



# ***Town of Essex Strategic Plan 2016-2020***

***Public Forum***

***February 10, 2016***

# Introduction

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- **Why does Essex need a Strategic Plan?**
- **What were the foundations of the Plan?**
- **How was the Plan developed?**
- **Who was involved in the Plan's development?**
- **How will the Town work to implement the Plan within its means?**

# Members of the Essex Strategic Plan Committee

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**Lisa O'Donnell,  
Board of Selectmen  
Committee**

**David Gabor,  
Finance Committee**

**John Bediz,  
Conomo Point Committee**

**Bob Coviello,  
Building**

**Julia Scofield,  
Open Space Committee  
Works**

**Annie Cameron,  
School Committee**

**Skip Crocker,  
Planning Board**

**Paul Goodwin,  
Board of Public**

**Keith Symmes,  
Council on Aging  
Preservation Committee**

**Michael Burke,  
Conservation Committee**

**Charlie McNeil  
Shellfishing Industry**

**Peter Madsen,  
Community**

## A Vision for Essex

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***That Essex remain a beautiful and vibrant Town, with its scenic spaces and natural gifts preserved for future generations, its age-old traditions of village entrepreneurship and craftsmanship strengthened, and its ability to provide high-quality, affordable public services for all its people ensured for years to come***

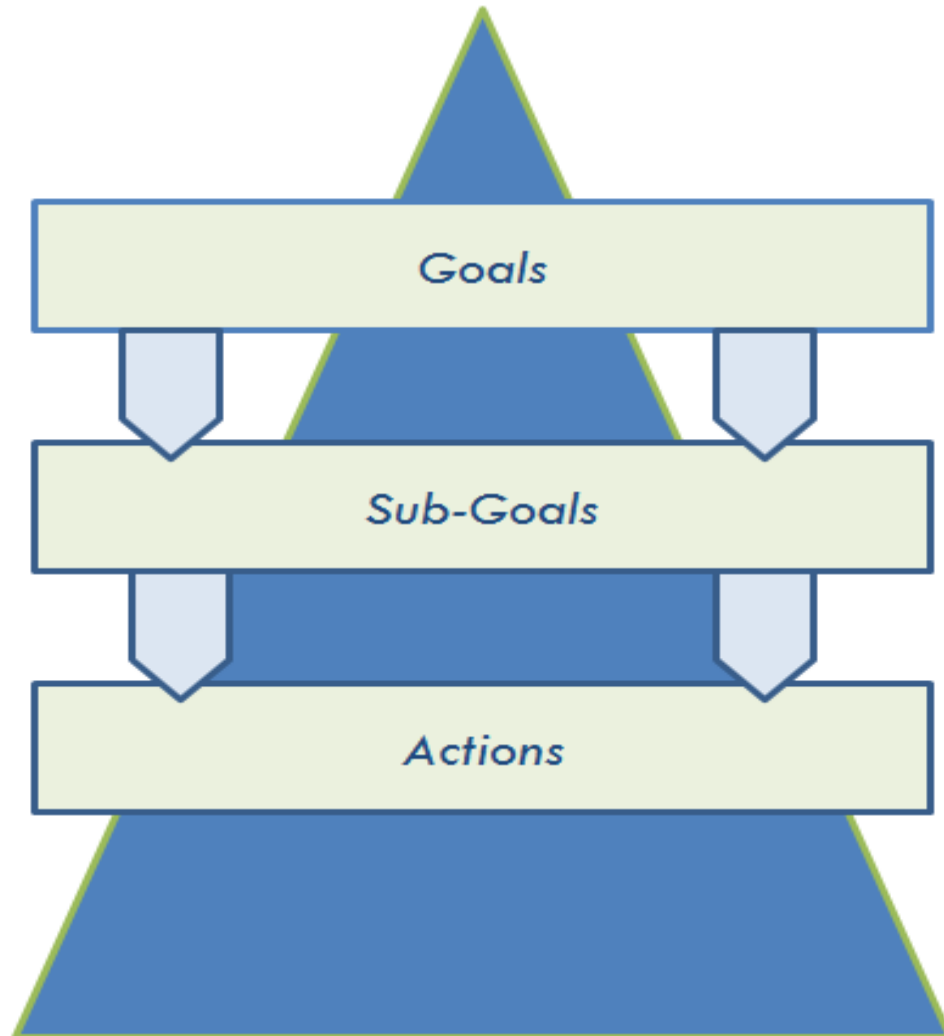
## **Building on Previous Plans**

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- **Long Term Planning Committee Report, June 2015**
- **Public Safety Committee Report, June 2015**
- **Conomo Point Plan, April 2015**
- **Open Space Plan, 2016**
- **Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, 2015**
- **Continuity of Operations Plan, Town of Essex, updated 2015**
- **Town Landing Improvement Plan, October 2013**
- **Downtown Boardwalk Feasibility Study, April 2013**
- **Village Initiative Plan, September 2009**

# Strategic Planning for Essex



## A strong goal is:

- **Outcome-oriented**
- **Measurable**
- **Specific**
- **Time measured**
- **Easy to understand**
- **Directional**

## Implementation should be:

- **Accountable**
- **Transparent**
- **Accessible**
- **Adaptable (living)**



## Nine Goals for Essex

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- 1) Renew and finance critical Town infrastructure by building a new public safety facility, replacing the Memorial School in Manchester and renovating the Essex Elementary School, replacing old water system components and maintaining the Town's ten-year-old sewer system;**
- 2) Increase participation in Town government;**
- 3) Maintain and develop a strong business community;**
- 4) Increase the amount of protected land in Essex;**
- 5) Improve the health of and access to Essex's rivers and lakes;**
- 6) Expand the range of recreational opportunities and assets, particularly for young people;**
- 7) Develop and deliver a fiscally responsible school budget consistent with multi-year forecasts;**
- 8) Maintain the viability of the Town's call Fire Service; and**
- 9) Meet the housing needs of all Essex residents.**





# 1) Renew and Finance Critical Town Infrastructure

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## The Essex SPC recommends the Town take the following actions:

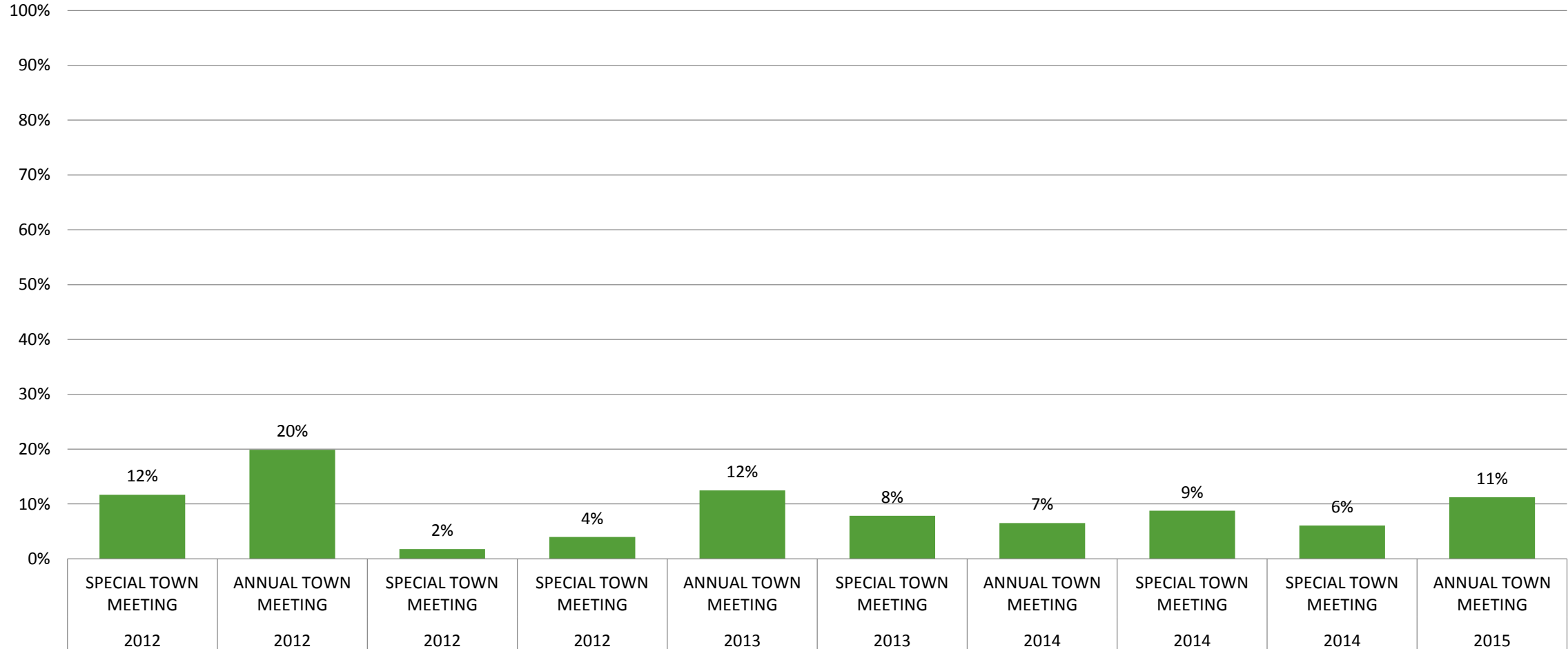
- Develop a plan for building/rebuilding the Town's public safety facility(ies), including the means of financing such improvements.
- Develop a school reconstruction plan with Manchester, including financing, for renovating the Essex elementary school and replacing the Manchester elementary school.
- Develop plan to replace (and finance) 18-20 miles of old water mains and remove asbestos cement mains, as well as address other long-term water and sewer system needs, such as filtration.
- Examine opportunities to dispose of surplus town properties.



## 2) Increase Participation in Town Government



Town Meeting Attendance 2012 to 2015





## 2) Increase Participation in Town Government

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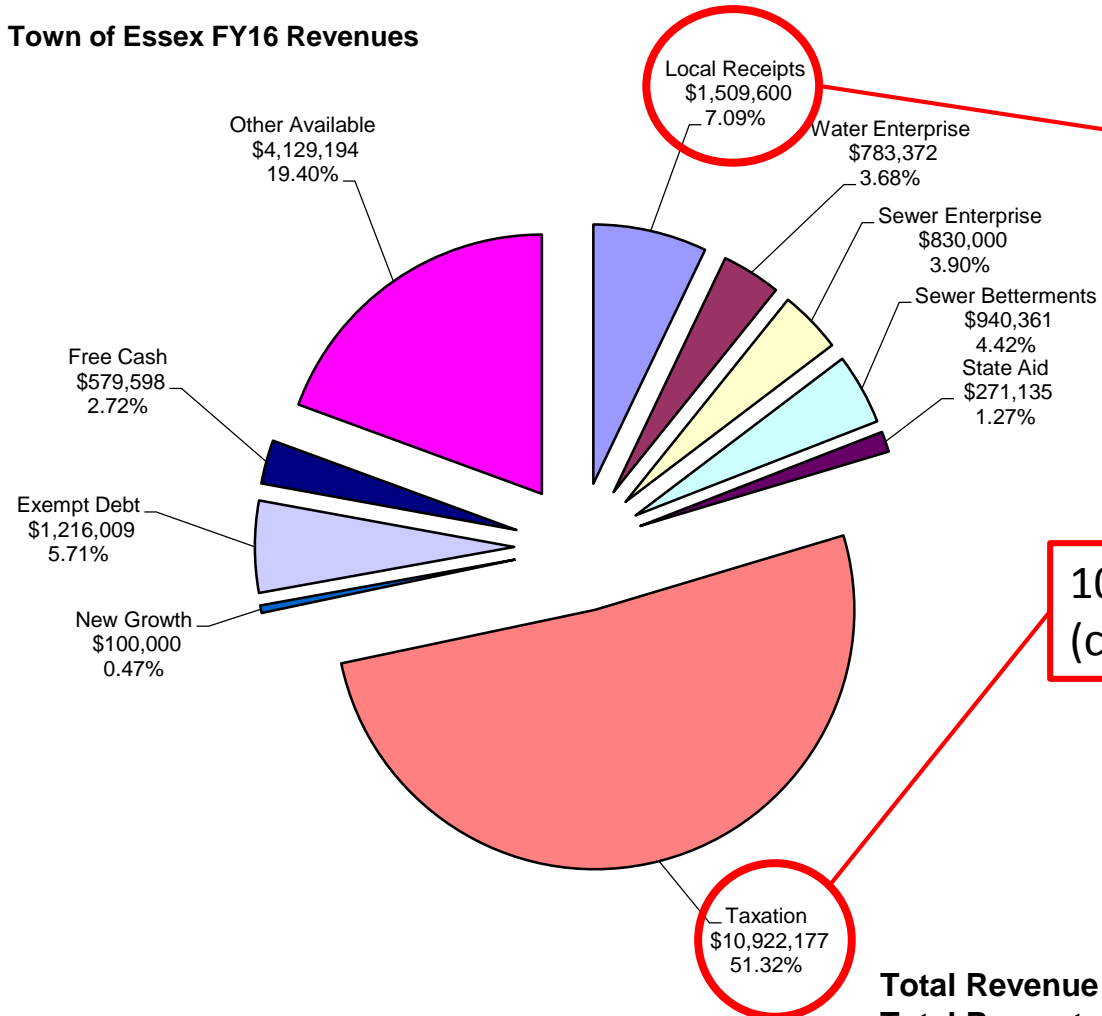
### **The Essex SPC recommends the Town take the following actions:**

- Conduct public awareness activities to inform residents of major government events and ways they can get involved.
- Develop an Essex 101 guide to town government.
- Inspire participation by considering fun ways to get residents involved
- Explore possibility for hosting voter information nights that also serve as community building events.
- Town Boards and Commissions should develop outreach plans for engaging residents, recruiting new members and mentoring them
- Consider alternatives to existing town voting/elections (e.g. Saturday town meeting, babysitting, pairing with national elections in November).

### 3) Main and Develop a Strong Business Community



Town of Essex FY16 Revenues



Local meal tax provides more than \$180,000 of revenue annually

10% of taxes derived from non residential properties (commercial, industrial, etc.)

**Total Revenue \$21,281,446**  
**Total Percentages 99.98%**

*Percentage off due to rounding*

### 3) Main and Develop a Strong Business Community

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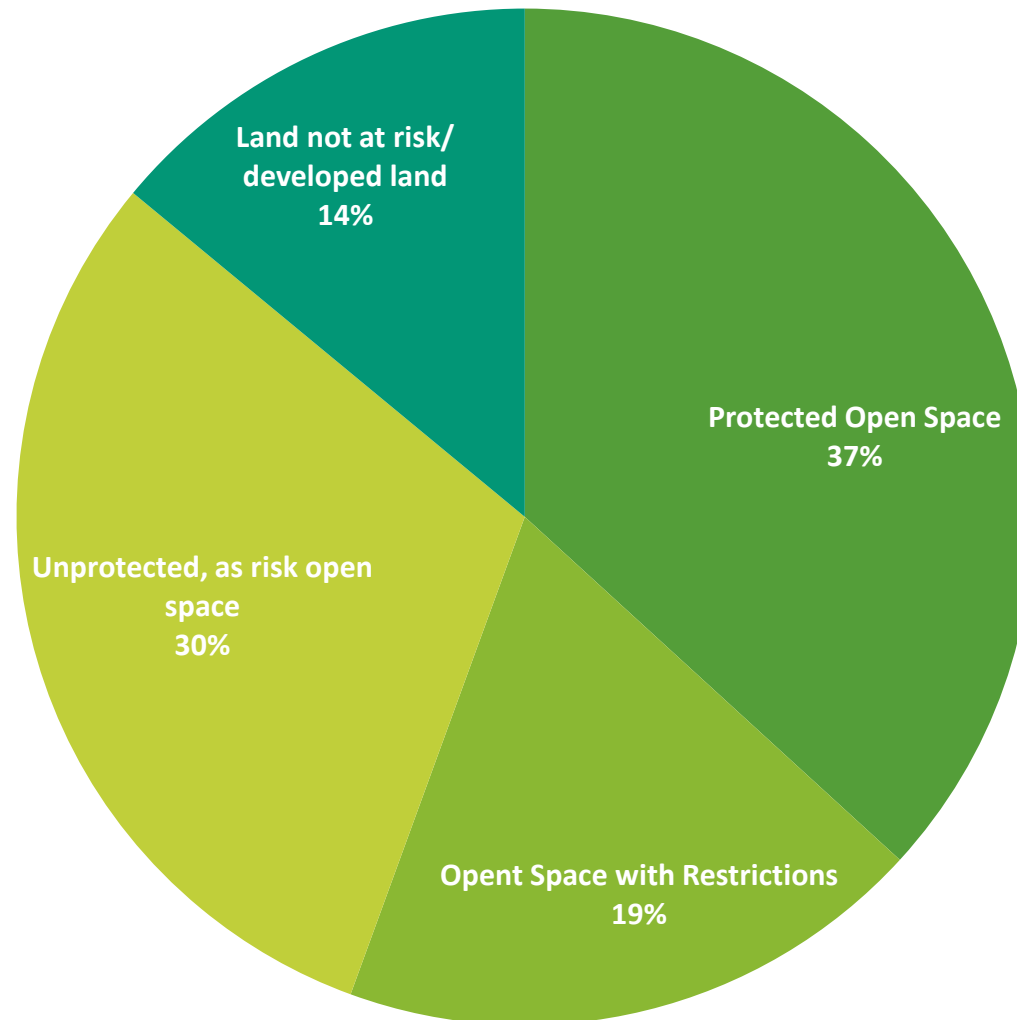


#### **The Essex SPC recommends the Town take the following actions:**

- Support initiatives at the Select Board level creating a fertile field for new ideas, concepts and ventures.
- Establish a Zoning Sub-Committee of the Essex Planning Board to look how zoning can support economic development and create new zone(s).
- Adopt a Downtown Overlay district to ensure clearer ground rules for development and to address the needs of non-conforming lots.
- Conduct economic development review to determine locations for new commercial development and attract businesses.
- Consider whether renewable energy generation can support economic development.
- Aid businesses outgrowing home occupations and incubate more local businesses.
- Win grants to spur improvements in decorative parking, street lighting and other aesthetic improvements, town land realignment and boardwalk construction.
- Sponsor Town events that draw people to Essex businesses.

## 4) Increase the Amount of Protected Land in Essex

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## 4) Increase the Amount of Protected Land in Essex

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### The Essex SPC recommends the Town take the following actions:

- Use future/additional CPA funds to support conservation priorities and leverage additional private resource for land protection.
- Identify land parcels of greatest environmental and scenic value for protection.
- Develop stronger relationships with local conservation groups, such as Essex County Greenbelt and the Manchester-Essex Community Trust to engage land owners and identify financing for permanent preservation.
- Adopt appropriate zoning to protect essential parcels of land – consider a Conservation By-Law.
- Develop an inventory of protected lands that can be accessed publicly.
- Better understand what contributes to protecting scenic view sheds.

## 5) Improve the Health of/Access to Rivers and Lakes



### The Essex SPC recommends the Town take the following actions:

- Develop long-term dredging plans for the Essex River.
- Work with local groups (e.g. Great Marsh Coalition and Ipswich River Watershed Assoc), to measure and monitor pollution/runoff levels.
- Consider guidelines to help residents remove/contain invasives, e.g. phragmites.
- Work with the state to pursue measures to reduce green crab populations.
- Implement public access improvements to Conomo Point and complete long-term leases to finance improvements.
- Finalize the Resource Management Plan for the Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and continue to analyze and plan for sea-level rise and coastal storms.
- Review policies used in other communities to regulate water pollution.
- Work with Hamilton to better manage/enforce rules on Chebacco Lake.
- Consider steps to increase shellfish populations (e.g. harvest limits, Sunday closures, reclassifying flats).





## 6) Expand the Range of Recreational Opportunities

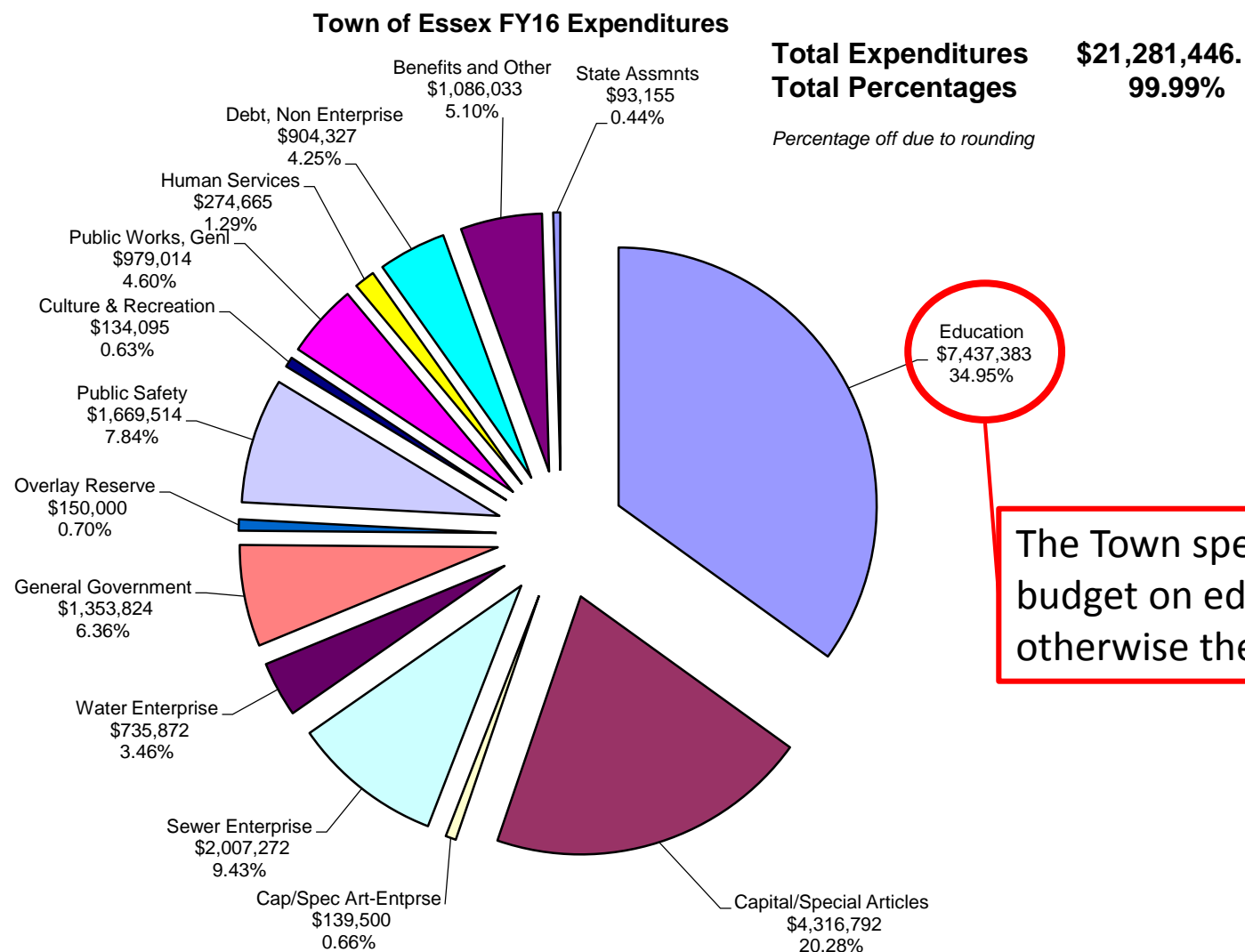
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**the Essex SPC recommends the Town take the following actions:**

- Use future/additional Community Preservation Act funds to support recreational priorities.
- Examine whether an Essex Youth Commission should be reestablished by creating an exploratory committee, which should examine interest and consider whether a part-time director can be hired, and a partnership with Manchester developed.
- Assess the current stock of recreational facilities to quantify existing maintenance costs and capacity for additional facility and grounds.
- Build maintenance costs for any new or refurbished recreational facilities into capital plan.
- Consider Memorial Park improvements, such as the feasibility and support for new tennis courts.
- Use zoning to preserve recreational resources.



## 7) Deliver a Fiscally Responsible School Budget



The Town spends appx. 52% of its annual operating budget on education (not factoring in capital funds, otherwise the percentage is 39%)



## 7) Deliver a Fiscally Responsible School Budget

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**The Essex SPC recommends the Town take the following actions:**

- Monitor budget through an informal group of school district and municipal officials from both Manchester and Essex.
- Maintain multi-year budget forecasts and plans to enable member towns to anticipate school needs.
- Ensure a settled three-year contract with the Manchester-Essex Teachers Association that aligns with multi-year budget projections.

## 8) Maintain the Viability of the Town's Fire Service

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**The Essex SPC recommends the Town take the following actions:**

- Recruit new volunteer on-call firefighters.
- Support the Fire Explorers program to develop future candidates for the fire service.
- Consider whether the Department would benefit from full-time leadership in the future.
- Ensure all firefighters receive required training.
- Examine ways to ensure inspections are carried out in a timely manner.



## 9) Meet the Housing Needs of all Essex Residents

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### **The Essex SPC recommends the Town take the following actions:**

- Adopt a Mixed-Use Zoning By-Law (2<sup>nd</sup> floor residential over commercial) to enable better utilization of already developed land.
- Allow “in-law” apartments (through zoning change).
- Examine affordable housing needs of current Essex residents.
- Determine how best to support housing using CPA funds.
- Consider partnering with neighboring communities on a joint housing plan
- Conduct a market analysis for the Town.
- Apply for grant funding for housing studies.
- Explore ways to reduce costs for homeowners, including energy cost savings through MassSave free home energy audits.

# Implementing the Plan

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- **The SPC will remain constituted to help steer implementation**
- **Priorities will be set for the short and long-term, based on affordability and need**
- **The Plan will be a living document, updated to reflect changing priorities and conditions**
- **Town resident involvement will be vital for the Plan to be realized**

# Questions and Feedback

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**Please share your thoughts on the:**

- **Vision and goals identified;**
- **Priorities for action detailed for each goal;**
- **Implementing the Plan; and**
- **Engaging Town residents in delivering this vision.**





***Thank you for your time  
and consideration for the  
future of Essex!***