

## PUBLIC UTILITIES

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This section discusses electricity, gas, telephone, refuse collection and recycling, cable, communications, water, and sewer utilities. Shared utilities are an essential part of modern suburban life and greatly influence the pace and location of new development.

Utilities in Kingston are primarily provided by fee-based private and public utilities, not by the Town of Kingston. In order to control taxes and keep our rural atmosphere, the Town has historically planned development to avoid congestion and not provide any utility service to residents. The Town controls to the best of its ability, private utility placement and appearance in attempt to minimize negative aesthetic concerns, as well as disturbance to natural environments.

### 2.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS

#### Electricity

Homes, municipal buildings, and businesses are dependent upon electric service for water pumps, heat, light, cooking, and communications. Any sustained disruption to this service can cause serious hardship and possible financial consequences.

Two companies provide electric service to Kingston, the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative and Unitil. Approximately 80 per cent of the community is serviced by Unitil and roughly 20 percent of the Town, located north of NH Route 111 is serviced by the NH Electric Cooperative. Both companies are able to meet projected future needs for Kingston.

Throughout Kingston, power is provided by lines wires on utility poles above ground. This is a condition that has been addressed differently by many New Hampshire municipalities. Many communities require that all new development (residential and non-residential) be served by utilities placed underground. This is done primarily for two reasons. The first is aesthetic in nature, with utilities underground there is less visual clutter. The second reason is to minimize service disruption. Having utility wires underground protects against weather-related power outages due to wind, ice, etc.

#### Gas

Kingston has no natural gas service. There are two major natural gas supply lines running through communities directly east of Kingston. These lines, owned by Northern Utilities, Inc. and Maritimes Northeast Pipeline L.L.C. share a right-of-way easement in an effort to minimize utility corridor impacts. This easement traverses from Salem through Plaistow, Newton, East Kingston, Exeter, Stratham, Greenland Portsmouth and Newington. Presently there are no plans to provide natural gas to Kingston from either of these lines.

Propane (bottled gas) is used by many households and businesses in Town for cooking, heating, etc. There are a several private businesses in the area that compete to supply propane to these residents.

### **Water**

The Town of Kingston does not provide municipal water. The majority of Kingston households and commercial/industrial establishments have private wells to provide water. These wells draw water from shallow wells in sand/gravel, or bedrock. The Town lies over some of the most productive sand and gravel aquifers in the entire state. As a result the Town adopted a fairly stringent aquifer protection overlay zoning district in 1991 that protects this resource in two ways. First, the ordinance which covers approximately 75% of the Town, prohibits certain land uses that are determined to have the greatest potential to contaminate groundwater. Second, the ordinance requires that any new lots created within the district have a minimum size of three acres. Outside of the Aquifer Protection District the Town's minimum lot size is 80,000 square feet or just less than two acres. This increased lot size helps protect against high concentrations of septic system effluent which can be a prime groundwater contamination source with serious health ramifications. In addition, some homes draw water directly from lakes and ponds. The Town protects surface water quality with two separate zoning ordinances. The Shoreland Protection Overlay District establishes buffers from surface waters for buildings and septic systems in order to prevent contamination via run-off. The Town also has a Wetlands Protection Overlay Zoning Ordinance that similarly uses buffer setbacks to prevent contamination of this resource.

A private water company regulated by the NH Public Utilities Commission (PUC), Hampstead Area Water Company (HAWC) provides water to one elderly residential development . There are 56 connections serviced in this development. Although the service provided to this development is very limited in scope, such development raises an interesting issue. Private water companies have the ability to completely change the way water is supplied within a community. As has been seen in Hampstead, residential housing development utilizing private community water supplies can result in significant residents being supplied water by a private entity. The Town of Kingston has attempted to declare itself a municipal water utility by way of town meeting votes in both 2004 and 2006. Although both ballot measures were passed by the voters by more than fifty percent neither got the required two thirds super majority necessary to secure the declaration. If the town can be successful in a future vote it can position itself to purchase any infrastructure in place for providing residents with water if such actions are found to be in the best interests of Kingston residents.

The State of New Hampshire and the United State Geologic Survey are completing a region-wide study to determine the sustainability of the Seacoast regions groundwater resources. The Town agreed to fund its portion for inclusion in this study and the Town should stay involved as the study progresses.

**Sewer**

The Town of Kingston does not provide municipal sewers. All sewage disposal is done by private septic systems (including shared systems) or holding tanks. For the foreseeable future this will remain the development paradigm with no plans for municipal wastewater facilities on the horizon.

**Solid Waste**

The Town of Kingston closed and capped its solitary municipal landfill in 2004. Residents are provided with curb-side trash pick-up as well as curb-side recycling through a contract with Waste Management Incorporated. For large items not accepted at curb-side, residents can bring items to the Town of Newton Transfer Station. This facility disposes of items according to an established fee schedule.

**3.0 COMMUNICATION**

**Telephone**

Local telephone service is provided Verizon. Long distance telephone service is provided by various carriers who compete to provide this service to residents.

Kingston has a unique telephone exchange 642, but some service along adjacent communities' boundaries utilizes different exchanges however these are not considered long distance for billing purposes.

As a result of greatly expanded Internet use and the proliferation of business conducted from homes, there is an increasing demand for new lines. To meet this increasing demand, Verizon has recently been making a substantial investment in fiberoptic cables and hubs in the region. Both analog and digital service is provided. ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network) service is available, as is ADSL (Asymmetrical Digital Subscriber Line). Both these services allow for digital data access. DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) service is being heavily promoted by Verizon but is not yet available to Kingston residents.

**Cable**

In 2006, Kingston signed a 5 year exclusive cable franchise with Harron Communications (now owned by Adelphia Communications.) Adelphia provides the opportunity for Kingston residents to access high speed internet service via cable.

The Town of Kingston operates a public access cable studio in the Town Hall which broadcasts public meetings and information to residents. This studio is staffed primarily by volunteers, with one paid cable coordinator.

## 4.0 TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The use of wireless communication has proliferated in the past several years to a point where a large percentage of private residents and commercial establishments rely on this new communication tool. This increased demand has resulted in the need for adequate infrastructure to support this growing industry. Presently the Town has three telecommuications towers. These towers are located along the NH Route 125 corridor in roughly the north, central, and south sections of Town. This placement of towers has resulted in adequate coverage of the major transportation corridor but has resulted in gaps in coverage for those parts of town distant from NH Route 125.

The Town was one of the first communities in Rockingham County to adopt a zoning ordinance providing requirements as to placement and aesthetic considerations that need be reviewed by the Town when siting such facilities. Having this ordinance in place assisted the Town in deciding between competing tower placements that resulted in one tower instead of two.

The future challenge for the Town is securing appropriate service coverage away from NH Route 125. This will likely occur independent of the Town through private market factors but the present market paradigm can have negative impacts on the community. The Town may wish to take a more proactive approach to the issue of Town-wide coverage by engaging a consultant to establish the best arrangement of telecommunications infrastructure necessary to accomplish full coverage. This is not the least expensive path but it could serve to prevent a repeat of the competing tower scenario already experienced by the Town.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **Electric**

New Hampshire has the second highest electric rates in the Country. Deregulation may provide a significant cost reduction and offer competition for residents. There are numerous proposals by independent power producers to generate electricity in the region by natural gas. Such circumstances would lead one to expect that alternative energy sources would offer welcome relief. The Town has had long standing ordinances that provide a tax credit to individuals installing solar energy or wind powered technologies. The Town may wish to review these credits to make sure they provide the level of incentive necessary.

#### **Gas**

There are currently no plans to provide natural gas service to Kingston. If natural gas is seen to be a preferred alternative to oil for heating fuel, the Board of Selectmen could investigate the possibility of accessing one of the two natural gas lines that are located just to the east of the Town boundary.

## **Water**

Several households in Town have experienced failed wells due to factors including sustained drought conditions, poor well construction and placement. In addition, a local Superfund site has created a contamination plume that may continue to negatively impact groundwater quality long after the surface has been remedied. Although these are isolated cases and are typically handled with individual water treatment systems, this may cause an expansion of private community water systems in these areas.

The Town has taken a proactive role in protecting its substantial ground and surface water resources through zoning initiatives aimed at their protection. Kingston should attempt a third Town Meeting vote to designate the community as a municipal water utility. This would be a vital step toward preventing the possibility of losing control of the water resource within the Town boundaries to either private community water systems or private water companies regulated by the NHPUC.

The Planning Board and Conservation Commission should monitor closely the on-going region-wide groundwater sustainability study and should endeavor to adopt those policy recommendations that may result from this project.

## **5.0 WASTE MANAGEMENT**

As the Town adjusts to the closure of the municipal landfill the residents will continue to utilize the Newton Transfer station for large, non-curb-side related waste disposal. The Town should consider establishing its own transfer station if the Newton facility proves unsatisfactory.

## **6.0 COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Telephone**

Present telephone service is adequate for the residents of Kingston. If Verizon continues to expand its network to include DSL service this would raise the level of service bar extensively for Kingston residents.

Telephone capacity is being challenged by many households having multiple lines for voice, fax, and internet access. New Hampshire is planning for a new area code that should easily account for increasing demand.

The Town must protect the provisions set forth in the municipal right of way space. Allowing utility companies to upgrade, install and maintain systems is important. Easy access will allow high speed phone systems to become prevalent throughout Town.

**Cable**

The Town should plan for continued cable service beyond the current five year contract and efforts should continue to be taken to ensure the most comprehensive services are provided to residents through these contractual arrangements.

**Communication Towers**

The Planning Board should continue to strengthen zoning ordinances to control telecommunication placement balanced with the need for effective communications throughout Town. Aesthetic concerns about placement, height, configuration, should be addressed. The Town may wish to prepare a coordinated Town-wide tower-siting plan with the assistance of a private consultant to insure maximum wireless coverage with minimal negative environmental and aesthetic impacts.