

Police Services

The Town of Sullivan maintained its own police department until 2013. In that year, long-time Police Chief Karl Wheeler retired. Facing the prospects of a long search to fill the position with a certified police officer, the Board of Selectmen decided on a short-term agreement with the Cheshire County Sheriff's Department to provide police services in town. The contract was made permanent on 31 December 2014. The agreement has continued to the present and is subject to renegotiation periodically. Money to fund the contract is voted on at the Annual Town Meeting. It is anticipated that this arrangement will continue into the future.

Fire Department

The Sullivan Volunteer Fire Department was formally established in 1946. Currently, it provides fire, rescue, and emergency medical services (EMS) for the town. The Department operates in accord with State standards and protocols, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards, and International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards. In addition to local EMS, the town also has contracts with the City of Keene for ambulance services and transport as required.

The Department is entirely volunteer and no one receives compensation for responding to emergency calls. However, training, equipment, and protective gear are provided by the Town. That is usually through an appropriation by the Annual Town Meeting. This includes maintenance expenses and updating equipment as NFPA/ISO standards change. Other funds, especially for major equipment, are provided through withdrawals from various capital funds set aside for major fire equipment purchases.

The Department is currently housed in the Fire Station (440 Centre Street in the town center) that was constructed in 1975-1976. A major addition was completed in 1998 and there have been several renovations and minor changes over the years. The building has 5 vehicle bays that provide adequate space for the trucks and EMS vehicles. The building also contains and space for equipment storage, meetings, classroom space for training, a small kitchen and bathroom facilities. Water comes from a well and sewerage system—both of which are shared with the Sullivan Public Library. This arrangement appears to be adequate for the future.

Principal equipment for the Fire Department includes:

- 2003, Sterling, 1250 Gallon, Class A Pumper.
- 1990 Tanker.
- 1983 heavy EMS truck.
- 2002 truck equipped for brush fires.
- 1994 EMS response truck.

The major concern for these vehicles is the pumper which would be a costly replacement. It is currently 20 years old and was built to standards that were current at that time. Future improvements to the fire station building include better ventilation

for the truck bays and areas for the decontamination of personal protective equipment, tools, and personnel.

The Department does its best to maintain equipment, training, and vehicles to NFPA/ISO standards. This is important as these organizations rate our fire-fighting and emergency response capabilities. Those ratings, in turn, are used by insurance companies to determine the cost of home owner's insurance within our community.

LIBRARY

Summary. The Sullivan Public Library has served our community since 1893. It meets the New Hampshire State Library Accreditation Standards for an “associate library.” It is open 15 hours per week and is staffed by two librarians who share the hours. The library is a member of the Nubanusit Library Co-op and is linked to the New Hampshire State Library System through the computer service NHAIS (New Hampshire Automated Information System). Both memberships help the librarians gain new skills and discuss library related issues with other librarians and state library personnel. Membership in NHAIS also allows us to borrow materials from other libraries in exchange for sharing our materials. The library serves its patrons with a number of media including eBooks, access to the internet, and an automated collection management system. In addition to money received from the town, the library also receives financial support from the Friends of the Sullivan Public Library. Ongoing concerns include the aging of our patrons, finding ways to engage children, and the costs of building maintenance.

History and Development. The Sullivan Public Library was formally established by the Town Meeting on March 14, 1893. The vote was to create and fund a “free library” as well as to appropriate public money and establish a three-member Board of Trustees. Moreover, it was to establish a publicly funded library to take over a private book collection that had served as a lending library since at least 1869. The new public library was established at the home of Sarah Ann Nims on Centre Street—about half way between East Sullivan and Sullivan Center.

After Sarah Nims moved to Keene in 1921, the collection and administration of the library was split between the Center and East Sullivan and continued to reside in private homes. It was not moved to a “public building” until 1957 when the two libraries were reunited and placed on the second floor of the Community Hall (30 Centre Street) in East Sullivan. It stayed there until the renovation of the old Town Hall (446 Centre Street) was completed in 1980.

The old Town Hall had been constructed in 1852 mostly from beams and materials from the 1808 Second Meeting House. From 1970-1976, the building underwent a much-needed renovation which included a new floor, sheetrock walls, new lighting, a furnace, and book cases made from lumber harvested from the Winch Town Forest. While the town voted money for some materials, other materials and all of the labor was donated by community members. Final completion of the project was held up because a renovation at the Sullivan Elementary School had been significantly delayed. The delay meant that a temporary school had to be found for grades 1 through 3. The library building was outfitted with desks, a bathroom, running water, and a sewer system shared

with the fire station. Once the elementary school was reopened, the library building project was completed with the addition of a circulation desk, a children's reading area, work space for the librarian, and tables for programs and meetings. It was dedicated on May 29, 1979. Several town committees began using the new facility for meetings including the Planning Board, the Conservation Commission, and the 1987 Bicentennial Committee.

In 1992, the building underwent another renovation to add an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant entry ramp and new wiring. However, many problems remained to be resolved. The bathroom was not ADA accessible and the pipes frequently froze in the winter months. In the mid-1990s, the building's attic was deemed a fire hazard. The space had long been used by the Planning Board and Conservation Commission as a storage space for documents. The library also used the space to store materials as well as old town records and collections of papers donated to the Library. Moreover, the ADA entrance ramp was not in full compliance and many library patrons had complained that it detracted from the building's appearance.

The Library was included in the many improvements to the town center in the 1990s. Beginning in 1997, an addition was constructed on the back of the building which included a second entrance. This included a fully compliant ADA ramp into the building, a new, fully compliant bathroom that had sufficient heat to prevent freeze-ups, new shelf space, and an archives room to properly store the many historical documents in the Library's collection. Finally, the furnace room in the front of the building was converted into an office for the librarian and a much more efficient furnace was installed in the new addition. The improvements were funded by a combination of public money, fund-raising by the Friends of the Sullivan Public Library, and a number of generous donations from individuals in the community.

A number of energy efficiency problems were noted by the Town Energy Committee in 2010-11. This led to a project to install more insulation, energy efficient storm windows, and an energy efficient lighting system. These projects were completed by 2014.

Fund-Raising. The Selectmen and the Town Meeting have supported the Library's budget requests over the years. However, the Library Trustees have only used public funds for operational expenses—librarian salaries, materials purchases, office supplies, utilities, etc. Funds for the purchase of "one time" items, programs, hosting special events, some computer equipment purchases, and emergency needs have largely come from separate fund-raising committees. In the past, these has included the Homeland Circle, the Lady Volunteers of Sullivan; and, since 1987, the Friends of the Sullivan Public Library.

The Friends have organized various fund-raisers over the years including craft fairs, bake sales, book sales, and plant sales. They have also hosted social gatherings, ice cream socials, and the annual Santa Day. Their support over the years has helped fund construction projects, the energy updates, the purchase of some materials, and provided help in hosting programs.

Mention should also be made of the many “one time” donations from individuals over the years that helped the Library Trustees purchase materials and smooth out budgetary shortfalls. There is also the Carolyn Wheeler Trust Fund which is restricted to the purchase of materials.

Since the 2015 Master Plan. The Sullivan Public Library has continued to provide library services to the community. This has included interlibrary loan, programs, summer reading, as well as providing our patrons with books and other materials. On-line services include full access to the world-wide-web, ancestry.com, heritage-quest, access to the State’s downloadable eBook program, and public wi-fi access. Computer services for the patrons was recently upgraded with the installation of fiber-optic broad band.

In terms of administration, the biggest change in our library was the adoption of an automated check in/out and cataloging system called LibraryWorld. This relatively inexpensive system is tailored to small libraries and enables the librarians to maintain patron records, the inventory of materials, and the status of individual books.

During this period, the Library has experimented with several community programs. While they were initially successful, the COVID-19 Pandemic curtailed and extinguished many of them. One of the most successful was Saturday Morning Coffee and Conversation. This was an unorganized gathering of anyone who wished to participate and conversations usually included town news, current events, and history. Efforts to restart the program after the pandemic have not been successful, but a few people still show up on Saturdays. Book groups were organized. One of the most interesting was a cookbook group that read from cookbooks, chose a recipe, and then participated in a potluck luncheon to share the results. Regrettably, that group did not survive the pandemic. More successful was a mystery book group that continues to meet. Other programs began after the pandemic with the Saturday library hours being the busiest.

For the future, the Sullivan Public Library will continue to provide services for the patrons. This means purchasing books, videos, eBook services, and other materials that reflect patron tastes and reading desires. One of the major concerns has been the decline in usage by children and young adults which seems to reflect the town’s overall population trends. The majority of the patrons are older adults.

The future of the Friends of the Sullivan Public Library is also a major concern as the membership has dwindled over the years and continues to age. Efforts to recruit new members have been difficult. Without this fund-raising group, the library would be unable to fund needs that are over and above the Library's operating budget. Past work by the Friends has included a water filtration system, renovation of the bathroom, insulated window curtains (part of the energy upgrade) as well as contributions toward our 1997 addition and 2010-2014 energy update project. These efforts have been vital in keeping the Library's expenses for the taxpayers at a minimum. The loss of this group would be a major problem for the future of the Sullivan Public Library.

Finally, a major concern for the future is the Library building itself. Given its age, major issues with its physical plant are bound to occur. Over the years, the Library Trustees have found funds in the operating budget for minor repairs such as windows or minor roof leaks. However, any major repairs such as structural damage, exterior painting, or the roof (last replaced in 1990) will need to come out of the Town's capital fund for building repair. That fund is currently designed to provide funds for all Town buildings—not just the Library building.

Highway Department

The Department maintains our town's public highways (Class V roads). This includes (among other things) upgrades to road surfaces, bridge repair, ditch and culvert maintenance, brush removal, mud mitigation in the early spring, and snow removal from both roads and town buildings in the winter. In addition, The NHDOT also maintains Centre Street, Route 9, and a small portion of Valley Road from the Route 9 intersection to the East Sullivan 4 corners. It should also be noted that Centre Street is ineligible for federal highway improvement funding.

The Town of Sullivan has had some sort of Highway Department since its founding in 1787. The modern Department has its origins in 1934 when the first Town Barn was constructed behind the Church's horse sheds. In the mid-1990s, the Department was moved to its current location (18 Church Street) as part of the Town Center Project. This provided more land for the Department including adequate space for the storage and maintenance of its equipment as well as the storage of sand and salt. The main building is a 45 x 64 wood frame building that houses the vehicles and maintenance facilities as well as an office and small washroom. It includes a floor drain containment system. It is heated with a wood boiler system and supplemented with propane heaters. Other buildings include sheds for sanders, a fuel storage facility, a general storage building, and structures for storing salt and sand. The completion of the salt shed on the west side of the highway land completed a project begun around 2020.

The Highway Department employs 2 full-time workers and as many as 2 part-time workers. One of the full-time workers is the Town Road Agent. Originally, the officer was elected every two years. In 2018, after years of discussion, the town meeting finally voted to have the Road Agent appointed by the Board of Selectmen.

Funding for the Department comes from an appropriation from the Annual Meeting for operations as well as a separate appropriation for special projects. In addition, the town also has capital funds that may be drawn upon for major expenses. In 2022, the town formed an equipment committee to draw up a more formal schedule for the replacement of vehicles and other major equipment.

The Department has the following equipment:

- 2022 International CV515 dump truck (new condition).
- 2016 International Terrastar dump truck (good condition).
- 2014 Mahindra 5010HST tractor (good condition).
- 2004 International 7400 dump truck (good condition).
- 2002 John Deere 410G backhoe (good condition).
- 1987 John Deere 670B grader (fair condition).

While most of the equipment is relatively new, however, there is concern that the age and condition of the grader may cause its replacement in the near future,

The major concerns for the future are maintaining our highways in adequate condition. Every year has brought increased costs in materials—especially asphalt—and there is

no reason to believe that trend won't continue. Moreover, the UNH Center for Infrastructure Resilience to Climate Change had determined that with weather-related impacts to roads (made worse by heavy road repair vehicles traveling over wet road base) in our region we can expect reduced pavement life. Our bridges continue to pass inspections; but, at some point, will need major rebuilds. Finally, the normal aging of our vehicles requires constant attention. Much of these concerns will require increased support from the Annual Town Meeting for appropriations and to continue to build Highway capital funds into the foreseeable future.