



TOWN OF WESTFORD STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT FINAL REPORT

JUNE 13, 2019

5:15 PM – 8:30 PM

EVENT HELD AT:

KIMBALL FARM

400 LITTLETON ROAD

WESTFORD, MA 01886

Jodi Ross – Town Manager

Eric Heideman – Assistant Town Manager



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Executive Summary

The ninth annual Strategic Planning Retreat was held on Thursday June 13, 2019 at Kimball Farm, located at 400 Littleton Road in Westford. We had a total of 352 attendees at the event who participated in two facilitated discussions. The first topic was the Town and School Safety Task Force's initiatives and the second topic was on stormwater management. We also had fourteen poster board exhibits on various topics to educate our residents on the different projects taking place throughout Westford.



2019 Strategic Planning Retreat Agenda

4:15 – 5:00 Exhibit table setup

5:15 – 5:30 Check in / On-site registration

5:30 – 5:35 Welcome, opening remarks, and overview of event *Jodi Ross, Town Manager*

5:35 – 6:15 Session #1 Facilitated Discussion of Town and School Safety Task Force Initiatives:

Discussion facilitated by Selectmen Thomas Clay and Scott Hazelton

-Includes brief overview of the task force's initiatives and accomplishments to date

-Paper and online surveys for attendees

-Open mic for questions

6:15 – 6:18 Information Update on Cross Town Connect Initiatives and Programs

Presented by Scott Zadakis, Director of the Cross Town Connect Program

6:18 – 7:00 Dinner & Ice Cream Break/Poster Board exhibits

7:05 – 7:45 Session #2 Facilitated Discussion of Stormwater Management:

Introduced by Christine Collins, Treasurer/Collector and Paul Starratt, Town Engineer

Facilitated discussion of Federal stormwater management regulations, proposed budget for FYs20,21,22 & 23, municipal funding options, and impacts on our residents and businesses

-Paper and online survey for attendees

-Open mic for questions

7:45 – 8:00 Summary of Event & Closing Remarks

Exhibit Tables:

35 Town Farm Task Force

63 Main Street Task Force

Board of Health – Tick-borne disease and prevention

Cameron Senior Center

Cemetery Commission – Cemetery and green burial information

Commission on Disability

Cultural Council

Economic Development Committee

Cross Town Connect

Lowell Regional Transit Authority

Westford Business Association

Energy Committee

Engineering Department

Healthy Westford Committee

Parks and Recreation Department – Forge Pond Beach improvements

Westford Cable Access Television (CAT)
Westford Community Gardens

**Town and School Safety Task Force Initiatives
Facilitated Discussion Topic #1**

Security and Wellness Update

Town Retreat June 2019

Security and Emotional Wellness Project

- What is it?
- Why now?
- Why Security *and* Emotional Wellness?
- What have we learned so far? What other inputs are we collecting?
- Can we afford it?
- What are the actions from here?

What is it?

- Our first obligation as elected officials and town staff is to ensure the safety and well-being of our citizens
- You deserve to have a town that has reached a well informed balance of safety and well-being in a changing world facing changing risks
- The Town and School Safety Task Force was formed in 2018 to research best practice, obtain outside advice from experts, develop a comprehensive plan and steward this plan through to implementation

Chief Targ	Chief McEnany	Superintendent Olsen	Superintendent Pigeon
School Committee Chair Adam	Board of Selectmen x 2	Town Manager Ross	Asst Town Manager Heideman
Board of Health Hanly	Deputy Chief Chambers	Asst Superintendent Clery	Finance Committee Greene

Why now?

- 2018 witnessed 82 active shooter events in the United States, a record high
- 8% of Westford High School Students report that they have missed school in the past 12 months because they did not feel safe at school
- 15% of Westford students reported incidence of self harm in the past 12 months
- 14% of Westford High School Students seriously considered suicide and 4% have attempted suicide in the past 12 months
- 8% of students report bringing a weapon to school, 1% within the last 30 days
- Weapons in schools, school violence and self harm are at our doorstep

Why Security *and* Emotional Wellness?

- Most incidents of school violence are perpetrated by students or former students
- Most perpetrators of violence tell someone of their plans and/or post to public social media prior to the event
- Statistically the greatest source of potential harm to our students and community members is self harm
- Identifying those at risk of harm to themselves or others and intervening appropriately is essential to our safety and well being

Physical security and emotional wellness are
equal partners in this effort

Town and School Safety Task Force Timeline

2018	2019	2020-2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Task Force Convened - Security Study Awarded - \$200,000 Capital allocated for urgent needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Security Study Complete - Task Force further investigates system wide challenges - \$200,000 Capital employed for most urgent needs - Wellness Study Awarded and Completed - Action teams formed for each building to prioritize and implement recommendations - Capital recommendations included in annual capital planning processes - Detailed comprehensive recommendation made by Task Force - Public input sought on plans and recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommendations implemented over a series of budget years - Building level improvements implemented - Task Force remains in place until all building and system level needs are resourced and implemented

Security Assessment

- Physical assessments of all 10 x Schools, 6 x Town Buildings and Nashoba Tech complete
- Detailed policy and procedure review and recommendations complete
- SRO presence review and recommendations complete
- Capital first recommendations (\$200,000 FY20 capital) complete
- Each building that was part of the assessment is forming a team to review, prioritize and implement recommendations
 - Timeline for implementation expected to be 6-12 months
- Further planning for several of the key issues will wait until we have the Emotional Wellness piece completed in the fall so that our approach is comprehensive

What have we learned so far?

- Detailed recommendations by building
- Detailed policy recommendations to make our policies current and consistent
- Recommendations addressing emergency management
- Recommendations addressing building access management
- Recommendations for level of SRO presence and SRO roles

What information are we gathering?

- The Emotional Wellness piece of this program will kick off shortly and evaluate
 - Best practices observed in promoting emotional wellness, identification of risk and successful intervention
 - Detailed recommendations for improvements to our services, policies and procedures
- We will continue to seek community input at this event and future events as our plans develop

Can we afford it?

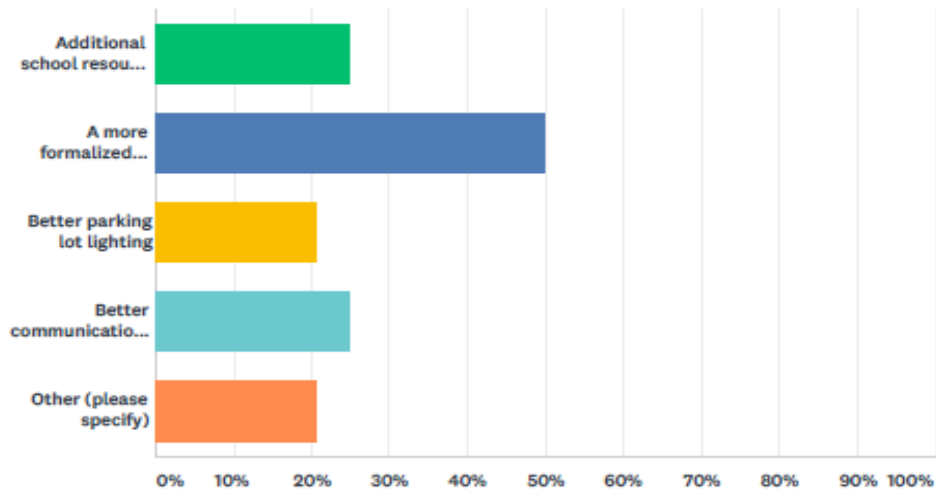
- Many of the recommendations for policy improvements will take work and staff time, but not have significant cost
- Many of the site security recommendations have a cost that is meaningful, but can largely fit in our regular capital process and could potentially be phased in over several budget cycles
 - We would pursue top priorities first
- The recommendations that would require additional staffing may be more challenging and take longer to phase in
 - We have uncertain enrollment in coming years because of new development in town
 - We have six additional first responders to bring us to the recommended level of staffing for regular police and fire safety
 - We will need to carefully prioritize in coming budget cycles to ensure all the critical needs are met

Action Plan

- Further develop town/system wide improvements for physical security
- Develop building level action plans to address specific issues with a 6-12 month implementation plan
- Participate in the Emotional Wellness study which will conclude this Fall
- Develop implementation plans and budgets with a combined view of security, wellness and achieving the right balance between these issues
- The Town and School Safety Task force will remain in place until all implementation plans are complete

Q2 Please select what you feel are the most important potential improvements in terms of helping you feel safer

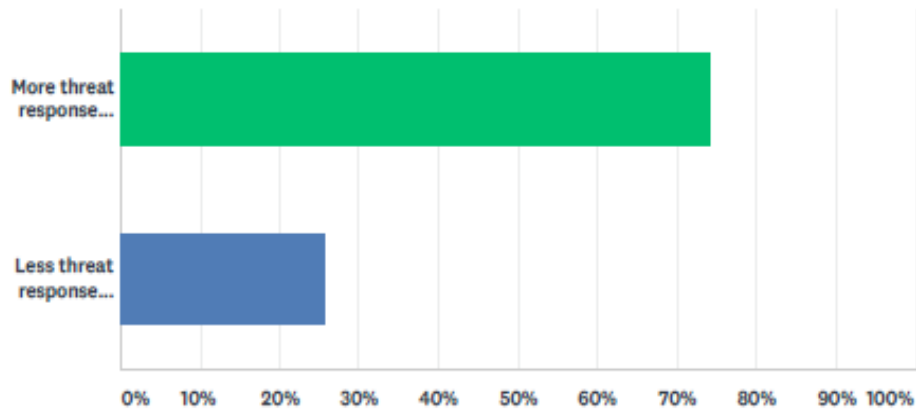
Answered: 44 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Additional school resource officer presence	25.00% 11
A more formalized building access/visitor control	50.00% 22
Better parking lot lighting	20.45% 9
Better communications infrastructure	25.00% 11
Other (please specify)	20.45% 9
Total Respondents: 44	

Q3 You may have had a student participate in ALICE training. Would you value more or less threat response training for students?

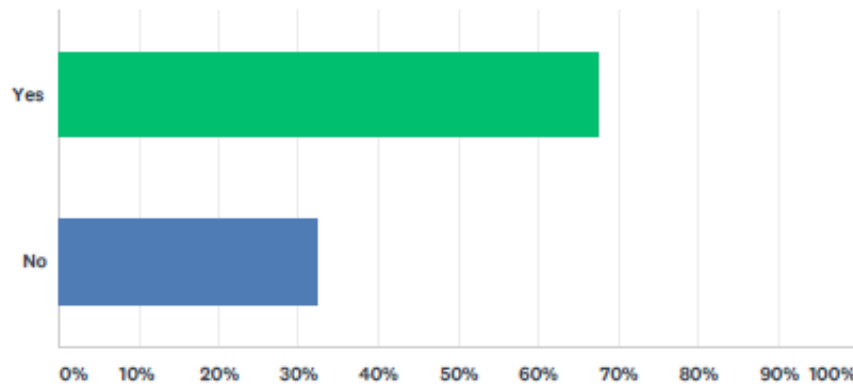
Answered: 31 Skipped: 15



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More threat response training	74.19%	23
Less threat response training	25.81%	8
TOTAL		31

Q4 Would you be comfortable with monitoring of publicly posted social media made using school equipment or through school Wifi with the goal of identifying those at risk of harm or self harm?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 6



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	67.50%	27
No	32.50%	13
TOTAL		40

Stormwater Management

Facilitated Discussion Topic #2

The Board of Selectmen are considering five funding options to meet the town's stormwater management obligations, these options include the following:

1. Continued Property Tax Funding

- Easy to understand and administer, but limited available funds which could lead to budget cuts and service reductions in other areas
- Overrides and debt exclusions could be utilized, but would require Town Meeting and ballot votes to pass
- Tax value does not correlate to stormwater impacts and does not provide any incentive for tax payers to mitigate stormwater on their own property

2. Establish a Stormwater Utility Fee

- Considered the fairest method, costs would be distributed based upon impervious surface on each parcel
- Fees for single family homes could be billed in tiers, which are estimated at \$45, \$75, and \$113 annually. Non-single-family residential customers would be billed based on their impervious surface
- Fee funding would prevent budget cuts and overrides
- Fee funding would allow us to address infrastructure concerns
- Staff time will be impacted for training & ongoing billing and collection
- New software would need to be purchased for billing
- Will require public education because it is a new concept

3. Charge a Fee for New Construction Only

- It is possible to institute a new fee that would be paid by new developments and could be dedicated to stormwater activity
- This funding mechanism would not provide sufficient and/or stable funding to meet compliance long term
- Could be used to supplement another funding option

- 4. Adopt Municipal Water Infrastructure Investment Fund Surtax up to 3%**
- Municipal Water Infrastructure Investment Fund or MWIIF works similar to Community Preservation Act funds (CPA)
 - Requires town meeting and ballot vote to adopt it
 - Surtax is segregated just like CPA funds and appears separately on the tax bill
 - Use is restricted to drinking, wastewater, stormwater asset maintenance, and improvements
 - No additional administrative cost for billing or collecting
 - Does not correlate to stormwater impacts by property and does not provide any incentives for tax payers to make stormwater improvements on their property
- 5. Consider reducing the existing 3% CPA Surtax by a TBD % to offset Stormwater cost increases**
- The CPA Surtax could be reduced to lessen the tax burden
 - Changing the CPA Surtax percentage requires a town meeting vote and a ballot vote
 - Reducing funding for CPA projects could cause greater competition for remaining funds and possibly more general fund contributions for projects in the future
 - Reducing the CPA Surtax percentage will result in reduced state match

Review FY20-23 Stormwater Conceptual Budget

The Budget has been developed based on the stormwater Master Plan and with input from the Town Engineer, Assistant Town Engineer, Highway Superintendent, Water Superintendent, Finance Director and our consultants at Tighe and Bond. The conceptual budget is a representation of what we believe the costs will be in the near term. The Master Plan contained recommendations for specific stormwater related repairs, maintenance, and tasks that needed to be done for compliance with the new EPA permit, as well as to plan for infrastructure improvements. We can either plan to take care of our infrastructure or we can react to failing infrastructure. Good management practices would favor planning. We worked to refine the estimated numbers in the Master Plan to create a budget that represented the actual work that could be accomplished in a year. We created a 3-year plan and then averaged out the totals for the 3-year period. The general

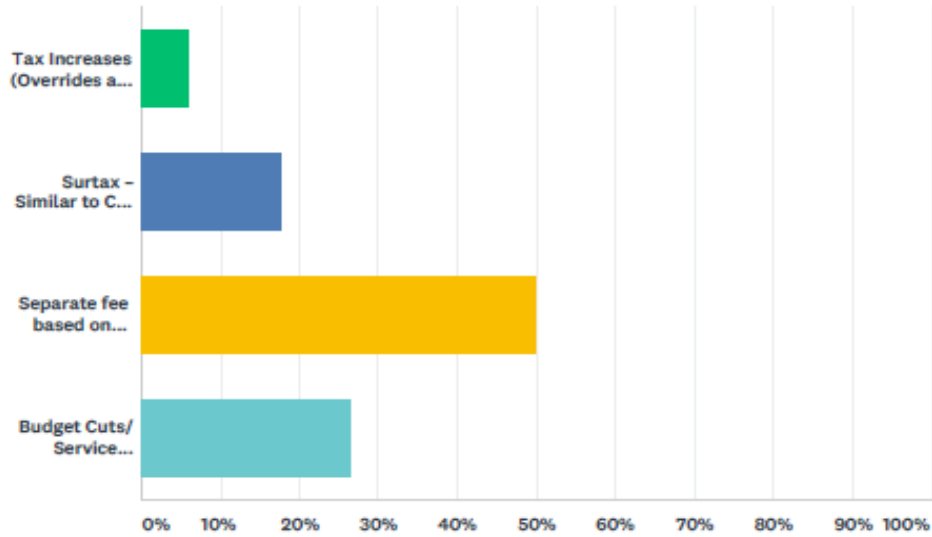
fund is currently contributing approximately \$600,000 per year to stormwater related activities through the Highway Department, Debt Service, Engineering, and GIS budgets. This \$600,000 contribution is expected to continue, so when we developed the conceptual budget, we accounted for the subsidy. The averaged, annual costs for stormwater management, after accounting for the \$600,000 General Fund subsidy ended up at approximately \$1,020,000 per year for FY21 thru FY23.

Credits & Abatements

The Board of Selectmen are considering credit policies that would apply if a Utility Fee is adopted. Our consultant has recommended credits of up to 50% for properties that have invested in stormwater systems which meet or exceed the standards of the town's stormwater permit. Residential customers may apply for credits if they have invested in systems on their property which would be at 50% of the same standard as the town bylaw describes. The consultant has recommended the credit for single family residential customers as a tiered reduction. For example, if you parcel had a larger impervious area and were able to receive a credit, you would pay at the rate of an average home. Your fee would be reduced from \$113 to \$75. The consultant is recommending a minimum base fee of \$45, so property owners in the lowest tier would not be eligible for a credit. Other possible credits under consideration are credit to tax payers who participate in stormwater program initiatives, such as clean up events, stream sampling, and storm drain stenciling. They also recommended that we offer a rain barrel program, whereby the Stormwater Utility would contribute to the cost of a rain barrel offering them to residents at a reduced price.

Q7 What way would you prefer to pay for stormwater costs?

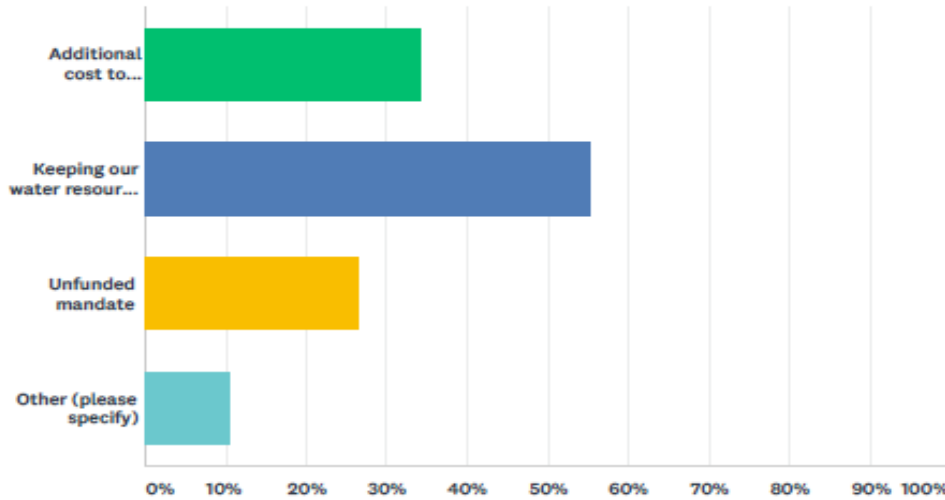
Answered: 34 Skipped: 12



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Tax Increases (Overrides and Debt Exclusions)	5.88% 2
Surtax – Similar to CPA Tax, comes as part of the Real Estate Tax bill	17.65% 6
Separate fee based on impermeable surface	50.00% 17
Budget Cuts/ Service Reductions	26.47% 9
TOTAL	34

Q8 What is your greatest concern with the town's need to comply with the EPA's permit?

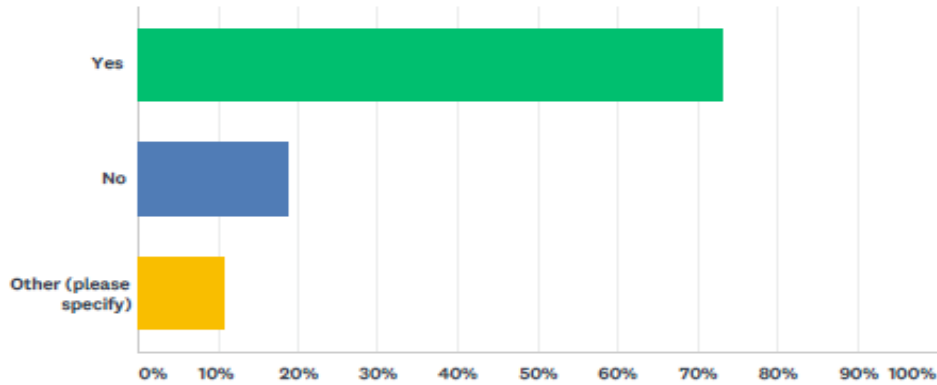
Answered: 38 Skipped: 8



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Additional cost to residents and businesses	34.21%	13
Keeping our water resources clean	55.26%	21
Unfunded mandate	26.32%	10
Other (please specify)	10.53%	4
Total Respondents: 38		

Q9 Do you feel that businesses and residents should pay a portion of the new requirements based upon their impermeable surfaces, recognizing that single family homes may be assessed on a scale and not individually?

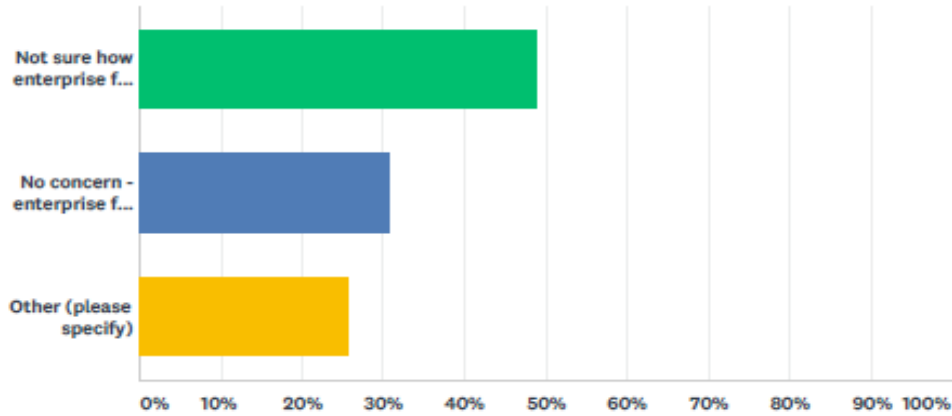
Answered: 37 Skipped: 9



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	72.97% 27
No	18.92% 7
Other (please specify)	10.81% 4
Total Respondents: 37	

Q10 What is your greatest concern with the town creating a stormwater enterprise fund?

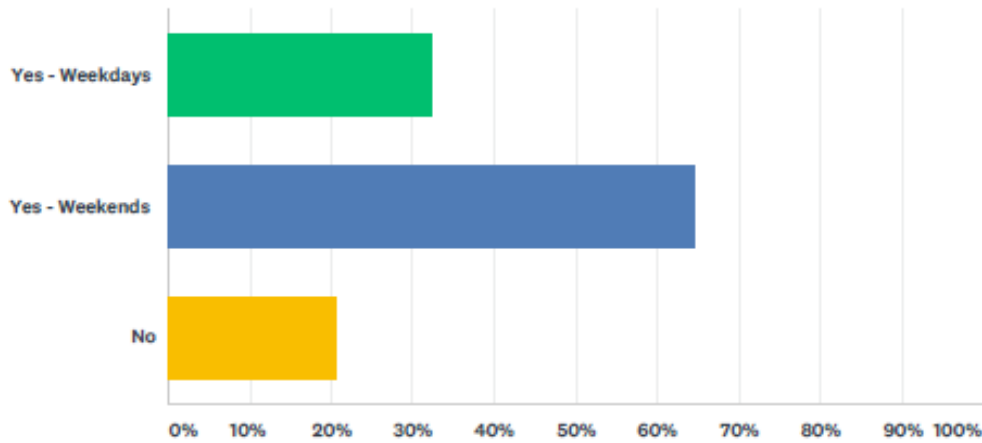
Answered: 39 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Not sure how enterprise fund works	48.72%	19
No concern - enterprise fund is appropriate	30.77%	12
Other (please specify)	25.64%	10
Total Respondents: 39		

Q11 Would you be willing to attend a site walk to visit some of Westford's stormwater issues and better understand the budgetary needs to fix these problems?

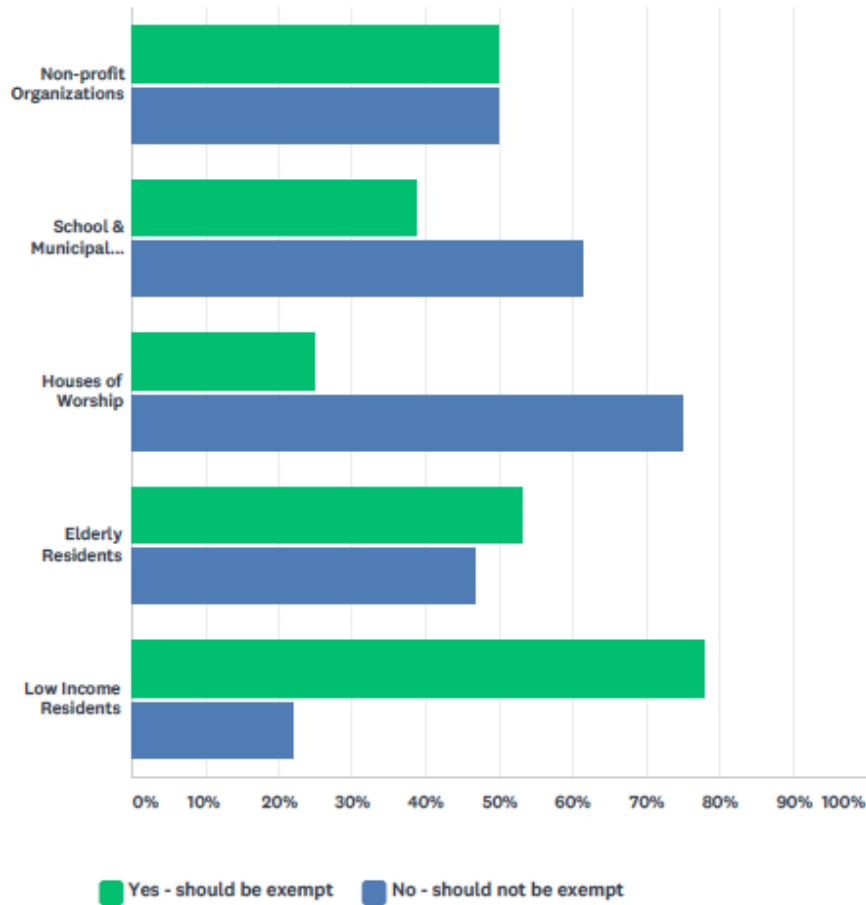
Answered: 34 Skipped: 12



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes - Weekdays	32.35% 11
Yes - Weekends	64.71% 22
No	20.59% 7
Total Respondents: 34	

Q12 Do you believe that some property owners should be exempt from contributing to stormwater costs?

Answered: 33 Skipped: 13

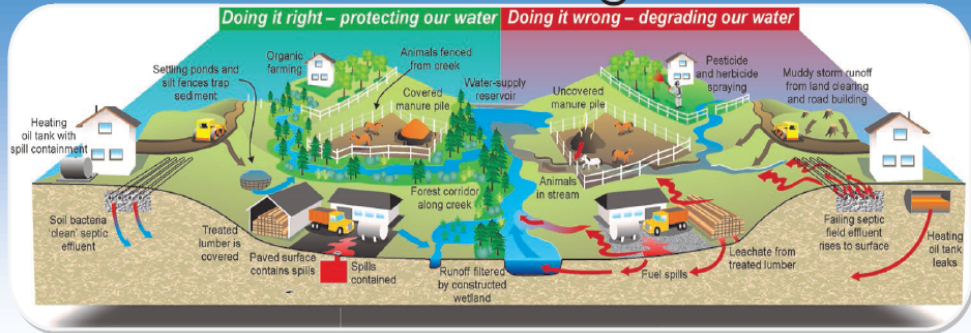


	YES - SHOULD BE EXEMPT	NO - SHOULD NOT BE EXEMPT	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Non-profit Organizations	50.00% 16	50.00% 16	32	1.50
School & Municipal Properties	38.71% 12	61.29% 19	31	1.61
Houses of Worship	25.00% 8	75.00% 24	32	1.75
Elderly Residents	53.13% 17	46.88% 15	32	1.47
Low Income Residents	78.13% 25	21.88% 7	32	1.22

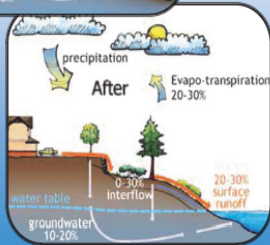
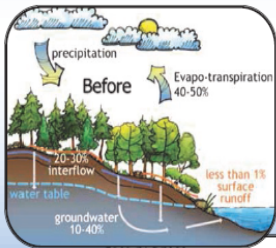
Water Resources Management

Benefits of Proper Water Resources Management

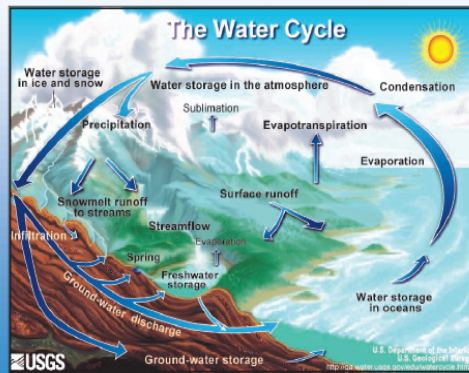
- Preserves water quality of lakes and streams for public health, recreation, and wildlife
- Provides a sustainable high quality drinking water source
- Reduces stormwater runoff and minimizes flooding
- Protects public health and public & private property



Water Resources Protection "Doing it Right" vs "Doing it Wrong"



Development Impacts on the Water Cycle & Groundwater Levels



- ### Current Local & State Water Resources Initiatives
- Massachusetts Sustainable Water Management Initiative (SWMI)
 - Westford Stormwater Management Master Plan (SMMP)
 - Westford Healthy Lakes & Ponds Initiative



What's in Stormwater



Stormwater in Massachusetts

U.S. EPA MUNICIPAL SEPARATE STORM SEWER SYSTEM (MS4) PERMITS



PERMIT AT-A-GLANCE

- ✓ Stormwater is the # 1 cause of water quality impairments in MA
- ✓ The new permit replaces the single 2003 permit that covered MA & NH
- ✓ 5 Year permit term
- ✓ Permit may cover 260 municipalities in MA
- ✓ Permit contains no end-of-pipe limits
- ✓ Addresses nutrient and flooding issues across MA

MS4 PERMIT FLEXIBILITY

- ▶ The new permit has the same 6 minimum control measures as the 2003 MS4 permit
- ▶ The permit has more direction and anticipated end-points, but still allows flexibility in planning and prioritizing

THIS PERMIT ALLOWS

- **Permittee to prioritize** catch basin inspection and cleaning based on their knowledge of the system
- **Credit for past work**, tailor their inspection priorities and up to **10 years** to complete illicit discharge requirements
- **Allows 1 year to update** from 2003 Stormwater Management Plan

POST-CONSTRUCTION

- ▶ Routine road maintenance and paving will never trigger post-construction requirements
- ▶ There are no retrofits required during the permit term
- ▶ The most cost effective way to treat stormwater is during new and redevelopment opportunities

<https://www.epa.gov/npdes-permits/massachusetts-small-ms4-general-permit>

\$ COST BREAKDOWN

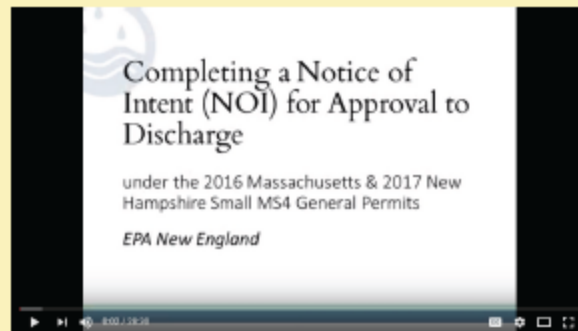
- 50%** of program funding is assumed to be used for system operations and maintenance (street sweeping and catch basin cleaning)
- 30%** of program funding is assumed to be used to track and remove illicit connections to the storm sewer (removing sanitary sewage from stormwater systems)
- 20%** of program funding is assumed to be used for planning, public education and other administrative requirements

TRAINING AND TOOLS

<https://go.usa.gov/xQNsv>

EPA is providing multiple tools to assist permittees with stormwater management and reduce the administrative burden.

(At right) Notice of Intent instructional video.



BMP Optimization, Accounting & Tracking Tools

Prioritize green infrastructure projects & track and report pollution removal

Contractor Supported Training

As well as EPA sponsored workshops/webinars for new permittees and IDDE Planning

Templates
Work with MassDEP to produce templates for public education and outreach requirements

Stormwater Management Plan Template

To assist permittees in developing a comprehensive stormwater management plan consistent with permit requirements

Pre-populated Annual Reports

Based on each permittee's *Notice of Intent*

Photographs from the Event







Planning for the 2020 Strategic Planning Retreat

Kimball Farm Rate Increase

Kimball Farm informed the town that their rates for next year's event would be increasing to from \$12 to \$13 per attendee without park game privileges. Next year will be our 10th anniversary of Westford's Strategic Planning Retreats at Kimball Farm, and we believe it provides a great convenient venue for our residents to participate in information-sharing and discussions regarding topics of interest to the town.

Alternative Venue Options

In consideration of alternative locations, we have considered if there is a suitable town property that could host our event in the future in an effort to reduce costs. Given the increased attendance in recent years, finding a location large enough to hold our event would be difficult, and the ease of hosting at Kimball Farm should not be underestimated.

Benefits of holding event at Kimball Farm

- Simplified logistics for planning and hosting such a large event.
- We are provided with a large tent, which would cost the town a significant amount to rent and erect on town property. Given the various weather scenarios we have experienced over the past nine years, a tent is necessary to prepare for potential adverse weather conditions on the day of the event.
- The venue provides us with tables and restrooms for our guests. The town could potentially use tables from the School Department to setup for an event held on town property, but we would likely incur additional personnel costs related to the setup and takedown. The town would likely need to rent portable toilets if the event was held outdoors, unless guests were required to walk to a nearby municipal or school building.
- Our guests are provided with dinner and ice cream. The town would certainly need to hire a caterer to provide similar amenities.

Other considerations

- The alternative to an outdoor event would be hosting it within one of our public school gymnasiums or cafeterias. We believe our attendance rate would significantly decrease if we pursued this option, mostly because we believe our residents would view this similar to Town Meeting and much more formalized. We believe the less formal environment is more inviting for those new to local government, and it is fun!

- East Boston Camps and the 4H Club may be possibilities for hosting our event, but the logistics of coordinating and hosting the entire event with town staff would be time consuming and a major undertaking.

Comments and Suggestions

Based on feedback from guests at our event and town staff, we may consider some or all of the ideas itemized below at future events:

- Allowing more time for guests to visit each of the exhibit tables to ask questions and learn about initiatives being pursued by various boards, committees, and town departments.
- One main topic for the event, as opposed to two or more, especially after dinner and ice cream.
- Provide only dinner and ice cream to attendees and stop providing the wristband for games and rides.
- Increased number of tables for guests inside tent when there is inclement weather.
- Improved check-in procedures.
- Sound system improvements.

