

Town of New London – Public Works Department Budget Committee Responses

Department Mission, Services, and Performance

1. Please describe your department's core mission and the essential services you provide to the community. Which services are legally mandated versus driven by community priorities?

Public Works' mission is to provide safe, reliable, and responsive services that keep New London functioning every day. Our team maintains roads, bridges, sidewalks, cemeteries, town buildings, solid waste operations, and wastewater infrastructure. Legally mandated services include road and bridge maintenance, solid waste disposal, wastewater collection, and regulatory compliance for safety and environmental standards. Community-driven priorities include parks, sidewalks, roadside mowing, lake protection, and public space improvements, all of which enhance quality of life and accessibility.

2. How do you measure service demand, and what are the key trends you're observing, such as seasonal changes or new and growing service needs?

Service demand is tracked through work orders, service calls, seasonal patterns, and resident feedback. Current trends include heavier demand during storms, growing community expectations and requests, and more extreme seasonal conditions than in past years. We are also seeing growth in ADA accessibility, environmental stewardship (lake and stormwater improvements, dam work), and service demand tied to development and population growth. These require more routine infrastructure and facility maintenance.

3. What are your key performance indicators for serving the community? How does the department's performance compare to relevant goals or benchmarks?

Indicators include road condition ratings, sidewalk ADA compliance progress, time to handle complaints, speed of infrastructure recovery, completion of scheduled work, regulatory compliance for wastewater, uptime of critical equipment, and resident satisfaction. Roads are maintained on a 10–15 year paving cycle, mowing schedules are met, and regulatory inspections pass with minimal issues.

4. Looking ahead 5–10 years, what is your long-term vision for meeting the community's future needs, and what are the most significant opportunities and challenges on the horizon?

Over the next 5–10 years, Public Works will focus on proactive infrastructure maintenance, full ADA compliance, and safe, reliable systems that support growth. Challenges include replacing the outdated Public Works office/garage, rising material costs, and sustaining service levels with current staff. Opportunities include pavement preservation to extend road life, in-house project delivery to reduce costs, energy-efficient upgrades, and adoption of new technologies such as AI-driven asset management.

5. How does your department partner with other community organizations, stakeholders, or external funding sources like grants and state aid to enhance services and achieve shared goals?

We work with lake associations on stormwater protection and water body improvement projects, often through grants. We coordinate with NHDOT on crosswalks, signage, and roadway safety. Public Works participates in a regional mutual aid group, providing and receiving support during

storms or equipment failures. We also collaborate with civic groups, conservation commissions, and historical societies on projects like cemetery preservation and historic markers. These partnerships expand our capacity and help us achieve more for the community.

Staffing and Operations

1. Could you provide an overview of your staffing model? How do you ensure staffing levels and schedules align effectively with service demands?

Public Works employs 17 people across five divisions: Highway (8), Transfer (3 FT, 1 PT), Wastewater (1), Facilities (1), Cemeteries (1 PT), and Administration (2). Staff are cross-trained, allowing flexibility to cover absences and emergencies. Daily “tailgate” meetings set priorities, review safety, and assign equipment. Schedules are made in two-week blocks but remain flexible.

2. How have your staffing needs evolved over the past five years, and what future staffing do you anticipate needing to maintain or enhance service levels?

Staffing has remained stable, but demands are growing. Additional Facilities and Highway staff may be needed to address aging infrastructure, safety requirements, and increased expectations. Expanded sidewalk maintenance, consistent plowing, mowing, ditching, paving, grading, and cemetery upkeep are all areas of growing demand.

3. What are the primary drivers of overtime in your department, and what strategies help manage it effectively while ensuring service continuity?

Overtime results from storms, emergency responses, downed trees, callouts, and snow removal. Strategies include flexible scheduling, cross-training, and preventative maintenance to reduce emergencies. Overtime is highly unpredictable, weather-driven, and often unavoidable.

4. What opportunities exist for increased collaboration or shared services with other town departments or neighboring communities to enhance efficiency and service delivery?

Public Works is part of a regional mutual aid group that assists towns during storms, major cleanups, or equipment breakdowns. We partner with Meredith for waste hauling and explore shared equipment, joint paving bids, and cooperative training. Internally, we collaborate with other town departments to reduce costs and improve efficiency.

Financial and Capital Planning

1. What are your department's highest-impact priorities that are most critical to achieving your mission in the upcoming budget?

Key priorities include road safety, solid waste hauling and disposal, wastewater system compliance with reduced flows to Sunapee, and essential building upkeep and repairs. Addressing the outdated Public Works facility remains critical. Other goals include balancing equipment purchases with town projects, and consistent Maintenance of roadway infrastructure.

2. To help us understand different budget approaches, could you describe how your services would be affected under a level-funded, level-service, and needs-based budget scenario?

Public Works budgets naturally grows only when services expand or costs rise. Level-service is difficult to define—we never aim for “good enough” but constantly pursue higher service,

standards, and quality.

- *Level-funded:* Core services continue, but deferred maintenance grows and costs rise long-term.
- *Level-service:* Maintains current quality but leaves little room for cost increases or emergencies.
- *Needs-based:* Supports proactive investment in preservation, equipment replacement, and facilities, reducing long-term expenses.

3. What revenue streams does your department currently generate and are there potential opportunities to enhance these or create new ones to support departmental services?

Revenues include wastewater billing, driveway permit fees and limited recycling revenue. Opportunities include refining fee structures to better reflect service costs.

4. Please provide an overview of your department's key capital assets, such as vehicles and equipment, including their current condition and expected service life.

Assets include trucks, heavy equipment, wastewater pumps, generators, buildings, sewer lines, landfill infrastructure, compactors, tractors, trailers, and vector equipment. For example, our grader is 30+ years old but still reliable, while the Multi-Hog sidewalk tractor is under 10 years but costly to maintain. Dump trucks are on a 12-year replacement cycle, though some extend beyond 15 years if conditions allow. These examples show the diversity in asset performance and service life. A full inventory exists but is excluded here for brevity.

5. What is your department's long-term capital plan for the next 10 years, and what guidelines do you use to determine when to repair versus replace major assets?

The 10-year plan focuses on equipment replacement, facility upgrades, paving, and wastewater infrastructure. Decisions weigh age, hours, repair history, downtime, parts availability, safety, and efficiency. We do not follow a strict "50 percent rule," but instead assess whether repairs are practical or replacement is more responsible. Building needs are guided by studies, community feedback, town growth, and accessibility.

6. In your capital forecast, what are the opportunities for deferring expenditures or exploring alternatives like leasing without significantly impacting core services?

We can lease, rent, or contract services rather than purchase outright, which we already practice in certain cases. Non-critical equipment replacements may be deferred when safety and repair costs allow.

7. To ensure resources align with the highest community priorities, are there services that could be modified or delivered differently to improve overall departmental focus and efficiency?

Public Works tasks are inherently service based. Reducing activities like line painting, calcium application, mowing, plowing, shoveling, or ditching would immediately affect safety and community quality of life. That said, efficiencies such as every-other-year line painting and calcium treatment help manage costs while maintaining service levels.

Technology and Innovation

1. What key technologies does your department use, and how could their capabilities be more fully utilized to add value to your operations?

IWORQ software is being deployed for work orders, preventative maintenance, and facilities management. Electric vehicles are being researched for fleet integration. AI is used for tasks such as memos, data analysis, RFPs, and document preparation. Wastewater uses online software to monitor flows and identify infiltration. Highway sanders feature digital controls that reduce over-application and improve efficiency.

2. What emerging technologies, including advancements like AI, could enhance your department's efficiency or improve service quality in the future?

AI can forecast road deterioration, optimize paving schedules, support asset management, and automate work orders. Drones can inspect bridges, roofs, and culverts. Tablets could streamline field reporting and work orders. Smart sensors could monitor pumps, drainage, and rainfall. While Public Works work is equipment-heavy, modern tools still provide efficiency and reliability gains.

3. Beyond staffing, what are the primary drivers of your operating budget, and are there opportunities to optimize spending through strategies like joint purchasing or inventory management?

Fuel, materials (calcium, asphalt, sand, salt, gravel), contracted services, and equipment maintenance are primary drivers. Joint purchasing, inventory management, and cooperative bidding with other towns are strategies we use to reduce costs.

4. What innovative ideas or strategic initiatives are you most excited about that could shape the future of your department and the services it provides?

Public Works is pursuing several initiatives:

- **Pavement Preservation:** Extends road life at reduced long-term cost.
- **Data-Driven Asset Management:** IWORQ and related tools improve lifecycle tracking and planning.
- **Regional Collaboration:** Shared equipment pools and coordinated storm response increase resilience.
- **Sustainability:** Electric vehicles, energy-efficient systems, and alternative power reduce costs and environmental impacts.
- **Future Opportunities:** Improved weather forecasting, live storm updates for residents, hands-free in-cab equipment technologies, smart infrastructure (CCTV and sensors), predictive analytics, expanded drone/GIS mapping, and public dashboards to show real-time progress on plowing and paving.

Together, these initiatives position Public Works to deliver higher service levels, adapt to changing conditions, improve transparency, and protect taxpayer investments.

Conclusion

Public Works is a service-based department at its core. Our responsibility is to sustain the daily operations that residents and visitors depend on, while planning for long-term resilience and growth. This budget reflects our commitment to fiscal responsibility, safety, innovation, and community service. We will continue to adapt, collaborate, and lead with professionalism to ensure that the town's infrastructure and services remain strong for years to come.

