



Preparing for a better tomorrow

By Dean Freeberg, PE



With steady population growth, Wisconsin towns are making an effort to provide better roads, public health and safety while attempting to keep the small town charm of a rural community. The main question is, "How does a town manage its resources and programs while providing for the community's increasing needs?" By planning ahead, municipalities will save time and act preventatively ultimately resulting in cost-savings.



When planning for the future, adjustments in public water supply, sanitary sewer collection, storm drainage control, fire protection, and road improvements are necessary. Some not so obvious issues include improved public buildings, computerization, and having a comprehensive plan which facilitates future development plans. Facilities that provide merely adequate support now need to be looked at to see if they have the potential for upgrading or whether full replacement will be necessary. It is important that communities are prepared to handle the current customer base as well as the incoming residents. Towns need to adjust their internal staffing or "people power" to accommodate for additional administration, clerical and maintenance needs. All of these reviews are necessary to prepare a workable local budget for the future.

Solid planning is the key to handling these changes. Having a set plan in place is crucial. Assistance with this planning can be drawn from both internal and external resources who can help set objectives and prioritize each goal.



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Also important is public awareness and involvement with pertinent issues. Having continuous communication with residents through newsletters, informational meetings, and news articles is beneficial in helping to better address issues. "All towns, no matter how small or large, need to plan. Having a comprehensive plan is ultimately important, but they need to actively work on their plan to hit 5 and 10 year milestones. All of a town's difficulties go back to planning. They may be unable to take adequate time for future planning, therefore working reactively instead of proactively," says Steve Corrigan, Ledgeview Town Chairman.

A thorough evaluation of current facilities, including office space, fire stations, existing utilities, and roadways is important. An up-to-date summary of what is in place helps to focus on what will be needed for upgrading in the future. In addition, addressing current staffing needs to build a solid, dependable, and well-prepared staff would benefit long-term plans.

Towns in urban areas must provide infrastructure improvements to meet the needs of their residents in a cost effective manner. This can be done with proper planning, engineering and financing.

- Len Teresinski
Hobart Town Chairman

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