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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Dear Mt. Vernon Friends and Neighbors,

Many people have contributed to this comprehensive plan. Some contributed data while others contributed opinions. Some attended our meetings while others were accosted in their barns or yards as we sought information and ideas.

We thank each and every one. This is your plan.

This has been a very difficult task. While most of the facts in the plan's inventory are indisputable, projections for the future were openly debated and remain debatable.

Wisdom of much greater magnitude than ours would be required to solve all of the problems identified during the planning process, but we have tried to steer our community in the direction of solutions, even if the actual solutions are not always readily apparent.

Some policies present our dreams; others are anchored in reality. We believe a comprehensive plan should include some dreams, and we have done so.

One thing is very clear to us: it will take the collective effort of each one of you to achieve the goals and policies of this comprehensive plan.

Yes, we mean you. There is much that you, as an individual, can do to help Mount Vernon achieve its future. And that future can be so much brighter with your help.

So, as you read this plan, check off the policies which you wish to help achieve. And let us know of your interest.

Join us in pestering town officials to work together to achieve the goals set out in this plan. Don't let this plan gather dust on the shelf. We've got you this far. The rest is up to you.

Sincerely,

George Smith, Chair
Russell Libby
John Hagelin
Diane Lee
Dave Markovchick

The Mount Vernon Comprehensive Planning Committee

INTRODUCTION

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

Mount Vernon's comprehensive plan is a blueprint for the town's future, a tool for providing coordinated guidance and direction to meet such challenges as growth, demand and financing for public services, and protection of our environment and rural characteristics. It is a plan in the sense that it provides a detailed program of action which will enable the community to grow and meet the challenges before us. It is comprehensive in that it covers all of the issues identified as concerns over the next ten years.

Comprehensive planning is much more than a written plan, however. It is a process, and a process which must continue into the future. Every year, each and every goal and policy should be reviewed, progress evaluated, and revisions and new policies proposed to meet our changing circumstances and new challenges. Legally, the plan provides a base and justification for all town ordinances, and it must be kept up-to-date in the future.

This plan presents our community's values and a set of principles within which to operate. Although it charts our course, other roads will diverge along the way and we'll have ample opportunity to evaluate and change course, as needed.

Why Prepare a Comprehensive Plan?

In 1988 the Maine Legislature enacted the Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act, commonly referred to as the "Growth Management Act". The Act requires each municipality in the State to develop a comprehensive plan which addresses ten state goals and any local goals. The plan must include town wide zoning within a growth management plan. A thorough explanation of the zoning requirement is presented later in this plan, within our own growth management plan.

Mount Vernon was placed in the first tier of towns mandated to prepare and enact plans because of its high growth rate over the past ten years. The plan must be approved by Maine's Office of Comprehensive Planning. If a town fails to adopt an approved plan, the Act specifies that any municipal zoning, subdivision, site review, or impact fee ordinance will become invalid one year after the applicable deadline when the plan was to have been submitted to the Office of Comprehensive Planning. Any other municipal land use ordinance or regulation will become invalid on January 1, 1998.

Failure to enact a plan according to the Act also renders the municipality ineligible for any State assistance programs designed to provide municipalities direct or indirect financial assistance for the following purposes: 1) to accommodate or encourage additional growth and development (e.g., Community Development Block Grant); 2) to improve, expand, or construct public facilities (e.g., Boat Facilities Grants, Land and Water Conservation Grants, and Economic Corridor Grants); 3) to acquire land for conservation, recreation, or resource protection (e.g., Waterfront Action Grants); 4) to plan for or manage specific economic and natural resource concerns (e.g., Coastal Planning Grants).

The Act also establishes a voluntary program whereby a municipality may request the state to certify its local growth management program as being consistent with the Act. The Act does not require such certification, but does establish certification as a prerequisite to obtaining certain state grants and assistance, specifically: 1) financial and technical assistance for the administration and enforcement of municipal land use ordinances; 2) use of the Municipal Legal Defense Fund to assist financing legal expenses related to the defense and enforcement of municipal land use ordinances; 3) eligibility for multipurpose Community Development Block Grants; 4) the right to adopt or continue to enforce an impact fee ordinance.

Long range planning is a compelling need in Mount Vernon and we must have a plan to form the basis of our land use and other ordinances. Although Mount Vernon prepared this plan in response to the state mandate, and we are generally not happy to receive state mandates, it must be recognized that planning is an excellent idea which should be encouraged and supported. This plan has been prepared in good faith, with our eyes firmly on our future.

How was the Plan Developed?

Mount Vernon Selectmen appointed a Comprehensive Planning Committee in 1990, consisting of the following individuals: George Smith, Chairman, Russell Libby, Alexander George, John Hagelin, and Peter Halliday. Alexander George and Peter Halliday subsequently resigned, and Diane Lee and David Markovchick were appointed to the committee. Rebekah Halliday and Diane Holmes provided organizational and clerical assistance at times. Other interested citizens participated during the planning process, particularly in the preparation of natural resource data.

The Committee also contracted with Aerial Survey and Photo, Inc., of Norridgewock, for an aerial survey and an extensive series of maps, some of which are reduced in size and presented in this plan's appendix. All maps are available in the town office and will serve as important planning resources in the future. Digitized maps of each of the following were prepared: base map, parcel map, land use map, shoreland zoning map (to match the new shoreland zoning ordinance being presented to the June, 1991 town meeting for enactment), and a limited factors map. From the aerial photography (negative scale at 1 inch = 2000 feet), we received 3 sets of 9" X 9" contact prints at 1 inch = 500 feet, a photo index, 2X enlargements at 1 inch = 1000 feet, and photographic enlargements corresponding to existing tax maps at scales of 1 inch = 500 feet and 1 inch = 100 feet. The aerial survey was completed in the spring of 1990.

The town voted to accept a state planning grant from the Office of Comprehensive Planning for the purpose of preparing this comprehensive plan. The total budget proposed by the state was \$17,184, with 75% state funds and 25% town funds. The Committee proposed a budget of only \$9,850, which was ultimately approved by the state. The state provided \$7,388, or 75%, and the town \$2,462, 25%.

Information was provided to townspeople through the regular town newsletter, and the committee prepared and mailed a final comprehensive newsletter summarizing the plan in May of 1991, just prior to a public hearing on the plan. In addition, two detailed surveys were mailed to every resident. An excellent response to each survey was received: 135 responses to the first survey and from 120 responses to the second survey. Both surveys are summarized in the appendix to this plan.

How is the Plan Organized?

A table of contents preceding this introduction directs readers to sections of interest. The plan consists of three distinct sections. The first section is our growth management plan. The second section consists of a series of goals and policies. Goals and policies were developed for each of the issues identified in the inventory and analysis. The policies are designed to achieve the goals, outlining what the town intends to do to achieve the goal. An implementation timetable and plan follows each policy and assigns responsibility for achieving the policy. The third section is a thorough inventory and analysis of key data and resources. The Analysis identifies the key issues in section two. In the appendix are survey results and two maps, a base map and a land use map.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN

CONSERVING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES
PROTECTING OUR RURAL CHARACTER
ENCOURAGING FARMING AND FORESTRY
PROTECTING WILDLIFE HABITAT AND WATER BODIES

GROWTH MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

- Protect the rural characteristics and diversity of the town.
- Conserve the town's important natural resources, especially water bodies.
- Strive to maintain or enhance the property value of all property owners.
- Protect private property rights and freedom of choice for property owners.
- Treat all property owners equitably.

So we had a large assortment of folks in our town, and although all towns have their characters, no town ever had as many as we did, or such fine ones. With the perspective of later years, I know now that everybody in our town was a character – and that the town was what made character, and I know the town made mine. Whatever it may be, the town made it. All I am or ever hope to be I owe to my mother's bringing me up in that small Maine town, because growing to a man there gave me the priceless things that universities don't sell, and other people don't know.

Excerpt from And One To Grown On by John Gould

Published by William Morrow and Company, 1949

Some men, when they walk, would rather walk the deep woods, harvested or untouched, either one, but never cleared or planned for anything but timber growth. I walk those woods at times because there is a satisfaction in knowing that there are twenty or thirty or fifty miles of woods beyond and that a man could press into them until he became a part of them in fact as well as in thought.

Usually, though, I would rather walk the acres where men lived and used the land for pasture or for field crops long ago.... It is the finding of the old foundations and the tracing of the once plain barnyard borders that I enjoy. Wherever men worked, they left something. It isn't physical, but it takes the physical remnants to recreate it.

When a man walks through a region like that, he can feel the presence of his predecessors.... The walker knows this. Somewhere in town there may be someone left who could tell him if he asked, but he doesn't need to ask. He knows. He can feel it and he can see it if he knows what to look for.

Part of the sadness of the new forests is that so few do know what to look for. Many hunters are superb woodsmen but when they sense the men who worked the land they walk, they are only conscious of something and that something is undefined. When they come to a stone wall, they know that there was much labor in its building but they cannot taste the sweat that came each spring as the new stones were barred and lifted.

When they see a mid-field pile of stone, they don't know that buried underneath it there's a boulder too big to move and so, resignedly, covered by the frost thrust crop and used thus to shorten the trip to the edge of the field.

On all the old lands, there are lessons. They are the marks men made, the intimacies of an era. They should not be lost.

The Presence of the Past

William M. Clark

And the boundaries of Cedar River are undefined. The woods intrude on the settlement and the settlement intrudes on the woods. Sometimes a man will go to his hayfield and find that the spruces have sprouted since the last cutting. Sometimes the deer will seek out a beech grove and find that someone has taken fifty or sixty thousand feet of logs and a winter's warmth, and the slash lies scattered.

Neither change is really a hardship. Hay gets increasingly unwanted as the tractors roar. There are other beeches and the beech trash will rot quickly, fast rot being a characteristic of beeches. Big bursting raspberries and tender hardwood sprouts will fill the cutover grove in a few years, feeding deer and bears and providing raspberry pies.

It may be the mingling of men and the wild things along the vague lines which separate the natural from the semi-controlled that has kept Cedar River people from conforming to the patterned lives of the down river world.

Maine Is In My Heart: Cedar River

William M. Clark

He said, "When I was a boy, even then, people were talking about worn out land. But they didn't know anything much to do for it except move away. Farmers know better now, and that's good. A man ought to do something for the land when the land has done so much for him."

I remember him saying that and he said it with all the sincerity that a man could say anything. And I agree with him. If I ever had time enough and money to use, I'd take another piece of land and do what I tried to do with the hill farm, except I'd finish the job. I'd put it right back where it originally was.

Because the land is the only true heritage there is.

True Heritage

William M. Clark

Excerpts from stories in The Hills of Maine by William M. Clark

Published by North Country Press (1990) of Belfast and Unity, Maine
Reprinted by permission of the publisher

VISION

Recent years have brought a period of investment in Mount Vernon's older homes, many building improvements and beneficial growth. Many rural characteristics have been preserved. Our rolling hills and plentiful lakes, ponds, and meandering streams, provide the most striking and pleasing characteristics which are appreciated by all residents.

With no major industry and a great deal of undeveloped land, Mt. Vernon's growth has been limited largely to residential development and home-based businesses, primarily along existing roads. Most citizens like the current diversity of homes, open space and forest. Most of the town is forested, and logging has accelerated in the last decade, stripping some large parcels of nearly all merchantable timber. The number of farms have diminished and only about 750 acres of open farmland remains in the entire town.

Most residents would like to wake up ten or twenty years from now in a community which has maintained its rural character. Such a community would include active farms and a forestry industry, a lot of undeveloped land both field and forest, no major industry, no high density development, homes spread out along existing roads, and clean and uncrowded lakes.

This Mt. Vernon of the future would not be appreciably larger, in population and number of houses, than the Mt. Vernon of today, although most citizens would concede that there is currently plenty of room for growth if it comes. This vision emphasizes a small community with a large landbase and plenty of room to roam.

RURAL CHARACTER

The term "rural" conjures up images of a visual landscape of farms, stone walls, winding tree lined roads running up and down over hillsides, and a diversity of architecture and people. Important rural characteristics include a lot of open space and forest, wildlife, clean water, large homesteads, and a diverse development pattern with homes spread throughout the landbase.

To some, the term "rural" represents an attitude: independence, neighborliness in an environment where you know and can trust all your neighbors, freedom, and the opportunity to be left alone if you wish. To others, it's certain smells, perhaps cedar and pine, perhaps manure.

Rural is the community where you can leave your door unlocked and the keys in your car. When problems occur, neighbors solve them by talking with each other. There is more self-sufficiency (although less than in the past) and people have the ability to take care of their own. When the electricity goes off, rural people don't panic. Rural is church on Sunday and the country store all week long.

Some believe that important rural characteristics are lack of regulations and allowance for creativity and diversity that gives even the poorest people an opportunity to house themselves. Rural can also be defined by what it is not. Rural to many means no "bother", no public services, no sidewalks, no street lights, no violent crime, and only very limited police protection.

Rural is a place where people live from their land, not just on their land. Land is a sustaining factor of life in rural Maine. Using the land is essential to rural life and rural people live closer to their land and natural resources. Living the rural life means you can sell a few cords of wood, when you need to, and enjoy the opportunity to manage and protect your land. Rural people have always had a reverence for the land and a strong belief that they should leave the land better than they found it.

Rural is the place where outdoor recreation prevails over organized indoor sports, where maple syrup is boiled in the springtime from maple ridges where snowmobiles and cross country skiers bound in wintertime. It is a place which lures summer vacationers who leave before the spectacular beauty of the fall returns Maine to its natives.

The definition of rural is very much related to one's surroundings. A diversity of land, homes and people make up the interesting character which we regard today in Mt. Vernon as rural.

REGULATORY CLIMATE

After decades of little or no regulation, Mt. Vernon townspeople enacted an extremely comprehensive package of growth management and resource protection ordinances during the 1980's. Moved to act by a fear of unbridled development and a desire to protect our bountiful natural resources, we enacted strict shoreland, subdivision, and site plan review ordinances. We also enacted a minimum lot size of 2 acres, a building code (including setbacks of 75 feet from the road centerline) and standards for new roads.

The 1990 annual town meeting enacted new ordinances concerning automobile and junk yards, stronger road standards including standards for driveways to back lots, and a stricter building code including occupancy permits. The 1990 summer town meeting will consider major revisions to our Shoreland Ordinance in response to a new state mandate. The town will protect more wetlands and streams than the state mandate prescribes, based on local knowledge of the importance of those areas. All wetland of ten acres or more will be placed in either shoreland or resource protection areas and buffered.

The subdivision ordinance regulates all developments of three or more lots. The site plan review ordinance governs all commercial development (except agriculture and home-based businesses), imposing a variety of performance standards which must be met by new commercial development. The minimum lot size applies throughout the town.

It is generally felt that these ordinances have been effective, although most are too new to allow a definitive judgment.

A Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1988 and many of its goals have been achieved. This new comprehensive plan encompasses any unachieved goals and adds many new goals, including state mandated goals.

Two serious problems have been identified in the regulatory arena. Enforcement is provided by a part time code enforcement officer. Although the town's new CEO is doing an excellent job on a very limited part-time basis, enforcement of both local ordinances and state laws remains woefully inadequate. In addition, many townspeople are unfamiliar with our regulations and inadvertently commit violations which oftentimes go undetected, causing environmental and other damage. Enforcement and education have been identified as needing improvement. This plan offers policies to meet this need.

TYPES OF ZONING

Maine's Growth Management Act requires that every Maine town enact town-wide zoning with a minimum of two zones. Land areas must be designated "growth" or "rural". The designation of growth areas is intended to ensure that planned growth and development is directed to areas most suitable for such growth and development and away from areas in which growth and development would be incompatible with the protection of rural resources.

The land use plan must designate as rural those land areas within the town with the town intends to protect agricultural, forest, scenic, and other open space land areas from incompatible development. The designation of rural areas is intended to provide for the long term protection of resource production and open space and scenic lands from incompatible development.

Zoning is supposed to protect landowners from adverse impacts of adjoining land uses. Some experts believe conventional zoning has failed to achieve this goal. In conventional zoning, the primary mechanism employed to protect the environment is large lot zoning. The theory of this approach is simply that the more resource limitations a site has, the relatively larger the lot requirement should be in order to reduce the damage done by roads, driveways, buildings and utilities. Conversely, denser zoning classes should be permitted where there are fewer environmental limitations.

Maine's Office of Comprehensive Planning (OCP) contends that minimum lot sizes, by themselves, are inadequate to meet the goal of encouraging orderly growth. Specifically they contend that minimum lot sizes allow homes to be spread across the landscape, encourage sprawl, and fail to protect rural resources. They believe that because rural areas generally lack public water and sewer service, and because soils may be poor, large lots may appear to be the best solution, but do not work because they do not protect open space.

OCP favors more restrictive measures, including mandatory clustering in rural areas, performance standards for protection of natural resources, structuring road frontage requirements to encourage internal roads rather than development on existing roads, and other policies which steer development into designated growth zones, while preserving open space, farmland, and forest in designated rural areas.

CONCLUSIONS AND CHALLENGES

With a common vision for the future and a shared understanding of the important rural characteristics of Mt. Vernon, the comprehensive planning committee nevertheless faced the challenging task of meeting a state mandate which seemed to impose arbitrary growth and management zones incompatible with our present development pattern and our desire of continued diverse development throughout the town.

The following growth management plan is a compromise, recognizing the requirements of the state growth management mandate, while retaining as much local control and initiative as possible.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT GOALS AND POLICIES

Mt. Vernon's Comprehensive Planning Committee believes that the following growth management plan will achieve both state and local growth management goals, which are as follows:

- 1) encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas while protecting Mt. Vernon's rural character, making efficient use of public services, preventing development sprawl, and assuring that all landowners are treated equitably and fairly.
- 2) protect the quality and manage the quantity of Mt. Vernon's water resources, including lakes, ponds, streams and aquifers.
- 3) protect other critical natural resources, including without limitation, wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, shorelands, and unique natural areas.
- 4) preserve historic and archaeological resources.
- 5) safeguard agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens those resources.

To achieve these goals, we propose a partnership of local and state growth management and protective measures.

Mount Vernon's strengthened shoreland zoning ordinance will protect water bodies and other important resources such as wetlands.

Maine's Natural Resources Protection Act is expected to protect significant wildlife habitats, including high and moderate value deer wintering areas when they are identified.

Maine's Forest Practices Act is expected to protect important forest resources and encourage a viable forestry industry.

Mount Vernon's policies established in the following section titled "Farm and Forest Resources" will strengthen and enhance state laws, regulations, and programs with local initiatives to achieve our goals.

Mount Vernon's site plan review ordinance will continue to manage and limit the impact of commercial development.

Mount Vernon's subdivision ordinance will continue to manage and limit the impact of large scale residential development. Proposed new open space options for developers will offer an enticement to preserve open space within subdivisions.

Mount Vernon's other ordinances, including its building code, will also assist in achieving our goals.

Mount Vernon's "Growth Management Strategies" outlined in a following section are designed to protect our rural characteristics and natural resources while providing property owners and developers with choices which encourage the continuation of a diverse pattern of development very similar to the pattern we now enjoy and appreciate. Recognizing that an important rural characteristic is the variety of lot sizes, road frontages, and set backs which currently exist, we have designed a table of options to allow such diversity to continue within our designated growth area.

In order to meet the state mandate, we propose to establish a Growth Area in a 1000 foot corridor along the entire stretch of State Highway Route 41 through Mt. Vernon, from our town line with Readfield to our town line with Vienna. Large scale commercial development and mobile home parks would be limited to this area.

In addition to our belief that the policies in this plan are more than sufficient to achieve all state and local goals, we have chosen not to adopt some of the State's suggested zoning restrictions, particularly mandatory clustering and large minimum lots in Rural Areas, for the following specific reasons:

1) Mt. Vernon has many natural limiting factors which restrict development, including a lot of water and wetland, deer yards, poor soils, and steep slopes. In addition, 2,552 acres, or 14% of our forest and 10% of our total land area, is placed in the Tree Growth tax category. Placing any more land out of reach of development would be unreasonable.

2) Many undeveloped lots exist in town already and we expect most growth over the next ten years to occur on these already existing lots. Hence, our development pattern has already been drawn for the foreseeable future.

3) We have enacted many growth management measures in the past decade and these appear to be working, ensuring that we will maintain our rural character and enjoy a continuing diversity of landscapes. There is very little support for additional restrictive measures at this time, largely because they are not needed. Over-regulation would negatively impact our rural character, which includes an element of freedom and independence.

4) Policies which require extremely low densities (large lot sizes) in rural areas and higher densities in growth areas discriminate against low income people who will be priced out of the possibility of living in rural areas. This would destroy our rural character which allows people of all means to live in the country and provides a diverse pattern of development, homes, and people, throughout the community. It would also conflict with our goal to provide affordable housing.

We believe our current ordinances, with improvements recommended in this plan, are adequate to achieve our goals and to define our community's values for anyone seeking to develop property here. Although change is inevitable, our controls are adequate to avoid the wrenching high impact changes which would dramatically alter our landscape and rural characteristics.

In the following section we present our specific policies for growth management, along with a timetable and implementation plan for each policy.

FARM AND FOREST RESOURCES

GOAL 1

Encourage sustainable agricultural and forest harvesting industries and safeguard the town's agricultural and forest resources.

FINDINGS

The rural character of our town consists partly of active farming and forest management. To protect that rural character, we must work to sustain our farms and forests. The policies below are developed to assist in reaching this important goal. No single policy will achieve this goal, and each policy must be reviewed annually to measure its importance and impact toward reaching the overall goal. Other policies may be needed in the future, but these represent an aggressive first step toward achieving this goal and maintaining the town's rural character.

FOREST POLICIES

1-1) Town officials should launch a sustained and aggressive program to link small forested parcels in a town-wide forest management program. All forested parcels of more than 10 acres should be included in this program, which will be voluntary on the part of the landowner. Landowners should:

a) be provided with information on available forest management programs, including the ASCS forestry program which pays 1/2 the cost of developing a forest management plan, and the State's program which provides a \$200 rebate to landowners who develop a professional forest management plan.

b) be provided with a list of foresters and wood harvesters who are willing to work with the town in managing and harvesting these small parcels.

c) be encouraged, on a regular basis, to participate in the town's forest management program.

d) assist landowners in pooling high value timber from small woodlots which do not have an entire truck load to sell.

1-2) The town should maintain a list of providers of wood and other forest products and services, and provide that list to all townspeople on a regular basis (in the town report, a town newsletter, etc.).

1-3) The town should establish a town forest and manage that forest for productive timber harvesting, adding to the forest whenever it is economical to do so.

As part of this policy, a timber harvesting plan should be prepared for all town owned property. Town officials should be alert to the possibility of adding to our town forest inventory and make recommendations for additions whenever they feel that such additions would make sense economically.

1-4) The town should, on an annual basis, inform large forest owners about the Tree Growth Tax Program, by providing factual information about the program, including benefits and penalties for withdrawal.

1-5) The town should consider a "Right To Harvest The Forest" policy. Such a policy should outline best forest management practices and the right of landowners to continue to manage their forest for wood harvesting purposes, and such a policy should serve to alert nearby neighbors to this continued right to harvest.

1-6) The town should include a policy in its Growth Management Ordinance which allows higher densities for developments on forested land, in exchange for placing a portion of the parcel being developed into a permanent and sustainable forest harvesting program.

1-7) The town should adopt performance standards describing best forest management practices as part of a Site Plan Review Ordinance. In general, this ordinance should outline harvesting performance standards for steep slopes (including hauling roads on steep slopes), reduced activity during mud season and reseedling of hauling roads after harvesting is completed. In addition, it should limit clearcuts to no more than 10 acres.

1-8) The town should provide local code enforcement for these policies, as well as for state laws concerning forest harvesting.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991/1992. The Planning Board should work with town officials, including Selectmen, to prepare a detailed program to implement these policies.

FARMING POLICIES

1-9) Town officials should launch a sustained and aggressive program to link small parcels of open land in a town-wide farmland management program. All open land of more than 10 acres should be included in this program, which will be voluntary on the part of the landowner. Landowners should:

a) be provided with information on available farmland conservation programs, including programs of the Soil and Water Conservation Agency.

b) be provided with a list of farmers and others who will lease farmland, mow fields, or provide other such services consistent with maintaining open land.

c) be encouraged, on a regular basis, to participate in the town's farmland management program.

1-10) The town should maintain a list of providers of farm produce and provide that list, on a timely basis when crops are ready for sale, to all townspeople (in a town newsletter, for example).

1-11) The town should, on an annual basis, inform large owners of farmland or open space about the Farmland and Open Space Tax Program, by providing factual information about the program, including benefits and penalties for withdrawal.

1-12) The town should make residents aware of Maine's Right to Farm Act, especially nearby neighbors of local farms.

1-13) The town should include a policy in its Growth Management Ordinance which allows higher densities for developments on forested land, in exchange for placing a portion of the parcel being developed into a permanent and sustainable farmland management program.

1-14) The town should continue to exempt agricultural land management practices from the town's Site Plan Review Ordinance. Agricultural land management practices means "those devices and procedures utilized in the cultivation of land in order to further crops and livestock production and conservation of related soil and water resources."

1-15) The town should allow interested local farmers to establish a farmers market on town owned land.

1-16) The town should work with landowners to resolve problems caused by littering, trespassing, misuse by recreational vehicles, and other problems.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991/1992.

The Planning Board should work with town officials, including Selectmen, to prepare a detailed plan to implement these policies.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

GOAL 2

Protect the town's rural characteristics and natural resources, while providing property owners with choices which encourage the continuation of a diverse pattern of land use and development and treating all landowners equitably.

POLICIES

2-1) Establish a Growth Area within 500 feet of each side of State Highway Route 41. Within the designated Growth Area, establish the following policies:

- a) all large scale commercial development will be limited to this area;
- b) all mobile home parks will be limited to this area;
- c) to encourage residential development in this area, a range of lot sizes and road frontages will be allowed, as specified in the following table:

Road Frontage (in feet)	Minimum Lot Size	Set-back from Road Center (in feet)
200	2 acres	75
250	1.75 acres	75
300	1.5 acres	75

2-2) In the remaining Rural Areas of town, current standards should continue to apply: a two acre minimum lot size with 200 feet of road frontage and a 75 foot setback.

2-3) The Subdivision Ordinance should provide a clustering option which allows higher densities when buildable land is set aside as permanently undeveloped space. A special clustering option allowing very high densities should be provided when land is set aside permanently to be managed for agriculture or forest harvesting (see Policies 11-6 and 11-13).

2-4) The subdivision ordinance should allow no more than 10 lots to be developed over a five year period on any single parcel of land. This limitation should be waived for developments which set aside at least 50% of the buildable land as prescribed in policy 2-3 above.

2-5) The subdivision ordinance restriction limiting lots to a three to one ratio of lot length to width should be reviewed, to allow back land to be included with any lot which already meets the standards specified above.

2-6) The town should enact a Mobile Home Park Ordinance which provides performance standards for mobile home parks, including standards for buffers and set-backs.

2-7) The town should work with Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) and other government agencies and conservation organizations to identify and protect significant wildlife habitat and enhance enforcement of laws which achieve this goal.

This policy should include the recruitment of volunteers to assist in identification of these areas, provide information for wildlife research projects, and work with local landowners who wish to manage their land for wildlife habitat. Town officials should encourage local conservation groups to participate in achieving this policy.

2-8) The town should work with MDIFW, DEP, and other government agencies and conservation groups to protect and enhance the quality of our water bodies and fisheries resources.

This policy should include the recruitment of volunteers to assist MDIFW regional fisheries biologists and others to monitor water quality, provide information for fisheries research projects, improve and maintain public access points, and assist with any other such programs. Town officials should encourage lake associations and other conservation groups to participate in achieving this policy.

2-9) The town should study phosphorous control methods and regulations which would enhance our water quality protection measures.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991/1992.

The Planning Board should prepare the proposed ordinances and submit them to townspeople in 1992, and also work to implement the other policies.

GOAL 3

Protect the town's groundwater and identified aquifers.

POLICIES

3-1) Prohibit storage of potentially toxic or hazardous materials over aquifers, except normal residential use, and prohibit the installation of underground tanks over aquifers.

3-2) Move and cover the town's salt and sand pile.

3-3) Close the town's transfer station and move it to a new environmentally safe site.

3-4) Provide all residents with information about proper disposal of hazardous materials which could pollute groundwater and aquifers. When state disposal sites and programs are developed, make sure residents are aware of these sites and systems.

3-5) Cooperate with the Maine Geological Survey to compile data on town wells and water supplies.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1992/1993.

The Planning Board should work to achieve policies 3-1, 3-4, and 3-5. The town appropriated funds at the 1990 annual town meeting to purchase a new site for the salt and sand pile and the transfer station, and Selectmen are now planning the construction phase of each of those projects. It is expected that the transfer station will be constructed first, in 1992, and the salt and sand shed at a later unspecified date, depending on whether or not we wait for financial assistance from the State.

GOAL 4

Improve code enforcement for all local ordinances and regulations, as well as enforcement of state laws and regulations.

POLICIES

4-1) create new and increase current impact and permit fees to allow a substantial increase in the position and wages for the code enforcement officer.

4-2) investigate the possibility of sharing a code enforcement officer with a neighboring town, to improve enforcement and reduce the cost of new state regulations regarding code enforcement officers.

4-3) develop new impact fees for the commercial and large scale residential development, to fund improved code enforcement and to offset increased costs of public services.

4-4) study the possibility of accepting local enforcement of the state's environmental laws, when those opportunities are offered.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1992/1993.

The Planning Board should work to achieve policies 4-1 and 4-3 and present recommendations to a 1993 town meeting, at the latest. Selectmen should work to achieve policy 4-2, and always be mindful of policy 4-4.

ALL OTHER GOALS AND POLICIES

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

GOAL 5

Provide an efficient system of town facilities and services which meet the needs of our citizens, now and in the future, while taking into consideration our ability to pay for expansion or creation of town facilities and services.

POLICY 5-1

Prepare and implement a five year road maintenance and improvement plan, including a up-to-date detailed inventory.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1992.

Selectmen and the Road Committee should prepare this plan and review and update it on an annual basis. The plan should be presented each year in the annual town report, with any recommended updates and amendments.

POLICY 5-2

Encourage ride sharing and other alternative transportation methods.

IMPLEMENTATION: On-going.

Selectmen should work with interested local residents to develop an effective ride share system, including a centrally located parking lot, and a place to post information about transportation needed or provided.

POLICY 5-3

Develop an environmentally sound solid waste disposal system, including a new transfer station, continue to develop an effective and efficient recycling program, and explore other waste reduction and disposal strategies.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991/1992.

The 1991 annual town meeting appropriated funds to purchase a site for a new transfer station. Selectmen are planning to construct the new facility this year. Although the recycling program remains voluntary, the town should monitor its effectiveness and consider eventually making recycling mandatory. 70% of those responding to our 1990 Town Survey supported mandatory recycling. The town should also continue to study additional strategies, such as community composting, to reduce the amount of waste hauled to a disposal site, and consider purchase and operation of our own hauling truck and bins.

POLICY 5-4

For public safety and protection of property and resources, seek improvements in services provided by the Kennebec County Sheriff's Department, Maine State Police, and Maine Game Wardens.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991/On-going.

Selectmen should meet annually with the Sheriff and Area Game Warden to pursue this policy, as well as explore the opportunities for local enforcement of state laws and regulations.

POLICY 5-5

Construct an environmentally safe storage facility for salt and sand, as soon as it is financially possible to do so.

IMPLEMENTATION: As Determined.

Selectmen should continue planning this facility, study all available options, and make a recommendation to the town when they believe it is financially feasible to move ahead on this project.

POLICY 5-6

Old cemeteries should be inventoried, cleaned up, and marked.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991/1992/1993.

Selectmen should recruit interested volunteers to locate all old cemeteries (using Clayton Dolloff's September, 1989 book), clean and mark these cemeteries.

POLICY 5-7

Support efforts of the Trustees of the Dr. Shaw Memorial Library to continue to improve the library facilities and collection, and encourage Vienna to provide increased funding commensurate with the use of the library by Vienna residents.

IMPLEMENTATION: On-going.

Trustees should continue to improve the library facility and collection, and consider a capital campaign to expand the library when a clear need to do so is demonstrated. Our neighbors in Vienna should annually be informed by Trustees about usage by Vienna residents and encouraged to provide funding commensurate with that usage.

POLICY 5-8

Be prepared to acquire historic or other valuable property if the opportunity arises.

IMPLEMENTATION: On-going.

Selectmen should be alert to these opportunities and should seek a town vote on those opportunities when they do arise.

EDUCATION

GOAL 6

Strive for a high quality public education for Mount Vernon's children.

POLICY 6-1

Encourage programs and methods which allow for and promote parental participation in the education process.

IMPLEMENTATION: On-going.

The School Committee and School Administrators should continue to work to develop a cooperative relationship with all parents.

POLICY 6-2

Develop a system which allows residents to participate more fully in education funding, planning, and policy decisions.

IMPLEMENTATION: On-going.

The School Committee and School Administrators should continue to work to accomplish this policy.

POLICY 6-3

Teach children about local government and participatory democracy.

IMPLEMENTATION: Annually.

Selectmen and Other Town Officials should speak each year to school students to educate them about local government and ways they can participate, both as children and later as adults.

POLICY 6-4

Work to change State laws which forbid or discourage local options for school construction projects.

IMPLEMENTATION: Long Term.

Town Officials and interested townspeople should work with state legislators to develop a system which allows local options in school construction projects, such as local construction of portable classrooms.

POLICY 6-5

Prepare a long term plan to resolve local school space problems and meet the future space needs of our local schools, with strong consideration of our ability to pay for improvements.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1992.

The School Committee and Administrators should achieve this policy, in consultation with town officials and residents.

POLICY 6-6

Include capital investment planning as part of the school budget development process.

IMPLEMENTATION: On-going.

The School Committee should annually provide input to the town's Capital Improvement Plan.

POLICY 6-7

Develop at least one Nature Trail for school children.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991/1992.

Selectmen and the School Committee should work to achieve this policy with volunteers.

TAXATION

GOAL 7

Maintain a fair and equitable system of property taxation, while striving for property tax relief, identifying new or expanded revenue sources, and decreasing our reliance on the property tax to fund municipal services.

POLICY 7-1

Study alternative methods, including the provision of services through private industry, contractors, or volunteers, before expanding current town services or initiating new services.

IMPLEMENTATION: Immediate/On-going.

Anytime new or expanded services are proposed, a statement outlining alternatives studied and steps taken to achieve this policy should be provided.

POLICY 7-2

Study new and expanded impact and user fees.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1992/On-going.

Selectmen and the Planning Board should study the potential and fairness of impact, permit and filing fees for new commercial or residential development, and new or increased user fees for some town services, such as user fees for solid waste disposal.

POLICY 7-3

Complete the town-wide revaluation, begun in 1991.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991/1992/1993/1994.

The revaluation project, scheduled over a four year period, should be complete in that time span, and should be implemented immediately upon completion.

POLICY 7-4

Urge the State to provide full reimbursement to municipalities for property taxes lost by placement of land in Tree Growth or Farmland and Open Space tax categories.

IMPLEMENTATION: On-going.

Selectmen should work with local legislators to achieve this policy.

COMMUNICATION

GOAL 8

Continue and develop systems of communication and activities within the town to keep citizens informed about town government and other civic activities, and to encourage involvement in those activities.

POLICY 8-1

Continue the Town Newsletter, published regularly, with information about town government, all selectmen's meetings and other meetings of town boards, local and state regulations and programs, private and public organizational meetings and other group activities, including upcoming events. The newsletter should strive to present more information about future issues, and more timely information about current events and issues, to allow residents to participate in the decision making process.

POLICY 8-2

Develop a welcoming program for new Mount Vernon residents.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991/1992.

Volunteers should organize a "Welcome To Mount Vernon" program to greet new residents. Through a personal visit to new residents, our "Welcome" volunteers should, in addition to the welcome, provide information about town government, fire and rescue protection, the local educational system, recreation opportunities, business services, and other local information, and encourage the new residents to participate in town affairs.

POLICY 8-3

Encourage improved communication between town boards and officials.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1992.

The Planning Board should study and implement a system which provides for improved communication between all town officials and boards.

POLICY 8-4

Provide better written explanations of issues and warrant articles and a public forum for debate and discussion of warrant articles, prior to town meetings.

IMPLEMENTATION: On-going.

The Town Newsletter should provide written factual analyses of the most important issues and warrant articles, prior to town meetings. Selectmen should host a public forum prior to town meeting to discuss warrant articles.

POLICY 8-5

Provide advance notice of all town meetings, elections, and referenda, to all households.

IMPLEMENTATION: On-going.

Notice could be included in a town newsletter listing the date, time, place, and subject matter of the meeting, election, or referenda.

PLANNING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

GOAL 9

Encourage continued planning and policy development at the local level.

POLICY 9-1

Provide annual review and updating of the comprehensive plan and continue the planning and policy development process into the future.

IMPLEMENTATION: On-going.

The Planning Board should form a subcommittee or interested citizens to annually review progress made in achieving the policies included in this plan, prepare a progress report for the annual town report, and make necessary and desired revisions and additions to the plan and present them each year to the annual town meeting.

POLICY 9-2

Enact ordinances required by the policies of this comprehensive plan.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991/1992.

The Planning Board should apply for an implementation grant from the Office of Comprehensive Planning, prepare drafts of the ordinances called for by this comprehensive plan, and present those ordinances to the town for a vote no later than the annual town meeting in 1992.

POLICY 9-3

Keep Mount Vernon's maps up-to-date for planning and program purposes.

IMPLEMENTATION: On-going.

Selectmen should arrange to keep the property tax maps up-to-date by adding new information at least quarterly.

The Planning Board should endeavor to add available information to the town's other maps whenever necessary, and make recommendations to annual town meetings whenever more professional mapping is necessary in order for the maps to remain useful planning and management tools.

POLICY 9-4

Incorporate capital improvements planning as an integral part of annual budget planning.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1992/On-going.

Selectmen should use the CIP in planning for 1992 and revise it each year thereafter. The CIP should project capital improvements with cost estimates for at least the ensuing five year period, and should be included each year in the annual town report.

RECREATION

GOAL 10

Encourage and protect outdoor recreation opportunities and maintain currently available recreational facilities and access to surface waters.

POLICY 10-1

Encourage private property owners to voluntarily allow public access to their property.

IMPLEMENTATION: Immediate/On-going.

Selectmen, local sporting clubs, and other interested citizens and organizations should get active in the debate on public access issues and the development of state and local programs to achieve this goal.

Programs, primarily at the state level, must be developed to offer optional incentives to private landowners who are willing to keep their land open for public recreation. Some state agencies are now developing such programs and they should receive our support.

POLICY 10-2

Support the efforts of the local snowmobile club to groom and maintain trails.

IMPLEMENTATION: On-going.

All of the town's share of funds collected from the registration of snowmobiles shall be provided each year to the snowmobile club for trail maintenance and grooming, for the benefit of snowmobilers and cross country skiers.

POLICY 10-3

Investigate the possibility of acquiring local town ownership of State property along the shore of Taylor Pond, and develop hiking trails and a town forest on the forested portion of that land, as appropriate, and a picnic area next to the dam.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991/1992.

The Planning Board should initiate discussion of this possibility with Maine's Bureau of Parks and Recreation, and enter into negotiations on the town's behalf if the Bureau is willing to pursue this transfer, as long as the State is willing to transfer the ownership of this property at no charge to the town.

POLICY 10-4

Provide residents with information about the process used to regulate motors and speed on surface waters, and encourage improved enforcement of the state's boating laws.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991.

Selectmen should gather this information and make it available in the town office. Selectmen should also work with local game wardens to achieve improved enforcement of the state's boating laws on local lakes. Other options should also be investigated, such as naming a Harbor Master, petitioning the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for reduced horsepower on some lakes and ponds, and possible local enforcement of boating laws, perhaps in cooperation with adjacent towns.

POLICY 10-5

Mark all access points to recreational property in town, and make a map of these sites available to residents.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991/1992.

Selectmen should have signs prepared and placed at all public access points. The Planning Board should have a map of these sites produced and make these maps available for sale at the town office.

POLICY 10-6

Expand and improve the town beach on Minnehonk Lake.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991/1992.

Better swimming access should be developed at the town beach and a more suitable boat launching facility should be pursued.

HOUSING

GOAL 11

Encourage and promote affordable, decent housing opportunities for all Mount Vernon citizens.

POLICY 11-1

Resist regulations and policies which might restrict the availability of affordable housing in Mount Vernon.

IMPLEMENTATION: On-going.

Local officials should evaluate proposed new regulations and policies to measure their impact on affordable housing, and provide a written assessment of that impact whenever new regulations are proposed.

The town should not discriminate, in any way, against non-traditional, modular, or mobile home dwellings.

POLICY 11-2

Continue flexible policies which allow homeowners to "build as they go" and construct their own homes as they are able.

IMPLEMENTATION: On-going.

Local ordinances should provide the necessary flexibility to achieve this policy.

ECONOMY

GOAL 12

Promote an economic climate that increases job opportunities and overall economic growth, while protecting and encouraging agricultural and forestry industries.

ISSUES BRIEF

Although there is very little a small town like Mount Vernon can do to bring major industry to town, and indeed, many residents would resist such development, we can be aware of local businesses and business opportunities, patronize residents who provide needed services, and make sure local regulations do not discourage the continuation and development of local businesses in appropriate and convenient locations.

POLICY 12-1

Evaluate regulations and policies which will negatively impact the agricultural and forestry industries.

IMPLEMENTATION: On-going.

Local officials should evaluate new regulations and policies to measure their impact on the agricultural and forestry industries, and provide a written assessment of such impacts whenever new regulations are recommended.

POLICY 12-2

Encourage home-based and other businesses throughout Mount Vernon.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991/On-going.

Home-based businesses which have minimal environmental impact should continue to be exempt from local regulations on commercial development.

A list of services provided by Mount Vernon residents and commercial enterprises within Mount Vernon should be compiled and updated on a regular basis by the Planning Board, and made available to all residents.

VILLAGE

GOAL 13

Support a viable village center in its present location, and encourage the continued revitalization of that village center.

ISSUES BRIEF

On January 30, 1990, the Comprehensive Planning Committee hosted a public forum at the Baptist Church in the Village. Every resident of the village received a hand delivered invitation, and all residents were invited to this forum through an announcement in the Town Newsletter. About forty residents attended the forum and participated in an excellent wide ranging discussion of issues important to the village area.

Participants at the village forum expressed interest in many issues, including waterfront improvements, safety at the village intersection, sewage treatment, establishment of a village square, preservation of the village's remaining open space, and other issues.

The following goal and policies were developed as a direct consequence of this public forum.

POLICY 13-1

Survey traffic and parking problems at the village intersection and make necessary changes to improve safety.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991/1992/1993.

Selectmen should work with Maine's Department of Transportation to achieve this goal. Suggestions include making the intersection a three way stop.

Selectmen should also work with the Maine State Police and Sheriff's Department to achieve more enforcement of the village speed limit.

POLICY 13-2

Investigate the possibility of maintaining the remaining large open spaces in the village area, including the field behind the library and the field on Wells Hill, with the consent and cooperation of those who own these properties.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991/1992.

The Planning Board should pursue this possibility.

POLICY 13-3

Investigate the possibility of a Community Development Block Grant application, to include village housing rehabilitation and sewage treatment.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991/1992.

The Planning Board, with assistance from the Capital/Coastal Council of Governments (CCCOG), should investigate this possibility, and if appropriate, prepare an application with assistance from a committee of interested residents.

POLICY 13-4

Study remaining sewage treatment problems in the village, and assist property owners in learning about treatment alternatives.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1991/1992/1993.

The Planning Board should initiate a study, assisted perhaps by the town's CEO, the Cobbossee Watershed District or CCCOG, of remaining treatment problems, and prepare a package of information for property owners outlining potential solutions to their problems.

POLICY 13-5

Establish a village square.

IMPLEMENTATION: when feasible.

The Planning Board should investigate the possibility of locating a village square at the village intersection vacant lot. The square might contain flowers, benches, memorials, a bandstand, or other suitable things.

POLICY 13-6

Improve the waterfront along Minnehonk Lake in the village.

IMPLEMENTATION: as opportunities arise.

The Planning Board should make waterfront owners aware of potential improvements, the possibility of conservation easements, and any other methods which would improve access and beauty of this area, and minimize erosion and pollution of the lake.

If it is ever financially feasible, the town should act to expand the public portion of land along the waterfront.

COMMUNITY

GOAL 14

Promote a sense of community and pride in Mount Vernon.

POLICY 10-1

All citizens of Mount Vernon are encouraged to assist in reaching this important goal.

This comprehensive plan recommends many policies which will promote a sense of community and pride in Mount Vernon. We believe the Town Newsletter will continue to help by keeping people informed of local activities and their opportunities to participate. The Welcoming Committee will clearly mark our community as a friendly place to live. The protection and sensitive use of our beautiful natural resources will demonstrate that we understand the importance of these resources to our quality of life. More participation by all residents in volunteer activities and local organizations and projects will be helpful. Higher visibility and cooperation by all elected officials will show that we can work together as neighbors, even when we disagree on policies and goals. We hope all Mount Vernon citizens will pitch in to make our community all that it can and should be, for all of us.

INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

HISTORY

The town of Mount Vernon was incorporated in 1792. The town's original charter was signed on June 28, 1792 by John Hancock, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, making Mount Vernon the 80th township in the Province of Maine.

Nine years after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, the King of England granted to William Bradford, Governor of the Colony, 1,500,000 acres of land extending 15 miles in width on either side of the Kennebec River. That was the Plymouth Grant. Its purpose was to give the Colony of Plymouth a territory from which the Pilgrims could sell fish, fur and lumber to defray the expenses of the voyage of the Mayflower and the establishment of the colony. The western boundary line of that grant, carefully surveyed and marked, came over Vienna Mountain, still marked by a line fence, through Vienna Village, across a corner of Flying Pond through the farms of Mr. DeMariano, Fred Foss, and Forest Ladd. Nearly opposite the brick house on the latter farm a stone marker was placed with the initial "PL" for Plymouth Line, engraved on it. The marker has disappeared, but the owners of all the land in Mount Vernon trace their titles back to that company.

It was about 1774 when settlers first started arriving to what is now Mount Vernon. Sometime previous to that a party of timber hunters from Lewiston camped one night at West Mount Vernon, along stream they called Thirty-Mile River.

The next morning they climbed the highest point of land in sight to get a better view of the unbroken forest. One of the men was named Bowen, and that hill has borne his name ever since. Peltiah Cobb and Reuben Rand, who were among the first men who arrived with their families, cleared land and built their houses on Bowen Hill. They raised corn on land which has long since grown up to woods.

Mount Vernon Village was founded by Captain William Whittier, who was born in Salisbury, Massachusetts. Captain Whittier was the first man to see the possibilities of water power in what is now Mount Vernon Village. Consequently, he bought all the territory in and around what is now the Village. Before 1792 Captain Whittier built a dam at the Village and the upper dam at the outlet of Flying Pond. He built a grist mill and sawmill at the Village. A hard worker, he still found time to have 16 children with his wife Elizabeth.

In 1792, even though there were 600 people living in Mount Vernon, there was no village, and most of the log cabins, scattered frame houses, and small clearings were on the hills - Old Bowen, Carr Hill, Cobb's Hill, Currier Hill, and the hills around Dunn's Corner.

The first road apparently came from Readfield over the hills to Aunt Betty's Corner. Because many of the best clearings were along that route, the road became known as Fat Street. On Fat Street stands perhaps the town's best example of the fine architecture of the early days, the former home of Dr. Samuel Quimby, the first doctor in town. The Quimby house has been restored and is now on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Philbrick schoolhouse was the first public building in town, located in the upper part of the present Hopkins field, and owned today by Jim Kenney. The first religious meeting in Mount Vernon of which we have any record took place on October 18, 1793, in the Philbrick schoolhouse. The preacher was the Rev. Jesse Lee, the Apostle of Methodism.

Beverly Wight Smith wrote a delightful book, Turning Back, which was published by the Vienna Historical Society in 1985. Copies are available at the Dr. Shaw Memorial Library, and most of this history is taken from Beverly's book. Clayton Dolloff has also written

several interesting historical publications, including a history of West Mount Vernon. Clayton's and Beverly's books hold many fine photographs.

Beverly's great-uncle, H. Warren Foss, gave an historical sketch of Mount Vernon's early days, at our 150th anniversary celebration in 1942. Uncle Warren noted,

"If time permitted we could speak of the raising, serenades, quilting parties, singing schools, and the annual parade of horrors on the 4th of July. We could tell of the concerts by the Mount Vernon Brass Band, the political campaigns when we listened to such men as Solon Chase and James G. Blaine. We could describe the thrills that came from having tintypes taken in the old picture saloon drawn by oxen, that parked about every other year under the horse chestnuts opposite Mr. Cram's store.

"There is much to say about the colorful old days when ox teams were hauling supplies for Franklin County through this town from Hallowell, when the taverns were flourishing, drovers were driving great numbers of sheep and cattle over the roads to Boston, and when the old stage coaches were flourishing. The stage from Kingfield to Bangor passed by way of Locke's Corner, over Cottle Hill and through Dunn's Corner. The Boat Stage drawn by four or six horses came from Farmington, through Vienna and Mount Vernon on the way to Hallowell where travelers could board the palatial steamer for Boston.

"Those were golden days for hunters and fishermen -- enormous numbers of passenger pigeons, wild ducks, partridges, bears, foxes, moose and deer. Many of you have heard of the banquet in the old Blossom Tavern, which my grandfather attended, when they served a 25-pound lake trout caught from Lake Minnehonk."

More of Mt. Vernon's illustrious history is awaiting eager readers at the Dr. Shaw Memorial Library, which includes many historical artifacts in the upstairs rooms. Perhaps you'll find the oral histories, compiled by the local Historical Society in conversations with long-time residents. Care to see a photo of Mt. Vernon Village in 1859? Interested in learning about our 13 original school houses? Wondering what building stood alongside that lonely chimney in West Mt. Vernon? Did you discover an old cemetery and want to know more about it? Did you hear about the fire of 1922? Time to visit the library!

Uncle Warren wrapped up his address at our 150th birthday party with a challenge, "We can say in all sincerity that in making the State of Maine a great state and the United States a great nation, the early settlers of Mount Vernon played their part and played it well. May the inhabitants of the next 150 years do as well."

POPULATION

The decade of the 1980's brought many new people to Mt. Vernon in search of the peace and scenery of our hillsides, the quiet mornings along the shore of our many lakes and ponds, and the close knit community spirit of our small village.

Three hundred and twenty four lucky new souls took up residence here between 1980 and 1990, according to the preliminary count of the 1990 U.S. Census, bringing our total population to 1,325. That's a 31.7% increase over our 1980 head count of 1,021. A net gain of 92 of those new residents were produced right here in town, from 1980 through 1990, according to birth and death statistics found in our annual town reports for those years. Total births multiplied our joy by 193 babies while deaths claimed 101 of our friends and neighbors.

TABLE 1

MT. VERNON POPULATION

(from U.S. Census)

1850	1,479 (peak)
1968	596
1980	1,021
1990	1,325
2000	1,661*

*Comprehensive Planning Committee's projection, based on 25% growth rate.

Demographic estimates provided by Maine's Human Services Department for 1987 show that Mt. Vernon's percentage of school age children is above average.

TABLE 2

MT. VERNON POPULATION BY AGE GROUP

(from Maine Dept. of Human Services)

AGES	NUMBER	PERCENT	MAINE PERCENT
0-4	102	8.8	7.3
5-17	235	20.3	18.7
18-44	449	38.9	41.2
45-64	203	17.6	18.9
65+	166	14.4	13.9

The average size of a Mt. Vernon household was estimated to be 2.63 in 1980. Today the average household size appears to be exactly the same 2.63 persons per household (dividing the 1990 population of 1,345 by the estimated 512 year round households).

The U.S. Census predicts that almost three quarters of Maine households will have no children in the home in the year 2010. "Although half of Maine households in 1960 had children living at home, this share had declined by 1988 to 35 percent and will continue to decline to below 30% by the year 2010. Associated with this change will be an additional decline in mean household size from 3.3 persons in 1960 and 2.6 in 1987 to 2.3 in 2010."

Having reached the mark a bit early, in 1980, Mt. Vernon is now exactly on this track, with 2.63 persons per household at the present time.

This trend toward a reduction in the number of households with children projected to occur between 1988 and 2010 reflects two important changes in the age structure of the Maine population, according to a report of the Commission on Maine's Future (issued in July, 1989): an increase in the proportion of adults whose children have grown up and left home and a decline in the number of women in the principal child-bearing years.

Summer residents are plentiful in Mt. Vernon, flocking here from afar to enjoy their camps at waters edge. Many maintain hunting and fishing camps and enjoy those sports year round, visiting on long weekends and weeklong vacations. We are privileged to know many of these fine folks, and they contribute to the community in many ways when they are here. Some are the strongest patrons of our library, others volunteer for school projects. There is little evidence here of the strains which occur in other towns between year-round and summer residents.

The Census Bureau estimated in 1980 that Mt. Vernon's seasonal population was 2,221, or more than double the year-round population of 1,021. This included several hundred children at summer camps. We have no current data to update this figure.

Mt. Vernon's summer residents provide a net financial gain for our community which would be impossible to replace. Nonresident property owners pay about 60% of our property taxes. During their visits, particularly in the summer months, they do add to our municipal burden, for solid waste disposal, road maintenance, fire protection, and other services. No data is available to quantify their demand for services, but we believe it is significant. However, on balance, their use of town services is much more than offset by the amount of property taxes which they pay.

Mt. Vernon's growth rate should not be alarming. Although the rate of growth appears significant, it is only because this growth is added to a very small starting base. Mt. Vernon's population actually peaked in 1850 at 1,479.

The 1980 Census found 12.7% of Mt. Vernon's residents living below the poverty line, compared to 11.8% of all Kennebec County residents and 13% of all Maine residents. Maine's Department of Labor reported Mt. Vernon's per capita income in 1985 to be \$8,301, compared to \$9,175 for Kennebec County residents and \$9,042 for Maine residents. The State Bureau of Taxation reported that average income of Mt. Vernon residents in 1989 was \$22,133.55, compared to \$24,939 statewide.

The Commission on Maine's Future noted that "immigration has become a major focus of public concern in Maine throughout the past fifteen years.... with an emotional charge that is surprising in comparison to the real size of the phenomenon. It may be that these common national trends.... are much more visible against the backdrop of the state's small population base and traditional isolation."

In an important conclusion, the Commission notes that "the pace of growth in Maine has been slower than the pace experienced in the rest of the United States," and "population growth will continue in Maine into the 21st century, but at a slower rate than we have experienced in the past."

The Commission describes six population trends which form the population dynamics of our time and the foreseeable future:

- 1) the baby boom which occurred between 1945 and 1962, which give us a bulge in our population. Today the bulge occurs in the middle years of the population, and will move upward in age as the baby boomers mature.
- 2) a sharp drop in the birthrates during the Great Depression and WWII creating a scarcity today of persons between the ages of 45 and 55.
- 3) a sharp decline in fertility over the past twenty five years resulting in fewer total births in the total population, smaller families and a higher proportion of households with no children at all.
- 4) the migration of persons from the urbanized core to the fringe of metropolitan areas -- both into Maine and internally within the state -- over the past twenty years reversing an earlier pattern of economic and population decline in the fringe areas through most of the 20th Century.
- 5) a sharp drop over the past twenty years in the average size of households resulting in a growth in the number of housing units twice as fast as that of the population.
- 6) a sharp decline in the death rate of elderly persons over the past twenty five years has meant more elderly surviving to very great ages.

The Commission notes that none of these trends is unique to Maine. One county in Florida, for example, Palm Beach County, has experienced immigration of 1,800 people per day during the late 1980's and net migration of 900 people per day. Daily immigration to Maine, in contrast, has been less than 100 persons for the whole state and net daily migration has been under 10.

Moreover, the Commission reports that growth in Maine has been strongly regional during the 1970's and 1980's, with the greatest emphasis on just three counties in southern Maine -- York, Cumberland and Sagadahoc. "Since 1985, growth has begun to accelerate in the central Maine counties along the I-95 corridor, but even with growth moving northward, southern Maine is projected to continue to drive statewide population gains in the future."

Of greatest interest, perhaps, is where our people choose to live. In 1960, half of Maine's population lived in villages, defined as having less than 2,500 residents. By the 1980 census, villages had lost nearly a third of their population, while towns between 2,500 and 10,000 residents enjoyed booming growth. The Commission noted that "even by the mid Eighties, after a period of substantial growth, (many) villages.... remained below 2,500 population and many even below 1,000. The Commission's projections show that, in the year 2010, villages will remain nearly 100,000 persons below the population they held in 1960.

Based on these findings, we project that Mt. Vernon's growth rate will slow to 25% for the next decade, giving us no more than 336 additional residents in the year 2,000. These folks can easily be absorbed within the community without undue crowding or deterioration of our current rural lifestyle.

Where within the community these new residents choose to live may also be predicted using information from the report of the Commission on Maine's Future.

The Commission informs us that "more than two-thirds of Maine's population growth between 1940 and 1980 took place in rural neighborhoods. This pattern is continuing in the 1980's."

The Commission predicts, "the settlement pattern by size of place in the coming century may be heavily unbalanced toward the open country side. By 1980, more than half of the Maine population lived outside the state's village and town centers. By the year 2010, another 100,000 persons may choose to move onto the state's rural landscapes." And who can blame them?

Mt. Vernon's pattern of growth is inherently rural, because there is very little room for new houses within our village center. In fact, because the village area lacks a sewerage treatment facility, it is very difficult to even rehabilitate or expand the housing that now exists there.

Our growth will continue to be spread throughout our rural landscape, and how we decide to regulate and restrict that growth will determine what our town looks like fifty years from now.

Mt. Vernon has had a particularly difficult time predicting growth numbers for school age children. When the elementary school opened its doors in the fall of 1990, so many children filed through that two grades, first and third grades, included more than the 25 students per class now recommended by the State. Neither class was predicted to be that large. Although several options were available, the townspeople, in a special town meeting, decided to take the most costly (and educationally preferred) option of leasing a double wide classroom, hiring two new teachers, and splitting the two crowded classes.

Our inability to predict class sizes may continue to plague us in the future. However, we might take hope from the findings of the Commission on Maine's Future.

"The major structural change in Maine society between 1986 and 2010 will be the shift of roughly an eighth of the population from under age 40 to over age 40 -- that is, the middle aging of the baby boom. There will also be an old aging trend in Maine as the number of persons over age 80 increases by 20,000, rising from one percent of the state population in 1986 to two percent in 2010. The populations of all other age groups will decline during some periods and increase during others."

"By 2010 the number of children under age 17 -- that is, those born after 1990 -- will have fallen to near the numbers born during the Depression and Second World War, and will represent a much smaller share of a much larger population than was living in the state between 1930 and 1945. The decline in the childhood population reflects the continuing decline in the number of young adults available to be their parents."

We are skeptical. Mt. Vernon's hills, valley, lakes and streams may attract more families than expected as we move into the decade of the 1990's.

HOUSING

Mt. Vernon's total housing stock increased from 682 units in 1980 to 809 units in 1990, according to preliminary 1990 U.S. Census data. Year round housing increased from 401 units in 1980 to 512 units in 1990, according to our own estimate, derived from local building permits. The U.S. Census noted that 277 of our total 682 units in 1980 were seasonal. No new data is available on seasonal dwellings, but many have been converted to year round use in the last ten years.

The 28% increase in year round housing units mirrors our increase in population, allowing us to maintain our household average at 2.6 persons.

If our average household size remains stable, we will need only an additional 13 housing units each year of the 1990's to house our estimated population increase of 336 persons. If, as the U.S. Census predicts, our average household size will continue to decrease, reaching 2.26 in the year 2010, we could need more new houses in the next decade, but we doubt that more than 15 or 16 units per year will be required.

Mt. Vernon has very little rental housing. In 1980 single family homes accounted for 84% of our total housing stock, multi-family units comprised just 5.5 percent, and mobile homes were 11.7%.

Mt. Vernon's housing stock in 1980 was old, with 46% built before 1939. We have many fine old homes which have been well maintained and improved over the years. Some of our homes date from the very earliest settlers and are still in very good shape.

Today, these older homes built before 1939 account for only 36% of our housing stock, while 52% have been built since 1970, giving us a very acceptable grouping of new housing stock. During the low growth years 1940 - 1970, only 12% of Mt. Vernon's current housing units were constructed.

Real Estate Transfer Tax data provided by the Maine State Housing Authority indicate that the average sales price for a Mt. Vernon home in 1987 was \$43,008.70, based on 23 sales that year. This was significantly below Kennebec County's average of \$57,532.85, and the state average of \$77,235.35.

During the 1980's, the most dramatic story was the huge proportional increase in mobile homes. From 1981 through 1988 mobile homes comprised 45% of our new housing units.

It is clear that mobile homes are the affordable alternative for many Maine citizens, and we expect this trend to continue or even accelerate throughout the 1990's. This means that it is important for the town to avoid discriminating in any way against mobile and modular homes.

Guidelines for Maine's Growth Management Act require our comprehensive plan to present a statistical analysis of the affordability of housing in Mt. Vernon. The state defines affordable housing for owner-occupied and renter-occupied units. The definition includes a cap of 33% of total household income for housing-related expenses for owners and 30% of household income for renters. Readers of this plan are invited to calculate their own housing costs as a percentage of their income to determine if they can afford the houses they are living in!

The Office of Comprehensive Planning expects us to compare the range of housing prices in Mt. Vernon with the range of incomes. We are judged to have a problem when the number of houses in the affordable range is much less than the number of people in town in the very low, low, and moderate income ranges.

Unfortunately, data on household income is both outdated and not localized for our community. We do not have enough current data to allow us to make the calculations suggested by OCP, but we can present the assessment of our comprehensive planning committee.

Housing is obviously difficult for those in the low and very low income categories, everywhere in Maine. But because land prices are generally lower in Mt. Vernon than surrounding towns, there are no restrictions on mobile, manufactured, or any other affordable housing alternatives, and we have in the past allowed residents to either "build-as-you-go" or live in substandard housing, we believe housing has been affordable to nearly everyone in our community.

A total of 35 residents received property tax refunds from the State's general tax/rent refund program in 1990, totaling \$7,093.31, and 25 residents received property tax refunds from the State's Elderly tax/rent refund program, totaling \$9,002.82. These were average refunds of \$202 and \$360 respectively in Mt. Vernon, compared to state average refunds of \$299 and \$292 respectively.

The Commission on Maine's Future found that only about 50,000 of the state's estimated 450,000 households have been able to hold their housing costs to the traditional standard of 25% of income. More than 200,000 Maine families require nearly one third of their incomes to pay housing costs. And for another 100,000 to 150,000 of Maine's youngest or poorest families, housing costs are at or nearing 40 percent of their budgets.

Yet according to Commission surveys, fewer than one in ten of all Mainers place housing assistance at the top of their spending priorities, "including only three in 100 of the politically important baby boomers."

The Commission projects that the "dollar cost of the average new housing unit (will) rise from near \$70,000 in 1988 to \$87,000 in the mid-1990's and to \$117,000 at the turn of the century." However, the current economic decline has already brought with it reduced housing prices in this area, and that trend could bring more houses into the range of affordability for a much wider group of Maine residents.

The Commission concluded that "it is uncertain whether a slowdown in residential mobility will be accompanied by improvements in housing affordability." We think it will, and so will the current economic decline. The boom in housing prices and land development appears to be over for the foreseeable future.

The Commission reports that, "between 1970 and 1988, the price of an average new dwelling unit in Maine more than doubled, from \$33,900 to \$69,700. Yet virtually all of this run-up -- nearly 93% -- occurred between 1970 and 1980, long before a crisis in affordable housing was apparent to the average Maine resident. During the 1980's, the unit price of new housing in Maine has been virtually static, up only about seven percent, despite the well-publicized and unprecedented increases in the prices of homes at the top of the market into the six and even seven figure range."

While it is clear to us that a larger proportion of our incomes may be required in the coming decade for housing costs, we cannot afford to ignore the Commission's conclusion that, "Maine can neither afford to ignore the burden of housing affordability on those who need assistance, nor to undercut the political will to ease that burden with overly-broad or excessively costly programs." The Commission predicts that housing costs will rise to claim an additional 20% of household budgets through the next fifteen years.

At the local level, we can review our land use controls to make sure we do not discriminate against affordable mobile and modular housing. Part of the reason housing has been affordable in Mt. Vernon in the past is that we have allowed people to live in substandard housing.

Newly enacted ordinances, including a tough building code which includes occupancy permits, may change this situation, making housing more costly and less accessible to low income residents. This situation needs to be monitored.

The Commission on Maine's Future notes, "As the price of conventional single-family new construction doubled during the 1970's, consumers have apparently shifted to substitutes, including manufactured homes, condominiums, existing and rehabilitated homes and homes in less expensive parts of the state.... much of the pressure driving Maine residents to suburban and rural towns -- and driving immigrants into Maine -- is the relatively lower cost of housing outside metropolitan areas.

"These substitution strategies have been operating in Maine to keep the average price of new housing units actually bought and sold on the market virtually immobile in the 1980's. An increasing reliance on manufactured housing, self-contracting and owner-building.... push the unit price of new dwellings toward a lower level."

Our lack of rental housing forces people, particularly young people, to locate elsewhere. 18% of those responding to the comprehensive planning committee's survey reported that they knew someone who was unable to find affordable housing in Mt. Vernon. Some additional rental housing could help fill this gap.

Some rental housing is available in older converted homes, and additional conversions might be encouraged by lowering our density requirement to less than 2 acres for each housing unit, if the community wishes to encourage the development of rental units. Lack of support services, particularly transportation and primary medical care, make this a poor location for a senior citizen complex.

Demand for new housing in Mt. Vernon is expected to subside over the next decade, after a few years of increased activity during the latter part of the 1980's. The Commission for Maine's Future notes that "residential mobility will decline sharply between 1986 and 2010. This will mean more stability, less turnover and fewer newcomers in Maine communities. It will also mean slower rates of housing turnover and residential development, which can be expected to dampen the pressure of demand on real estate markets."

This slowing of residential mobility is caused by the decline in the population age 18 to 34. This is a highly mobile age group, and our aging population over the next two decades will be much less likely to move. Only one in ten of our older people moves each year.

The decline in household size is one of the most important demographic trends. The Commission notes that the average household in Maine dropped from 3.3 persons in 1960 to 2.6 persons in 1987. They predict further erosion toward 2.26 persons per household in 2010. Because of this trend, we need more dwelling units to house our population. In 1960 it required 300 dwelling units to house 1000 persons in Maine. By 1990 it will take nearly 400.

The Commission reports that "the rapid decline in household size results primarily from three factors -- growth in the elderly population, growth in the rate of divorce and family break-up, and growth in the number of young people living alone. As a result of these combined forces, the number of permanent, year round dwelling units has increased in Maine at an average rate of more than two percent per year for the past 27 years. Four new units were built for every five additional people."

The Commission predicts, "in the future, the pace of development is likely to slow by about a third, from near two percent annual growth to near one percent annual growth through the coming twenty years and the location of new construction is likely to be fairly evenly distributed through municipalities of different size. The effective impact of housing development in the future is likely to be most evident, as it has been in the past, in Maine's suburban communities, particularly those within the I-95 transportation corridor."

"By 2010, an estimated 130,000 new (housing) units will be built statewide, (but only) about 30,000 (will be built) in the rural villages."

The housing picture in Mt. Vernon is fairly clear, and consistent with the Commission's findings and predictions. Housing growth will slow, and has in fact already slowed due to the current economic decline. Those seeking affordable housing will continue to rely on mobile and manufactured housing or build-as-you-go housing. We should encourage all of these alternatives.

While pressure has subsided at the present time, and we recognize that much of our past growth occurred on our lakeshores where it is less likely to occur in the future because lakeshore property is now depleted and new shoreland regulations are more restrictive, it will be important, nevertheless, to monitor future growth, measure the ability of current ordinances to protect our rural characteristics and natural resources, and be prepared should a boom in land development occur sometime in the future.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

INVENTORY

Water Supply

no public water supply system. An outside faucet at the town office provides water to those in need. A private but traditional source of water is the Spring Hill spring. Spring water has also traditionally been available on the Watson Pond Road in Vienna.

Sewage Facilities

no public sewage system.

Solid Waste Facilities

transfer station. The current transfer station, located behind the town office, maintains open bins which, when filled, are transported to the Norridgewock landfill of Consolidated Waste Services (CWS). CWS provides the bins and was transporting them to Norridgewock, until a landslide there closed that site. Currently, Mt. Vernon's waste is hauled to a disposal site in New Hampshire. The town began actively recycling in 1990, hiring a recycling coordinator, leasing a special five section bin to collect recyclable material, and contracting with CWS to dispose of the recyclable material.

The State is refusing to relicense our transfer station site because it is on top of our old landfill. The town has appropriated \$35,000 to purchase a nearby site, as the first step toward construction of a new transfer station.

Public Safety

no local police or constables. We rely on state police and the Sheriff's department.

excellent volunteer fire department and rescue squad, with twenty four hour per day coverage, dispatched by the town of Winthrop, with a 911 telephone number.

A minimal number of street lights are maintained, mostly in the village area.

Energy Facilities

no generating stations; electricity supplied intermittently by Central Maine Power Company.

Communication

telephone service by Community Service Telephone Company in Winthrop and New England Telephone Company. Cable television supplied by Longfellow Cable Systems in Kingfield. No daily newspaper provides adequate coverage of Mt. Vernon news, although the Central Maine Morning Sentinel, the Kennebec Journal, and the Lewiston Sun-Journal each provides some coverage of the Mt. Vernon area. Post office located in the village area, with boxes and two rural routes; some residents' mail is delivered via rural routes out of the Readfield and Belgrade post offices. A Town Newsletter funded by the town and mailed to every household provides town government news, notices of special events and activities, reports from a variety of groups, and other news. It is very well received and a key element in keeping residents informed about what is going on.

Health Care

all provided outside of town, except for health screening programs and emergency assistance provided by the rescue squad. The closest source of health services is the Belgrade Health Center.

Education

Mt. Vernon is part of School Union 42, with our own elementary school on North Road, housing grades pre-k through 6. Grades 7 - 12 transported by bus to Maranacook School in Readfield. An addition was constructed at the elementary school in 1986, and included a gymnasium which is available for community events, including town meetings. A double wide portable classroom, holding two classes, was added in 1990. Maranacook School is currently overcrowded and has been studying new construction alternatives.

Cemeteries

eleven cemeteries are maintained by the town. Ownership is questionable -- and only one is known to have space available. Space was generally sold by landowners to individuals for their own plots. Some left funds for perpetual care, but most did not. No maps of the plots in these cemeteries are available. This list follows:

Wells cemetery - Hovey Road (top of Wells Hill)
Stevens cemetery - North Road, near Marvin White's
Smith cemetery - end of Spring Hill Road
Hopkins cemetery - south end of Blake Hill Road
Philbrick cemetery - north end of Blake Hill Road
Bean cemetery - Bean Road
Marston cemetery - Doner Road
West Mt. Vernon cemetery - near Floyd Dolloff's
Butler cemetery - Hanna Hill, Route 41
Dunn's Corner cemetery - Dunn's Corner
Potash cemetery - Dunn's corner, across from Jim Reid's

In addition, Robinson cemetery on North Road is maintained by a private association. The town also maintains four individual graves of Revolutionary War soldiers:

Joshua Wells, Anderson Road
John Rogers, Old Rome Road
William Larrabee, back of Helen Cushman's home
Noah Greeley, back of Helen Cushman's home.

There are also numerous old cemeteries, mostly private, spread throughout the town. These have been catalogued, photographed, and described by a wonderful book written by Clayton Dollof. A copy is available at the town library.

General Administration

town office on North Road housing town clerk and selectmen's assistant, fire station in the village, town library in the village, sand/salt pile on Route 41 on state owned property, and elementary school on North Road. Road Commissioner, Town Clerk, Treasurer, Tax Collector, and three Selectmen are elected annually. Outside consultant is retained for assessing. The town is governed by an annual town meeting.

ANALYSIS

Water supply

no need for a public water supply system is anticipated.

Sewage Facilities

a study done in the early 1980's projected a sewage treatment system in the village area, where private systems are now severely restricted. Federal and state funds were never provided, and the system was not built. A new study needs to be done to analyze remaining sewage treatment needs in the village.

Solid Waste

Although our facility has been sited in the past as one of the best managed dumps in Maine, the DEP now indicates that it is unlikely we will receive a renewed license to operate a transfer station on the current site, because we are operating on top of the old landfill. Many alternatives are now being studied, and a long term solution, including a substantial recycling program, must be developed. Selectmen are making plans to obtain a piece of property near the current landfill, upon which to construct a new transfer station and salt/sand shed. Of equal concern is the location of an ultimate destination for our solid waste and our recycled materials.

Public Safety

all services are adequate, and major expansion is not expected in the next ten year period, other than to keep up maintenance and regular replacement of vehicles and equipment.

Cemeteries

the Bean cemetery may be expanded through private sales of land behind the cemetery. The town needs to carefully inventory available space and make plans for expansion of some of these cemeteries over the next ten years. Our old neglected cemeteries need to be marked and cleaned up.

General Administration

all facilities are judged to be adequate for our needs over the next ten years, with the exception that a covering structure must be built for the salt/sand pile. Selectmen are currently considering a plan to construct the salt/sand shed on the parcel of land which they plan to purchase for our new solid waste transfer station.

Code enforcement is a problem. In the past year, a new code enforcement officer has improved this effort tremendously, but it remains a part-time operation with a very small budget. Enforcement of state and local laws, regulations, and ordinances is severely deficient. There is an identified need for more vigorous enforcement of regulations which continue to grow more complex. A well trained CEO who educates and helps residents to meet local codes and state regulations would be an important improvement.

There is also a need for volunteers, for local town boards, committees, children's activities, fire and rescue departments, and special projects. Volunteerism needs to be promoted and all Mt. Vernon residents need to respond and assist when they can.

EDUCATION

Inventory

Construction of Mt. Vernon Elementary School was completed in 1960, replacing the village school in Mt. Vernon village where grades K through 5 were taught, and the West Mt. Vernon School where grades 6 through 8 were taught. Consolidation into one school completed a process which extended from the time when as many as 17 schools dotted the landscape of Mt. Vernon.

Total enrollment in 1960, for grades K - 8, was 128 students. By 1966 enrollment was 143 students. In 1976 when Maranacook Community School was completed, grades 7 and 8 were moved to the new Readfield school, leaving an enrollment in grades k - 6 of 138. Enrollment has continued to grow at an extraordinary rate for a small rural town. As of October 1, 1990, Mt. Vernon had 299 students enrolled in our public education system.

A staff numbering 31 is responsible for Mt. Vernon's elementary school program, including 20 full or part-time teachers and a full-time principal.

To meet new state requirements, curriculum enhancements such as physical education, art, music, guidance counseling, and other programs, and to keep up with enrollment increases, Mt. Vernon Elementary School was expanded in 1986. The major addition included a new classroom, library, resource room, and multipurpose room large enough for concerts, plays and town meetings. The multipurpose room includes a kitchen for hot lunch.

In 1990, an unforeseen increase in the enrollment in grades 1 and 3 resulted in a town vote to immediately purchase two portable classrooms and hire two new teachers. This added about \$50,000 to our budget.

Parental involvement in the form of a loosely structured Parent Teachers Club has existed since 1975. The PTC works to provide "extras" including enrichment programs and books for the school library. The PTC's role has been changing from a fundraising support group toward more involvement in all the important educational issues facing our community, as well as improving communication between parents and school administrators and teachers.

In 1989 a group of parents formed The Parents League for Active Youth (PLAY). PLAY led a successful drive to raise funds and build a new community playground at the elementary school.

Mt. Vernon is part of a Community School District, sharing a middle and high school and a superintendent of schools with 3 other towns: Manchester, Readfield, and Wayne. Each town maintains it's own elementary school, also administered by the shared superintendent.

ANALYSIS

School spending has skyrocketed over the past five years. Like many rural Maine towns which lack an industrial base, much of the added funding has come from the property tax, which has now become a substantial burden for many of Mt. Vernon's low and moderate income homeowners. Yet pressure to continue to improve our educational system is relentless. It is very difficult to see the road ahead and to establish specific goals for our local educational system. Obviously, creative alternatives must be explored and new ideas implemented if we are to prepare our children for the changing workforce requirements of the world to come.

The wide ranging debate over curriculum and teaching methods must be resolved. Elementary students are asked today to learn much more, much earlier than in the past. And we have invested substantial sums to provide special and intensive educational assistance to students who need extra help. Hot meals, art and music, phys ed, and computer skills are all relatively recent developments, as the school evolves and adopts a role previously reserved for parents. Now we are debating at the state level the possibility of offering nursery school and day care services at our elementary schools.

Busing looms as a problem in Mt. Vernon as well. Today we have three buses transporting Mt. Vernon students to the elementary school and to Maranacook. Two buses are filled to capacity and the third is nearly filled. Some parents are concerned that high school students are riding the same bus as elementary students, while others worry over the long bus trips and lengthy school days. The typical school day for many children starts at 7 a.m. and doesn't end until 3:45 p.m. Yet some state leaders continue to press for a longer school day and a longer school year.

The Community School District is currently debating a needed addition to the Maranacook School. The addition will probably take the form of a new middle school, either attached to the present school or built elsewhere on the same parcel. This proposal needs a thorough and careful debate, in the context of meeting our needs for the next decade.

Many positive educational achievements have occurred in Mt. Vernon in the last ten years, and our children are the better for that. But much remains to be done. Although many of these issues will be debated and settled at the state level, a great many decisions are left to local residents. Unless we receive substantial property tax relief, local support for education may suffer. That would be a shame. Support at the local level in Mt. Vernon has been strong for the educational improvements we have achieved. It needs to remain strong. All of us should take more interest and get involved in this important decision making process.

RECREATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

INVENTORY

Lizzy Chase Park, town beach and picnic area, on Minnehonk Lake in the center of the village, where swimming lessons are offered in the summer.

Mt. Vernon Elementary School, outside athletic field utilized for baseball, soccer, playground for family use (open for public use after school hours and weekends), open space for kite flying; indoor multipurpose room utilized for year round weekly adult volleyball

Maranacook School, CSD #42, located in Readfield, outdoor athletic fields for football, baseball, soccer and track, tennis courts, cross country ski trails; indoor gym facility. All area available for use by Mt. Vernon residents.

Minnehonk Ridgerunners Snowmobile Club, club maintains marked trails for snowmobiling and cross country skiing, and clubhouse on Cottle Hill. All trails are open to the public.

The State owns property in several locations, including boat landings on Long Pond, Echo Lake, and Taylor Pond. Kennebec Land Trust recently accepted property on Torsey Pond. These and other traditional public access points are shown on the maps prepared as part of this comprehensive planning process.

Cultural Resources are offered by the following:

Dr. Shaw Memorial Library, owned and operated by the town, and serving both Mt. Vernon and Vienna residents, has grown tremendously in the last decade in number of patrons and amount of reading material. It is a special and important community asset, which also serves Vienna. In 1990, the library's list of patrons totaled 701, an increase of approximately 100 persons during the year. A total of 637 new books were added in 1990 bringing the total collection to 7,598 books. Patron visits totaled 3,982 in 1990, and 6,154 books were circulated. The library is governed by a Board of Trustees, appointed by the Selectmen. The library is supported by town funds, donations, and a trust fund established by Dr. Shaw, who also left his home which houses the library and the historical society.

A Performing Arts Group, which sponsors the world famous Christmas Revels.

A local Historical Society.

The nearby state library in Augusta.

Local schools (Mt. Vernon Elementary, Maranacook CSD #42)

A local theater group.

A newly organized group planning Mt. Vernon's bicentennial celebration in 1992.

Camp Bearnstow, a private non-profit summer camp offering swimming and artistic training.

No public or private campgrounds.

Public land and water access located throughout town, shown on new town maps.

Seven large lakes and numerous small ponds, streams and brooks (see maps).

No public vistas but beautiful scenery abounds along nearly all of our local roads, with special mention of the North Road, which winds up and over several hills, offering spectacular views along the way. Specific sites which offer long vistas occur at Dorer's on the Fogg Road, Wadleigh's on the north road looking toward Kents Hill, Clough's farm on the north road looking toward Mt. Blue, Robinson's Ridge on the North Road looking toward Mt. Blue, Wells Hill looking into the village, and Cottle Hill toward the Belgrades.

Several of these sites offer nice views of open fields and farmland. All roads which pass along our shorelines are scenic, with special note for Route 41 along Minnehonk Lake, the Chimney in West Mount Vernon, Moose Pond from the North Road, and the Blake Hill Road bridge over Hopkins Stream. Our many snowmobile trails offer beautiful off-road scenery. Those who would hike up McGaffey Mountain or our many hilltops, such as Bowen and Hornbeam, are offered breathtaking views.

Most private land is open to the public for recreation, including hunting and cross country skiing. Some land is open with permission only. More and more land is being posted "No Trespassing".

ANALYSIS

The people of Mt. Vernon have been generous with and very supportive of cultural and recreational facilities and programs over the past decade. A first rate small town public library along with many talented performers and artists provide a literary and artistic focus for our community which may be unusual in rural Maine.

With strong leadership from a few adults, excellent recreational programs, including baseball, swimming, and soccer, are provided for our children.

While adult recreational opportunities within town are limited, most residents are happy to provide their own entertainment, often taking to the fields and forests for hunting, hiking, skiing and snowmobiling. Our many lakes and ponds provide good fishing, and indeed attract people from throughout the state.

Public access at traditional sites needs to be clarified, with appropriate signage. A cooperative effort with Maine's Bureau of Parks and Recreation, which lacks sufficient maintenance and development funding, could lead the town to take over some state property and provide improved recreational opportunities. This idea needs to be explored with state officials.

Book space at the library is stretched thin. It is possible that sometime in the next five years the building may need to be expanded, funded most likely by a private fundraising campaign sponsored by the library's trustees.

No specific new facilities or programs are necessary for the next ten years, although we expect individuals and groups may continue to develop new projects and programs to meet their particular recreational and cultural needs. Public financial assistance is not the fuel generally needed for these programs, which rely on volunteers and community enthusiasm to succeed.

Of major concern is our opportunity to continue to recreate on private land. Public access issues need to be addressed at both the local and state level and creative solutions to the problems of posted land and conflicts between landowners and recreationists must be solved.

Equally important, a scheme of development must be encouraged which does not detract from the beauty of Mt. Vernon, maintains and protects the high quality of our water bodies, and assures that our fields and forests continue to be available for public use and enjoyment.

ECONOMY

Overall, the Mt. Vernon economy is probably undistinguished from other rural economies for towns with similar characteristics, demographics and geography. The local economy consists of a variety of small, mostly micro businesses, which overall provide a marginal contribution to the economic base (as defined by the tax base) of the community.

The direct benefit provided the town by its local economy is the fact that approximately 83 identified businesses provide some form of employment to one or more individuals, thus reducing the potential impact on town or state resources for general assistance, unemployment, or other forms of public aid. Additionally, several of the small businesses provide needed services such as plowing, fire wood, gas and groceries, clothing, education and culture.

Overall, like it or not, the geographic location of Mt. Vernon makes it a bedroom community to several larger population centers. This assumption is fortified by data from the 1980 Census occupation tables. In 1980, the employed population of Mount Vernon totaled 420. Of that population, approximately 71% were employed in occupations which were not indigenous to the local economy. The assumption that Mount Vernon is predominately a bedroom community is further fortified by 1980 Census data which indicate that 66% of the employed population had a work commute of greater than 20 minutes to their place of employment.

In educational attainment, Mt. Vernon residents over the age of 25, according to the 1980 Census, have generally more education than their Maine neighbors, as demonstrated in the following table, a smaller percentage of Mt. Vernon residents lack a high school diploma, and a higher percentage have attained at least four years of college education.

TABLE 3

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

MT. VERNON PERSONS 25 YEARS OLD AND OVER

(from 1980 U.S. Census)

		Mt. Vernon	Maine
Less than four years of High School	169	26.2%	31.3%
High School Graduate	273	42.4%	39.3%
1 to 3 years of College	78	12.1%	15.0%
4 or more years of College	124	19.3%	14.4%

For the purposes of the following inventory, a business is defined as an entity which provides any of the following:

- Employment
- Sales Taxes
- Services for Cash or Barter

TABLE 4

<u>Indigenous Business Inventory</u>	
Category	# of businesses
Sand/Gravel/General Contractors	8
Logging/Trucking	3
Builders/Heating/Plumbing	5
Tree Farms/Orchards	2
Camps	5
Grocery/General Merchandise	2
Library	1
Post Office	1
Daycare/Nursery	3
Poultry Farms	1
Trailer Parks	2
Auto Body/Auto Repair	7
Saw Mills/Mills	3
Salvage Yards	3
Real Estate	2
Attorney	1
Professional Consultants	4
Research	1
Dairy Farms	3
Clothing/Fabrics	3
Misc. Crafts	7
Cabinetry	1
Boats	1
Lodging	1
Retail Yard Equipment	1
Piano Lessons	1
Piano Tuning	1
Misc. General	8
Total	81

At the end of the 1980's the largest full time employer in town was the Mount Vernon Elementary School followed by Horne Enterprises, which is primarily engaged in construction; therefore having major seasonal fluctuations and employment levels. Other stable employment is provided by the Mount Vernon Country Store, Flying Pond Variety Store, Clark's Pallet Mill, and the Post Office. Additional seasonal employment is available from Camp Laurel, Camp Skoglund, and a variety of small contractors.

Mt. Vernon has no infrastructure which would make the town attractive to light manufacturing or broader commercial uses. No such development is anticipated in the near future. As Mt. Vernon continues to grow, primarily through immigration, micro businesses offering products and services are expected to continue to surface as new skills and professions join the community, or current home-based businesses expand.

Although there is very little a rural town like Mt. Vernon can do to bring major industry to town, we can be aware of local businesses and business opportunities, patronize local commercial establishments and providers of services, and make sure local regulations do not discourage the continuation and development of local businesses.

Because of state rules and regulations, small businesses are not hiring as they did in the past. Local businessmen and women often choose to work on their own, without hiring employees, due to the regulatory and tax burden imposed on those who do employ workers today.

Agriculture was once an important aspect of Mt. Vernon's economy. Today agriculture is no longer a key component of our local economy, although a few farms have survived, and a number of part-timers produce and sell some farm goods, such as eggs or vegetables.

Mt. Vernon workers will continue to rely on employment opportunities outside of town, making us susceptible to the state and national ebbs and tides of our economy and far less self-sufficient than our ancestors. Although many of us work for the state government, always thought to be resistant to recession, the current budget and employment cutbacks by state government prove that recession can even reach here, in our state government, and in Mt. Vernon.

Although we can and will continue to encourage home-based, natural resource based, and other commercial activity in Mt. Vernon, clearly most of our employment opportunities will come elsewhere, and we will return to Mt. Vernon after work to a quiet and peaceful residential community, our refuge from the economic world beyond our borders.

FISCAL CAPACITY

INVENTORY

The revenue and spending charts which accompany this report identify some interesting trends and lead to a few clear conclusions.

The spending chart shows the following:

- * total spending has increased 339% from 1976 to 1989, from \$377,736 to \$1,659,562.
- * the fastest growing service area is protection and health. From 1976 to 1989, spending on the fire department and rescue squad increased from \$12,951 to \$145,262. Spending on the dump, also in the protection and health category, increased from \$5,537 to \$30,275.
- * spending at the C.S.D. Maranacook school has risen nearly twice as rapidly as spending at the Mt. Vernon elementary school. C.S.D. spending increased 581% from 1976 to 1989, while elementary school spending increased 294%.
- * school spending dominates the budget, representing 53.3% of total spending in 1976 and increasing to 56.5% of total spending in 1989.
- * some town services are decreasing in terms of overall commitment, as measured by their percentage of the budget in 1976 and 1989 respectively.
- * general government has gone from 7.6% of the budget in 1976 to just 2.9% of the 1989 budget.
- * Although spending on roads increased from \$71,744 in 1976 to \$157,761 in 1989, the share of our budget dedicated to roads was actually reduced from 19% of the 1976 budget to just 9.5% of the 1989 budget, a dramatic reduction in our commitment to local roads.
- * the elementary school has also suffered a reduction in overall commitment, representing 40.6% of the 1976 budget but falling to 36.4% of the 1989 budget.
- * the fire department/rescue squad enjoyed the greatest growth in overall commitment, increasing from 1.9% of the budget in 1976 to 5.4% in 1989, an increase of 173%.
- * the C.S.D. also enjoyed a sharp increase in overall commitment, increasing from 12.7% of the 1976 budget to 19.6% of the 1989 budget.

The revenue chart shows the following:

- * property valuation has risen by more than \$50 million since 1976, going from \$4,026,260 in 1976 to \$58,677,100 in 1989.
- * nonresidents' share of our valuation in 1989 was \$35,889,100, or 61%. In other words, nonresidents pay 61% of our property taxes.
- * total revenue has increased 311%, from \$399,030 to \$1,639,257.
- * state revenue sharing is the fastest growing revenue source, up 1,202% since 1976, from \$4,888 to \$63,659.
- * state highway aid is the second fastest growing revenue source, up 845% since 1976, from \$2,790 to \$26,387.

* excise tax collections have risen dramatically, up 944% since 1976, rising from \$9,990 to \$104,256. This has allowed excise taxes to rise as a percentage of revenue from 2.5% in 1976 to 6.4% in 1989.

* the property tax provides twice as much revenue as any other single source, although as a percentage of revenue, our reliance on the property tax has decreased somewhat, from 48.3% of total revenue 1976 to 46.1% in 1989.

* property tax revenue has increased 292% since 1976, from \$192,842 to \$755,573.

* the state elementary school subsidy has increased from 20.4% of our budget in 1976 to 22.9% in 1989.

ANALYSIS

Any way you measure it, the property tax is a substantial and increasing burden on Mt. Vernon property owners.

As the following tables demonstrate, Mt. Vernon's tax assessment (the amount of money raised from property taxes) is the highest of the 8 Kennebec County towns of less than 2,000 population. In 1989 we raised \$56,000 more from property taxes than the town with the second highest assessment. Mt. Vernon's per capita tax (the amount of property tax raised for each resident) was the sixth highest amount in Kennebec County, \$125 above the county average.

TABLE 5

FULL VALUE PROPERTY TAX RATES (in ascending order by tax rate)

Town	1990 State Valuation	1989 Tax Assessment	Full Value
Rome	59,100,000	411,973	6.97
Belgrade	142,050,000	1,076,177	7.58
Sidney	76,650,000	693,587	9.05
West Gardiner	66,700,000	610,738	9.16
Pittston	55,050,000	517,475	9.40
Manchester	96,150,000	975,805	10.15
Windsor	52,900,000	563,259	10.65
Albion	41,950,000	460,234	10.97
China	123,900,000	1,362,028	10.99
Vassalboro	91,000,000	1,027,198	11.29
Mount Vernon	66,850,000	755,573	11.30
Farmingdale	78,100,000	894,691	11.46
Benton	59,250,000	685,041	11.56
Readfield	86,250,000	1,007,589	11.68
Chelsea	46,400,000	554,772	11.96
Randolph	37,950,000	467,827	12.33
Wayne	56,650,000	699,690	12.35
Litchfield	81,050,000	1,048,884	12.94
Oakland	145,200,000	2,067,948	14.24
Winthrop	217,050,000	3,123,094	14.39
Winslow	298,200,000	4,394,514	14.74
Clinton	63,600,000	959,394	15.08
Fayette	36,650,000	583,926	15.93
Hallowell	73,200,000	1,188,549	16.24
Vienna	17,250,000	293,354	17.01
Monmouth	111,150,000	1,969,472	17.72
Waterville	479,500,000	9,354,185	19.51
Augusta	766,250,000	15,206,380	19.85
Gardiner	154,200,000	3,105,825	20.14
Kennebec County Average			12.98
State Average			13.98

This table shows full value tax rates based on each town's 1989 tax assessments and the state's 1990 valuation of each town's property. The full value tax rate is based on 100% valuation, and will differ from the town's actual mill rate if the town is at less than 100% valuation. All figures were provided by the Maine Municipal Association.

TABLE 6

TAX ASSESSMENT/PER CAPITA PROPERTY TAXES

(in ascending order by population)

TOWN	1990 POPULATION	1989 TAX ASSESSMENT	PER CAPITA TAX
Vienna	417	293,354	703.49
Rome	758	411,973	543.50
Fayette	855	583,926	682.95
Wayne	1,029	699,690	679.98
Mount Vernon	1,362	755,573	554.75
Albion	1,736	460,234	265.11
Windsor	1,895	563,259	297.23
Randolph	1,949	467,827	240.03
Readfield	2,033	1,007,589	495.62
Manchester	2,099	975,805	464.89
Benton	2,312	685,041	296.30
Belgrade	2,375	1,076,177	453.13
Pittston	2,444	517,475	211.73
Chelsea	2,497	554,772	222.18
West Gardiner	2,531	610,738	241.30
Hallowell	2,534	1,188,549	469.04
Sidney	2,593	693,587	267.48
Litchfield	2,650	1,048,884	395.80
Farmingdale	2,918	894,691	306.61
Clinton	3,332	959,394	287.93
Monmouth	3,353	1,969,472	587.37
Vassalboro	3,679	1,027,198	279.20
China	3,713	1,362,028	366.83
Oakland	5,595	2,067,948	369.61
Winthrop	5,968	3,123,094	523.31
Gardiner	6,746	3,105,825	460.40
Winslow	7,997	4,394,514	549.52
Waterville	17,173	9,354,185	544.70
Augusta	24,309	15,206,380	713.08

This table measures the amount of property tax raised for each resident, using 1990 U.S. Census population data and 1989 town tax assessments. This table allows the comparison of total tax assessments and per capita taxes for towns of similar population.

TABLE 7

PER CAPITA PROPERTY TAXES

(in ascending order by amount of tax)

Pittston	211.73
Chelsea	222.18
Randolph	240.03
West Gardiner	241.30
Albion	265.11
Sidney	267.48
Vassalboro	279.20
Clinton	287.93
Benton	296.30
Windsor	297.23
Farmingdale	306.61
China	366.83
Oakland	369.61
Litchfield	395.80
Belgrade	453.13
Gardiner	460.40
Manchester	464.89
Hallowell	469.04
Readfield	495.62
Winthrop	523.31
Rome	543.50
Waterville	544.70
Winslow	549.52
Mount Vernon	554.75
Monmouth	587.37
Wayne	679.98
Fayette	682.95
Vienna	703.49
Augusta	713.08
Kennebec County Average	430.10

This chart measures the amount of property tax raised for each resident, and is derived by dividing the total tax assessment by the total population. U.S. 1990 Census figures were used and 1989 tax assessment for each town.

Even with this sharply increased property tax levy, we have not kept up with spending increases. The growing gap between property tax revenue and spending has been covered by increased state revenues, highlighted by the substantial increase in state revenue sharing funds from 1976 to 1989 and large increases in aid to education. A tremendous increase in excise taxes has also provided important funds to fuel our growing appetite for government programs and services.

In the midst of a spending explosion, our commitment to the town's infrastructure, particularly our roadways, has sharply diminished. Although the cost of both summer and winter maintenance of our roads has risen dramatically, our willingness to keep up with even the most basic maintenance has been sapped, as revenues were captured by more favored programs, particularly the fire department and rescue squad and the Community School District.

Our commitment to the local elementary school has also diminished, with proportionally more of our resources now going to the CSD, and less to our children in the lower grades.

Of equal concern is the substantial increase in spending which appears to be just around the corner. Tremendous increases in the cost of solid waste disposal, education, county government, growth regulations, highways and other programs, to meet new state mandates and local demand for services, accompanied by the surge in value of our property, will place an unprecedented strain on the property tax.

The property tax burden is especially difficult for those on fixed incomes, and for low income people who own property which has become, over the years, much more highly valued. It is generally felt that these people should not lose their property simply because they can no longer afford to pay higher property taxes.

Because nearly \$2 of every \$3 of local property tax is paid by nonresidents, who are unable to vote on the town's budget and therefore are taxed without representation, the property tax burden may cause antagonism between residents and nonresidents, and a political problem which will not be easily resolved at the local level.

With no prospects or desire for major industrial development, the property tax on residential and seasonal property will continue to provide most of the revenue necessary for important local services, including solid waste disposal, road maintenance and improvement, fire department, and a large portion of the costs of educating our children.

If other sources of revenue are not provided, and state mandates which drive our costs higher are not ended, the local property tax burden is likely to escalate beyond the reasonable ability of many of our citizens to pay their property taxes, irregardless of how efficiently we are able to manage town services.

TABLE 8

SOURCES OF REVENUE

(from town reports)

	1976	1980	1984	1988	1989
Property Valuation	4,026,260	21,600,400	23,732,700	55,400,600	58,677,100
Tax Assessment	192,842	306,399	450,921	637,107	755,573
Tax Rate	4.7	14	19	11.5	13
Excise Tax	9,990	25,019	39,492	97,793	104,256
State Revenue Sharing	4,888	12,659	19,952	53,669	63,659
State Highway Aid	2,790	5,864	13,613	18,563	26,387
State School Subsidy	81,510	102,141	146,783	347,703	375,562
Total Revenue	399,030	581,294	895,266	1,186,259	1,639,257

TABLE 9

REVENUE INCREASES

(from town reports)

	INCREASE 1976-1989	PERCENT INCREASE	PERCENTAGE OF REVENUE IN 1976	PERCENTAGE OF REVENUE IN 1989
Property Valuation	54,650,840	1,357		
Tax Assessment	562,731	292	48.3	46.1
Excise Tax	94,266	944	2.5	6.4
State Revenue Sharing	58,771	1,202	1.2	3.9
State Highway Aid	23,597	845	.7	1.6
State School Subsidy	294,052	361	20.4	22.9
Total Revenue	1,240,227	311		

TABLE 10

EXPENDITURES					
(from town reports)					
	1976	1980	1984	1988	1989
General Administration	28,798	32,949	31,865	41,154	48,387
Protection/Health	12,951	18,065	48,355	112,842	158,213
Highways/Bridges	71,744	67,684	128,240	138,563	157,761
Education	201,149	323,284	483,401	811,969	937,556
Cobbossee Watershed	183	414	780	440	897
Kennebec County	8,745	14,208	21,291	31,878	47,306
Welfare	252	774	109	673	1,052
Unclassified	3,141	8,266	77,606	19,390	42,108
Total	377,736	560,644	791,538	1,434,954	1,659,562

TABLE 11

EXPENDITURE INCREASES				
(from town reports)				
	INCREASE 1976-1989	PERCENT INCREASE	PERCENTAGE OF BUDGET IN 1976	PERCENTAGE OF BUDGET IN 1989
General Administration	19,589	68	7.6	2.9
Protection/Health	145,262	1,122	3.4	9.5
Highways/Bridges	86,017	120	19.0	9.5
Education	736,407	366	53.3	56.5
Cobbosee Watershed	714	390	.04	.05
Kennebec County	38,561	441	2.3	2.9
Welfare	800	317	.07	.6
Unclassified	38,967	1,241	8.3	2.5

TABLE 12

MAJOR SPENDING INCREASES

(from town reports)

	1976	1989	INCREASE	PERCENT INCREASE IN 1976	PERCENT BUDGET IN 1989	PERCENT BUDGET
Dump	5,537	35,812	30,275	547	1.5	2.2
Fire/Rescue*	7,233	92,844	85,611	1,184	1.9	5.2
Elementary Sch.	153,281	603,494	450,213	294	40.6	36.4
Maranacook Sch.	47,868	325,911	278,043	581	12.7	19.6

*There was no rescue unit in 1976.

LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Much of Maine's Growth Management Act centers on our important natural resources and the need to protect those resources. The Act's guidelines require a detailed inventory of water, agricultural, forest, historic, archaeological, and critical natural resources. We are required to analyze threats to these resources from current land uses or future land uses, assess the effectiveness of current protection measures, and propose any new regulations necessary to protect these resources in the future.

Our land use and resources inventory is presented on digitized maps and an aerial survey completed by Aerial Survey and Photo, Inc., of Norridgewock.

The aerial photography was at a scale of 1 inch = 2000 feet and 1 inch = 500 feet for shoreland areas. The town received 3 sets of 9"X9" contact prints, a photo index, 2X enlargements at 1 inch = 1000 feet, and 5X enlargements at scales of 1 inch = 500 feet and 1 inch = 100 feet corresponding to existing tax maps. The photographs were taken during the spring of 1990.

The digitized maps consist of the following:

- a) a base map showing all roads (distinguished between state, town, and private roads, and paved and gravel surfaces), major utilities, all water bodies, bridges, dams, recreational areas including public access sites.
- b) a parcel map, showing all ownership parcels.
- c) a land use map, showing types of vegetative cover and land uses.
- d) a limiting factors map, including steep slopes, wetlands, shoreland zoned areas, resource protection zones, and aquifers.

The latter includes all areas proposed to be included in a revised shoreland zoning ordinance to be presented to townspeople for a vote at the June, 1991 town meeting.

GENERAL LAND USE ISSUES

The bulk of land in Mt. Vernon remains forested. Much of this land is held in large parcels, and as long as this is the case, development pressure in many parts of the town will be minimal. In reality, much of the forested land is too steep to support sizable residential developments anyway. Much of the development pressure will come on land that is already cleared, along existing roadways, since development costs tend to be lower. This means that 750 acres of open space, two-thirds of it in agriculture, are prime locations for future development activities.

In recent years the town has made a major effort to enact and upgrade ordinances. We have enacted or extensively revised the Building Code Ordinance, the Subdivision Ordinance, the Town Road Ordinance, and the Junkyard Ordinance. There is a new Site Plan Review Ordinance in place, which regulates most non-residential activity. In the past year, there has been more vigorous code enforcement activity as well.

However, the town still has yet to come to grips with the type of development it wants in the future. While most would like to see the town remain largely as it is, we have to figure out how to accomplish that within the framework of the town's current land use policies, and this comprehensive plan.

WATER RESOURCES

For many, the principal attractions of the Town of Mt. Vernon are its many lakes and ponds. From Minnehonk Lake, with the village beside it, to Flying Pond, Long Pond, Parker Pond, Echo Lake, and Torsey Pond, residents and nonresidents alike have tended to build either on the water or within sight of it. For that reason, the quality of water and the way the lakes, ponds and streams are used presents a particular challenge for the town. We need to balance the wishes of the many for access to water, for use of the water for drinking and for recreation, with the current land ownership patterns and access patterns.

WATER QUALITY

About one in six of the residents responding to the comprehensive planning committee's Natural Resources Survey felt that water quality in lakes in town is unsatisfactory. There was broad support for the idea that the town has a role in enforcement to maintain water quality, including strict enforcement of septic system regulations and watershed controls. Given the large number of camps and residences abutting waterbodies, bringing all the systems up to standard will be a slow process.

Table 13 presents the Department of Environmental Protection's current assessment of water quality in Mt. Vernon lakes, and other lakes which water from Mt. Vernon flows into. At this point, only Torsey Lake and Long Pond are considered by DEP to be in "non-attainment" status due to water quality problems. For Torsey, this is attributable to shallow water, shoreland development, and other non-point sources of pollution. Long Pond is subject to problems with shoreland development, although much of this is based on the "upper" basin which does not abut Mt. Vernon.

Water falling in Mt. Vernon flows into two major drainage basins, through three major outlets. The area on both sides of Route 41, and to the west, drains into the Androscoggin River. Most drainage to the west of the North Road, and from the Dill Road south, flows through the Cobbossee watershed into the Kennebec River. Water falling to the east of the ridge along which the North Road runs flows into the Belgrade Lakes chain, through Messalonskee Stream into the Kennebec. Because of our position on the edge of these watersheds, activity in the town can have a major impact on water quality through a broad area.

TABLE 13

MOUNT VERNON LAKES AND PONDS

(from DEP data)

ANDROSCOGGIN RIVER WATERSHED

Lake Name	Surface Area (acres)	Direct Drainage Area (acres)	Watershed % in Mount Vernon	Water Quality
Echo Lake	1037	385	29	good
Flying Pond	385	1022	28	moderate/sensitive
Hopkins Pond	25	405	100	moderate/sensitive
Minnehonk Lake	99	657	100	moderate/sensitive
Parker Pond	1551	605	15	good
Taylor Pond	59	1937	97.5	moderate/sensitive

KENNEBEC RIVER WATERSHED

Desert Pond	22	484	100	moderate/sensitive
Ingham Pond	42	4280	100	moderate/sensitive
Bog Pond	25	306	20	moderate/sensitive
Long Pond	1334	5318	63.9	good
Moose Pond	64	712	100	moderate/sensitive
Torsey Lake	568	2162	66.4	moderate/sensitive

The major issue for many lakes in Maine, as identified by the DEP, is control of phosphorus entering the watershed. Several lakes in Mount Vernon are considered fairly sensitive to additional quantities of phosphorus. Almost any kind of development activity can release small amounts of phosphorus. The issue for the Town is likely to be finding ways to minimize these releases.

ACCESS

This subject is treated more fully under "Recreation." However, a principal message from both the town survey, and the recent report of the Maine Commission on Lakes, is that there is increasing conflict about how our lakes should be used. Many who live near lakes are looking for a quiet place, and others see all waterbodies as prime recreation areas.

DRINKING WATER

There is no public drinking water system in the Town of Mt. Vernon. Several facilities, (summer camps) have water systems that potentially could be classified as "community" because of the large number of people served. For most residents, drinking water comes from either a well, directly from a lake, or from a spring or purchased source. There is, at this time, no good tabulation of the number of households that get their water from each of these sources.

The only known spring used by the public is located on the Spring Hill Road. A single aquifer has been identified in Mt. Vernon to date. That is located in a wetland area about 150 yards north of the intersection of the Bean Road and the Belgrade Road.

Past discussions of community septic systems for the village area has not included discussion of a public water system. To date that has not been a wide subject of discussion.

There has been one instance reported of water contamination by salt, directly opposite the town's (and formerly the state's) salt/sand pile on Route 41. A second well was dug, with water meeting State standards. The proposed relocation of the salt/sand pile to a shed at anew location should minimize future problems.

FINDINGS

Water issues are critical to the future of Mount Vernon. There is a need for better management to prevent lower water quality. Special attention is needed for Torsey Lake, Long Pond, and Flying Pond, since they are now in non-attainment status.

SOILS

Mount Vernon is characterized by relatively good soils. Except for two regions of town, the majority of the soils are of the "Hollis-Paxton-Charlton-Woodbridge" association, which are generally usable for most purposes. The major areas of other soil types include the west shore of Long Pond, where two wetlands types are prevalent (Scantic-Ridgebury-Buxton and, to a lesser extent, Buxton-Scio-Scantic) and the north and northwest corner of town, near McGaffey Mountain, where Berkshire-Lyman-Peru soils are dominant.

There is a sizable area of town, largely along the North Road and surrounding areas, which are considered prime agricultural soils due to the dominance of the Paxton-Charlton soils in particular. Much of the prime farmland in town is still actively farmed as part of the Hall and Clough dairy farms, and the Jacobs farm.

Because the bulk of the town is subject to relatively few soil restrictions, the basic limitation for use will be such items as slopes and depth to bedrock, items that will be picked up during the inspection for suitability for a private septic system.

A brief description of the major soil types follows:

1. Hollis-Paxton-Charlton-Woodbridge association: shallow and deep, somewhat excessively drained to moderately well drained, gently sloping to moderately steep, moderately coarse textured soils; on hills and ridges.

This association is on upland ridges throughout the county, generally at elevations of 200 to 700 feet. The major soils in this association formed in glacial till. The Hollis soils are shallow and somewhat excessively drained and generally have irregular surfaces. The Paxton and Charlton soils are deep and well drained and have smoother surfaces. In most places, the Paxton soils are intricately intermingled with the Charlton soils. The Woodbridge soils are moderately well drained and are on the lower end of long slopes and in depressions. The poorly drained Ridgebury soil is of minor extent in this association and occupies low, wet depressions.

These soils are mainly in woodland, but many areas are farmed and used for other purposes. The well drained Paxton and Charlton soils are suited to cultivated crops, orchards, and other intensive uses. The Woodbridge soils have some limitations for both farm and nonfarm uses. Many orchards and dairy farms are on this soil association.

2. Scantic-Ridgebury-Buxton association: deep, poorly drained to moderately well drained, nearly level to sloping, medium textured soils in valleys and moderately coarse textured soils in flat areas or depressions; on upland ridges.

The major soils in this association formed in marine or lacustrine sediments and in glacial till. Scantic and Ridgebury soils are poorly drained. Scantic soils have a profile of silt loam over silty clay loam that is underlain by silty clay. They generally occupy flat areas where run-off of surface water is slow. Ridgebury soils formed in fine sandy loam glacial till. They generally occur in seepage areas on hillsides or at the base of long slopes and in depressions on upland ridges. Buxton soils are moderately well drained to somewhat poorly drained. They have a profile of silt loam over silty loam that is underlain by silty clay. They occupy sloping areas near the Scantic soils. Some areas of these soils are in grassland, but most of the association is in woodland.

3. Berkshire-Lyman-Peru association: deep and shallow, somewhat excessively drained to moderately well drained, gently sloping to moderately steep, medium textured and moderately coarse textured soils' on hills and ridges.

This association is on upland ridges mainly in the northwestern section of the county but also in small areas throughout the county. In many places, elevation is 1,100 feet or more, including McGaffey Mountain where it is more than 1,200 feet. The major soils formed in glacial till. Berkshire soils are deep, well drained, and are on the tops and sides of the upland hills and ridges. They Lyman soils are shallow to bedrock, somewhat excessively drained, and are also on the tops and sides of ridges. Perus soils are deep, moderately well drained, and are in depressions or at the base or on lower parts of side slopes.

FORESTRY

Most of Mt. Vernon is forested. Of a total 26,107 acres, about 18,000 is woodland. Wood types range from a northern spruce-fir forest, particularly in lower elevations and areas nearer water, to hardwood stands on the ridges. There are several areas of substantial pine growth as well.

Because land ownership in town is relatively fragmented, forestry takes place on many individual woodlots. The typical woodlot supplies firewood to the owner; major cutting and logging activities are done as cash is needed. A total of 58 parcels, represented 2,552 acres, are enrolled in the Tree Growth Tax Law, as of 1988. These parcels represent a long term commitment by the landowner to keep their lands in forests.

Respondents to the Natural Resource Survey conducted by the Comprehensive Planning Committee bear this out. Of 87 resident respondents, 48 owned more than 5 acres of woodland. However, only 29 managed their woodlots, and only 15 expected income from their woodlot during 1990. Only 23 expected income during the next five years. The majority of respondents strongly supported actions which would restrict some forestry practices (clearcutting restrictions based on slope and size). This is partly in response to major clearcuts in recent years on Vienna Mountain and off the Bean Road.

A number of businesses in town are forestry based. The Log and Chain Shop on Belgrade Road specializes in supplies for loggers. Clark's Pallet Mill on Route 41 uses a substantial volume of wood. Ralph Hopkins has opened a small business sawing logs on the North Road. Brent Mace on the Wing's Mills Road has a portable sawmill which he takes to woodlots on a custom basis.

Among those with logging businesses are Greg Goucher and Son, Michael Pastore, and Ron LaRue. Firewood is supplied by these and others.

Forestry is an important way for people in Mt. Vernon to cover land ownership costs. However, continuing public concern about how forestry is practiced implies a need for good management on the part of those actually doing the harvesting.

FINDINGS: Forestry is an important contributor to Mt. Vernon, economically and in terms of character. Use of the Tree Growth Tax Law provides stability in land use, and should be

encouraged. Citizens of the town are sensitive about some forest practices, particularly clearcutting. Those who manage their forests need to use responsible forest practices.

AGRICULTURE

Although Mt. Vernon has relatively few farms remaining, they play an important part in forming the town's rural character. In particular, the large fields and dairy farms along the North Road represent a strong impression of agriculture to those traveling to and through Mt. Vernon. Two-thirds of the large parcels of open land in the town are still being used for agriculture. Out of about 757 acres of open land (calculated from 1990 aerial photographs), just over 500 acres are in agricultural use (see Table 14).

The principal commercial agricultural products in Mt. Vernon are milk, chickens, beef, hay, sweet corn, and vegetables, and pigs. Two commercial dairy farms, Raydic Farm, operated by the Halls, and Clough Acres, operated by the Cloughs, remain in production. Compared to 50 years ago, when there were 78 farms milking cows in town, that represents a tremendous drop. But the 387 cows milked in 1940 produced less milk than 100 good quality cows produce now, so total production has not shifted substantially.

What has changed is the nature of the dairy business, shifting to a full-time, specialized activity. As the business has changed, land use patterns have changed accordingly. A number of fields that were once operated as separate farms are now used to support the remaining dairy farms. Many of the smaller farms that once milked cows are used primarily for smaller beef operations.

Mt. Vernon has one agriculture-related service business which is gaining national prominence. The Woods End Lab, located on the Old Rome Road, is operated by Will Brinton. The Lab specializes in composting projects, and provides consulting services to a number of businesses in Maine and the rest of the country that are busy trying to find ways to use waste products in a way that allows nutrients to be recycled to agricultural lands.

The large number of part-time farms, many of which produce limited cash returns for their owners, is a contributor to the town's rural nature as well. Each of the 9 beef farms relies on open farmland for pasture and hay. The vegetables from the White farm on the Bean Road, and the Hall's sweet corn business, are regular stops for many local residents. Manley Damren's orchard on the Wing's Mill Road has begun providing local apples. One other, rather unusual, agriculture-related venture is Mycelles, run in part by Barbara Skapa. Mycelles buys mushrooms that have been harvested in the wild from around the State, packages them, and then ships them to various markets around the country. Taken together, these and other part-time ventures represent a sizable amount of activity that contributes to the town's well-being and character. Although not generally acknowledged as such, the widespread reliance on gardens for summer vegetables provides some stability in rural land use as well.

Fifty years ago, nearly 3,300 acres of land were actively farmed in Mt. Vernon. Today, we're at about 20% of that level. We are not likely to return to the position of 1940. However, if we do not actively encourage our remaining farmers to continue, in part by making sure they can farm profitably, we will have very little open space in agricultural production even twenty years from now.

FINDINGS

Agriculture continues to play an important economic role in Mt. Vernon, although few full-time farms remain. Continued support for agriculture is important in maintaining the rural character of the community. The Town, as it expressed itself in the Natural Resource Survey, believes that the maintenance of agriculture in Mt. Vernon is an important goal, and one that the Town should support.

TABLE 14

AGRICULTURE

(based on a road survey and aerial photos)

				Acres Used
DAIRY				
Raydic Farm	North Road	Holsteins		145 acres
Clough Acres	North Road	Holsteins		105 acres
BEEF				
Gouchers	Route 41			
Robert White	Bean Road			35 acres
Arnolds	Belgrade Road			9 acres
Mace (Dorer's)	Fogg Road			25 acres
Ballard	Bean Road			40 acres
Ralph Hopkins	North Road			10 acres
Chicken Farm	Belgrade Road			10 acres
Robert Miner	Desert Pond Rd.			10 acres
J. Hermann	Bean Road			10 acres
HAY				
Ron Herrick	Bean Road			30 acres
Whitcomb (Jacobs)	North Road			65 acres
Hall (Hopkins)				
POULTRY				
Bor's Egg Farm	Ithiel Gordon Rd.			
Chicken Farm	Belgrade Road			
CHRISTMAS TREES				
Skip Hammond	Belgrade Road			9 acres
Fred Webber	Bean Road			2 acres
MISCELLANEOUS				
Barbara Skapa	Bean Road	wild mushrooms		
Robert White	Bean Road	potatoes, pumpkins		
		corn, grain		
Ray Hall	North Road	corn, squash		
Clyde Clough	North Road	squash		
W. Locke	North Road	breeding poultry	2 acres	
M. Damren	Wings Mill	apples	10 acres	
Sue Murch	Desert Pd. Rd.	horsetraining	4 acres	
L. Whittier	Seavey Road	dried flowers		
Russ Libby	Torsey Pd. Rd.	farm eggs	7 acres	
R. Kraut	Belgrade Rd.	farm eggs	2 acres	
R. Hopkins	North Rd.	farm eggs		
	Route 41	farm eggs		
Woods End Lab	Old Rome Rd.	consulting		

TRANSPORTATION

A total of 55.23 miles of public road exist in Mt. Vernon. 35.67 miles are town roads, 7.87 miles are state highway, and 11.69 miles are state aid. The town plows 44.6 miles of road in winter.

In the early 1980's the Maine Legislature authorized and directed the Department of Transportation (MDOT) to classify all public roads throughout the state. The classification system that was established was based on the principle that the roads which serve primarily regional or statewide needs should be the State's responsibility, and roads which serve primarily local needs should be a local responsibility. The State's classification system includes the following:

STATE HIGHWAYS are usually arterials and are comprised of a system of connected highways throughout the State which serve arterial or through traffic. The State is responsible for all construction, reconstruction and maintenance. In Mt. Vernon, all of Route 41 is designated State Highway.

STATE AID HIGHWAYS are usually collector roads and roads that are not included in the system of State highways, but which serve as feeder routes connecting local service roads to the State highway system. The State is responsible for construction, reconstruction and summer maintenance of state aid highways, and the town is responsible for winter plowing and maintenance. In Mt. Vernon, all of the Readfield (North) Road and all of the Belgrade Road is designated state aid road.

LOCAL ROADS include all other public roads and are maintained entirely by the municipality. They serve primarily as local service roads providing access to adjacent land and state highways.

TABLE 15

STATE HIGHWAY AND STATE AID ROADS INVENTORY

(from MDOT)

NAME	LENGTH IN MILES	* CONDITION
Route 41	7.87	3.11 4.29 miles north from Readfield town line 2.98 next 1.46 miles 4.08 remainder to Vienna town line
Belgrade Road	3.49	3.96 2.47 miles west from Rome town line 3.89 remainder to Readfield Road intersection
Readfield Road	8.20	3.96 2.69 miles south from Readfield Corner intersection to Readfield town line 3.48 .7 miles between country store and fire station 4.12 from fire station to Readfield Corner intersection

* Condition is established by MDOT according to this scale:

Out/of/Service Comfortable @ 25MPH Comfortable @ 45MPH Comfortable @ 55MPH Perfect
 0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5

TABLE 16

TOWN ROADS

(from Road Commissioner)

ROAD NAME	MILES PLOWED	COVER	* CONDITION	
Castle Island	.9	paved	good	from Belgrade Road to State Boat Facility
Old Rome	.75	gravel	fair	from Belgrade Road to Carlson's
Bean	5.95	paved	fair/good	from Belgrade Road to Readfield Road
Mooar Hill	.15	gravel	fair	from Readfield Road to Transfer Station
Mooar Hill	.20	gravel	fair	from Bean Road to North Joe Taylor Road
North Joe Taylor Road	.55	gravel	fair	from Mooar Hill Road to Colebrooke's
South Joe Taylor Road	.55	gravel	good	from Bean Road to Hetherly's
Journey's End	.45	gravel	good	from Bean Road to Bloom's
North Cottle Hill	.35	gravel	fair	from Bean Road to Karabin's
South Cottle Hill	1.25	gravel	fair	
		paved	good	from Wings Mill Road to Pettingill's
Dunn's Corner	.7	paved	good	from Readfield Road to Dunn's Corner
Seavey Corner	.65	paved	good	from Route 41 to Vienna Town Line
North Ithiel Gordon	1.2	paved	good	from Vienna line to Bor's
		gravel	fair	from Bor's to Green's camp road
South Ithiel Gordon	.45	gravel	fair	from Route 41 to Ray Neal's
Hovey Luce	.75	paved	good	from Route 41 to bottom of hill
		gravel	good	from bottom of hill to Silz's
Blake Hill	1.5	paved	good	from Readfield Road to Route 41
Sandy River	1.05	paved	good	from Route 41 to Fayette line
Echo Lake	.4	gravel	fair	from Sandy River Road to Greenough's
Five Seasons	.75	gravel	poor	from Route 41 to Five Seasons
Sadie Dunn	1.05	paved	good	from Readfield town line to Readfield Rd.
West Desert Pond	1.4	gravel	poor	from Readfield Road to Desert Pond
East Desert Pond	.6	gravel	good	from Route 41 to Christianson's
Torsey Pond Road	.5	paved		
		gravel	fair	from Desert Pond Road to Couling's
Dill	.4	paved	good	
		gravel	fair	from Readfield Road to Liebling's
Readfield Corner	.9	paved	good	from Readfield Road to Readfield line
Fogg	.6	paved	fair	from Readfield line to Dorer's
Rat Mill Hill	.9	gravel	fair	from Dunn's Corner to Readfield line
Plains	1.55	paved	good	from Readfield line to Crank Road
Crank	1.2	paved	good	from Belgrade line to Wings Mill Road
Wings Mill	3.85	paved	good	from Readfield line to Belgrade line
Dunn	.5	gravel	fair	from Wings Mill Road to Belgrade line
Spring Hill	.85	gravel	fair	from South Cottle Hill Rd. to Ropella's
Bog	.15	gravel	poor	from Spring Hill Road to Langmeyer's
Currier Hill	.2	gravel	poor	from Readfield Road to Pickett's
Carr Hill	.5	gravel	good	from Belgrade Road to Hanson's
Total	44.6			

* Condition as rated by Road Commissioner, based on scale from excellent to terrible.

The most recent MDOT average daily traffic counts for Mt. Vernon locations are ten years old. A map of this data is available in the town office. In 1980, MDOT reported that the greatest amount of traffic was found in the village, where a total of more than 800 vehicles passed the store and fire station each day. Traffic on the Readfield Road north of the intersection with Readfield Corner Road was 516 vehicles per day, the second highest count outside of the immediate village and Route 41 traffic.

MDOT has also provided us with a summary of accident data covering the period from January 1, 1986 to December 31, 1988. It shows accident rates on most Mt. Vernon roads to be below average expected numbers.

State Highway Route 41 suffered 14 accidents in that three year period, most resulting in property damage only. The accident rate was only half the expected rate, based on statewide averages for similar stretches of highway. The only section suffering a significantly above average number of accidents was right in the village.

There were 57 accidents on local roads in the three year period, with 40% resulting in personal injuries. The accident rate exactly met the expected rate based on MDOT state averages for similar roads. Only one road suffered a significantly above average number of accidents, the Rat Mill Road, and that was based on only two accidents on that road.

Local knowledge about accidents during this time period indicates that the MDOT data may be incorrect.

None of the road in Mt. Vernon is clogged at this time with traffic and we have no concern for the immediate future that new traffic control measures will be required or that traffic patterns will dictate a need for new policies.

However, traffic in the village was raised as an issue, including the accident rate, during the Village Forum hosted by the comprehensive plan. This issue is mentioned in this plan's section on the Village Forum.

Mt. Vernon has only one local bridge, a concrete structure on the Cottle Hill Road, constructed in the mid-1980's and expected to last a lifetime.

State Road Block grant funds are projected to increase substantially over the next few years, rising from \$22,646 in FY89 to \$49,416 in FY 94. We sincerely hope that they do, because we need the money!

Mt. Vernon needs a long term plan for maintenance and improvements to our roads. A Road Committee appointed in 1990 by the Selectmen has been charged with this responsibility and is working on a five year plan. It needs to be adopted this year and carefully evaluated and updated every year in the future.

We have been directing an ever smaller proportion of our town budget to road maintenance and improvement in the last decade (see analysis in Fiscal Capacity section), and appear to be falling further and further behind where we should be. There is some concern that more of our budget needs to be spent on roads, but until a plan is completed, we have nothing but subjective opinions and personal observations on which to base this conclusion.

REGIONAL ISSUES

A number of regional issues were identified during this planning process. Some particular policies which might address regional issues would be the following:

- 1-2 ride sharing and other alternative transportation methods
- 1-4 recycling
- 1-6 law enforcement improvements
- 2- all education policies
- 3-4 Tree Growth and Farmland and Open Space tax programs
- 6-1 public access
- 6-3 State property on Taylor Pond
- 6-4 boating laws and regulatory process
- 9-1 Route 41 village intersection
- 11- farm and forest policies
- 12-4 wildlife habitat and resources
- 12-5 fisheries resources
- 13-4 hazardous waste disposal
- 13-5 groundwater surveys
- 14-2 sharing of code enforcement officer
- 14-4 enforcement of state environmental laws.

In addition to these issues, other issues were identified which have not led to policies in this plan. These include:

Wings Mills Dam: owned by the towns of Rome and Belgrade, this dam lies in Mt. Vernon and impacts Mt. Vernon property both upstream and downstream.

Belgrade Stream: Much of Mt. Vernon's shore frontage is placed in Resource Protection, and Belgrade's zoning for their side of the stream should probably match our own.

Dr. Shaw Memorial Library: shared by Vienna and Mount Vernon residents.

Public Access Issues: Mt. Vernon's water bodies are used by people from throughout the state, and access to our water bodies remains a regional as well as statewide issue.

SURVEY RESULTS

Two surveys were prepared by the Comprehensive Planning Committee and mailed to all Mount Vernon households. An excellent response was received to the first survey and a good response to the second.

The first survey concerned a wide variety of issues, including zoning and public facilities and services. A total of 134 responses were received, roughly equivalent to 25% of our households. A summary of the results was included in a town newsletter, which reported the following:

71% of respondents are satisfied with Mount Vernon's tax rate, although 51% report having some difficulty in paying their property taxes. 49% feel we should keep the transfer station in its present location and fight the state's attempt to force us to move. There is strong support for recycling, with 84% favoring voluntary recycling and 70% supporting mandatory recycling. Only 29% believe Mount Vernon lacks affordable housing, although 18% say they know of someone who was unable to find affordable housing in town.

The survey asked respondents to rate the adequacy of municipal services and to indicate whether spending on these services should be increased, decreased, or maintained at the current level. Respondents are happy with most municipal services. The percentage indicating they are happy or very happy are elementary school (56%), high school (38% with 16% unhappy, the remainder expressing no opinion), fire protection (82%), rescue service (88%), road maintenance (76%), snow plowing/sanding (47% with 48% unhappy), street lights (49%), solid waste disposal (61%), recreational facilities (51%), recreation opportunities (62%), public access to lakes (95%), ordinance enforcement (53%), library (79%), natural resource protection (44% with 36% unhappy), and town government (67%).

The services which elicited the highest number of respondents who feel spending should be increased were road maintenance (40%), and natural resource protection (43%). The services with the highest number of respondents who feel spending should be reduced were the high school (23%) and street lights (23%). Strong majorities felt all services should be maintained at current levels, ranging from 50% for natural resource protection to 75% for town government.

Almost ninety residents responded to the second survey of the Comprehensive Planning Committee. Another 40 non-residents, mostly property owners, completed the survey and provided comments as well.

FOREST ISSUES: Over half (48) of the respondents own more than 5 acres of wooded land. Only 29 do any forest management, and only 23 expect any income in the next five years. Town regulations of forest practices are supported by 58-21. Clearcutting is seen as an appropriate tool by only 22 of 83, but almost all felt there were times that clearcuts were inappropriate (81 of 82). Slope and size restrictions were both considered appropriate forms of regulation (supported by 72 & 70).

AGRICULTURE: Only 22 report more than 5 acres of fields and farmland, with 15 reporting agricultural income. Residents feel agriculture is important, and want to keep farmland (78 yes, 7 no). Over 55 feel the town should commit resources to do that. Farmers were encouraged to participate in the Farm & Open Space Tax Law (67Y) even with the tax loss to the town (61Y).

RESOURCE PROTECTION: There was strong support for resource protection zones (71Y, 10N), but a large number of people don't know where the zones are. Fewer than half reported knowing where the zones were (33), with 7 reporting knowing some and 34 not knowing any.

WATER QUALITY: Water quality is a major issue for many people. Fourteen reported unsatisfactory water quality in water bodies they know about, 70 were satisfied. Over 75 supported each of the possible approaches except roadbuilding controls (73Y) and development buffers (70Y). Several comments emphasized control of problems before they happen, rather than after-the-fact enforcement.

OPEN SPACE: Many supported keeping open space (68), but there is no clear indication of responsibility. A relatively low number supported the town taking a role (33Y, 26N). Use of the Farm & Open Space Tax Law was supported by 61; setting up a system for the town to accept easements by 66.

NATURAL RESOURCES: Three residents & several non-residents reported plants of potential interest, including: trailing arbutus, fringed orchis, ladyslippers, clubworts, mushrooms. A Conservation Commission was supported by 58, opposed by 21.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES: Swimming took the lead, with 60 participants; 57 boaters; 50 fish; 50 hike; 40 camp; 30 hunt; 7 cross-country ski (write-in). A major barrier, mentioned repeatedly, was lack of water access for swimming and boating activities. A number of town actions were proposed, many focusing on water access, particularly at Minnehonk. Forty-one supported greater access (trails), 30 opposed.

HOW WE SEE MOUNT VERNON: The great majority still see Mount Vernon as a rural area with attractions of its own (72); eighteen see it as a bedroom community, 7 as a suburb. Several specifically mentioned a trend towards becoming a bedroom community, with a desire to not see that happen. Suggestions for development options included: support for large lots (48); for clusters (33); for keeping development along major highways (18). Several emphasized landowners rights as the key development issue.

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS: 32 people took the time to write their own comments. Many focused on: water access; protecting natural resources; minimizing suburbanization; right of landowners to do as they wish, within reason; a need to clean up the downtown/village area.

NON-RESIDENTS' VIEWS: There was an even greater emphasis on keeping the waterfront accessible. There were a number of comments about problems with large boats and jet skis. The village area was criticized on aesthetics & behavior grounds. Several had detailed suggestions on different forms of property taxation that might lessen the incentive to develop waterfront.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLANNING

Maine's Growth Management Act requires the town to prepare a Capital Investment Plan for "financing the replacement and expansion of public facilities and services required to meet projected growth and development." An on-going capital investment process should be established to provide an annual needs assessment, detailed planning, and budgeting for municipal capital improvements. Priorities are expected to be set for all needed municipal capital improvements, and potential funding sources and financing mechanisms should be identified. This comprehensive plan establishes several capital investment policies:

Policy 5-1: Prepare and implement a five year road maintenance and improvement plan, including an up-to-date detailed inventory;

Policy 6-6: Include capital investment planning as part of the school budget development process;

Policy 9-4: Incorporate capital improvements planning as an integral part of annual budget planning.

This plan also establishes policies for two major capital investment projects, a salt/sand shed and a new solid waste transfer station. The 1991 annual town meeting appropriated \$35,000 to purchase land on which to build both of these facilities. Engineering work will begin shortly, but no funds have been raised to actually construct the facilities. No cost estimates are yet available for either project.

Our Superintendent of Schools has submitted an application to the State for a new addition to the Mount Vernon Elementary School, to replace existing portable classrooms and accommodate expected growth, but no determination has yet been made as to our place on the State's construction priority list. Firm cost estimates are not yet available either.

This plan establishes policies for a number of other items which might, or might not, involve capital expenditures. We expect most minor items to be funded directly from annual property taxes, in whatever year the items are achieved. Some policies, such as Policy 5-8, which calls on the town to "be prepared to acquire historic or other valuable property if the opportunity arises," do not allow us to establish funding requirements at this time.

However, Mount Vernon's funding sources and financing mechanisms for capital investment projects are well known. We can pay-as-we-go, by appropriating entire project costs at our annual town meeting. We can borrow funds over a longer term and pay them back, with interest, over an established term, oftentimes commensurate with the life of the project. Or we can set aside funds in reserve accounts each year, until such time as the entire sum necessary for a project is accumulated.

Maine law limits the amount of debt a municipality may incur. While there are exceptions, for practical purposes the maximum is 7.5% of the State's established valuation of all town property. Mount Vernon's State Valuation in 1990 was \$66,850,000. Therefore our debt limit in 1990 was \$5,013,750. Mount Vernon's actual long term debt was only \$100,000 for the year ended December 31, 1989. This represented a balance of \$40,000 on the new fire truck, which will mature in 1992, and a balance of \$60,000 on the elementary school addition, with a final payment in 1991. The town borrowed \$250,000 in anticipation of taxes in 1990. Obviously, we remain far below our legal debt limit, a situation much favored by residents and taxpayers.

Although it is impossible at this time to prepare a factual prioritized Capital Investment Plan, we have acknowledged the importance of such a plan, and called for a plan to be developed this year and to be included as an integral part of our budget making process in future years.

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