important to the Town's future.

A Capital Needs Committee is established by Article 2.3 of the Mattapoissett General By-Laws as follows:

2.3 A Capital Needs Committee, composed of up to five persons appointed by the Board of Selectmen shall conduct a continuing study of the capital needs of the town and report its findings and recommendations from time to time to the Committee of Finance and the Board of Selectmen.

The Consultant recommends that Article 2.3 be amended to read as follows:

2.3. There shall be established a Capital Improvement Program for land purchases, construction or renovation of buildings, major equipment or machinery purchases, road and drainage reconstruction, and the construction and reconstruction of special facilities such as sewer and water mains and water treatment and sewage disposal facilities.

The Selectmen shall appoint a Capital Planning Committee consisting of nine members as follows:

- 1) A person knowledgeable and experienced in banking and investment matters;
- 2) A person who is a member of the School Committee or an appointee thereof;
- 3) A person who is a member of the Water and Sewer Commission;
- 4) A person who represents the business community;
- 5) A person with experience in the management of construction activities;
- 6) A person knowledgeable about the Town's needs in the areas of open space and recreation facilities or activities;
- 7) A Selectman;
- 8) Two members of the Finance Committee;
- 9) The Finance Director/Town Accountant shall serve as an ex-officio non-voting member.
- 10) Town Administrator shall serve as an ex-officio non-voting member.

And charge the Committee with the duty to:

- (a) work with town departments and officers to compile an inventory of the town's facilities, equipment, machinery and other capital assets;
- (b) work with town departments and officers to develop a list of capital needs of the town, rank the needs, and establish a timetable for each, covering an initial period of at least five years;
- (c) propose a schedule for the provision of funding each project;
- (d) after presentation of the plan by the Selectmen at a public hearing, the Committee shall present the Capital Improvement Plan to the Annual Town Meeting for its approval and for the approval of fiscal year expenditures;
- (e) monitor the execution of the projects authorized;

(f) explain and defend to all town meetings dealing with capital expenditures any deviations from the capital plan, with a vote of town meeting required to override the Committee's recommendation for any capital item as defined by the Committee;

(g) add a new year's schedule and represent the plan to each Annual Town Meeting for approval.

The Committee shall determine what constitutes a capital item for the Town of Mattapoisett and inform all departments of that definition. The Committee shall work closely with the Board of Selectmen, Board of Assessors, and Finance Committee in establishing what amounts of money will be dedicated to the Town's capital needs and shall make specific recommendations for the funding of each project in its plan.

Each year's amendments to the plan will allow the Committee to make adjustments in figures, to add new projects or to delete proposed projects. In the event of the resignation of a Committee member, the Selectmen shall fill the vacancy with a person of similar qualifications. Members shall serve terms of three years and may be removed from office only for cause after a hearing. Initially three members shall serve for one year, three for two years, and three for three years and may be re-appointed, but no member shall serve for more than six years.

Recommendation 7. The Selectmen should routinely evaluate and enhance the operation of the Town's numerous Appointive Committees.

The Town of Mattapoisett is fortunate to have community volunteers who serve on the town's many *ad hoc* committees, particularly those dealing with development and infrastructure issues. These committees include:

Bike Path Study Committee
Buzzards Bay Advisory Committee
Cable Advisory Committee
Capital Needs Committee
Computer Advisory Board
Economic Development/Commerce Study
Committee
Elementary School Building Committee
Empowerment Group
First Station Building Committee
GIS Study Committee
Historical Commission

Massachusetts Housing Partnership
Committee
Joint Transportation Planning Group
Marine Advisory Board
Mattapoisett River Valley Water Supply
Protection Advisory Committee
Mattapoisett Cultural Council
Pre-Subdivision Control Law Streets
Committee
Recreation Committee
Skate Board Park Study
Tri-Town River Committee
Veteran's Board Executive Committee

However, all committees, boards, and commissions, especially those that lack statutory authority, can become less effective and energetic over time. The Consultants recommend the following actions toward the goal of maintaining energetic committees with clear roles and responsibilities:

- ◆ All *ad hoc* committees should receive a new and specific charge from the Board of Selectmen, including a specific task or tasks (e.g., preparation of an advisory report by a specific date) or be disbanded,
- ◆ All future *ad hoc* committees should have a specified “sunset” date for automatic termination, rather than merely waiting for terms of office to expire,
- ◆ The temporary nature of *ad hoc* committees should be reflected in their charge and title, (e.g., the *ad hoc committee Y*, or the *temporary committee Z*),
- ◆ The Board of Selectmen should continue the practice of appointing an official liaison to each committee to help answer questions about Town policy and objectives and to keep a continuous flow of information back to the Selectmen,
- ◆ The Board of Selectmen should require each committee to appear before it on an annual basis to receive information and an official report on the committee’s activities. It is increasingly common for Selectmen to require a short (one-page) report on a committee’s activities for inclusion in the town’s Annual Report.

4.20 Phase II: Public Facilities and Inspections

Elected Highway Surveyors have been abolished by most towns in Massachusetts and replaced by individuals with educational credentials and expertise in civil engineering or highway engineering. Only 20 (6.6%) towns in Massachusetts still have elected Highway Surveyors and most of those communities are tightly clustered in Central Massachusetts (10) and Southeastern Massachusetts (7). There has been a clear trend over the last twenty years to replace this position with an appointed (by Selectmen) Streets and Highways Superintendent. None of Mattapoissett’s peer communities has an elected Highway Surveyor.

Recommendation 8. The elected Highway Surveyor position should be converted to an appointed Department of Highways, Parks, and Trees.

Recommendation 8a. The new department will be headed by an appointed Superintendent of Highways, Parks, and Trees, who will be responsible for all functions previously performed by the Highway Surveyor.

Recommendation 8b. The town's Forest Warden should report to the Superintendent of Highways, Parks, and Trees.

Recommendation 8c. The town's Caretaker of Veteran's Graves should report to the Superintendent of Highways, Parks, and Trees.

Recommendation 8d. The town's Tree Warden should report to the Superintendent of Highways, Parks, and Trees.

Recommendation 8e. The management of the town's transfer station, the SEMASS contract, and any future landfill should be the responsibility of the Superintendent of Highways, Parks, and Trees.

Recommendation 8f. The Superintendent of Highways, Parks, and Trees will also serve as the Town Engineer and provide engineering support to other departments as directed by the Town Administrator.

The duties of a Superintendent of Highways, Parks, and Trees typically include responsibility for planning, directing, and administering all aspects of public works functions relating to:

- streets and highways (design, construction, maintenance),
- drainage,
- snow and ice operations,
- recycling and solid waste disposal, including management of the transfer station and landfill,
- trees, grounds, parks, and cemeteries,
- open space operations,
- public works infrastructure construction projects,
- serving as the Town Engineer.

In the last 21 months (January 2001 – September 2002), fifteen towns have advertised for a Highway Superintendent or Director of Public Works in *The Beacon* and these listings establish a very consistent platform of minimum requirements, skills, and knowledge for the position. In 12 of the 15 cases, the minimum requirements for an appointive Highway Superintendent are a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering or related field (e.g., highway engineering) and five to ten years' previous experience in public works. Most towns require an individual

to be a licensed Professional Engineer in the state of Massachusetts and to have a thorough knowledge of public works operations, construction standards, and public works financing. The salaries for this position vary widely depending on the size of the community, the office holder's span of authority, the range of public services delivered through the department, and the qualifications of the candidate. The salary range for the type of position recommended by the Consultant is \$60,000 - \$70,000.

Recommendation 8a and 8c (including related recommendations) require that Article 1.3 of the Mattapoisett General By-Laws be amended as follows:

At the Annual Town Meeting the following officers shall be balloted for on one ballot, to wit: -- For One Year Term; Moderator.

1.3 For Three Year Term: -- One Selectman, Town Clerk, Treasurer and Tax Collector; One Assessor, ~~Highway Surveyor~~, Two Members of Mattapoisett School Committee, One Member of Old Rochester Regional District School Committee, Two Members of the Mattapoisett Library Trustees, One Water/Sewer Commissioner, One Member Board of Health, Two Constables, ~~Tree-Warden~~, Herring Inspector.

Recommendation 9. The Selectmen should create a new Department of Inspectional Services.

Recommendation 9a. The Department of Inspectional Services will be headed by the Building Inspector.

Recommendation 9b. The Plumbing Inspector, Gas Inspectors, Wire Inspector, Sealer of Weights and Measures, Weighers of Hay and Coal, Measurer of Wood and Bark will be in the Department of Inspectional Services and report to the Building Inspector:

Recommendation 9 (and all subsidiary recommendations) only require an executive action by the Board of Selectmen.

**[page left blank for Figure 18: Mattapoisett Boards and Commissions – 11 X 17
foldout]**

[page left blank for Figure 19: Mattapoisett Office of Selectmen – 11 X 17 foldout]

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