

## Policy Area 12: Summerfield as a **Limited Services** Local **Government**



*A wise and frugal government, which shall leave men free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned - this is the sum of good government.*

**Thomas Jefferson**

### Key Words and Phrases:

*Citizen Comments from Town Meeting (literal, unedited):*

### DESIRED FUTURE

#### Town Finances

- Low taxes
- Keep taxes low
- Closer relationship with NCDOT-including town funding

#### Limited Services Government

- Continue small gov't and staff – no bureaucracy
- Small town gov't (simple/effective)

## UNWANTED FUTURE

### Higher Taxes, Especially Property Taxes

- Significant property tax increases
- Tax rates of larger town

#### Town Council/Zoning Board Comments From Joint Kick Off Meeting:

While there were no comments pertaining to the topic of Limited Services offered at the joint kick-off meeting, the Town Council has adopted a Vision Statement for the community as follows:

#### Town Council Adopted Vision Statement

**Summerfield is a Town that respects the history of the community and balances growth with the preservation and utilization of our natural, cultural, fiscal, and citizen resources to enhance our quality of life and our small town identity (May 2008)**

The above *key words and phrases* were gleaned from (1) the Town Meeting for the Comprehensive Plan (2) the Joint Kick-Off Meeting of the Town Council and Zoning Board, and (3) the Town Council adopted vision statement. These key words and phrases were employed to generate the following **Common Objective** and related **Policies for Summerfield as a Limited Services Local Government**.



### Common Objective for Summerfield as a Limited Services Local Government

The Town of Summerfield shall continue to control its own destiny—the Town shall remain an independent community, carefully managing its own finances and its own growth and development. Town government should be small and accessible, citizen-engaged, with services limited and taxes kept low. Town government should continue to focus on the highest priorities of area residents—managing growth and preserving and enhancing the area’s quality of life.

### Policies for Summerfield as a Limited Services Local Government

**Policy 12.1:** The Town should continue to employ a **MULTIPLE COMMITTEE STRUCTURE** to advise the Town Council and to constructively engage citizen volunteers in the governance of their community.

**Policy 12.2:** The Town should continue to employ **CONTRACTED SERVICES** as an efficient way to hold down fixed costs and overhead, and to direct resources to service areas where most needed at any given time.

**Policy 12.3: ADDITIONS TO THE TOWN STAFF** should be considered when it can be shown that the on-going, regular demand for a particular service becomes so great as to make contracted services more costly to Town taxpayers and/or less effective than if it were handled in-house.

**Policy 12.4: The Town should minimize municipal OWNERSHIP OF INFRASTRUCTURE** (e.g. water and sewer systems) not identified as a priority by the citizens or mandated by the county or state government.<sup>5</sup>

**Policy 12.5: Carefully BALANCE CITIZEN PRIORITIES** for enhanced quality of life, with concept of limited services and low taxes. Continue to make budget process transparent to community and use as a tool to prioritize efforts to implement the Comprehensive Plan and goals of the Town Council.

### Notes and Commentary:

In some respects, it is fitting that the Policy Area on *Summerfield as a Limited Services Local Government* is the concluding section of this Comprehensive Plan. The town's government provides the vehicle through which the plan will be carried out, and its framework should support the rest of the policy's underlying principals. Throughout this document, the drafting of numerous policies and action items have been influenced by the idea that Summerfield was originally incorporated, and to date has remained, a *limited services local government*. But what exactly does that mean? At the time of the Town's incorporation in 1996, the state of North Carolina required municipalities to provide only one service to satisfy the General Statute requirements for incorporated towns: building inspections. Latitude is provided even in this regard, in that small towns like Summerfield often enter into an agreement with the County or a nearby municipality to provide building inspection services on a contracted basis.<sup>6</sup>

In 1999 the state changed the incorporation statutes (GS- 120-158 through 174) to require that a new municipality must have an ad valorem tax rate of at least 5 cents, and within three years provide four of the following (i) police protection; (ii) fire protection; (iii) solid waste collection or disposal; (iv) water distribution; (v) street maintenance; (vi) street construction or right-of-way acquisition; (vii) street lighting; and (viii) zoning. Summerfield is currently not subject to the 1999 change in the General Statutes.

However, as a practical matter, all governments require some level of staffing to perform the day-to-day operations of governing a community. Summerfield has increased staff levels in response to the needs of the community. The Town Clerk position was originally a volunteer position that evolved over time to a part-time, and now a full-time position. In 2003, a full-time Town

*For fiscal year 2008-2009 the Town of Summerfield had a tax rate of 3.5 cents per hundred, among the lowest property tax rates in Guilford County. For 2009-2010, Summerfield's Town Council voted to have a tax rate of "zero", meaning that town government would be run using cash reserves collected in previous years.*

<sup>5</sup> One exception, for example, is a quality open space, park and trail system that the citizens have identified as a defining attribute to set Summerfield apart and to enhance the area's quality of life.

<sup>6</sup> In the case of Summerfield, the Town contracts with Guilford County for building inspection services.

Administrator was hired<sup>7</sup>; in 2004 the town was not satisfied with the contract work provided by Guilford County Planning and created their own 2-staff Planning Department. In 2007, the position of Parks and Recreation Supervisor was created to oversee the construction and maintenance of town parks and facilities.

Currently, the Town of Summerfield has five paid employees, all of which wear multiple hats and have a variety of responsibilities within Town government:

- Town Manager
- Town Clerk
- Town Planner
- Planning Technician
- Parks and Recreation Supervisor

More will be said about these five positions in the pages that follow as the various services of town government are discussed.

### How Services Are Provided

While there is no definition or strict litmus test as to what constitutes a *limited services local government*, there are certain common principles that become apparent to the extent that “you know it when you see it.” In keeping with this concept, these notes and commentary describe how various types of local government services, oftentimes provided by permanent staff within municipal government, are instead provided to the residents of Summerfield by alternative means. The following analysis reveals that, regardless of how small a municipal government may be, there are nonetheless a wide range of government functions that must still be addressed. Most are required by State law and Summerfield is not exempt.

- **Law Enforcement—Sherriff’s Office**

Instead of having its own police force, the Town is served by the Guilford County Sheriff’s Department. A new “District 1” Sheriff’s Department substation opened just off US 220 in 2008, serving those portions of Guilford County outside the City of Greensboro north of I-40 and east to US 29. According to representatives of the Department, Summerfield has a very low crime rate which does not necessitate “enhanced

service”, for which the Town would be charged a fee. (The Town of Stokesdale, for example, pays an annual fee for the services of a deputy who is dedicated to that Town’s jurisdiction for enhanced law enforcement services.)



- **Fire Protection--  
Summerfield Fire and Rescue.**

Instead of having its own fire department, fire protection services within the Town of Summerfield are provided by the independently operated *Summerfield Fire and*

<sup>7</sup> By voter referendum the Town now operates under a Council-Manager form of government, so the position is now Town Manager.

*Rescue* via three fire stations. A special fire district tax generates most of the revenue to pay for the paid firemen, equipment, and fire stations. A non-profit board of directors guides the services provided. The service area extends beyond Summerfield's boundaries. Currently, Summerfield Fire and Rescue is looking at sites for a fourth fire station.

- *Street Maintenance—North Carolina Department of Transportation*

Instead of maintaining its own streets department, maintenance of public streets in Summerfield is coordinated, paid for, and implemented by the NCDOT District 7 Office located in Greensboro. While many municipalities in the state employ Powell Bill<sup>8</sup> monies, property taxes, and other funding sources to maintain their own streets, the Town of Summerfield has never assumed responsibility in this area. This non-involvement may be about to change, however. There are growing signs that NC DOT may no longer be able to continue to accept responsibility for road maintenance in small towns like Summerfield, as well as in most unincorporated areas in the state. Discussions are now underway in the State Capitol that, if brought to fruition, would transfer responsibility for most local roads to towns and counties whether they choose to do so or not. Under the new arrangement, the state would be responsible only for major roads. As a result, the Town of Summerfield could be required to maintain all public streets in the community except for US 220, NC 150 and the planned I-73 connector. This will have major implications for the Town's finances.

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- *Public Works—Contracted Landscape Maintenance Services plus the Parks Supervisor*

Instead of having an in-house public works operation, the Town contracts out for landscape maintenance services at the Community Park and elsewhere. These routine services are supplemented by special projects undertaken by the Town's Park Supervisor. With the new Town ballfields facility coming on-line in the very near future, the Town has begun the process of evaluating the overall need for additional park maintenance services. Included, for example, might be utilities and lighting maintenance, parking, and road maintenance, solid waste management, building and grounds upkeep, etc.

- *Garbage (Solid Waste) Collection and Disposal—Contracted Out*

Instead of having its own sanitation department, the Town contracts with a private hauler, Republic Waste Services, for garbage collection, recycling, and disposal. While Republic has an exclusive franchise within the Town, residents of the Town may choose whether or not to use the service<sup>9</sup>. Those residents that do use the service, however, receive a discounted rate over what the hauler normally charges to individual customers. While the Town has discussed making universal trash collection a requirement, it has never been

<sup>8</sup> Under North Carolina's Powell Bill legislation, participating local governments receive money from the state for road construction and maintenance—which can include sidewalks and bikeways within the public right of way. Revenue is raised by a 1 and 3/4 cent tax on every gallon of gas sold and allocated to communities around the state based on the centerline mileage of streets for which each community is responsible. The City of Greensboro, for example, might typically receive between \$5 and \$7 million in Powell Bill monies annually. This is not enough to cover the City's transportation improvement needs.

<sup>9</sup> Some studies have shown that non-mandatory service can lead to illegal dumping and burning of garbage by those who do not sign up, though this has reportedly not been a major problem in Summerfield.

adopted by Town Council. With the growing interest in environmental quality issues nationally, it remains to be seen whether the State or Guilford County will pass a law requiring municipalities to implement mandatory trash collection and disposal.

- *Drinking Water Supply—No Centralized System*

While the Town has, at various times, entered into discussions concerning a centralized water system for Summerfield, no formal action has been taken in this regard. Currently, water supplies are known to be available from sources in Rockingham County (Madison) and the City of Greensboro (Randleman Lake/Piedmont Triad Regional Water Authority). Even if a water supply source were to become available, the low density of development in the Town, combined with the need to upgrade/replace piped community water systems already in place, might make the construction of such a system cost prohibitive on a town-wide basis.

Due to the spread out nature of development in Summerfield (very large lots, generous open space allowances), there is currently no opportunity for a cost effective centralized sewage treatment system serving the whole community. In the future, there may be opportunities for smaller sewer systems serving pockets of development.

- *Sewage Collection and Treatment— No Centralized System*

Due to the spread out nature of development in Summerfield (very large lots, generous open space allowances), there is currently no opportunity for a cost effective centralized sewage treatment system serving the whole community. (The cost effectiveness of a piped, centralized sewer system is even more sensitive to the density of development than is a water supply system.) In the future, there may be opportunities for smaller sewer systems serving pockets of development, an idea which should be evaluated during a (periodic) review of priorities.

- *Planning Department—Current Planning Handled In-House*

The growth of Summerfield over the past fifteen years has required that planning be an area of high concern to the community. The community's close proximity to Greensboro, PTIA Airport, I-40, and US 220, and high-quality schools, have made Summerfield an attractive location for higher-end residential development. As is evidenced in the permitting and census data, hundreds of new residences were built over the past ten to fifteen years. This growth in residential development has led to increased pressure to preserve the remaining undeveloped land, and has created pressure to develop commercial retail businesses. All of this has kept planning issues at the forefront of concern, which led to the creation of a town planning department. The main focus of staff is "current planning": rezoning petitions, subdivision and site plan reviews, special use permits, signage requests, address assignments, and road renaming, floodplain information, etc. Support to Town boards, attention to detail, due process, and accurate record keeping are essential to a current planning function. In addition, staff is responsible for overseeing other areas of planning including watershed protection, code enforcement, transportation, and long-range planning. All of these areas demand regular attention regardless of the level of immediate new development requests.

- *Building Inspections-- Guilford County*

Instead of having its own building inspections department, the Town of Summerfield contracts with Guilford County for building inspection services within the town limits. This is a direct bill service, meaning that the County bills and receives payment for permits and inspection services directly from the applicant, with no intervention by the Town. The Town does provide a "Development Clearance Certificate" to the applicant and the County, verifying

that the applicant's plans conform with all Town zoning and other development ordinance provisions.

- *Code Enforcement—Contracted Out*

Instead of having a code enforcement officer in-house, the Town contracts with a private firm for code enforcement services. This is an area of municipal government that, from the perspective of the Town's administration, is best handled by persons outside the organization. Code enforcement often requires telling a property owner to clean up a violation, or face a penalty. Given a small staff, the Town's few employees would undoubtedly find it difficult to be both a "good cop" and a "bad cop", while remaining in the good graces of the Town's citizenry. At the same time, code enforcement is an important function that must be carried out for the benefit of the vast majority of citizens and property owners that abide by the rules and wish to see their town present a respectable image and adequate concerns for safety.

- *Long Range and Special Area Planning—Contracted Out*

Instead of having an in-house long range planning function, the Town contracts with consultants for long range and special area planning. Long range and special area planning, involves targeted research, policy writing, action planning, committee work, and meaningful community involvement. For a small community like Summerfield, the ability of a consultant to provide an unbiased opinion and the necessary dedication of time and expertise for a limited time, makes more fiscal/operational sense than a dedicated full-time Long Range Planner.

- *Human Resources/Personnel—Handled by Town Manager*

Instead of having a personnel director or human resource manager, the Town Manager is responsible for recruiting, interviewing, hiring, firing, conducting employee performance appraisals, etc. Paperwork for new hires, including documentation of time off, benefits, paychecks, etc. is handled by the contracted Finance Officer. Recent effort by Town Council to place many of the town committees directly under the authority of the Manager will greatly increase the time the Manager will need to dedicate to "personnel" issues of volunteers.



Instead of having a personnel director or human resource manager, the Town Manager is responsible for recruiting, interviewing, hiring, firing, conducting employee performance appraisals, etc.

- *Town Finance Function—Contracted Finance Officer, working with Town Clerk & Manager*

Instead of having an in-house finance director, the Town contracts with an independent Finance Officer. The Finance Officer cuts all checks, working in conjunction with the Town Clerk, who keeps track of receivables and payables. The Manager and Finance Officer work closely with the Town Finance Committee. The Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, and the Chair of the Finance Committee, also have signing authority for check disbursements.

- *Budget Director – Handled by Town Manager*

Instead of having a Budget Director on staff, The Town Manager assumes responsibility for formulating the Town budget each year. Working with the Town Finance Officer and Finance Committee, the Town manager prepares a proposed budget for public input and Town Council review and approval, based in large measure on budget requests and needs identified by the Town's various committees. This annual process is a significant task that takes place over a several month period in the late winter and spring of each year.

- *Public Information Officer/Website Manager – Handled by Town Staff*

Instead of having a Public Information Officer and Website Manager, members of the Town Staff respond to information requests and update the Town's website as time and opportunity allows. These responsibilities are an example of a day to day task that is not typically accounted for as part of a job description but consume a significant part of the staff's time over the course of a year.

- *Legal Services –Contracted Out*

Instead of having a Town attorney on staff, The Town contracts with a private attorney for legal services. The contracted Town Attorney attends meetings of the Town Council, Zoning Board, and Board of Adjustment on an as needed basis.

The entire Town of Summerfield is located within a controlled watershed area; either Reedy Fork Creek (Greensboro Watershed), or Jordan Lake. The new rules promulgated by the State for Jordan Lake supersede local rules and will require re-writing ordinances and creating new enforcement procedures.

- *Watershed Protection/Regulation—Contracted Out*

This is a rapidly growing area of responsibility for local governments around the country and particularly in North Carolina. The entire Town is now located within a controlled watershed area; either Reedy Fork Creek (Greensboro Watershed), or Jordan Lake. The new rules promulgated by the State for Jordan Lake supersede local rules and will require re-writing ordinances and creating new enforcement procedures. The Town contracts for engineering services primarily to review stormwater management plans, subdivision activity and other development located within a controlled watershed area. Other state-mandated requirements include an educational effort and the retrofitting of existing neighborhoods (currently delayed under the Jordan Lake rules).

*We cannot avoid stream pollution by keeping everyone out of the watershed, for all land is watershed and there is no place else to live and work.*

**Marion Clawson**  
1972



- *Recreation Programming—Summerfield Recreation Association and the Town Parks and Recreation Committee*

Instead of having an in-house Recreation Director, the Town relies upon two volunteer groups to handle this function: (1) the non-profit Summerfield

Recreation Association (SRA) organizes and supervises a number of recreation programs in the community. SRA, which is not affiliated with Town government, currently offers cheerleading, softball, basketball, and baseball programs. SRA relies on individuals and business sponsors to fund these sports programs. and (2) the Summerfield Parks and Recreation Committee--in addition to its park development oversight duties--also develops plans for occasional special events such as "Art in the Park", "Music in the Park", Ice Cream Socials, etc.

### Customary Boards and Committees

*Note: The Town Council, Zoning Board and Board of Adjustment are customary municipal boards that operate in Summerfield in a manner typical of such boards throughout the State of North Carolina. The Town Staff provides support to these boards in preparing agendas, publicizing meetings, keeping minutes, and documenting decisions made.*

- *Town Council*

The Town Council meets once per month and as needed. The Town Council is the duly elected governing body of the Town of Summerfield. The Town Council is responsible for making Town policy and approving the Town budget. The Town Council also has final approval over many types of development proposals. The Town Council directs the Town Manager in establishing priorities in need of action.

- *Town Zoning Board*

The Summerfield Zoning Board meets once per month. This five-member volunteer board is appointed by the Town Council. The Zoning Board reviews and recommends upon rezoning petitions. It approves major subdivisions (i.e. more than 5 lots), commercial site plans, watershed boundary modifications, non-residential landscaping plans, and proposed projects within the Town's Scenic Overlays and Town Core Overlay, among other things. As noted above, the Town provides staff support to the Zoning Board—accepting and reviewing applications, assembling agenda packets, attending meetings, recording and producing minutes, maintaining permanent files, issuing public notices, and a host of other related activities.

- *Board of Adjustment*

The Board of Adjustment meets monthly to review requests for variances, special use permits, and appeals of the enforcement officer regarding development ordinance interpretations. This five-member volunteer board is appointed by the Town Council. The Board acts in a *quasi-judicial* manner in that the board sits in judgment when reviewing cases and must determine specific facts in relation to the case. The Town staff must keep careful records of all testimony and proceedings of the Board of Adjustment.

### Special Boards and Committees

*Note: The Town Council of Summerfield has established several advisory boards and committees to assist in the governance of the community. Each board or committee advises on a particular area of Town government and*

receives guidance and support from the Town's staff according to need. There are over 80 volunteers serving on the following committees<sup>10</sup>:



The Athletic Advisory Committee was created to oversee the planning and construction of the Summerfield Athletic Park. The committee advises staff and Town Council on the types of active recreational facilities that are needed, and helps to develop the plan for implementation on property owned by the Town.

oversee the planning and construction of the Summerfield Athletic Park. The committee advises staff and Town Council on the types of active recreational facilities that are needed, and helps to develop the plan for implementation on property owned by the Town. The Athletic Park is under construction at this time and is slated to be finished in mid-spring 2010. The Committee will then decide to continue to exist or disband- having accomplished their mission of developing the park. The Parks and Recreation Supervisor and Town Manager are staff liaison to this committee.

- **Summerfield Parks and Recreation Committee**

The Summerfield Parks and Recreation Committee meets once per month. The Committee oversees work on major park improvements such as the Summerfield Community Park. As noted previously, the Committee also develops plans for special events such as Movies in the Park, "Touch-a-Truck", Fishing Rodeo, etc. The Parks and Recreation Supervisor is the staff liaison to this committee.

- **Athletic Advisory Committee**

The Athletic Advisory Committee was created to

- **Historical Committee**

The Historical Committee also meets once per month. The Committee's purpose is to identify, locate, list, and record, with photographs and written descriptions, historical structures in Summerfield, and to share that information with the public. The Committee was instrumental in designating the town's National Register Historic District along portions of Oak Ridge and Summerfield Roads. It has also developed historic building plaques and pole banners and provides oversight to the Town Hall Museum of local history. The Town Manager is the staff liaison to this committee.

- **Founders' Day Committee**

The Founders' Day Committee meets once per month or as needed during the majority of the year, with responsibilities reaching a peak during the last few months leading up to the annual Founders' Day Parade and Celebration held each May. The Planning Technician and Town Manager are the liaison, but during the weeks leading up to the event all of the staff are involved in the event preparations.

<sup>10</sup> Much of the information concerning these various boards and committees was gleaned from the Town's website at <http://www.summerfieldgov.com/content/view/57/85/>

- *Public Safety Committee*

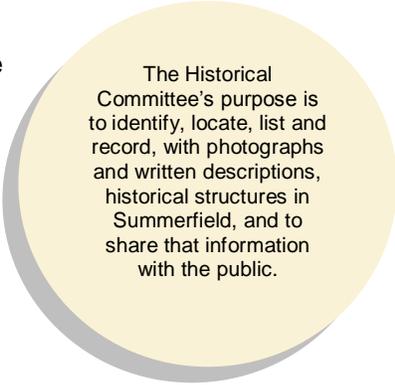
The Public Safety Committee meets as needed to review and investigate citizen concerns regarding safety issues. The committee is also responsible for ensuring the emergency preparedness of the Town by maintaining the town generator and emergency supplies and equipment, and by providing training and staff for the Town's two designated Red Cross emergency shelters. Senior Resources activities and programs are a sub-committee of the Public Safety Committee. The Town Manager is the staff liaison to the committee.

- *Finance Committee*

The Finance Committee provides oversight concerning the assets of the Town of Summerfield. Specifically, the Committee 1) serves as a liaison between committees and the Town Council in the provision of financial support services, 2) provides a collaborative effort in the accomplishment of Town goals, 3) lends expertise, provides advice, and makes recommendations to other committees, staff, and Town Council, 4) provides support in the creation of the Town budget, 5) provides review and recommendations for the expenditure of Town funds as requested by committees and community-based non-profits, and 6) maintains fiscal responsibility in all actions. The Town Manager and Finance Officer serve as members of this committee.

- *Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee*

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee meets monthly to provide guidance to the development of a long-range plan for the Town of Summerfield. Working with a planning consultant and the Town staff, the Committee reviews proposed Town policies and actions dealing with transportation issues, residential and commercial development, community appearance, greenways and trails, parks development, and many other growth issues that Summerfield will face over the next 10-15 years. Over the course of preparing the plan, the Committee also hosts special town meetings to invite public input to the process. The Town Planner, Planning Technician, and Manager all work with this committee.



The Historical Committee's purpose is to identify, locate, list and record, with photographs and written descriptions, historical structures in Summerfield, and to share that information with the public.