



## Is The Lack of Municipal Water Deterring Commercial Development in Windham?

The Economic Development Committee was asked recently to clarify this comment: “The lack of a source of municipal water has been identified as the number one deterrent to economic development in areas zoned for such development in our town.”

After some discussion, the EDC can state that as in most parts of the country, Windham included, lack of municipal water is one of the major deterrents to economic development. There are several reasons why.

Providing water from a bedrock well, whether for a home or a large office is risky. The well yield could be insufficient to support the development. The quality of the water is always suspect; it can be contaminated at any time, naturally or unnaturally. This risk can be mitigated by treatment systems, but the backflow is pumped into the water table, further contaminating our groundwater. And over time, bedrock wells have the effect of depleting the groundwater supply.

More important for commercial development is fire protection. Cisterns are required and they need monitoring (for leaks) and annual maintenance. Once the cistern is empty (while fire fighting), water has to be trucked in or pumped from a nearby water body. Specialty equipment may be needed to insure adequate fire flow, equipment not needed with a municipal water source.

In addition to these risks, the amount of tax positive development is restricted with bedrock wells. Wells require a protective radius, within which no improvements (buildings, etc.) are allowed. Commercial improvements are the type of tax positive development which benefits Windham homeowners. More improvements in the commercial districts will help to shift the percentage of town and school costs shouldered by each homeowner. That percentage is now a whopping 92 % (compared to Andover Ma and Bedford NH where only 80 to 83 % of the costs are shouldered by homeowners.)

The proposed Windham Water Study in Article 21 could be a first step in gaining empirical data in evaluating the feasibility of municipal water in Windham as a catalyst in reducing the tax burden of Windham residents.

If Article 21 is approved and the study is completed, a summary of the findings will be reported to the Windham residents and elected officials. The report will include recommendations for next steps following completion of study. Input from residents and town officials on this report will be solicited and then incorporated into a final report.

This study is about getting us the accurate information needed in making prudent future decisions about whether investing in municipal water makes sense for us.

The Windham Economic Development Committee – Keeping you informed and remaining dedicated to enhancing the vitality of the local economy to balance the tax base for all Windham residents. Visit us on line at:

[www.windhamnewhampshire.com/committees/economic-development-committee](http://www.windhamnewhampshire.com/committees/economic-development-committee)