

CHAPTER 4 Utilities and Community Facilities Element

Section 4.1 Introduction

Adequate infrastructure, utilities, community facilities, and services are important in meeting existing and future community needs. They are the framework of a community's life and without them, present day standards of living could not exist. The decisions made for the Town of Amherst regarding the utilities and community facilities will have an impact on all present and future residents.

This chapter will describe the existing utilities and community facilities serving the community, and outline future desires and needs for Town residents.

Section 4.2 Public Utilities Inventory and Analysis

A. Sanitary Sewer Service

There is no sanitary sewer service in the Town of Amherst. Residents in the Town utilize private onsite wastewater treatment systems (POWTS), otherwise known as private septic systems, as allowed by the Portage County Private Sewage System Ordinance and Department of Commerce Administrative Code (COMM 83). The Portage County Planning and Zoning Department administers the permitting and management of POWTS County-wide.

The Village of Amherst has a wastewater treatment facility and sewage collection system, but there are currently no plans for extension of services into the Town.

B. Water Supply

Town residents rely entirely on private wells for their water supply. Water is generally plentiful throughout the Town, with potential pumping yield rates of 500-1000+ gallons per minute. Please see the groundwater section of the Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources chapter for further information.

Since potable water is obtained primarily from groundwater, consideration should be given to possible sources of contamination. One possible source is landfills. Landfills (also formerly known as dumps) have been around as long as people have lived in Portage County; however, the locations of many of the smaller, private dumps are unknown. The amount of materials deposited in these was small, and the toxicities of the materials were likely fairly low as compared to current solid waste. All known landfills, except the current Portage County Landfill located on Cty Rd QQ, have been closed. According to Department of Natural Resources (WisDNR) Administrative Code, there must be 1,200 foot separation between a private well or reservoir and the nearest edge of an existing, proposed, or abandoned landfill. Landfills in the Town are shown on Map 4.2.

C. Storm Water Management

The Town does not have a formal storm water management plan. However, responsibility for storm water management within the Town of Amherst is split between Portage County and the Town. Storm water facilities consist mainly of ditches along the road network. Portage County maintains the ditches along the portions of County Roads within the Town of Amherst, while the Town maintains any ditches along Town roads. Ditches along Town roads vary in size, ranging up to 4 feet in width.

D. Solid Waste & Recycling Facilities

The Town of Amherst contracts with Wittenberg Disposal, out of Wittenberg, WI for solid waste and recycling pickup. Waste material is taken to the Portage County Landfill in the Town of Stockton. The Town is charged a fixed dollar amount per residence that is then assessed on the tax bill. The Portage County landfill is scheduled to close in 2006, after which the waste will be trucked to a landfill in Marathon County. Recyclables are taken to the Portage County Material Recovery Facility in the Village of Plover. Solid waste is picked up weekly and recyclables are collected bi-weekly. The Town is satisfied with the current level of service, but will review alternatives as conditions change.

An old landfill exists in the Town southeast of the Town Hall. It lies west of old Hwy 10 (now designated as Cty Rd KK) on private property (Map 4.2). Fees were collected by the property owner from the municipalities which used it. Nelsonville, Amherst Junction, and the Town of Amherst deposited waste there until 1991 (File Re: SW Lic#181). There is no clay liner or monitoring wells associated with the site. WisDNR plans to do nothing about this landfill unless wells in the area begin to show contamination.

Another landfill exists in the Town on Cty Rd T near the intersection of Cty Rds T and B. This facility, owned by the Village of Amherst, is still active for yard waste and inert construction material.

E. Corporate Utilities

1. Telecommunication Facilities - The Town does not own or manage telecommunication facilities. However, two telecommunication towers are located in the Town, one at the end of Mill Rd. and the other south of Old Hwy 18, west of Amherst Junction. Both facilities were placed to maximize exposure to the U.S. Highway 10 facility. Ordinances governing the placement and construction of these facilities are administered by the Portage County Planning and Zoning Department.
2. Power Generating Plants and Transmission Lines No electric generation plants or substations are located within the Town of Amherst. However, one 69kV electrical transmission line runs east-west through the Town.
3. Pipelines – A 36” gas pipeline, owned by ANR Pipe Line Company, a subsidiary of El Paso Corp., was laid prior to 1969. It enters the Town near Cty Rd. K and SS and parallels USH 10. Then it crosses north of the Village of Amherst and continues to parallel USH 10 until it exits just south of Cty Rd. T.
4. Telephone and Internet Services – Phone service is currently offered through Amherst Telephone Company out of Amherst, Wisconsin. Internet services are available through a number of private providers.
5. Other facilities – Gordondale Farms, near the Village of Nelsonville, generates enough energy to serve a number of homes through the production of methane from their dairy operation. The surplus electricity is sold back to Alliant Energy and the left-over solids from the manure digestion process are re-used as livestock bedding.

Map 4.1 Community Utilities

Section 4.3 Community Facilities Inventory and Analysis

A. Municipal Buildings

Municipal buildings in the Town of Amherst include the Town Hall, located at 4023 County Road Q; and Town Garage, also located at 4023 County Road Q. The Town Hall contains a meeting room, office, small storage room, and bathroom. The 3-bay Town garage provides storage for the Town's road maintenance equipment. Public parking at these facilities is limited.

B. Police, Fire, Rescue, Emergency Response

Police protection and ambulance service is provided by Portage County. The Portage County Sheriff's Department provides protective services through random patrols and on a "call-out" basis. Portage County is divided into 3 districts for patrol purposes. The district in which Amherst is located is bounded by STH 66 to the north, and the Portage County line to the east. During the day shift 1 officer is assigned to each district, plus an additional officer "floats" throughout the County. During the night shift, 2 officers are assigned to each district, plus 2 additional officers float throughout the County. Officers may drive through the Town any number of times during each shift to check on businesses and residences.

An agreement to create the Amherst Fire District was signed January 1, 1993 by representatives of the villages of Amherst, Nelsonville, and Amherst Junction, and the Town of Amherst. In addition to serving these areas, the District also contracts with parts of Lanark and Stockton for fire services. Volunteer firefighters, recruited from the area served, are dispatched via pagers by Portage County 911.

As of July 2004, the Amherst Firefighters merged with the Amherst Emergency Medical Services to create a management umbrella with a combined budget. The District recently received an \$18,000 bio-terrorism grant. All members of the volunteer Medical Services now have EMT status. Dispatched by the Portage County 911 system via pagers, one of the two EMT's on-duty generally arrives at the scene in a district-owned SUV to provide medical assistance ahead of the ambulance. Supplies are kept at the fire station, as is the 1-ton truck equipped with rescue equipment. The EMT program is supported financially by the member communities of the Amherst Fire District. In addition, the Town of Lanark contracts for services with the Amherst Fire District for EMT service as do areas in the southern part of the Town of New Hope. [The Town of Stockton has its own emergency medical services.]

A fire station building was constructed in 1995 and is located in the Town of Amherst at 4585 Fairgrounds Road. As of August 2004, the following vehicles were housed in the fire station:

- 3 engines/pumpers: **1st out**--1250 gal. per minute pump rate with 500 gal. capacity, foam application, and an aerial boom with ladder.
 - 2nd out**--1,000 gal. per minute pump rate with 1,000 gal. capacity
 - 3rd out/reserve**--750 gal. per minute pump rate with 750 gal capacity
- 2 tankers - having a 2,000 and 3,000 gal. capacity
- 2 rescue vehicles-- 1 SUV and 1 one-ton truck
- 1 utility/grass fire vehicle

Water for the vehicles is usually pumped from the water hydrants located in the Village of Amherst. Additional water is available from four irrigation wells: 2 in the Town of Lanark and 2

in the Town of Amherst. In addition, there are a number of dry hydrants across the area. The District also has mutual aid agreements with other fire districts in Portage County to utilize their water resources, equipment and manpower if needed.

In 2005, the fire district purchased property adjacent to the fire station to provide access to Packer Avenue.

C. Schools

The Town of Amherst is served by two School Districts (Map 4.2).

1. Tomorrow River School District

The Tomorrow River School District is approximately 100 square miles in size, and includes the Villages of Amherst, Amherst Junction and Nelsonville, along with part of the Towns of Amherst, Buena Vista, Lanark, Stockton, and New Hope. The entire student population, Pre-kindergarten through 12, is educated on one site, within a 160,693 sq. ft. interconnected structure in the Village of Amherst. The Amherst School District employs approximately 86 teachers, 43 support staff and 5 administrators servicing 900 students in grades Pre-Kindergarten to 12. The school is governed by a 5 member school board elected to three year terms.

The original high school building constructed in 1922 was 11,000 square feet in size. Additions to the school have included: a 7,500 square foot shop building added during the 1940's; a new 14,300 square foot band building in 1953; a 12,075 square foot elementary school addition in 1978; and a 16,000 square foot elementary school addition in 1988. The area between the high school and elementary buildings has gradually been utilized for expansion, so that both buildings are now under one roof.

2. Iola-Scandinavia School District

The Iola-Scandinavia School District serves approximately 820 K-12th grade students in two facilities located in the Village of Iola, in Waupaca County. The elementary school, which houses the district administrator, administers K-6th grade and special needs students. The middle and high school serves 7th-12th graders. The staff of the school district is made up of 63 teachers and 110 regular employees.

A number of post-secondary educational opportunities are also available to Town residents.

University of Wisconsin- Stevens Point (UWSP)

UWSP is home to four colleges (fine arts and communication, letters and science, natural resources and professional studies) and enrolls approximately 8,700 students. Its academic programs offer 100 choices within 51 majors and 78 minors plus 16 graduate programs.

The 400 acre main campus includes seven major buildings in addition to Old Main, UWSP's administrative building, the University Centers and 13 residence halls housing approximately 3,000 students. North campus includes Schmeckle Reserve, a 225-acre nature area with a 24-acre lake, nature center and trails that are part of the Portage County 26-mile Green Circle Trail. The Stevens Point campus is part of the University of Wisconsin System that includes 13 four-year campuses, 13 two-year centers and the University of Wisconsin-Extension. The University of Wisconsin system represents one of the finest educational institutions in the world. Access to information and research on virtually any topic is available on the internet.

Map 4.2 Community Facilities

Mid-State Technical College

Mid-State Technical College (MSTC) is one of 16 publicly supported colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System. Approximately 16,000 full and part-time students enroll annually. MSTC offers technical training in nearly 50 careers by granting one- and two-year technical diplomas and two-year associate degrees in four areas: business, health, service technologies, and technical & industrial. The Mid-State Technical College District includes full-service campuses in Marshfield, Stevens Point, and Wisconsin Rapids; a center in Adams; and several outreach sites.

In addition to these facilities in Stevens Point are: Fox Valley Technical College, located in Waupaca, and UW- Marathon County (2 year college) and North Central Technical College, located in Wausau.

Fox Valley Technical College (Waupaca Regional Center)

The Waupaca Regional Center provides credit courses that can be applied to associate degree, technical diploma programs or certificates. Numerous non-credit courses are offered for continuing education as well as for self-enrichment.

The Waupaca Regional Center provides focused training for Business Technology and Emergency Medical Service.

D. Parks and Recreation

There are no Town parks in the Town of Amherst. However, there are 2 parks that are owned and maintained by Portage County. Lake Emily Park is a 143-acre park located on the northern and eastern portions of Lake Emily. It features swimming, picnicking, fishing, camping and motor boating, including 50 campsites with utilities, enclosed shelters, wildlife pens, two playgrounds, a fishing pier and swimming raft. The park is also available for passive day use activities. The other County Park is Cate Park, a 9-acre undeveloped park located on the eastern shore of the Amherst Mill Pond. The main activities at this facility include fishing and picnicking with access provided to the 48 acre water body (Map 4.2).

A number of boat launches within the Town are available to provide access to various water bodies. Portage County owns an unimproved boat launch on the south side of Lake Meyers on Lake Meyers Road, an unimproved boat launch at Cate Park, north of the Village of Amherst, and an improved boat launch on the east side of Lake Emily. In addition, the Town owns a boat launch on the north side of Lime Lake, and another unimproved boat launch can be found on the south side of Lake Emily.

The County Fairgrounds, owned and managed by the non-profit Portage County Fair Association, is a 32-acre facility located southwest of the Cty Rd KK and Cty Rd B intersection in the Town of Amherst. It contains a one-mile horse racing track, viewing stands, stables, and exhibition buildings. In addition to hosting the yearly fair, the fairgrounds are the site for the Little Britches Rodeo, the 4th of July activities and fireworks, flea markets, and assorted other activities. The buildings can be rented for other purposes including boat storage during the winter.

More information regarding hiking and bicycling facilities in the Town can be found in the Transportation element of this plan.

E. Cemeteries

There are four cemeteries in the Town of Amherst that will adequately serve the residents through the time frame of this plan. They are located as follows:

- LOWER AMHERST CEMETERY, Section 27, near the intersection of Lorry Rd. and USH 10. This 3.5 acre cemetery is not affiliated with a church; it is operated and funded by a corporation with ties to the Fleming family. The corporation would like to procure the property on which the old Fleming School sat at some point in the future. The current contact is Kathy Blesky of the Village of Amherst.
- PORTAGE COUNTY POOR FARM CEMETERY, Section 08, Amherst Township, Portage County, WI on Lake Drive, just north of Hwy 10. This is an inactive cemetery that was once part of the Portage County Poor farm. **Residents indicate that more bodies were buried in this area but the graves are unmarked. Further research needs to be done, especially if any development is to take place in that area.**
- OAK GROVE CEMETERY, Section 22, Amherst Township, Portage County, WI on County B, ½ mile east of Amherst. This **active cemetery** is owned and maintained by Peace Lutheran Church, Village of Amherst.
- BICKEL CEMETERY, Section 20, Amherst Township, Portage County, WI on County Road B, 1 mile west of Highway 10. This small but still active cemetery is owned and operated by St. Paul's Lutheran Church in the Village of Amherst.

F. Health Care Facilities

There are no health care facilities located in the Town of Amherst. The closest facility is the Amherst Family Medical Center located near the center of the Town in the Village of Amherst. This clinic, associated with Ministry Health Care, provides primary care services for patients in the surrounding area. Normal business hours for this facility are 8:00a – 5:00p Monday through Friday. The next closest facilities are in the cities of Stevens Point and Waupaca, each approximately 12 miles on either side of Amherst.

Major hospitals utilized by residents include Riverside Hospital in Waupaca, St. Michaels Hospital in Stevens Point, St. Josephs Hospital in Marshfield, and Riverview Hospital in Wisconsin Rapids. Other regional hospitals are found in Wausau and the Fox Valley.

G. Child Care Facilities

There are no licensed day care facilities in the Town of Amherst. However, there are several licensed facilities located in the Village of Amherst, and one licensed facility in the Village of Amherst Junction.

There are 2 different categories of state licensed child care, determined by the number of children in care:

- Licensed **Family** Child Care Centers provide care for up to 8 children. This care is usually in the provider's home, but it is not required to be located in a residence.
- Licensed **Group** Child Care Centers provide care for 9 or more children. These centers are usually located somewhere other than a residence and may be small or large in size.

For a complete list of providers, contact the Regional Division of Children and Family Services at: 2811 8th St. - Ste. 70, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494, Phone: (715) 422-5080; Fax: (715) 422-5091.

H. Libraries

Although there is no library in the Town of Amherst, residents still have access to several library resources close by. The Lettie W. Jensen Public Library located at 278 North Main Street, in the Village of Amherst, contains an estimated 18,000 volumes and is a member of the South Central Library System. The Library offers internet access, various computers programs, interlibrary loan, large-print books, audio books, videos, magazines, a local history room, a copy machine, story time kits, a book discussion group, and a weekly preschool story hour.

The Portage County Library System has branches throughout the County. The Charles M. White library, affiliated with the Portage County Library system, is located on Main Street in downtown Stevens Point, approximately 15 miles from the Town of Amherst. There is also another branch in the Village of Plover, located at 2151 Roosevelt Drive, approximately 10 miles from the center of Amherst. Hours for the Plover branch can be obtained by calling 715-341-4007. More detailed information about the Portage County Public Library can be obtained via the internet at: <http://library.uwsp.edu/pcl/> or by calling the library system at: 1-800-264-0766.

Section 4.4 Utilities and Community Facilities Issues

The following issues regarding utilities or community facilities were identified during the comprehensive planning process:

- How can the Town protect groundwater quality?
- How can surface waters be protected from run-off?
- What technologies or systems are available to replace failing septic systems?
- How can the Town enforce ordinances pertaining to recreational usage, especially on Lake Emily?
- What can the Town do to address safety concerns on and around Lake Emily?
- How can the Town limit the proliferation of communication towers?
- How can the Town monitor groundwater quality around existing or closed landfills?
- As growth occurs, how will the Town provide adequate emergency services?

Section 4.5 Utilities and Community Facilities Goals, Objectives and Policies

Goal 1: Ensure a range of services to meet present and future needs.

Objective 1.1: Residents are provided an adequate level of emergency services.

Policies:

1. Work with the Portage County Sheriff's Department to continually improve service in the area.
2. As need demands, recommend the creation of satellite ambulance and sheriff facilities within the Amherst area.
3. As growth continues, consider the creation of an area-wide police department.
4. Cooperate with adjoining municipalities to maintain efficient fire protection services.

Objective 1.2: The Town is more actively involved with the County when proposals for new communication towers are initiated.

Goal 2: Protect groundwater quality.

Objective 2.1: Encourage the use of Best Management Practices by agricultural operations to ensure a supply of potable water.

Objective 2.2: Encourage the use of newer technologies to replace failing septic systems.

Policies:

1. Maintain housing densities at a 2 acre minimum for unsewered lots.
2. Explore the option of service agreements with the Village of Amherst to provide water if residential wells are contaminated.

Goal 3: Protect and preserve Lake Emily Park, other parks, the trail and the fairgrounds

Objective 3.1: Properly maintain recreation facilities throughout the Town.

Policies:

1. Work with the County Parks Dept. to mitigate negative impacts to Lake Emily Park.
2. Work with the County Parks Dept. and other organizations to monitor the usage of recreational facilities.
3. Work with the County to enforce ordinances designed to protect and preserve recreation facilities.