

SERVING COLCHESTER: GOVERNANCE

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VISION: The Town shall ~~ould~~ foster communications, citizens' trust, active participation, and cooperation in an efficient and effective form of government that addresses needs as they pertain to economic vitality, social and environmental responsibility, and prosperity in a dynamic future.

GOAL: Maintain high quality services and determine actions to ~~maintain-sustain~~ and enhance the ~~general high quality~~ services.

OBJECTIVE: To build community capacity and provide ways to increase the contribution and participation of more people who live and work in Colchester.

TOWN GOVERNMENT

Town government provides services that individuals and the private sector do not or can-not provide. In order to provide services, some form of governance is necessary. The Town of Colchester is governed by a Charter, or local constitution, adopted by its voters and approved by the State Legislature ~~as the Town's authority is granted by the State of Vermont. Town citizens vote to he voters~~ approved operating budgets, capital commitments that pledge property taxes as collateral, use of local option taxes and, elect a Selectboard of five members. The approved budgets, as well as State and Federal grants, are used for the planned expenditures of the fiscal year, otherwise known as the Capital Budget Program. The estimated project costs for the 2019 fiscal year is \$3,347,601, roughly \$600,000 less than the previous fiscal year. It must be noted that the Capital Budget is typically volatile as projects slip behind a year or grant funds cause other projects to move faster.

The Selectboard serves as the legislative and judicial branch of Town government. The Selectboard appoints the Planning Commission, Development Review Board, Recreation Advisory Board, Cemetery Advisory Committee, Board of Ethics, Governance Committee, and the Conservation Commission. The Burnham Memorial Library trustees, the Board of Listers, and the Board of Civil Authority are elected. The Town has a Get Engaged program to include high school students on boards. This program and new internship opportunities have increased youth participation in Colchester's government. The Town runs on volunteerism: Volunteers assist the Town with everything from policy and budget development, acting as judicial boards for town ordinances appeals of property assessment, property tax abatement, election oversight, cemetery policy, library policy and programs, recreation programs and policy, review of ethical complaints, review of changes to the town charter, conservation issues and projects, long-term planning, development review, planning and staffing community events such as the triathlon, fire, rescue, and technical rescue services, planting and maintaining community flower gardens, to community events such as Green Up Day.

The Selectboard hires a Town Manager who oversees Town services and supports the Selectboard in their legislative and judicial roles. The Selectboard ~~oversees-has purview over~~ questions to be put before the voters including the development of budgets, capital funding requiring voter approval, and

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46 changes to the Charter. The Selectboard also considers, develops, and approves a myriad of polices for
47 the Town Manager to implement ~~and oversee including the~~ .

48
49 ~~The Town Manager oversees the implementation of~~ Town's annual budget. ~~., oversees that~~ Sservices
50 are delivered to the Town through 108 full and part time employees who work for the town year-
51 round. The Town Manager coordinates the activities of the 60 members of boards, commissions, and
52 committees through Town staff. ~~The Town Manager also oversees~~ Mmajor contracts and relationships
53 with three fire departments and a volunteer technical rescue squad are the responsibility of the Town
54 Manager. There are over 100 part time employees, primarily in parks and recreation as well as 70
55 volunteers in rescue and technical rescue. In 2017, the total expenditures for the Town services were
56 \$12,190,870, which is an increase of \$525,898 from the previous year. The Town departments include
57 the Manager, Assessor, Clerk/Treasurer, Economic Development, Planning/Zoning, Finance,
58 Human Resources, Public Works, Library, Parks/Recreation, Police, and the Rescue
59 Departments, Manager, Finance, Assessor, Planning and Zoning, Clerk/Treasurer, Reseue, Public
60 Works, Parks/Recreation, Economic Development, Human Resources, Library, and the Police
61 Departments.

62
63 The Assessor, Clerk/Treasurer, Economic Development, Planning/Zoning Departments services
64 include: property assessment; issuing of licenses such as marriage, liquor and pet licenses;
65 issuance of passports; operation of elections; recording property deeds, birth, and death
66 certificates; tax collection; working to maintain and grow area businesses; comprehensive
67 planning; and, the administration of local building codes, health and zoning regulations,
68 wastewater permits and development review. In recent years, efforts have resulted in the
69 digitization of many town records including deeds, easements, plat, permits, board
70 applications, and planning and zoning files. The Assessor's interactive webmap provides
71 information on assessment cards, zoning, fire districts, floodplains and more. Most of these
72 digitized records are now available online. Many applications such as permits and parks and
73 recreation registrations can now be completed and submitted online P-and payment for
74 property taxes and other services can also submitted online.

77 PUBLIC WORKS

78 The Colchester Public Works Department provides a variety of public services to the community
79 including with the primary responsibilities include the planning, design, construction,
80 maintenance and operation of the community's infrastructure. The administration and
81 engineering divisions provide oversight to the operations of the department and its various
82 projects. Stormwater and wastewater are detailed in the Systems and Connections Chapter while
83 the Getting There Chapter details the highway system and other means of travel works. The
84 highway division is also responsible for the maintenance and improvement of the Town's roads
85 and associated improvements such as streetlights, street trees, and drainage. The equipment
86 maintenance division keeps all of the Town's equipment and vehicles in working order. The
87 bBuildings division is responsible for all of the Town's building facilities that include the
88 Bayside Activity Center, Burnham Memorial Library, the Town Meeting House, the Historical
89 Society, the Town Offices, the Police Department, Colchester Rescue, Technical Rescue, and the

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90 Town Garage. Funding of these services is a blend of utility funds (sewer and stormwater),
91 general tax revenue, grants, and capital funds. The Capital Equipment and Facility Plan, the
92 Capital Transportation Program, Bridge Reserve Fund, and Public Safety Capital Plan help to
93 pay for vehicles, equipment, and various projects and are often used to leverage grant funds. The
94 Department is based out of the Town offices as well as the Town garage at 711 Blakely Road.
95

96 LIBRARY

97 The Burnham Memorial Library is located in the Village and recently overtook stewardship of
98 the adjacent Town Meeting House for functions and events. The Library is overseen by the
99 elected Library Board of Trustees in addition to the oversight provided by the Town Manager. The
100 Friends of the Library conduct fundraisers such as the annual used book sale to raise money to
101 sponsor programs and ~~purchases~~acquisitions. Library volunteers ~~assist~~augment staff in shelving
102 and book drops contributing over 2,000 hours of volunteer time annually. The Library maintains its
103 Library Strategic Plan, a five year plan ~~most recently~~-adopted in 2016 that governs its actions and
104 services. In addition to the traditional book loan programs that the library maintains, the library
105 also provides a variety of other ~~services-amenities~~ including public meeting space, computers and
106 internet access, access to the Vermont Online Library and inter-library loan system, audiobooks, e-
107 readers, videos, music, a space for local artists to display their work, and programs for all ages
108 from tutoring to computer skills. Library staff often serves as ombudspersons for providing
109 information for a variety of inquiries.
110

111 PARKS & RECREATION

112 The Colchester Parks and Recreation Department provides year-round programs and events for
113 residents of all ages. Programs are conducted in the fields of sports, arts and crafts, wellness,
114 educational and cultural activities, and more. These programs range from highly-active ones,
115 such as youth day camps, to more passive ones, like horticultural skill workshops. Examples of
116 some popular events include the Winter Carnival, the Fourth of July Parade, and the Colchester
117 Triathlon, which all benefit from volunteer assistance. The Department also provides oversight to
118 all Town recreational facilities, staffs the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (which provides
119 policy and planning guidance), and runs the Colchester After-School Program.
120

121 The Department is responsible for the maintenance and management of the Town's parks,
122 recreational facilities, and cemeteries. The Recreation Advisory Board assists in coordinating
123 major events and provides input on Recreation programing and events. Parks and Natural Areas
124 are acquired by the Town through initiatives, donations, the development review process, and
125 impact fees. Given the costs of stewardship, the Town should continue its current policy to
126 prioritize new acquisitions around the community's needs rather than accepting land offered.
127

128 Colchester's six cemeteries are: The Village Cemetery, Munson Cemetery, Old Methodist Church
129 Cemetery, Champlain Cemetery, Malletts Bay Cemetery and the Cemetery at Fort Ethan Allen. Interred
130 alongside founders, farmers and families are veterans of every American conflict. Most notably the
131 graves at Fort Ethan Allen cemetery are the final resting place for the largest concentration of those who
132 gave their final measure in service to our country. In 2016 Robert and Holly Miller gifted land and a new
133 fence at the Munson cemetery adjacent to the Respite House on Roosevelt Highway. During the term
134 of this plan, this cemetery will be the focus of planned expansion for traditional lots, a columbarium and
135 meditation garden. The care of our cemeteries is a reflection of our reverence for our past. The Town is

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136 committed to work diligently and purposefully to ensure all Town cemeteries are places of serenity,
137 beauty and quiet tribute.

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139 The Recreation Department maintains an enterprise fund for programing and a Capital Budget
140 and Parks Plan to purchase and furnish new parks while maintaining and improvinge the current
141 park system. The Parks and Recreation Department is based out of the Town Offices and Airport
142 Park maintenance facility at 500 Colchester Point Road. Programing is offered at, as well as the
143 Bayside Activity Center and Colchester Schools. The following is a general list of types and
144 sizes of parks, in what circumstances they are recommended, and where they are found in
145 Colchester's lands.
146

147 Mini-Park: Ranging between 2,500 square feet to one acre in size, these parks are generally used
148 for passive recreation and include greens, flag lots, and dog parks.

- 149 ➤ Town's Flag Lot: Corner of East Lakeshore Drive and Blakely Road.
- 150 ➤ Bonanza Park: On Bonanza Park Road off of Heineberg Drive, this is a 0.6 acre park
151 with a limited playground and all-purpose field.
- 152 ➤ Heritage Park: Off Main Street on Heritage Drive in the Village, Heritage Park is 1 acre
153 in size and holds a limited playground, tennis court, basketball court, and parking area.
- 154 ➤ Valleyfield Park: Off Malletts Bay Avenue. It is 0.65 acres and has a limited playground
155 and all-purpose field.

156
157 Neighborhood Park: These parks range from 5 to 10 acres in size and serve an adjacent area
158 encompassing ¼ to 1 mile in distance. These parks generally focus on passive recreation and are
159 usually connected to adjacent neighborhoods through paths or trails.

- 160 ➤ Fort Ethan Allen Parade Grounds: Dalton Drive, Colchester owns 6.4 acres of this park.
161 A shared property between Colchester and Essex, this park serves the needs of members
162 from both communities.
- 163 ➤ (Heineberg) Billado Park: This 4 acre ~~park is park is~~ owned jointly by the Town and the
164 State. It provides access to the Winooski River off ~~to of~~ Heineberg Drive, ~~and future~~
165 ~~plans include increased fishing access, non-motorized boat ramp, picnic area, path, and~~
166 ~~additional parking.~~

167
168 Community Park: Providing access for regional use and Rranging from 20 to 50 acres in size,
169 these parks serve a broader purpose by providing recreation fields, play structures, game courts,
170 passive use, and parking.

- 171 ➤ Airport Park: ~~s~~ This 64.5 acre park is located on Colchester Point Road and includes a
172 1.3 mile jogging and cross-country ski trail, picnic area, pavilion, playground, 4 ball
173 fields, 2 soccer fields, 2 sand volleyball courts, 6 horseshoe pits, 2 tennis courts, 1
174 basketball court, ice skating, restrooms, and offers parking for both Airport Park and
175 Causeway Park.
- 176 ➤ Causeway Park: This 4-mile long, 10 foot wide gravel path extends across Lake
177 Champlain that connects to the original Rutland Railroad bed. This park includes a
178 renovated gravel path suitable for walking, biking, and fishing access as well as seasonal
179 duck hunting. Additionally, Island Line Trail Bike Ferry operates by Local Motion from
180 June through October that provides access to South Hero.

Colchester DRAFT 2019 Town Plan Services Chapter 11.29.18

- 181 ➤ Bayside Park: This 22-acre park is located on both sides of West Lakeshore Drive at the
182 intersection of Blakely Road. This park provides a parking lot, restrooms, bathhouse,
183 picnic area, pavilion, playground, skateboard park, swimming beach, ~~Senior-Activity~~
184 Center, 2 shuffleboard courts, 4 tennis courts, 1 basketball court, 2 sand volleyball courts,
185 1 small baseball field, 1 lighted softball field, and 2 horseshoe pits.
- 186 ➤ Village Park: With 66 acres this park was formally opened in 2018 with a one-mile long
187 trail that circumnavigates the parcel at this time. Access to the park ~~is in~~ is in the Village
188 off of Main Street behind Fire District Three.

189
190 Natural Areas: These are lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, open
191 space, visual aesthetics, and buffering that may also include passive recreation such as walking
192 paths and canoe launches.

- 193 ➤ Rossetti Natural Area: 47 acres in size, Rossetti Natural area resides between Lake
194 Champlain and the Lakeshore Drive/Holy Cross Road/Church Road Intersection. A
195 boardwalk/trail with a swimming area and a 50 car parking lot serve the property.
- 196 ➤ Porter's Natural Area: This 56-acre parcel is located just south of the Colchester
197 Causeway Park, and holds wetlands, floodplain forests, and important buffer lands
198 ~~protecting-adjacent to~~ the Colchester Bog. Due to the ecological importance of the area,
199 no formal trails have been cut.
- 200 ➤ Sunny Hollow Natural Area: Located off of Hercules Drive, this 80-acre diverse area has
201 limited parking and three miles of mountain biking, walking and cross-country skiing
202 trails.
- 203 ➤ Law Island: West of the Causeway off of Colchester Point, Law Island is 8.5 acres in
204 size, owned by the State of Vermont, and managed by the Town of Colchester. The island
205 is on the Vermont Paddlers trail and is not accessible by land. ~~eC~~Camping is permitted
206 and. ~~Duck and duck~~-hunting is allowed (in season). ~~There is no access by land.~~

207
208 The Town owns both Bayside Park (north and south of East/West Lakeshore and Blakely
209 Intersection) and the Bayside Hazelett property, located on East Lakeshore Drive. These areas
210 had a conceptual master plan developed and approved by the Select Board in 2018. The
211 implementation of this plan will be done in phases and will depend on future funding.

212
213 During the Bayside Park Master Plan, which followed an earlier effort known as the Community
214 Center Initiative, residents expressed interest in indoor recreation amenities including an indoor
215 pool. The Bayside Hazlet and Bayside parcels must be developed to make room for the
216 recreation center.

217 218 **POLICE**

219 Established in 1967, the Colchester Police Department (CPD) provides 24/7 coverage to the
220 community with 39 employees including 29 sworn officers, and 8 public safety dispatchers.
221 CPD provides community policing ~~including and~~ traffic safety, a marine unit, a K-9 team, two
222 school-based officers, ~~and four officers~~ four officers working as detectives, one of whom
223 serves in the Chittenden County Unit for Special Investigations. The marine patrol unit
224 provides seasonal coverage of Malletts Bay. CPD also provides many special programs to the
225 public such as Rape Aggression Defense training, Boating Ed, Hunter Ed, Child Passenger
226 Safety, Honor Guard, Bike patrols, Bike Camp, and Public Safety Awareness Camp, ~~and a~~

Colchester DRAFT 2019 Town Plan Services Chapter 11.29.18

227 ~~Domestic Violence Unit~~. CPD responds to over 13,518 calls per year with over 400 arrests
228 and over 500 crimes. In recent years, the number of mental health related calls and drug
229 related calls regionally have increased leading to a partnership ~~provide community with~~
230 community outreach staff from the Howard Mental Health Center. The face of community
231 policing is continually changing and CPD continues to adapt itself to meet Colchester's needs.
232

233 **RESCUE**

234 The Colchester Rescue Squad began as a volunteer organization in 1961. The first paid staff
235 began in 1998 to address the elevateds level of service caused by increased calls, and training
236 requirements for EMTs, AEMTs, and paramedics. There are six career staff and 40 per diem
237 members and volunteers. Individual volunteers average over 60 hours of service a month. Based
238 out of Rescue facilities at 687 Blakely Road, the Squad responds to over 1,300 calls a year. The
239 Squad provides trainings for the public such as in CPR and supports many events such as the
240 Colchester Triathlon, blood drives, and an annual open house. St. Michaels College maintains a
241 rescue squad that responds to calls on campus, the Fort neighborhood in Colchester, Winooski
242 and many other communities.
243

244 Colchester Technical Rescue has about 30 volunteers and offers a dive team, confined space
245 response, structural collapse response, swift water rescue, trench rescue, and ropes. Technical
246 ~~Rescue and~~ operates throughout the state, providing the majority of their service outside of
247 Colchester.
248

249 **FIRE FIGHTING AND PREVENTION**

250 The community is served by fire fighting and prevention services consisting of the Malletts Bay
251 Fire Department, Colchester Center Volunteer Fire Company, and Saint Michaels Fire, which is an
252 independent organization but which serves as a battalion of Colchester Center ~~and the Malletts Bay~~
253 Fire Department. Colchester Center and Malletts Bay are part of Colchester Fire Districts 3 and
254 Colchester Fire District 2. The fires districts are special purpose municipal organizations within
255 the Town. The Town pays for the operating costs of the fire portion of the fire districts. Colchester
256 Center maintains a station in the Colchester Village and Clay Point Road while Malletts Bay
257 maintains a station on Church Road in the Bay neighborhood. Saint Michaels' Fire is based on Rt.
258 15 by their campus. In fiscal year 2018 Colchester Center, including Saint Michaels Fire,
259 responded to over 600 calls while Malletts Bay responded to 412 calls. Colchester provides and
260 receives mutual aid to and from adjacent municipalities when support is needed.- The fire
261 departments rely upon about 90 volunteers to perform critical, demanding and potentially
262 dangerous services. Due to a lack of firefighters available in weekday daytime during the work
263 week, the Town is pursuing options to fund three positions to augment our volunteers.
264

265 In support of fire safety and prevention Colchester has adopted within Chapter Seven of the
266 Colchester Code of Ordinance fire protection standards that often exceed State code
267 requirements. For example: sprinklers are recommended and often required.
268

269 **REGIONAL GOVERNMENT**

270 The Town of Colchester participates in and funds regional organizations including: Chittenden
271 County Regional Planning Commission,; Champlain Water District,; Winooski Valley Park
272 District,; Chittenden County Court System (which is funded by a County Tax but operated by the

Colchester DRAFT 2019 Town Plan Services Chapter 11.29.18

273 State); Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce; Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation;
274 Local Motion; Green Mountain Transit (~~ECTAGMT~~); Special Services Transportation Agency
275 (through ~~GMT~~~~CCTA~~); Visiting Nurses Association; Steps to End Domestic Violence;
276 Chittenden County Public Safety Authority (dispatch); Chittenden Solid Waste District; and the
277 Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations.

278 The Winooski Valley Park District (WVPD) has regional park and natural areas in Colchester
279 including:

- 280 ➤ **MacRae Farm Park:** Operated by the ~~WVPD~~~~Winooski Valley Park District (WVPD)~~,
281 this 288 acre piece of land provides great opportunities for birding and usage of trails to
282 residents of Colchester, Burlington, Winooski, and more.
- 283 ➤ **Wolcott Family Natural Area:** This 61 acre parcel is located off of East Road and is
284 adjacent to the Colchester Pond park. A one and a half mile park was constructed in 2018
285 ~~as well as~~including a primitive parking area.
- 286 ➤ **Delta Park:** This 55-acre wetland is conserved and operated by the WVPD; ~~and is home~~
287 ~~to~~ It is a habitat for numerous birds and a nesting area for turtles. There is a half-mile
288 long trail that exists on this property, but parking is scarce.
- 289 ➤ **Colchester Pond:** With ~~182-191.43~~ 182-191.43 acres ~~of pond~~, this natural area is conserved to both
290 protect wildlife ~~present~~ and allow for some recreational opportunities. This natural area,
291 operated by the WVPD, is home to a 3.5 mile trail that circles the pond.
292

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293 POLICIES

- 294 1. Increase participation in Town government and services ~~delivery~~.
- 295 2. Maintain a level of services and maintenance of Town assets in accordance with the
296 voter's ability to support and grow services as the Town grows.
- 297 3. Make improvements to Bayside-Hazlett property and Bayside Park, ultimately leading
298 to the creation of an indoor recreation facility.
- 299 ~~4. Reduce flood recovery costs to the community, reduce flood insurance rates, and~~
300 ~~improve flood resiliency.~~
- 301 ~~5.4~~ Provide a framework for safe ~~new~~ development through ordinance and regulations.
302

303 ACTIONS

- 304 1. Invite youth and others to attend public meetings;
- 305 2. Engage our boards and commissions with policy decisions ~~of the Town~~
- 306 ~~1-3~~; Support and honor volunteers providing services to the Town.
- 307 4. Continue adaptive management of Town services under a private sector approach,
308 respecting that the Town belongs to the community as represented by the voters,
309 Selectboard, and boards and commissions.
- 310 5. Continue and grow public safety collaborations to improve services and cost-
311 effectiveness.
- 312 ~~2-6~~; Work with organizations that assist the Town in maintaining the fabric of the community,
313 providing specialized services and government fee based utilities, and planning for the
314 future of the Town within its greater regional community.
315

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316 | ~~3.7~~ Advance the Bayside-Hazlett project as funding allows and; continue the recreation impact
317 | fee in support of the needs of a growing community.
318 | ~~4. Maintain the FEMA Community Rating System~~
319 | ~~5.8~~ Re-evaluate Chapter Seven of the Colchester Code of Ordinances to promote the safety
320 | of those serving Colchester in emergency services.
321

Comment [SH2]: Move to environment chapter

322