

# 4 UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

## 4.1 Introduction

In this era of tight budgets, many communities are examining policy decisions concerning the provision of public services and community facilities, including consideration of development patterns that affect expansion and maintenance of these services and facilities. The Town of Onalaska is committed to providing efficient, affordable and quality public services and facilities, and encouraging new development to be located in areas that will continue these practices.

The Utilities and Community Facilities Element includes background information, goals, policies and actions to guide the future development of utilities and community facilities in the Town of Onalaska. As required by §66.1001 of the Wisconsin Statutes, the element describes the location, use and capacity of existing public utilities and community facilities that serve the Town and includes an approximate timetable that forecasts the need to expand and rehabilitate or create new utilities and facilities.

## 4.2 Existing Utilities and Community Facilities Conditions

### 4.2.1 Sanitary Waste Disposal Facilities

The Town of Onalaska has no public sanitary sewer service. CTH OT is currently the sewer service boundary agreed upon by the City of Onalaska and Village of Holmen, the two potential providers. At this time, the City and the Village are re-evaluating the agreed upon boundary for sewer service provision as part of their respective comprehensive planning efforts. Some areas of development in the Town of Onalaska lie immediately adjacent to existing sewer lines while other developing areas would require more engineering and construction. The City of Onalaska provided for utility line access under the USH 53 freeway when it was built.

Sanitary sewer lines provided by the City of Onalaska ultimately rely on the City of La Crosse Wastewater Treatment plant as outlined in the City of Onalaska's *Agreement for Sewer Conveyance and Treatment* with the City of La Crosse. The City of Onalaska administers its sewer system through a user charge and pays the City of La Crosse a user fee based on flow. In the 1999 *La Crosse Sewer Service Area Water Quality Management Plan 1999-2020* the Sewer Service Area Boundary was set to extend north only as far as CTH OT.

The disposal of wastewater in the Town of Onalaska outside of the areas served by the City of Onalaska or Village of Holmen sanitary sewer is handled through the use of individual on-site wastewater disposal systems, often referred to as septic systems. Septic systems discharge wastewater to underground drainage fields or septic tanks. There are currently six types of on-site disposal system designs authorized for use in the state: conventional (underground), mound, pressure distribution, at-grade, holding tank and sand filter systems.

The Wisconsin Department of Commerce (COMM) regulates the siting, design, installation and inspection of most private on-site sewage systems. Recent changes to the State's Plumbing Code

(COMM 83) allow both conventional and advanced pre-treatment systems for residential development. These changes present local communities with new land use challenges. The COMM 83 changes allow properties that have soil depths or soil types that were once unsuitable for conventional septic systems to now be developed and serviced by advanced pre-treatment sewage systems. This could result in widespread areas of scattered non-farm related residential development in the Town unless sound land use planning principles and policies are followed. Scattered non-farm residential development is both costly and inefficient to serve and it significantly degrades the Town's unique rural character. Further, such scattered non-farm development often leads to increased conflicts between agricultural operations and non-agricultural uses.

On-site sewage disposal systems, especially in areas where housing densities are greater than one house per acre, can significantly pollute groundwater. During this 20 year planning horizon, the Town anticipates private on-site sewage treatment will continue. However, the Town will continue discussions with the City of Onalaska and Village of Holmen pertaining to provision of sewer service by those entities to areas currently within the boundaries of the Town.

#### 4.2.2 Water Supply

The Town of Onalaska does not provide municipal water service to its residents. Water in the Town generally comes from private wells or small community wells that serve a few homes in a subdivision. Such wells are not considered to be public systems under Wisconsin Statutes. CTH OT is currently the boundary agreed upon for public utility provision by the City of Onalaska and Village of Holmen, the two potential providers. At this time, the City and the Village are re-evaluating the agreed upon boundary for public utility service as part of their respective comprehensive planning efforts.

#### 4.2.3 Stormwater Management

In 2000, the Town completed the Brice Prairie Watershed Storm Water Management Plan. The Plan represents a comprehensive storm water management plan for the proposed Brice Prairie Watershed Area. It will serve as a comprehensive guide for the development of a storm water management system within the Brice Prairie Watershed Area. The Plan incorporates several storm water management elements: storm water, quantity, storm water quality, infiltration/hydrogeology, and ecological resources. The plan will provide a basis for local flood control planning and design, water quality improvements and design, infiltration, groundwater recharge and protection, and improve and mitigate the current degradation of existing ecological resources, as well as a guide for proceeding with final engineering and design.

The primary objectives of the Plan are to enhance, protect, and preserve the unique environmental and ecological characteristics of Lake Onalaska, Black River, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, and existing wetlands by utilizing wet detention basins, grass and prairie grass infiltration systems, and existing wetlands in order to:

- Reduce to the maximum practical extent, the public and private capital expenditures for construction, operation and maintenance necessary to control excessive volumes and rates of storm water runoff and constituent pollutant discharges as the Brice Prairie area develops and grows.
- Prevent increases in storm water runoff and downstream flooding.

- Minimize water quality and ecological degradation and pollutant discharge loads.
- Improve and preserve water quality in all water bodies.
- Reduce erosion, sedimentation, habitat and ecological loss.
- Maintain natural base flows, promote and protect groundwater recharge by encouraging creating and cost effective storm water infiltration methodologies.
- Protect and enhance biological, fish and wildlife habitat.
- Minimize negative impacts to wetlands and the environment.
- Provide opportunities for multiple use of drainage and storm water management facilities.
- Enhance the natural beauty of the landscape by providing economical, safe, aesthetically pleasing and socially acceptable drainage facilities within proposed new developments.
- Protect and enhance recreational opportunities.
- Secure other benefits associated with the proper management of storm water runoff.

The Plan includes 14 implementation and summary recommendations, which all impact the future of the Town. It is therefore important to list those recommendations in this section. However, the Plan contains detailed descriptions of each recommendation. In addition, it should be noted that the Town is currently in the process of implementing some of those recommendations. The recommendations are:

**Table 4.1: Brice Prairie Watershed Storm Water Management Plan Implementation Strategy**

Implementation Strategy		Status/Notes
1.	Establish Storm Water Utility	In process.
2.	Implement Effective Ecological Protection Regulations.	
3.	Encourage Reduced Setbacks.	
4.	Encourage Natural Drainage Designs	
5.	Encourage Native Vegetation for Landscaping	
6.	Reduce Parking Requirements	
7.	Encourage Cluster Developments	
8.	Provide Effective Wet Storm Water Detention	
9.	Construct Storm Sewers Only Where Necessary	
10.	Educate Residents About Natural Drainage Approaches	
11.	Identify Appropriate Floodplain Uses and Zoning	
12.	Implement Open Space Opportunities	
13.	Implement Comprehensive Storm Water Management Ordinance	
14.	Wellhead Protection	

Source: Brice Prairie Watershed Storm Water Management Plan, Town of Onalaska, 2000

In addition to the Plan discussed above, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requires an erosion control plan and permit for all projects that disturb five or more acres of land. The landowner is required to ensure that a site specific erosion control plan and stormwater management plan are developed and implemented at the construction site.

The Town of Onalaska is also currently under La Crosse County Zoning. According to the La Crosse County Subdivision and Platting Ordinance the subdivider is required to provide: a soil erosion plan subject to Chapter 21 of the La Crosse County Code of Ordinances and a storm water management plan which meets the appropriate post-construction water quality requirements of NR151 of the

Wisconsin Administrative Code and the water quantity requirements set forth in the La Crosse County Code of Ordinances.

#### 4.2.4 Solid Waste Disposal/Recycling Facilities

The Town contracts with Hilltopper Rubbish Service, Inc. to provide for the collection of solid waste and recyclable material. Glass, aluminum, tin, and newspapers are collected for recycling and all other solid waste is disposed of at the Xcel Energy French Island Waste to Energy Incinerator. Xcel Energy, formerly Northern States Power, recently upgraded the French Island Incinerator to come into compliance with the Federal Clean Air Act.

Leaves and grass are not permitted to be deposited by individuals into the solid waste stream but may be brought to a collection site at the Town Shop where a local farmer currently uses them for mulch at no cost to the Town.

The La Crosse County Landfill is the regional repository for unacceptable/unburnable solid waste and ash from the waste to energy incinerator. The landfill has capacity to meet solid waste disposal needs to approximately 2020. However, new ash mining techniques could allow the landfill to be used beyond this date.

La Crosse County also established a Household Hazardous Materials Collection program to serve all household residents within the county. Opened in November 2003, the permanent collection facility is located at the Landfill site. Partially supported with Town tax dollars, residents may drop off materials without charge.

#### 4.2.5 Town Government

##### a. Town Hall

The Onalaska Town Hall is located at W7052 Second Street. The building consists of the Town Board room, an office, small storage areas, and two bathrooms.

##### b. Town Shop

The Town Shop, located at N7024 Josie Street, has four (4) full time employees, including the Town Foreman, and typically employs one (1) part-time worker in the summer as workload demands. The Town owns much of its own maintenance equipment which is listed in Table 4.1. In addition to the maintenance equipment in Table 4.1, the Town also owns many pieces of miscellaneous equipment valued under 5000.00 each. The Town contracts with the county and/or private companies for equipment for seal coating and crack repair on Town roads.

**Table 4.2: Inventory of Town of Onalaska Shop Equipment**

Qty.	Equipment Type
1	John Deere 772-A motor grader with wing
1	John Deere dozer 450B
1	1997 John Deere 544G loader
1	1995 John Deere F935 riding mower
1	Massey-Ferguson ICM scraper
1	Galion Pony pull grader
1	Vermeer chipper BC 1800A
1	Ziegler roller
5	Universal two-way plows # 22, # 24, # 26, # 28, #30
4	rear sanders for truck # 26, #30, #22, #28
3	front sanders for truck # 22, # 24, and # 28
1	grass seeder for tractor
1	John Deere V plow for grader
1	New Holland mower 918H
1	Cair air Compressor 3082472
Qty.	Equipment Type
1	Pressure Washer –Honda North Star
1	1979 20 foot x 8 trailer
1	2000 24 foot x 8 trailer
1	Handy Clean parts washer
1	Hottco posthole drill 977A
1	water pump CHE 2604 - 4" trash pump engine
1	2003 New Holland Tractor TN70D
1	2001 New Holland LS 160 Skid Steer
1	2001 broom for skid 6 foot
1	2000 New Holland Mower MC28 72inch cut
1	Alamo Roadside mower
1	sewer jetter
1	Woods lawn tractor zero turning #1850

Source: Town of Onalaska

c. Town Government Structure

The Town is governed by an elected board of supervisors consisting of five (5) members, including the Town Board Chair. All candidates run on a town-wide ballot for a specific seat. An elected clerk and treasurer also serve the town. The Town has a seven (7) member planning commission and is regulated by County zoning.

#### 4.2.6 Fire Protection & Rescue/Emergency Medical Services

The Town of Onalaska is served by both the Village of Holmen and the City of Onalaska Fire Departments.

The Holmen Area Fire Department is staffed by three (3) full-time employees and 27 paid-on-call volunteer firefighters. The Fire Department has nine (9) trucks: three (3) engines, three (3) tankers, one (1) rescue, one (1) quick response and one (1) brush truck. The Holmen Area Fire Department currently has a Fire Insurance rating of 4. This rating is determined by assessing the adequacy and reliability of public fire-protection programs, including the main aspects of fire department operations, training and administration; water supplies for fire-fighting; emergency communication systems; and fire-prevention programs. A rating of 10 means the community has no insurance and a rating of 1 is the best a community can achieve.

The Holmen Fire Board is comprised of two (2) members of the Town of Onalaska, the Town of Holland and the Village of Holmen.

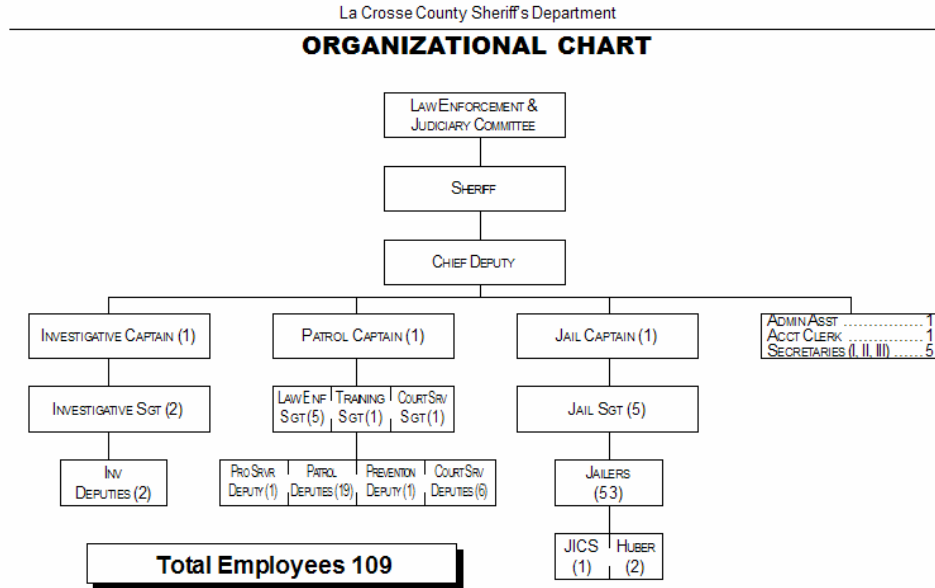
The Onalaska Area Fire Department is staffed by eight (8) full-time employees; the remaining 28 firefighters are part-time, paid on-call employees. The Department currently has a Fire Insurance rating of 5 but expects to be re-rated as a 3 at the time of its next inspection. The addition of full-time staff and recent commendations are a few of the reasons for the improved rating.

Emergency Medical Service on Brice Prairie is provided by the Brice Prairie First Responders. The prairie is cut-off from other emergency response providers by the at-grade rail crossings on both CTH Z and CTH ZN (the sole access roads onto the prairie). Brice Prairie First Responders formed to address the lengthened response times. Emergency response in the remainder of the Town is provided by the Tri-State Ambulance Service and the Holmen Fire Department.

All of La Crosse County is served by 911 Emergency Dispatch.

#### 4.2.7 Law Enforcement

The Town of Onalaska is served by the La Crosse County Sheriff's Department, which is located in the City of La Crosse. Currently, the La Crosse County Sheriff's Department has 109 employees. The chart below depicts the organization the Sheriff's Department.



Source: La Crosse County Sheriff's Department

#### 4.2.8 Health Care Facilities

No health care facilities are located in the Town of Onalaska. The nearest health care facilities to the Town are located in the City of Onalaska and the Village of Holmen. Gundersen Lutheran and Franciscan Skemp Healthcare, Mayo Health System are two (2) large medical centers that operate in the region, each with a hospital and large clinic in the City of La Crosse. In addition, both Gunderson Lutheran and Franciscan Skemp Healthcare, Mayo Health System operate health care facilities in the city and village.

Gundersen Lutheran operates a 325-bed teaching hospital with a Level II Trauma and Emergency Center in La Crosse. Franciscan Skemp, MHS La Crosse Campus operates a 250 bed hospital with a 24-hour Emergency Trauma Center. Construction is underway for a 100,000 sq. ft. expansion to the Franciscan Skemp, MHS facility.

A health care education consortium that includes Viterbo University, Western Wisconsin Technical College and the University of Wisconsin at La Crosse exists in the region.

#### 4.2.9 Library

The Town of Onalaska is served by the La Crosse County Library. The La Crosse County Library operates five (5) branch libraries in the City of Onalaska, the villages of Holmen, West Salem and Bangor, and the Town of Campbell. Each library branch is housed in a building provided, furnished and maintained by the municipality in which it is located. The County is responsible for the books and other media contained in each library, the processing of the materials and the personnel to provide the services.

The City of La Crosse also operates three municipal libraries which are available to Town residents for an additional fee.

All of the La Crosse County Libraries belong to the Winding Rivers Library System which gives residents access to a seven county interlibrary loan system including: Buffalo; Jackson; Juneau; La Crosse; Monroe; Trempealeau; and Vernon counties.

#### 4.2.10 Schools

The Town of Onalaska is primarily served by the Holmen School District although some southern portions of the Town lie within the Onalaska School District.

The Holmen School District serves six (6) municipalities, including: the Village of Holmen, the Town of Holland, and parts of the Town of Farmington, Town of Hamilton, Town of Onalaska and City of Onalaska.

The Holmen School District operates the *Oak Grove Family Learning Center* (in the Town of Onalaska) for adult education, early childhood and preschool. The three (3) elementary schools: *Viking Elementary School*; *Sandlake Elementary School*; and *Evergreen Elementary School* serve K-5. The *Holmen Middle School* serves 6-8, and the *Holmen High School* serves 9-12. The District is considering plans for adding a middle school and elementary school.

The Onalaska School District consists of three (3) elementary schools, one (1) middle school and one (1) high school. *Eagle Bluff Elementary*, *Northern Hills Elementary*, and *Irving Pertzsch Elementary* serve K-5. *Onalaska Middle School* serves 6-8, and *Onalaska High School* serves 9-12. In addition to public schools, Onalaska is served by *St. Pat's Elementary School* (Catholic), *St. Paul's Elementary School* and *St. Paul's Middle School* (Lutheran) and *Luther High School*.

In addition, a few families attend the Melrose-Mindoro School District.

Higher education is provided by the Western Wisconsin Technical College, Viterbo University and the University of Wisconsin at La Crosse. All of these facilities are located in the City of La Crosse.

#### 4.2.11 Child Care Facilities

There are several private home-based child care facilities in the Town. The La Crosse County Health and Services Department performs inspections of these facilities.



#### 4.2.12 Parks and Recreation Facilities

Table 4.3 lists the parks located in the Town of Onalaska. Swarthout Park, on Brice Prairie, is a county park facility with one park shelter. There are also three (3) baseball diamonds on Brice Prairie: *Mulder*; *Roth*; and the diamond adjacent to the *Oak Grove School*. All three (3) baseball diamonds are located on Brice Prairie.

The Town also maintains two boat landings on Brice Prairie.

Additionally, a section of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge is located in the northwest section of the Town of Onalaska. The Refuge, which is the longest of its kind in the Continental U.S., extends 261 miles along the Mississippi River from the Chippewa River in Wisconsin to Rock Island, Illinois. The Refuge was established in 1924 for the purpose of providing a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds, fish, other wildlife and plants. The 242,400 acre refuge lies within Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois. Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Upper Miss Refuge is divided into four management districts.



The Refuge, which is managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, contains look-out platforms for wildlife observation.

Refuge-managed areas surround Brice Prairie and include Lake Onalaska (a.k.a. Pool 7), Black River Bottoms, Halfway Creek Marsh, and the Mathy and Midway Railroad Prairies. Lake Onalaska is one of the most significant outdoor resources available to residents and visitors. Excellent opportunities for boating, canoeing, sailing, fishing, hunting, birdwatching or simply enjoying wildlife abound. The 7,000-acre lake has depths to 40 feet, but the average depth is just 8 feet. The lake was formed in 1937 when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers finished the Dresbach, MN Lock and Dam 7. Lake Onalaska provides critical habitat for bald eagles, tundra swans and canvasback ducks.

**Table 4.3: Parks in the Town of Onalaska**

Name of Site	Location of Site	Size (acres)	Facilities
Homestead Park	N. Lake Shore Drive (CTH ZB)	1	Playground equipment, picnic tables
First Prairie Park	Eric and Fairview Streets	2.32	Ballfield with backstop, picnic tables, playground equipment
Roth Field	W. side of Eric St. between Tower and Woodview Streets	3.52	Ballfield with bleachers, backstop, dugouts, outfield fence, half court basketball, open shelter, picnic tables, playground equipment
Mulder Field	Prairie Drive, Park Street, Elm Street (off CTH Z)	1.25	Ballfield with backstop, bleachers, outfield fence, open shelter, picnic tables, playground equipment
Swarthout Park	Across from Upper Brice Prairie boat landing	5.22	Large enclosed shelter, volleyball court, picnic tables, horseshoe pits, basketball court, playground equipment
Prairie Heights	End of Prairievew Drive off Filler Court	1.2	Ballfield with backstop, playground equipment, picnic tables
Meadow Estates	CTH XX and Evergreen Way	.75	Picnic tables, playground equipment
Terrace Heights (Circle Park)	S. of Westview Drive, east of STH 35	1	Picnic tables, playground equipment
Strawberry Commons	Strawberry Road and Abby Road	3.52	Ballfield with backstop, basketball court, playground equipment, picnic tables
Heritage Hills	End of Sugar Lane off Hilltop Drive and STH 35	1.7	Full basketball court, playground equipment, picnic tables
Sandy Knolls	CTH SN and Reef Road	2.91	Open shelter, picnic tables, playground equipment, ballfield with backstop
Thunderbird Hills	CTH SN and Mohican Trail	1.92	Open shelter, picnic tables, playground equipment, volleyball court
Apple Valley	Schilling Road and Park Drive	3.34	2 open shelters, hand water pump, tennis court, ballfield with backstop, picnic tables, playground equipment
Sobkowiak Park	Between CTH S and Sobkowiak Road	1.5	Basketball court, picnic tables, playground equipment
Sun Valley Park (Rocky Top)	CTH D (Sun Valley Subdivision)	2.52	Playground equipment, picnic tables
Mesa Grande Park	CTH Z (Mesa Grande subdivision)	3.01	Picnic tables, playground
Lake Park	On Schaller Drive	.98	Picnic tables, playground equipment
Town Hall	In Midway-corner of Second Street and CTH OT		Playground equipment, picnic tables

Source: Town of Onalaska, 2004

#### 4.2.13 Power Plants/Transmission Lines/Electricity

There are no power plants or telecommunication towers located in the Town of Onalaska. The nearest plants are located on French Island in La Crosse and in Genoa.

Xcel Energy and Riverland Energy Cooperative provide electric power in the Town. Xcel also offers natural gas to locations in the Town.

#### 4.2.14 Telephone, Internet and Cable Television Service

CenturyTel provides Town residents with local telephone service. Various long distance providers serve the Town. Charter Communications provides cable television service. CenturyTel and Charter Communications both provide high-speed Internet access.

#### 4.2.15 Cemeteries

There are seven (7) cemeteries located in the Town of Onalaska. Five (5) are historic and two (2) are active. Cemeteries in the Town of Onalaska include:

- The Asbury Cemetery – Active
- The Brice Prairie Cemetery – Historic Ho-Chunk Burial Site, Inactive
- Halfway Creek Lutheran Cemetery – Active
- Weverstad Cemetery – Private Cemetery, Inactive
- Engelson Cemetery – Private Cemetery, Inactive
- Scandinavian Baptist Cemetery – Inactive
- Helgeson Cemetery – Private Cemetery, Inactive

#### 4.2.16 Churches

Several churches are located in the Town of Onalaska and many more are located in surrounding communities, including the Village of Holmen, and the City of Onalaska. Churches in the Town of Onalaska include:

- Sand Lake Wesleyan on CTH SN
- Apostolic Church on STH 35
- Lakeview Foursquare Gospel Church on STH 35
- Halfway Creek Lutheran Church on CTH W



Asbury Cemetery



Engelson Family Cemetery



Halfway Creek Cemetery



Scandinavian Baptist Cemetery



### 4.3 Timetable for Utilities and Community Facilities Expansion or Renovation

This section provides an approximate timetable of the necessary expansions or renovations of utilities and community facilities that should take place in the Town of Onalaska during this 20-year planning horizon.

**Table 4.4: Town of Onalaska Utilities and Community Facilities Updates/Expansions**

Utility or Community Facility	Status	Potential Action	Timeframe
Stormwater Management	Currently under study by the Town.	Creating a Stormwater Management Ordinance and Utility District.	1-3 years
Solid Waste/Recycling	Satisfactory	N/A	N/A
Parks	Satisfactory	As new growth and development occurs	N/A
Telecommunication Facilities	Satisfactory	N/A	N/A
Power Plants and Transmission lines	Satisfactory	N/A	N/A
Electricity and Natural Gas Services	Satisfactory	N/A	N/A
Cemeteries	None.	N/A	
Health Care Facilities	None.	No Town action. Facilities located throughout the region. New medical facilities are planned and under construction in the City of Onalaska.	
Child Care Facilities	None.	No Town action. Provided privately.	
County Sheriff			
Fire	Satisfactory	N/A	N/A
Rescue	Satisfactory	N/A	N/A
Library (Holmen)	Satisfactory	May need expansion	Review in 3-5 years
Schools (Onalaska School District)	Satisfactory	N/A	N/A
Schools (Holmen School District)	Middle School overcrowded 4 <sup>th</sup> Elementary School will be needed High School will need expansion	When referendum passes Around 2010 (with projected growth) Around 2016 (with projected growth)	Middle School overcrowded 4 <sup>th</sup> Elementary School will be needed High School will need expansion
Town Hall	To begin study in 1-2 years and budget.	Identify potential sites and build new Town Hall	1-5 years
Town Employees	To include in 2006 budget, create job description, hire in 2006.	Hire Town Administrator	1-2 years

Source: Town of Onalaska, 2005