

**Report of the
2009 Sterling Town Government Study Committee**

April 30, 2012



I would like to extend my personal thanks and appreciation to the members of this committee for their extraordinary commitment to this 3 year effort. We met monthly in the beginning, and often weekly over the last year. Only once did we fail to have a quorum, and most often six or seven members were present. Not only were they diligent, persistent and thoughtful in their work, they also displayed great patience, restraint and discipline as they fulfilled their civic responsibilities.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank those people who made themselves available to be interviewed by us, the administrative staff in the Sterling town government, the Collins Group at University of Massachusetts Boston, the Massachusetts Municipal Association, the Department of Communities and Development of the Commonwealth, and Sterling-Lancaster Community TV. A special note of gratitude to Jeff Donaldson and his firm Mirick O'Connell, not only for his role as the committee's scribe in guiding us through untold iterations of this report, but also for the production of this final document.



Robert C. Dumont, Chair

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Robert C. Dumont, Chair

Donlin K. Murray, Vice Chair

Kathleen M. Mello, Clerk

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2009 STERLING TOWN GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMITTEE

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BACKGROUND

The 2009 Sterling Town Government Study Committee was created by Article 12 of the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting of the Town of Sterling held on May 11, 2009 and received two extensions, the first of six months duration from the Annual Town Meeting of May 17, 2010 and the second of 12 months duration from the Annual Town Meeting of May 16, 2011. The Committee was charged with performing the following tasks:

1. To evaluate each elected and appointed Board (with the exception of the Sterling Light Board and its Department), Committee, and Commission relative to its function and responsibilities.
2. To examine what other similar Towns have for municipal government.
3. To develop recommendations, if deemed necessary and prudent, relative to changing the size, structure, responsibility, function and/or appointing authority of any Board (with the exception of the Sterling Light Board and its Department), Committee and Commission.
4. To make recommendations relative to the creation or modification of paid employee positions within the Town government.

The Committee held its first meeting on November 4, 2009. Since that time, the Committee has

- (a) held over 50 meetings,
- (b) interviewed over 55 Town employees and members of Town Boards, Committees, and Commissions,
- (c) publicized and sponsored a public forum (referred to as a "Town Government Café") on November 13, 2010 that was covered by the local press and broadcast on local access television, and
- (d) met with two groups of professionals who consult with Towns regarding modifications to Town government, how town governments are organized, and how they compare with each other.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The committee has approached the evaluation of the Town Government with an open mind, having no pre-conceived conclusions as a group. We were guided by the goal of preserving and strengthening the power of the citizens of Sterling. We also focused on making our town government more efficient and effective.

WHAT WE LEARNED AND HOW WE LEARNED IT

From the time of our first meeting when we began researching Sterling's Town Government and how it works, it was clear that a wealth of knowledge and experience resided with the members of the committee. We also knew that in order to have a high degree of credibility we could not rely on that knowledge base alone to reach conclusions and make recommendations. We needed to gather information from sources beyond that which our members could contribute. After considerable discussion, we decided that we should interview the Town Administrator, town employees who headed up discrete governmental functions as well as the chairs (and members selected by their chairs) of Town Boards, Committees and Commissions, both appointed and elected.

Although all our meetings were held in open session, we concluded that it would also be important to conduct some kind of an open forum that would be structured to allow for citizen participation and expressions of opinion about the Sterling Town Government.

We also agreed that we needed to look beyond our town borders and learn more about other towns in the Commonwealth, especially those that were comparable to Sterling. To accomplish this, we engaged the Collins Center for Public Management at the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies, UMass Boston, which put together a team of Michael Ward, an associate from the Center and Marilyn Contreas, Senior Program and Policy Analyst at the Department of Housing and Community Development of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We also met with Hans Larson, Executive Director of General Government Operations of the Town of Wellesley and Charles Blanchard, retired town administrator of the Town of Paxton, members of the Massachusetts Municipal Managers Association, part of the Massachusetts Municipal Association. In addition, we decided that it would be useful to meet with Tim Bragan, the former Sterling Town Administrator and current Town Administrator of the Town of Harvard. Our interview with Mr. Bragan was not only helpful in providing information about how town government operate in a neighboring town, but it provided information about the 11 years when he was the administrator in Sterling. The interaction with these outside resources was extremely useful, especially as it related to responding to the second of our charges: "to examine what similar towns have for municipal government."

The interviews with current Town department heads and the chairs of Boards, Committees and Commissions were very important, not only because of the information and reactions that we gathered, but also because they gave our effort some credibility with a key constituency in Sterling. The interaction that these interviews provided was quite productive for the most part, but there was the occasional complaint that we didn't allow enough time or didn't ask the right questions. A list of the questions we provided to the interviewees in advance of the interviews (which was posted on the Town's website) is attached as Appendix A. Attitudes about work or volunteer involvement were quite positive, negative feelings were definitely the exception, and most demonstrated a good knowledge of their job and their role in the overall scheme of things. There was some frustration expressed over the lack of clear lines of authority and responsibility. This seemed to focus on the fact that there are independently elected boards, such as the DPW board, that do not report to the selectmen and are in that sense autonomous.

Our open forum for the citizens of Sterling, billed as a Government Café, was held on Saturday, November 13, 2010. Although the attendance was disappointing (12 citizens and a

couple of members of the press), the discussion was lively and the conclusions that the group reached at the end of the morning were useful as another sample of the perspective of a group of Sterling residents. There was considerable positive comment about the way the Town was run, especially as it related to finances and the stable tax rate. But concerns were expressed about the lack of accountability, the lack of clarity regarding reporting relationships, about effective communications, and the autonomy of certain elected boards. Citizens are confused about where to go because they are used to organizations/businesses that have centralized operations.

From our outside resources we learned the steps necessary to make changes in the existing government structure, from job descriptions to bylaw amendments to a special legislative act process. We also were provided with some perspective on trends in town government structure and a significant amount of comparative data on where Sterling stands in relation to other towns in Worcester County and in 55 towns with populations between 6,000 and 9,999. For example, we learned that of the 44 towns in our population grouping for which we have data, 33 towns have an elected board of health. Thirty-six towns have no DPW board, 3 towns have a DPW board appointed by the selectmen, and 3 towns (Sterling among them) have an elected DPW board. In 24 towns, the moderator alone appoints the finance committee, and Sterling is one of only 6 towns that has some kind of mixed appointment process. Twenty towns have no personnel board. The details of these comparisons, along with other charts and graphic displays comparing Sterling in other ways that you might find interesting, can be found in Appendix E.

Our conclusions are presented in the recommendations that follow. There is a general sense that Sterling Town Government functions relatively well. The phrase “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” was heard time and again in the interviews we conducted and in the discussion that we had amongst ourselves. We also had to consider the opposite phrase – “The time to fix the roof is when the sun is shining.” We found parts of Town government that are functioning quite well, parts that are functioning satisfactorily but could be improved upon, and parts that are not functioning satisfactorily and need to be fixed. We say this with our goal as stated in our guiding principles in mind: “we are guided by ...preserving and strengthening the power of the citizens of Sterling...” Our committee would like to thank Linnea Palmer Paton, an intern from WPI who graduated in 2011 with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering and Environmental Policy and Development, for her hard work and research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee has identified and studied 12 issues that it believes should be addressed by the citizens of Sterling. *Please note that the recommendations, each of which were approved by at least a majority of the members of the Committee, are not listed in order of perceived importance to the Town. We believe that all recommendations should be seriously considered.* The recommendations can be grouped into three broad categories:

A. Recommendations on Town structure

B. Process recommendations for changing Town structure

C. Policy recommendations for improving Town governance

A. Recommendations on Town structure

Although the Committee did consider changes to the legislative branch of Sterling's government (Open Town Meeting), the Committee decided that no major structural changes would be recommended. There are some policy recommendations related to Open Town Meeting in Part C.

The first structural change recommendations have to do with the head of the Town's executive branch, the Board of Selectmen, and the Town Administrator.

1. **Increase the Number of the Board of Selectmen.** The Committee believes that because of the increased time demands of our society, the increasingly diverse population in Sterling, and the complex issues that local government has to address, serious consideration should be given to increasing the size of the Board of Selectmen from three to five. We believe that an expanded board offers the following advantages:

- (a) A five-member board would increase the chances that the board would be more diverse and therefore more representative of the Town as a whole, and that a board of five members will reduce the chances of divisive polarity of opinions that can be counterproductive to the proper functioning of the board.
- (b) A lighter workload for each member, giving the board more time to focus on long-range planning and policy-making.
- (c) Debate and decision-making would be more vigorous, as any one member of the board would have to convince at least two other members to take a given action.
- (d) Attract more candidates to run for the board, as the shared (and therefore lighter) workload would not be as intimidating to citizens considering running for the board.

2. **Define the Role of the Board of Selectmen.** Whether or not the size of the Board of Selectmen is increased, we encourage the Board of Selectmen to extricate itself from the day-to-day administration of the Town to the extent possible. In order for the Town of Sterling to operate more efficiently, the board should only involve itself in administration and personnel issues when necessary. Instead, the board should focus on reviewing performance of key management,

participating in and guiding the planning and implementation of a long range plan, and addressing core structural and philosophical issues. At the same time, recognizing the statutory obligation of the board, we recommend that the board continue to exercise management authority over Town business, including approving the Town's proposed operating budget, appointing all employees at and above the Department head level, and approving all Collective Bargaining Agreements. Finally, we recommend that each board member be assigned as a liaison to selected boards, committees, and departments, which will increase communication and interaction between the Board of Selectmen and the rest of Town government.

3. **Define the Powers and Responsibilities of the Town Administrator.** After thoroughly reviewing and discussing the risks, benefits, and roles of a having a Town Administrator or a Town Manager, we recommend continuing with the position of Town Administrator. We do recommend, however, clearly defining the Town Administrator's role, authority, and responsibilities. Our Committee found, through many interviews, that there is a general sense of frustration with how the Town's business is conducted. We believe that this frustration is caused in part by a lack of clarity in the responsibilities of the Town Administrator. Our committee discussed at length that establishing clearer reporting relationships as well as lines of authority and responsibilities would help to alleviate this frustration. Responsibility without authority has resulted in the power of the position of Town Administrator rising and falling depending upon the personality of the person in that position, rather than on the inherent powers and responsibilities afforded that position. We believe that the powers and responsibilities of the Town Administrator should be clearly articulated and documented. We recommend that the list of responsibilities set forth on Appendix B be incorporated into the general bylaws or, a formal job description. We have also attached as Appendix C a sample description that places more responsibility and authority in the hands of the Town Administrator than is presently the case. If the Town decides to go with the second example, then a special legislative act may be necessary because executive power would be being transferred from the Board of Selectmen to the Town Administrator.

4. **Improve the Appointment of Boards and Committees.** The Committee believes that the method of appointment of most of the boards in Town is adequate. However, we learned that in many cases, people are appointed to boards and committees without a general solicitation to the citizens of the town for persons interested in being appointed. We recommend that all openings on boards and committees be publicly advertised on CATV and in the print media as well as on the Town's webpage, and that uniform public interviews of interested persons be held in coordination with the appointing authority and the applicable committee or board. In particular, we believe that this solicitation should be used to attract members to the Board of Health (an elected board). The Board of Health should be staffed with sufficient breadth and depth of experience in health and related fields to deal with issues faced by a Board of Health in the 21st century, such as terrorist attack preparedness, as well as septic systems, animals, noise abatement, and other more traditional issues under the purview of the Board of Health. Of the 44 towns in our population grouping for which we have data, 33 towns have an elected board of health, and we recommend that the Board of Health continue to be an elected board.

5. **Eliminate and Consolidate Certain Boards; Add Town Planner.** The Committee believes that most of the boards in Town serve a proper function. We are concerned with the inability to attract new members to boards and committees, as well as the fact that many people serve on multiple boards and committees due to the inability to attract more people to volunteer work at Town government. With that as the backdrop, we make the following recommendations.

Eliminate and consolidate the following boards:

- (a) We recommend that the Earth Removal Board be eliminated and its responsibilities transferred to the Planning Board, with the Building Inspector, acting in his role of Zoning Enforcement Officer, to be charged with enforcement.
- (b) We recommend that the Department of Public Works Board, currently an autonomous elected board, become an advisory board appointed by the Board of Selectmen, and that the Superintendent report to the Board of Selectmen through the Town Administrator. In order to provide the most effective and efficient services to the citizens of the Town, it is important that all the services and procurement be centralized under one board that has clear authority and responsibility and can be held accountable for performance in the minds of the citizens/voters of Sterling. Currently a major portion of the services provided to the Town's residents are not the responsibility of the Board of Selectmen, something that most voters do not understand. Such independence, operating under the radar, can occasionally result in anomalies such as what occurred with the funding and construction of the DPW garage. In addition, having the management of the DPW employees under the same day-to-day direction as most other Town employees will strengthen employee communications and encourage team work. Of the 44 towns in our population grouping for which we have data, 36 towns have no DPW board, 3 towns have a DPW board appointed by the selectmen, and 3 towns (Sterling among them) have an elected board.
- (c) Consistent with our concern for effective management and good communications with all Town employees, employees of the library should be part of the Town's Classification Plan and actions regarding compensation and other personnel practices should be governed by the Town's Personnel Policies. As provided by Ch. 78 of the General Laws, the Library Director should report to the Town Administrator with respect to day to day administrative matters.
- (d) We conclude that the current structure of having a Personnel Board is functioning well. We do recommend that, if and when we have a full-time human resources director, the Town consider eliminating the Personnel Board and having the HR director report to the Board of Selectmen through the Town Administrator. Of the 44 towns in our population grouping for which we have data, 20 towns have no personnel board.

Add a Town Planner:

In our interviews and deliberations there was reference to the need for more planning, particularly at the Board of Selectmen level. We recommend hiring a part-time town planner/grant writer who would report to the Board of Selectmen. This would be a cost effective catalyst to jump start a more intentional long range planning effort for Sterling, and allow for a more focused pursuit of grant money that would accrue to the town's best interest.

B. Process recommendations for changing Town structure

To obtain the changes noted in the prior five recommendations (“Recommendations on Town Structure”), we make the following recommendations on the process the Town should consider.

6. **Seek a Special Act to Codify the Town’s Structural Changes.** Once the Committee started doing its work and researching available information concerning the Town of Sterling, it became apparent the Town does not have a functioning Town Charter. The Town has Articles of Incorporation that were filed to create the Town in 1781; however, the Articles are perfunctory and provide no guidance in terms of the organization and structure of the Town. The Committee recommends that special legislation be sought that will establish a Town Charter and codify structural changes as required by law.

7. **Amend and Restate the General Bylaws.** The Committee also found that the general bylaws of the Town of Sterling are deficient in content, organization, and detail. Where more flexibility is needed (in other words, where duties etc. change more frequently and therefore the underlying document may need to be revised more frequently) in defining certain paid employee positions, Boards, Committees, and Commissions, the general bylaws are the preferred route amendment rather than defining such positions in a town charter. The Committee recommends that all permanent boards, committees, and commissions not created or required by statute be included in the General Bylaws. To the extent appropriate, boards, committees, and commissions created by statute should be acknowledged in the General Bylaws and expanded upon beyond the statute as determined at Town Meeting.

C. Policy recommendations for improving Town governance

Beyond the structural changes noted above, the Committee felt that it was important to make some recommendations for policy changes that its research indicated could improve the operations of Town government.

8. **Maintain Open Town Meeting.** The Committee discussed whether or not the Town should consider changing its form of government to Representative rather than Open Town Meeting. Concerned citizens have been frustrated for many years with the poor attendance at Town meetings. There is a “core” of 50 to 100 people who regularly attend Town meeting. Groups often attend to support or oppose a specific article, then disappear once the vote has been taken. As a result, often only 200 to 300 citizens are making all of the decisions on behalf of the residents of the Town of Sterling, making it easier for a special interest of one kind or another to determine the direction of the whole community. Following are the figures for Town meeting attendance over the past six years:

STERLING TOWN MEETING ATTENDANCE 2006-2011

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>
Total Population	8098	8066	8060	8100	8122	8045
Registered Voters	5448	5379	5474	5569	5631	5688
Annual Town Meeting Attendance	175	123	258	384	381	346
% of Registered Voters Attending Town Meeting	3%	2%	5%	7%	7%	6%

The Committee recommends that we maintain Open Town meeting in the Town of Sterling, but address ways of attracting the electorate to Town meetings so that a greater representative body makes the decisions that impact us all, both in the short term and the long term. We have concluded that the low Town meeting turnout is the result of a number of related and unrelated factors, including:

- (a) voter apathy,
- (b) busy work schedules,
- (c) the perception that decisions have already been made on a number of issues, and
- (d) a general lack of understanding about the functioning of Town government and the role of Town meeting.

We recommend the following:

- The moderator and other elected officials record a short video on how Town meeting works and the procedures that one should be familiar with when one attends Town meeting. The video could then be made available on the Town’s website, YouTube, and on local access television.
- The moderator allow for more in-depth presentations on articles at Town meeting, as the push for a “quick” Town meeting often comes at the expense of the sponsors of the articles. Although article sponsors may have spent countless hours researching and preparing for Town meeting, they are given a very short period of time in which to present background and analysis on an article.
- Thought should be given to having presenters prepare video presentations that can be posted on the Town’s website or YouTube and shown on local access television for viewing in advance of the Town Meeting. To assure consistency in presentation and the ability of citizens to comment on the presentation, the same presentation should be shown at Town Meeting.
- Materials that are going to be handed out at Town meeting be made available in advance of the meeting (e.g. posted on the Town’s website, at Town hall, at the library) so that

citizens who like to prepare for Town meeting will be able to read the materials in advance rather than have to read them during Town meeting when other articles are being discussed.

- Mail the Warrant to all households in which at least one registered voter lives in the Town of Sterling.

9. **Role of the Finance Committee.** Because the finance committee acts as the watchdog and advisor to the people/the town meeting, we believe that it should be comprised of people having a broad range of expertise. According to the Town By-Laws, the finance committee “shall consider all matters of business included within the articles of any Warrant for a Town Meeting for the purpose of making reports and recommendations thereon to the town....with such recommendation or suggestions as it may deem advisable on any matters pertaining to the welfare of the town.” Therefore, we recommend that the Finance Committee report on every article, not just articles with a financial impact to the Town.

The Committee spent a great deal of time discussing the role of the Finance Committee in Sterling. The Finance Committee in Sterling is heavily involved in creating the annual Town budgets. This level of involvement is dependent on members of the Finance Committee having not only the skill sets but the time to devote to being integrally involved in the development of the annual operating and capital budgets for the town. That said, the way in which the Finance Committee in Sterling has functioned over the past several years has served the town well. The Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, Finance Committee, Capital Committee, and citizens of the Town need to be alert to this and recognize that the Town may need to change its budgeting practice when the current composition of the Finance Committee changes, as the future make-up of the Finance Committee may not allow it to be so integrally involved in the development of the budgets. Regardless of the current practice of our Finance Committee, ultimately the responsibility for preparing and submitting the annual Town operating and capital budgets to the Town Meeting for approval rests with the Board of Selectmen.

10. **Create and Maintain a Town Organization Chart.** As a part of the process of organizing the Town Boards, Committees, Commissions, and Departments, the Committee found that the Town does not have an organization chart. Based on available information, we were able to develop an organization chart for our use, which accompanies this report. However, the chart should be formalized, with input from all Boards, Committees, Commissions, and municipal employees, and reflect the organization established by the Articles of Incorporation and General Bylaws of the Town. In particular, the reporting and communication lines need to be addressed.

Our Town has many situations where there is “dotted line” reporting, in which a municipal employee reports to an individual or to a Board, Committee, or Commission in an informal way, but supervision and evaluation of that person are performed by others. Communication and coordination is of great importance in providing efficient government for the citizens, and we believe that an organization chart would benefit everyone and provide a visual aid to citizens for determining the right person to call to discuss an issue.

The organization chart could be posted on the Town’s website as a starting point for people seeking information, and the box for each employee, department, board, committee, and commission featured on the chart could have a link to a page that has detailed information,

including duties and contact information. We have attached a draft organization chart as Appendix D.

11. **Clarify Roles of Different Town Parties in Employment Practices.** We believe that the approach of the Town to hiring and dismissal of Town employees needs to be reviewed and revised. The roles of the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, Human Resources Director, and Personnel Board all need to be revisited so that our Town has a clear approach to hiring, evaluations, reporting lines, and dismissal practices. The Town should establish hiring protocols that require that three people be involved in the hiring process: the Town Administrator, the Human Resources Director, and the head of the department for which the opening is being filled. A set of standards for hiring employees at different levels within given departments should also be established, with the human resources director as the common thread. The process should require the department head to go to the Human Resources Director and Personnel Board to establish the position to be filled as well as the pay rate and grade, then have the Town Administrator post the vacancy on the Town's website. The department head, Human Resources Director, and Personnel Board would then be charged with reviewing applications for qualifications, interviewing qualified applicants, and selecting the candidate to fill the vacancy. Part-time summer help could be handled by department heads in conjunction with the Human Resources Director and Personnel Board.

12. **Increase Informational Resources Available to the Citizens.** Our Committee found that there is a general lack of understanding regarding the roles and responsibilities of the various components of Town government. It is far too easy for a citizen to pick up the phone and call the Town Administrator or a member of the Board of Selectmen rather than determine the appropriate person to call to discuss an issue. This puts the Town Administrator and the members of the Board of Selectmen in the unenviable position of having to spend a great deal of time being nothing more than an information funnel. In order to reduce this inefficiency, we must make resources readily available to the citizens of the Town so that there is no question as to the correct person to contact to discuss an issue. We believe that the organization chart we have recommended will assist in that matter. However, the Town's website must be enhanced to include a comprehensive, yet simple, guide to the functioning of our Town government.

We recommend that the town develop a "town handbook," that could be available both in printed form and on the town's website as a downloadable PDF. We recognize that there are many resources available on the Town's website, but those resources could be better organized into a handbook. Examples of content for the handbook include:

- A list of all boards and committees of the town, whether they are elected or appointed, and the statutory or town bylaw basis for their existence
- General Bylaws
- Special Bylaws
- Personnel Bylaws
- Protective (Zoning) Bylaws
- Organization Chart

APPENDICES

- A. Interview Questions
- B. Town Administrator Job Description
- C. Sample language for Town Administrator authority
- D. Organization Chart (draft)
- E. Comparative Town Data

Appendix A

Interview Questions

STERLING TOWN GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMITTEE

DISCUSSION ITEMS FOR DEPARTMENT INTERVIEWS

The mission of Sterling's Town Government Study Committee ("TGSC") is to fulfill its mandate pursuant to Article 12 of the 2009 Sterling Annual Town Meeting. As a result of Selectman Paul Sushchuk (who drafted that Article) having confirmed that Article 12 was intended to apply to *all* of Sterling's town government, the TGSC will be interviewing all Boards, Committees, Commissions, and Councils, as well as all other groups listed under the general heading of "Departments" on the Town's website, excluding only Sterling's Light Board and the Sterling Municipal Light Dept. As used below, the term "Departments" is intended to apply to any and all such Boards, Committees, Commissions, Councils and Departments.

The TGSC's study will involve: (1) confirmation of the *existing* organizational structure of our Town government; (2) confirmation of the *existing* operational infrastructure *of* each Department and *between* each Department; (3) determining what aspects of the operational infrastructure (and lack of it) of each Department, as well as of the overall Town government, supports and/or hinders its effective and efficient operation; and (4) recommend whatever changes to our Town government's structure, operational infrastructure, business management functions and leadership roles would be advisable in order for our Town government to (a) achieve and maintain optimal effectiveness and efficiency in its day-to-day business operations; and (b) best position it to address and meet the increasing and evolving financial, legal and regulatory complexities and demands for responsible and efficient town governance.

This study is therefore not a performance evaluation or review of any individuals or Departments, nor of whether the right people are in the right positions. Rather, it is intended to be a thorough, constructive, open and transparent assessment of our Town government structure and operations. It has not been decided by the TGSC whether it will interview only the Department Heads, or all members of each Department together. Therefore, this document is being posted on the Town website (Town Government Study Committee page) for all to see" with the expectation and recommendation of the TGSC that each Department Head discuss this thoroughly with its entire Department internally and before its Department interview with the TGSC, so that one way or another, every member of every Dept. will have the opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions in this effort to "get it right" for the sake of the Town and its government.

(1) A preliminary "snapshot" of our current organizational structure has been generated by a member of the TGSC, based upon input received from the Town Administrator and one of our current Selectmen. This will be made available to each Department for any additional input and feedback as well, during their respective interview with the TGSC.

(2) The following questions are being proposed as a basic framework for each Department to use in preparing for its discussions with the TGSC. The questions below, as well as the associated thinking points offered on the last page, are intended to provoke thought- not limit the discussions or input received. Departments should therefore feel free to disregard any questions/ portions of

questions that do not apply to them, but are strongly encouraged to offer and address whatever thinking points may have been overlooked but which are relevant to this Department and/or the overall objective of this study.

Department Interview Questions

Note: Talking/Thinking points reo each question immediately follows this section.

1. How is this Department organized?
2. Identify important aspects of/concerns regarding the duties, responsibilities and functions of this Department.
3. What operational infrastructure exists *within and outside* of this Department for managing and supporting this Department's day-to-day and periodic operations?
4. Critique how well this Department communicates internally (within itself), as well as with other Departments, and how well those Departments communicate with this Department.
5. How is the fulfillment and performance of this Department's responsibilities and duties assessed and improved?
6. What works best in this Department in terms of overall effectiveness and efficiency; why is it working so well, and on what does that depend?
7. What needs to be improved in this Department and why?
8. What works best as far as how this Department works with other Departments, and why does it work so well?
9. Extent of Department's involvement/management of its finances and expenses.
10. Types of changes within and/or to this Department, to other Departments, and to the overall Town government structure, that this Department believes would benefit or be a hindrance to this Department, and in what respects.

Talking/Thinking Points For Certain Questions

Regarding Question # 1

- To what Department does this Department directly report
- Department's organizational hierarchy
- Number of full-time/part-time employees, contractors and volunteers
- Other information that is relevant or might be helpful

Regarding Question #2

- Duties/responsibilities that have been/can be delegated to this Department by any other Departments- reason/purpose
- Resources required, used, needed, desired, lacking-specifics please.
- Laws, rules, regulations, by-laws, if any, governing any of this Department's responsibilities and/or functions.
- How duties/responsibilities are prioritized, assigned & managed
- Ramifications of any specific responsibilities/functions not being fulfilled/performed correctly, completely or at all
- Duplication/overlap/redundancies of responsibilities/functions/deliverables *within* this Department, between this and any other Department(s), and reasons if any.
- What duties should be performed by employees versus contractors or volunteers, or vice versa, and why.
- Other information that is relevant or might be helpful

Regarding Question #3

- Formal administrative policies, practices, procedures, guidelines etc. re. this Department's applicable responsibilities and functions.
- Formal administrative policies and procedures regarding the purchase and financing of any services/resources needed; the approval process, and how this is coordinated with finance functions outside of this Department and the Town budget.
- Record-keeping policies and practices, and for what purposes
 - contract administration
 - service/product warranties/tracking
 - studies/assessments performed-guards against duplication/assessments performed
- Long-term operating plans for multi-year periods.
- Databases and system/application software used within this Department, and/or accessed through any other Department(s), and for what purposes
- Whether this Department ever uses a different version of any databases or software used by other Department and if so, the reason.
- Specific communications and access policies and procedures regarding information generated or accessed by this Department and reasons for them.
- Other information that is relevant or might be helpful

Regarding Question #4

- Types of information that should be readily available and accessible
- Coordination of activities between Departments
- Inter-Departmental liaisons
- Unified methods and means of communication and updating
- Responsiveness requirements for efficiency
- Follow-up procedures and practices
- Other information that is relevant or might be helpful

Regarding Question #5

- Maintenance of Department performance metrics by Dept. Head
- Individual performance evaluations and bases used for assessments
 - uniform application of generic expectations and metrics
 - specific performance metrics for individual positions
 - existing job descriptions
 - by whom is one's job performance evaluated, and is it the person most familiar with the applicable person's day-to-day performance
 - consistencies/inconsistencies with other Departments
- Other information that is relevant or might be helpful

Regarding Question #7

- What will it take
- On what will the success of the measures taken depend
- Opportunities seen by this Department for streamlining their operations and/or otherwise increasing their effectiveness and reducing their costs
 - Consolidating functions/roles
 - Regionalization
- Other information that is relevant or might be helpful

Regarding Question #9

- Involvement in Town budget process
- Policies/processes followed to stay within Dept. budget
- How expenditures are authorized/approved/checked
- Position on centralizing/formalizing management of Town finances
- Other information that is relevant or might be helpful

Appendix B

Recommended items for inclusion in Town Administrator job description

The Town Administrator will:

- Have strong financial credentials.
- Work jointly with the Finance Committee to prepare and submit to the Board of Selectmen an annual operating budget proposal for all Town departments, boards, commissions and committees, after consultation with all of the above.
- Work jointly with the Capital Committee to prepare and submit to the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee an annual capital budget proposal for all Town departments, boards, commissions and committees that have capital expenditures, after consultation with all of the above.
- Insure that complete records of financial and administrative activity of the Town are maintained so as to be reported to the Board of Selectmen as may be required and to be made available as required by public records laws.
- Review warrants for payment of Town funds prepared by the accountant.
- Prepare an annual forecast of the Town's revenues, expenditures and the general financial condition of the Town, in consultation with relevant boards and committees.
- Be responsible for the efficient use, maintenance and repair of all Town facilities, including oversight of all insurance policies, for all facilities under the jurisdiction of the Board of Selectmen.
- Attend all regular and special meetings of the Board of Selectmen, unless excused. The Town Administrator should attend all sessions of annual and special Town meetings and answer all questions addressed to him/her that are related to the warrant articles and matters under his/her general supervision.
- Coordinate activities of all Town departments, officers, boards and commissions under the jurisdiction of the Board of Selectmen, and facilitate interdepartmental communications.
- Supervise the implementation of personnel policies, practices, rules and regulations, any compensation plan including benefits and insurance programs, and any related matters for all municipal employees, including all provisions of the personnel by-law and all relevant collective bargaining agreements.

- Participate with the Board of Selectmen in all negotiations of union contracts of Town employees over wages and other terms and conditions of employment, excluding contracts of the Wachusett Regional School District and the Municipal Light Department. All contracts are to be approved by the Board of Selectmen.
- Serve as the chief procurement officer of the Town in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Ch. 30B.
- Award, subject to the approval of the Board of Selectmen, all Town contracts (except those relating to the Wachusett Regional School District and the Municipal Light Department) and serve as the contract compliance officer for the Town.
- Identify and evaluate grant opportunities and supervise the preparation of grant applications.
- Coordinate the preparation of Town meeting articles

Appendix C

Sample language granting more authority to the Town Administrator than is presently the case

(Note: this will require either a special legislative act or a general bylaw amendment)

The Town Administrator will be the Chief Administrator of the Town, acting as the agent of the Board of Selectmen and will be responsible to the Board of Selectmen for the proper operation of Town affairs for which the Town Administrator is given responsibility. The Town Administrator, under the policy direction of the Board of Selectmen, will supervise, direct and be responsible for the administration of all officers appointed by the Town Administrator and their respective departments and all functions for which the Town Administrator is given responsibility, authority or control, by By-law, by Town meeting vote or by duly authorized vote of the Board of Selectmen. The Town Administrator will have the power to delegate, authorize or direct any subordinate or employee of the Town to exercise any power, duty or responsibility, which the office of Town Administrator is authorized to exercise. All actions that are performed under such delegation will be deemed to be the actions of the Town Administrator.

Except as otherwise provided, the Town Administrator will appoint, subject to the approval by majority vote of the Board of Selectmen, the Town Treasurer, Town Accountant, Town Clerk, DPW Superintendent, Police Chief, Fire Chief and all other department heads and officers, subordinates and employees, except employees of the Wachusett Regional School District, the Sterling Light Board/Department and those that are elected or who are under the supervision of elected officials, boards or commissions of the Town. Appointments of department heads made by the Town Administrator will become effective on the fifteenth day following the day notice of proposed appointment is filed with the Board of Selectmen unless the Board of Selectmen will, within said period, by a vote of a majority of the board rejects such appointment, or has sooner voted to affirm it.

Copies of notices of proposed appointments as filed with the Board of Selectmen will simultaneously be posted.

Except as otherwise provided or as reversed by the Board of Selectmen, the Town Administrator may remove for cause all department heads and officers, subordinates and employees except those who are elected or are under the supervision of elected officials, boards or commissions. Removals for cause by the Town Administrator will be subject to due process requirements of federal, state or Town laws and regulations or enforceable contract provisions. The Town Administrator will follow the procedure outlined in the Town personnel policy, as it may be revised or amended from time to time. Removals of department heads by the Town Administrator will become effective on the 30th day following the day the notice of proposed removal is filed with the Board of Selectmen, unless the board by majority vote either rejects or affirms the proposed removal within the 30-day period.

Annually, for the ensuing year, the Board of Selectmen in conjunction with the Town Administrator will define goals and performance objectives which both parties determine necessary for the proper operation and welfare of the Town and for the attainment of the policy objectives of

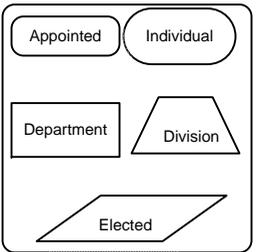
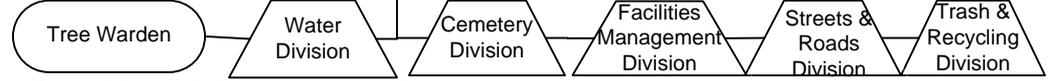
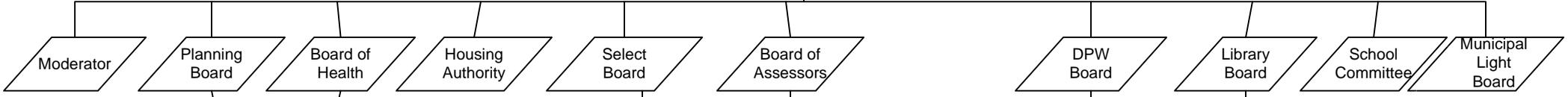
the board. Together they should establish relative priority among the various goals and objectives and reduce them to writing. The Board of Selectmen will review and evaluate the performance of the Town Administrator on a formal basis once annually under the terms and conditions of this act. This review and evaluation will include, but not be limited to: the administrator's progress and performance on the annual goals and objectives; budgetary and financial administration; personnel administration; supervision and leadership; staff development; public relations; employee and labor relations; policy execution; and interaction with the Board of Selectmen as well as government officials, boards and committees. The Town Administrator will be provided with an evaluation in writing after each formal review and be provided an opportunity for discussion of the evaluation with the Board of Selectmen in a workshop session and an opportunity to written comments as a follow up.

Appendix D

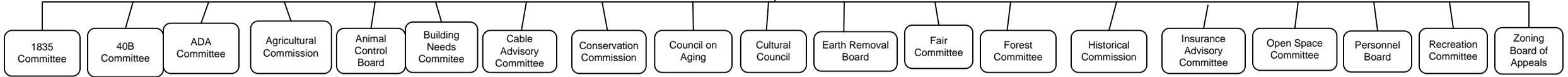
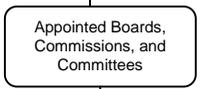
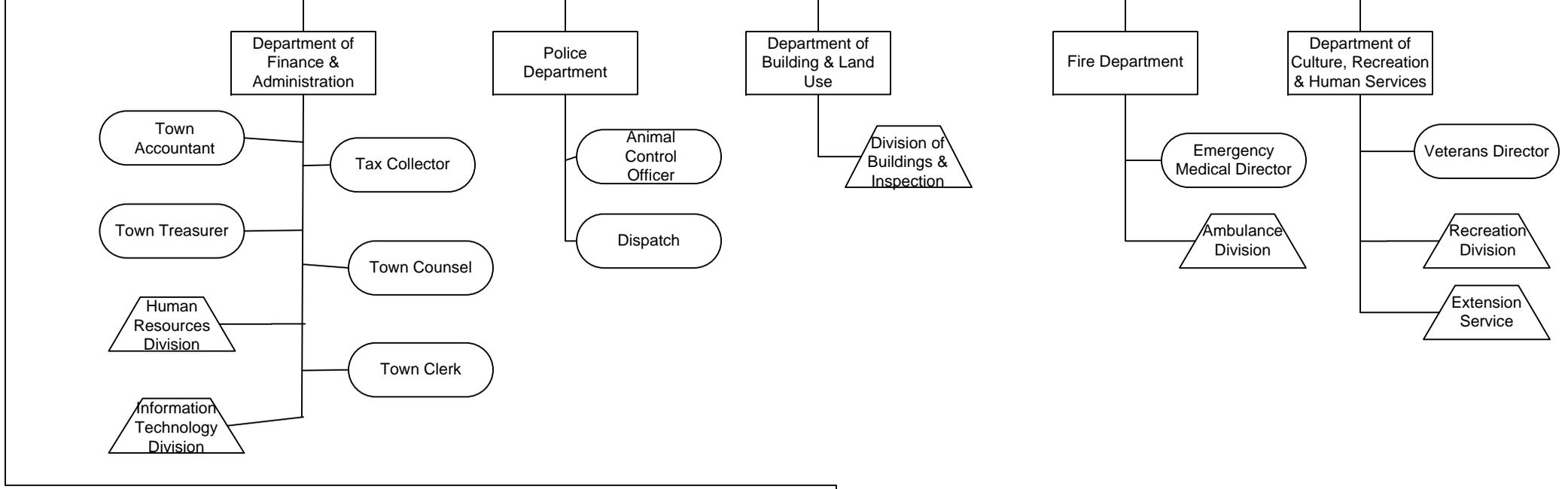
Organization Chart

(see organization chart on following page)

Town of Sterling, Massachusetts
Incorporated 1781



Note: All employees, boards, committees, and commissions below this line report to the Select Board through the Town Administrator.



Appendix E

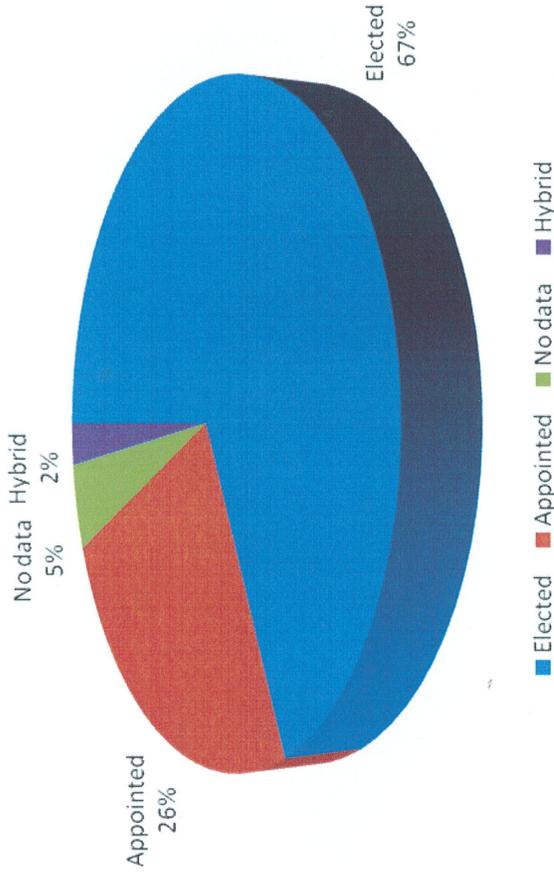
Comparative Town Data

(see graphs and charts on following pages)

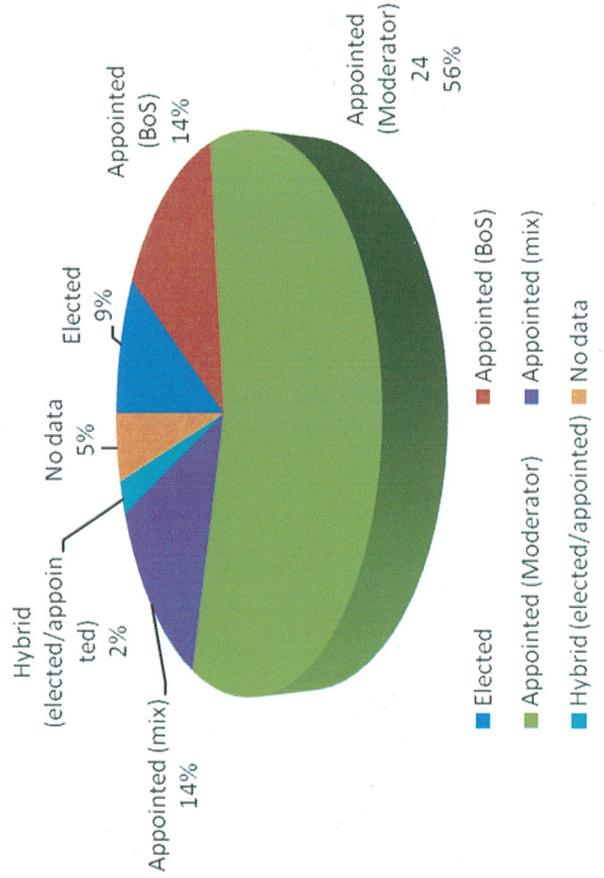
Municipality	County	'09 Pop'n	Land SQ Miles	Public Road Miles	FY09 Budget		Board of Health: E or A	FinCom: E or A	FinCom: Appt by whom	DPW Board: E or A	Personnel Board
					FY10 Budget	Per Capita					
BREWSTER	Barnstable	9,976	22.98	167.79	\$38,841,541	\$4,315	Elected	Appointed	Moderator	No	No
BLACKSTONE	Worcester	9,725	10.9	46.52	\$17,642,297	\$2,035	Elected	Appointed	Moderator	?	?
SOUTHWICK	Hampden	9,706	30.96	85.32	\$21,485,025	\$2,265	Elected	Appointed	Moderator	No	No
TOWNSEND	Middlesex	9,687	32.87	95.07	\$17,508,931	\$1,913	Elected	Appointed	Moderator	No	No
MIDDLETON	Essex	9,241	13.97	56.15	\$25,371,253	\$2,698	Appointed	Appointed	Moderator	No	Yes
SUTTON	Worcester	9,180	32.38	110.21	\$27,264,749	\$3,011	Appointed	Appointed	Moderator	No	No
FREETOWN	Bristol	9,076	36.61	105.01	\$21,194,325	\$2,341	BoS + Appointee	Elected	--	No	No
LITTLETON	Middlesex	8,975	16.62	84.71	\$35,529,264	\$3,961	Elected	Appointed	Mix	No	Yes
STURBRIDGE	Worcester	8,859	37.41	119.41	\$27,657,172	\$3,137	Elected	Appointed	Moderator	No	No
GEORGETOWN	Essex	8,726	12.94	65.36	\$24,122,225	\$2,873	Appointed	Appointed	?	No	Yes
LINCOLN	Middlesex	8,653	14.37	62.6	\$30,391,741	\$3,990	Elected	Appointed	Moderator	No	Yes
SALISBURY	Essex	8,608	15.43	55.59	\$22,722,319	\$2,650	?	Appointed	Moderator	No	No
HAMILTON	Essex	8,251	14.6	51.81	\$26,748,282	\$3,233	Appointed	Appointed	Moderator	No	Yes
BOXFORD	Essex	8,164	23.97	99.71	\$27,214,399	\$3,456	Elected	Appointed	BoS	No	Yes
SHIRLEY	Middlesex	8,110	15.82	48.77	\$17,026,521	\$2,205	Elected	Appointed	Moderator	No	Yes
WEST BOYLSTON	Worcester	8,109	12.9	61.78	\$23,115,380	\$2,819	Appointed	Appointed	BoS	Apptd by BoS	Yes
DOUGLAS	Worcester	8,099	36.37	83.00	\$24,298,368	\$3,195	Appointed	Appointed	Moderator	No	Yes
RUTLAND	Worcester	8,068	35.26	101.56	\$15,916,331	\$1,933	Elected	Appointed	Moderator	No	No
MILLIS	Norfolk	8,034	12.16	51.74	\$25,867,641	\$3,281	Elected	Appointed	Moderator	No	No
WILLIAMSTOWN	Berkshire	8,028	46.89	75.99	\$21,443,811	\$2,673	Appointed	Appointed	Moderator	No	No
TEMPLETON	Worcester	7,963	32.04	101.25	\$14,508,350	\$1,796	Elected	Appointed	Moderator	No	Mix
AYER	Middlesex	7,854	9.02	49.38	\$30,016,601	\$4,034	Elected	Appointed	BoS	No	Yes
HALIFAX	Plymouth	7,790	16.15	58.19	\$20,326,694	\$2,623	Elected	Appointed	Mix	No	Yes
STERLING	Worcester	7,786	30.52	106.75	\$21,329,729	\$2,795	Elected	Appointed	Mix	Elected	Yes
ORANGE	Franklin	7,699	35.36	103.53	\$18,888,277	\$2,583	?	Appointed	Moderator	No	Yes
ROCKPORT	Essex	7,675	7.07	40.6	\$29,363,834	\$3,878	Appointed	Appointed	BoS	Apptd by BoS	Yes
WESTMINSTER	Worcester	7,478	35.51	109.36	\$20,556,476	\$3,227	Elected	Appointed	Moderator	Apptd by BoS	Yes
GROVELAND	Essex	7,456	8.94	42.78	\$14,415,178	\$2,022	Elected	Appointed	BoS	No	Yes
COHASSET	Norfolk	7,409	9.89	48.12	\$40,559,387	\$5,439	Elected	Appointed	Mix	No	No
GREAT BARRINGTON	Berkshire	7,358	45.18	95.88	\$22,520,584	\$3,047	Elected	Elected	--	No	No
LANCASTER	Worcester	7,034	27.68	70.07	\$17,204,591	\$2,555	Elected	Elected	--	Yes	No
NEWBURY	Essex	6,912	24.25	64.86	\$17,641,831	\$2,407	Elected	Appointed	BoS	No	Yes
CHATHAM	Barnstable	6,753	16.22	122.43	\$40,762,534	\$6,000	Appointed	Appointed	Moderator	No	No
UPTON	Worcester	6,722	21.52	81.14	\$16,906,129	\$2,591	Elected	Both	Mix	No	Yes
STOW	Middlesex	6,671	17.62	59.96	\$24,662,098	\$3,491	Elected	Appointed	Moderator	No	No
MERRIMAC	Essex	6,609	8.53	47.56	\$14,350,350	\$2,210	Elected	Appointed	Moderator	No	No
DALTON	Berkshire	6,553	21.81	47.72	\$13,923,439	\$2,097	Appointed	Elected	--	No	No
MATTAPOISETT	Plymouth	6,519	23.3	58.1	\$25,325,206	\$3,702	Elected	Appointed	?	No	No
BERKLEY	Bristol	6,498	16.54	63.09	\$16,232,318	\$2,577	Elected	Appointed	Mix	No	No
GRANBY	Hampshire	6,305	27.86	67.75	\$18,555,811	\$3,801	Elected	Appointed	Mix	No	Yes
HARVARD	Worcester	6,156	26.36	77.06	\$21,858,972	\$3,671	Elected	Appointed	Moderator	No	Yes
TOPSFIELD	Essex	6,144	12.74	60.62	\$22,812,282	\$3,695	Appointed	Appointed	Moderator	Elected	Yes
ASHBURNHAM	Worcester	6,070	38.67	97.84	\$14,652,663	\$2,512	Elected	Appointed	Moderator	No	No

New charts for Sterling 9/21/11 meeting

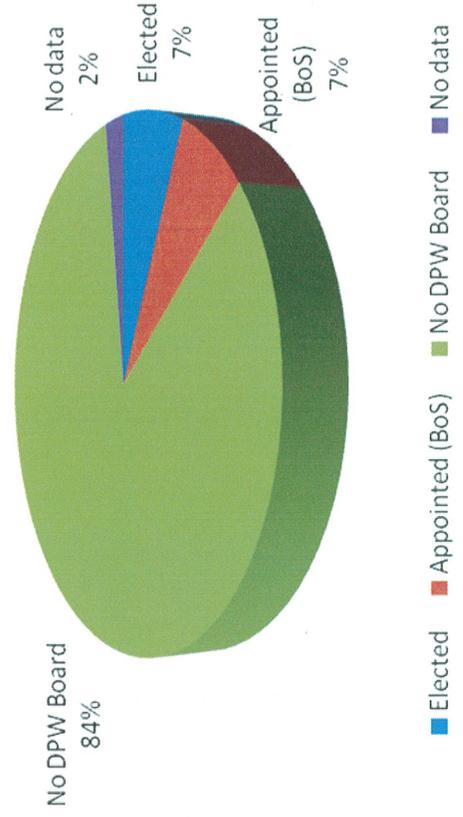
Board of Health Status



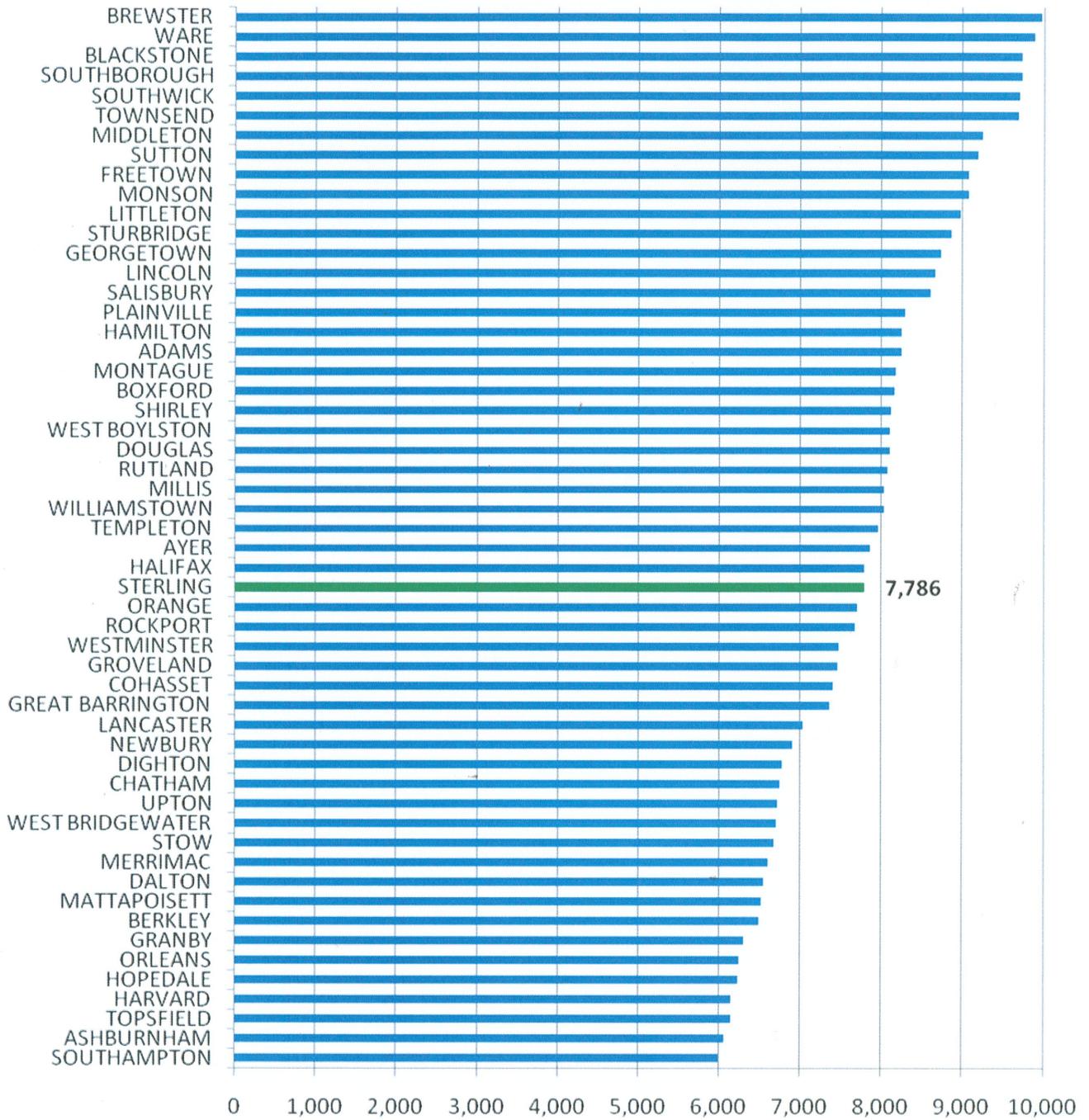
Finance Committee Status



Public Works Board Status

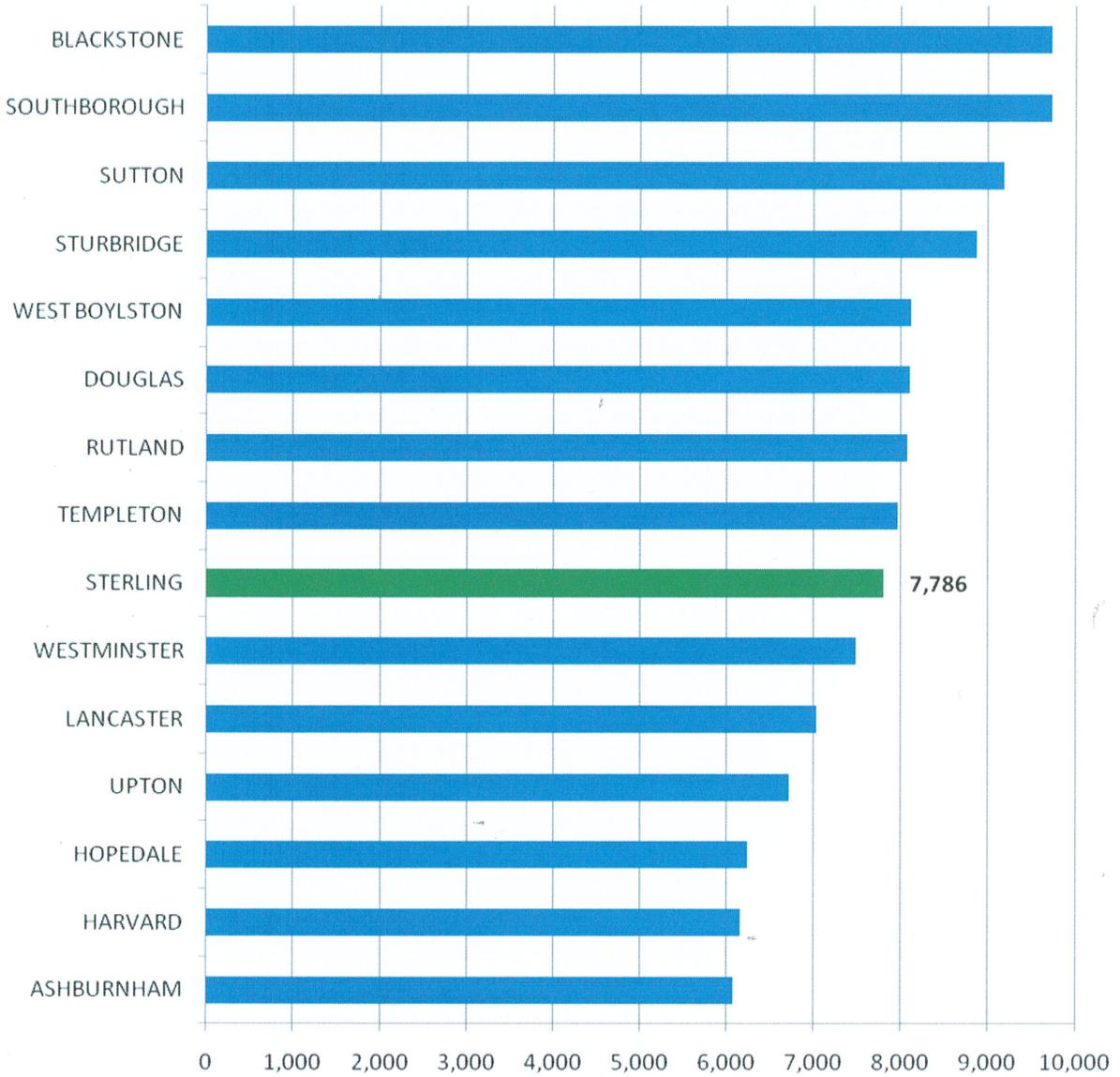


Mass Towns with Populations from 6,000 to 10,000 (2009 census)



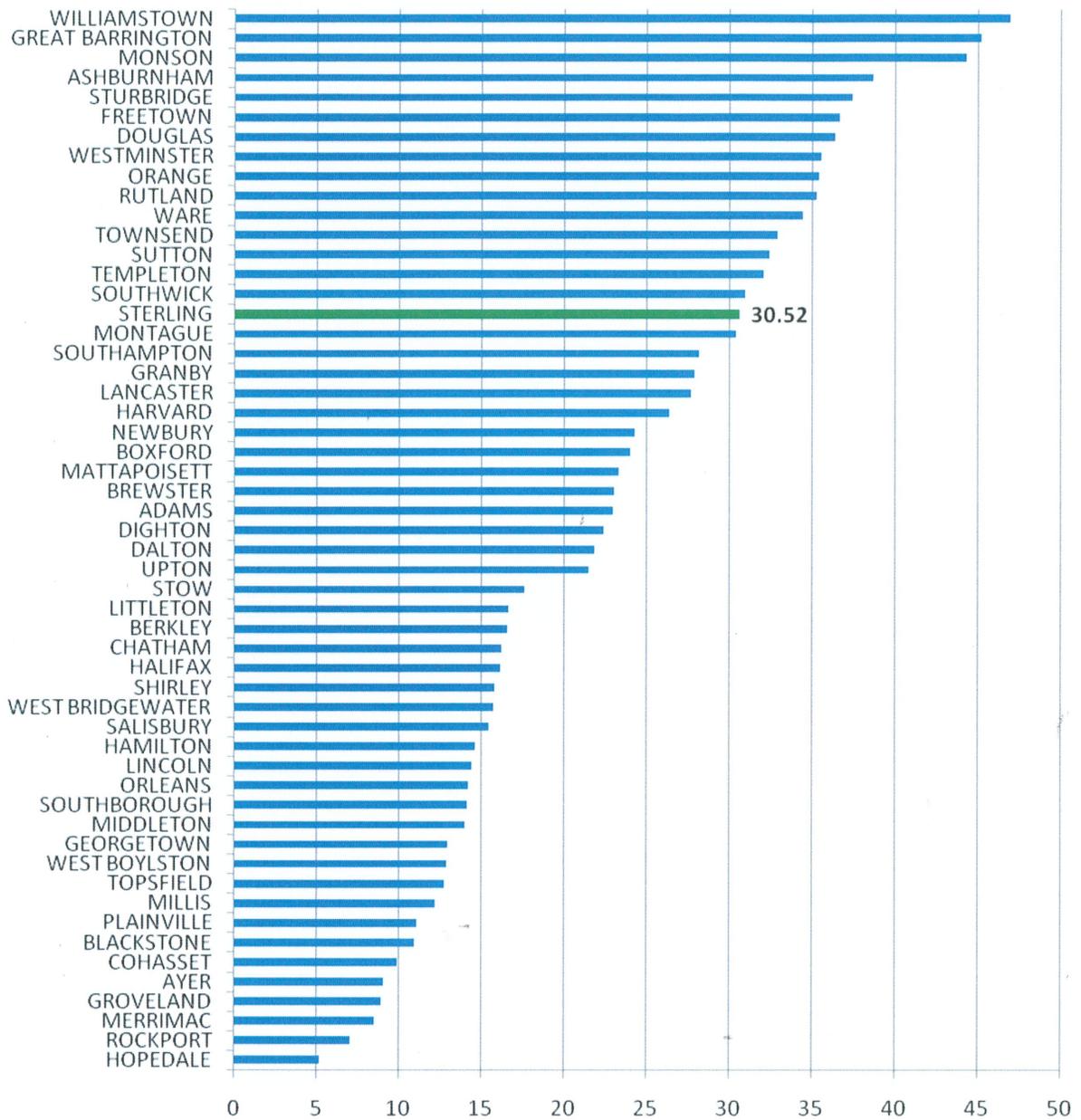
Worcester County Towns with Populations from 6,000 to 10,000

(2009 census)

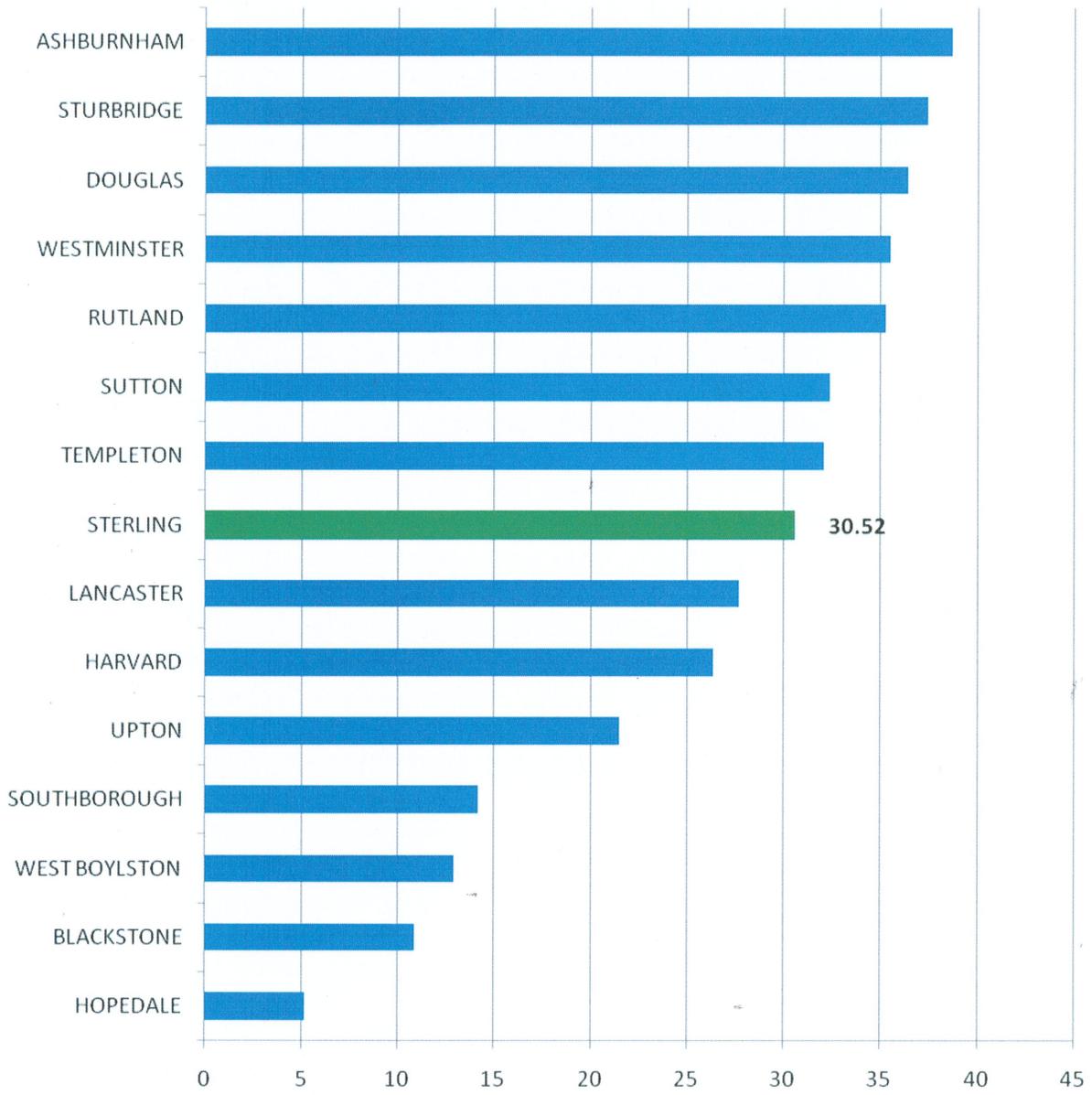


Land Area for Towns with Populations from 6,000 to 10,000

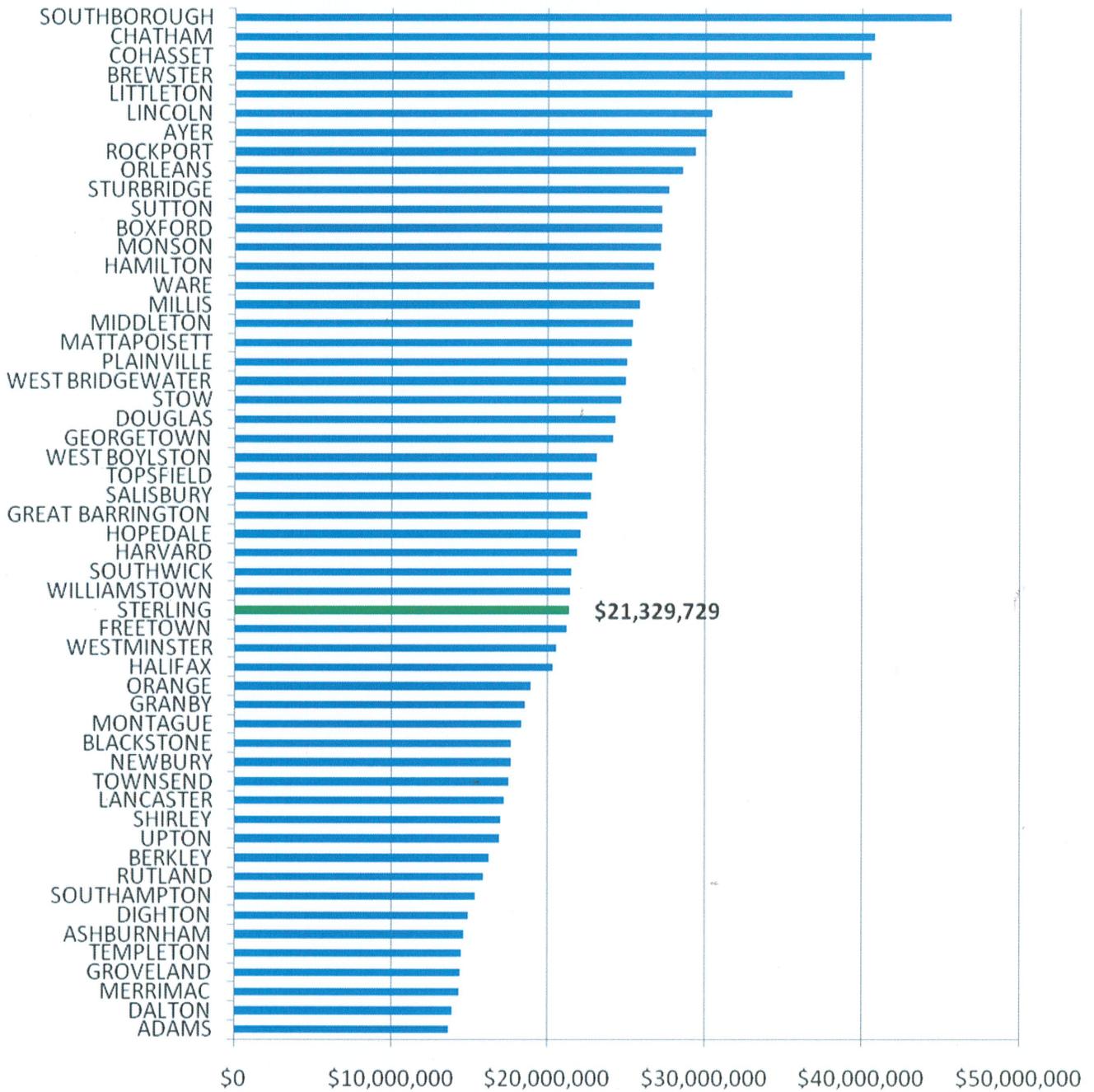
(Square miles)



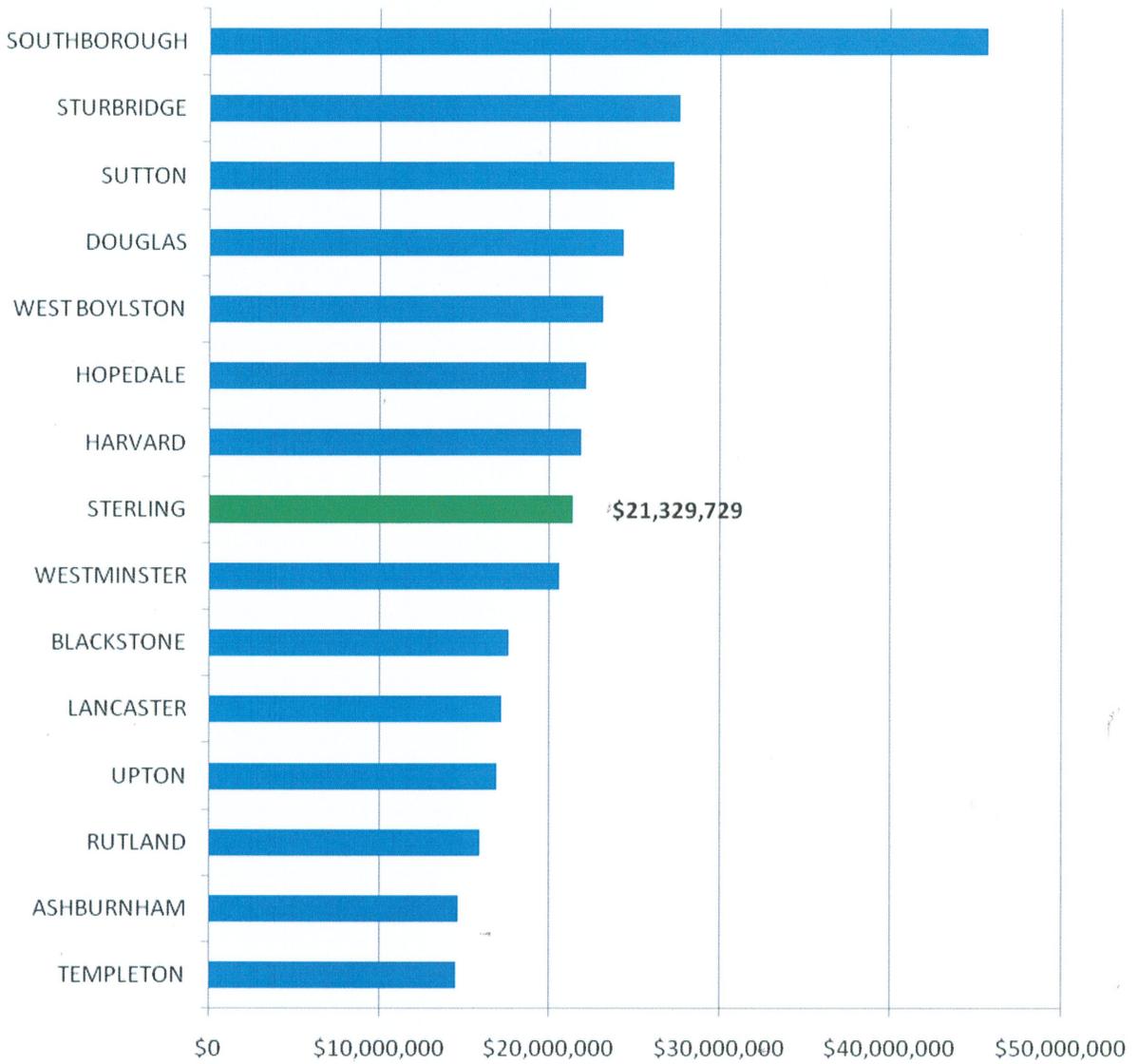
**Land Area for Worcester County Towns with Populations
from 6,000 to 10,000**
(Square miles)

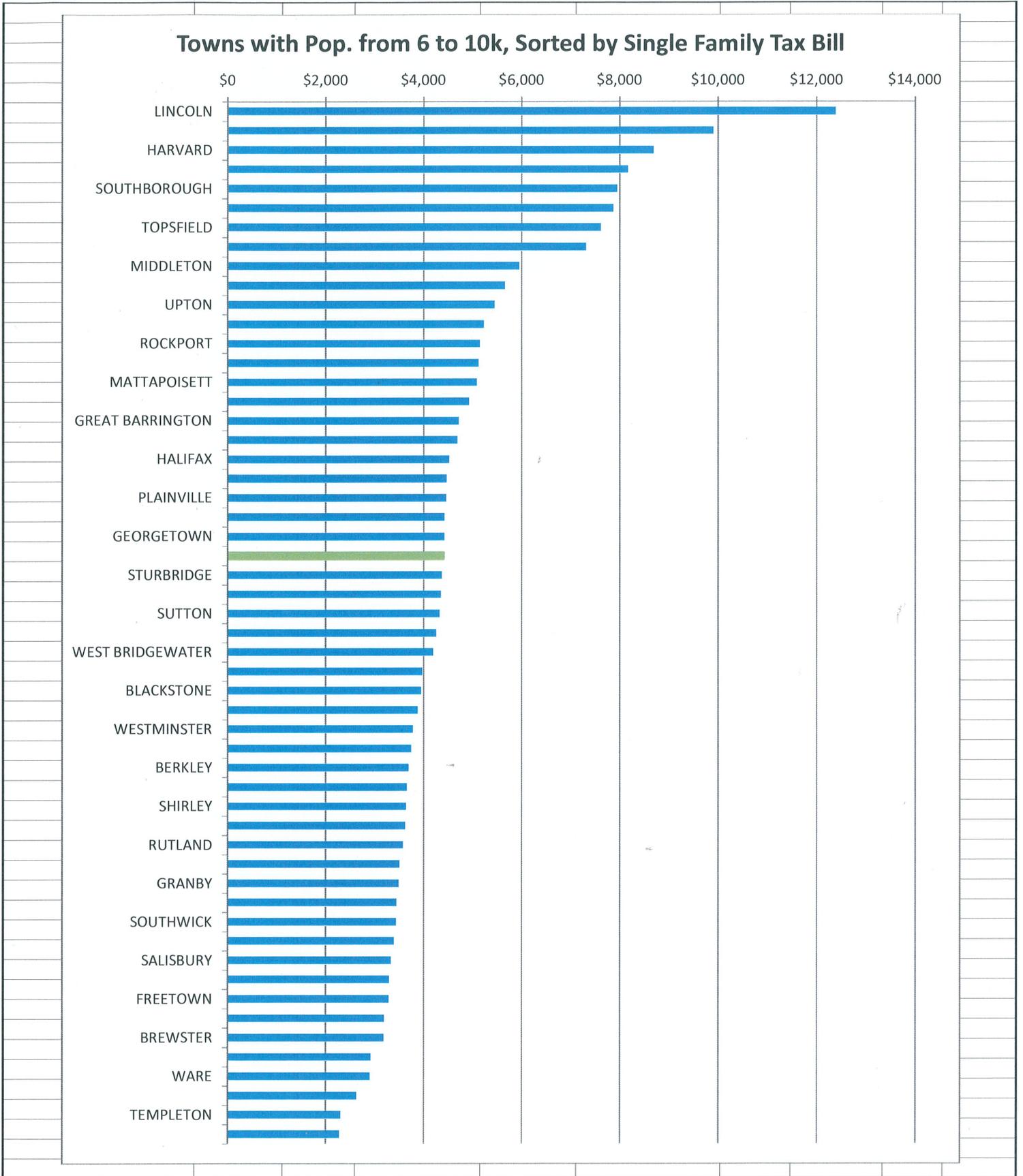


Operating Budgets for Towns with Populations from 6,000 to 10,000 (FY2010)

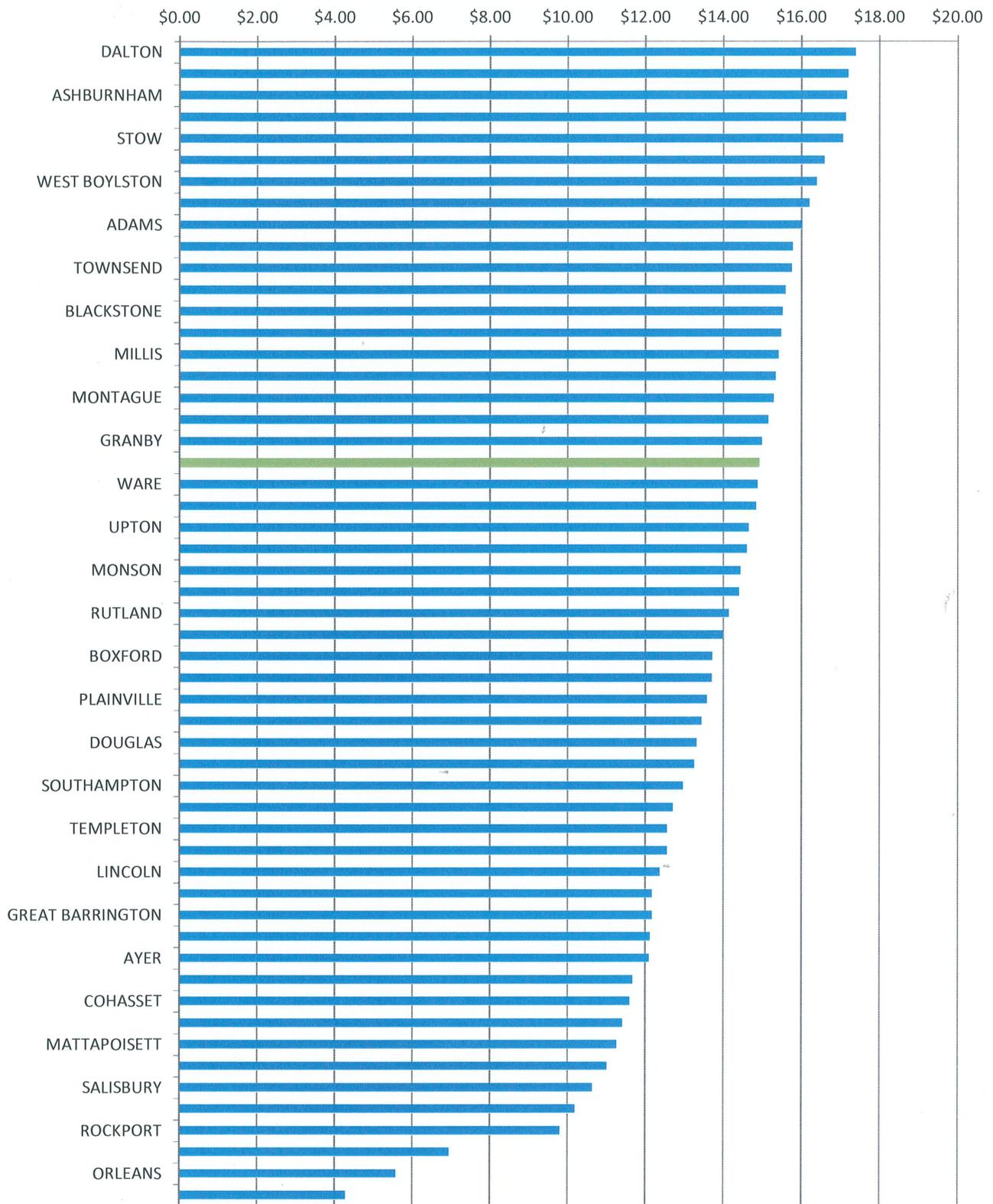


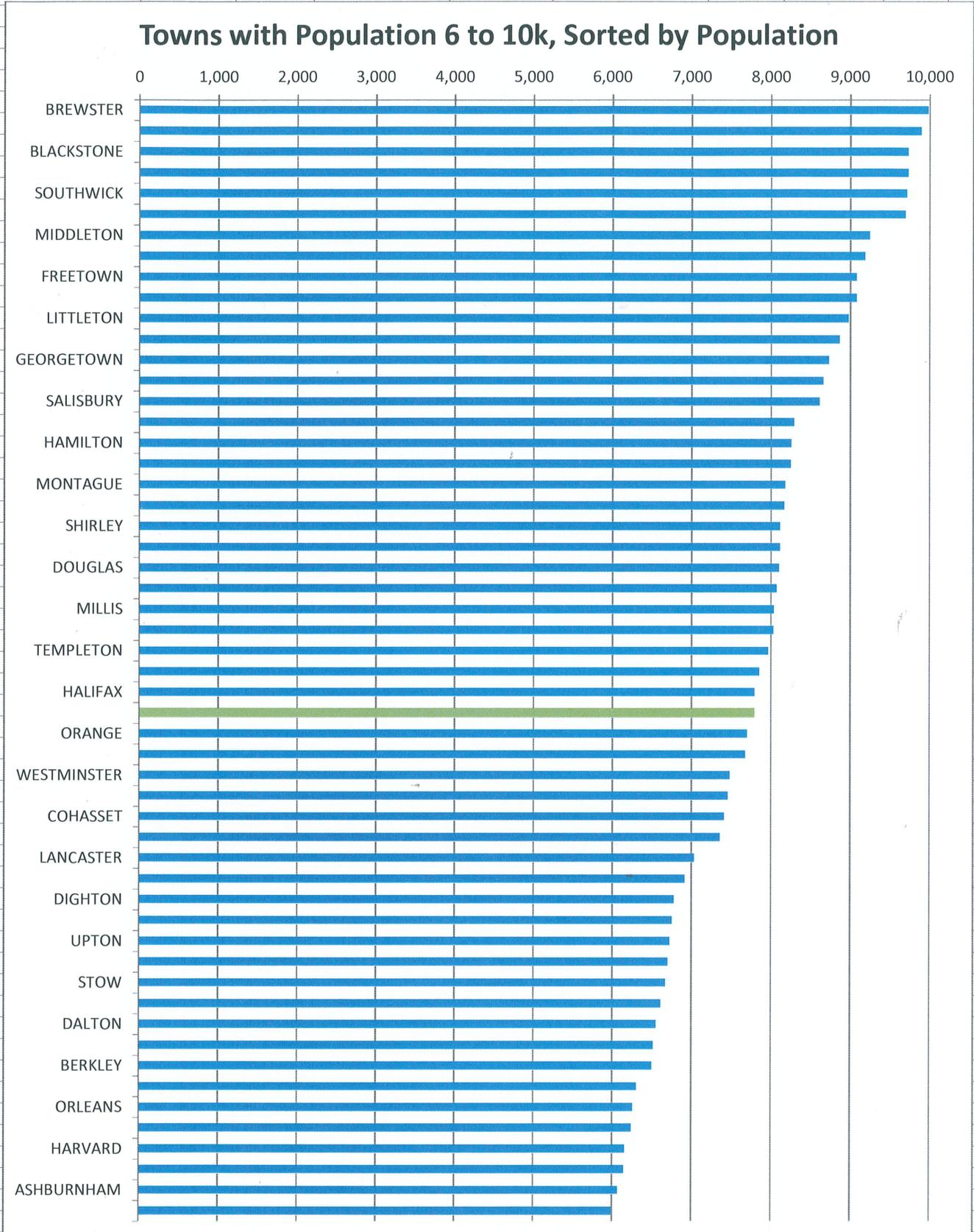
**Operating Budgets for Worcester County Towns with
Populations from 6,000 to 10,000
(FY2010)**



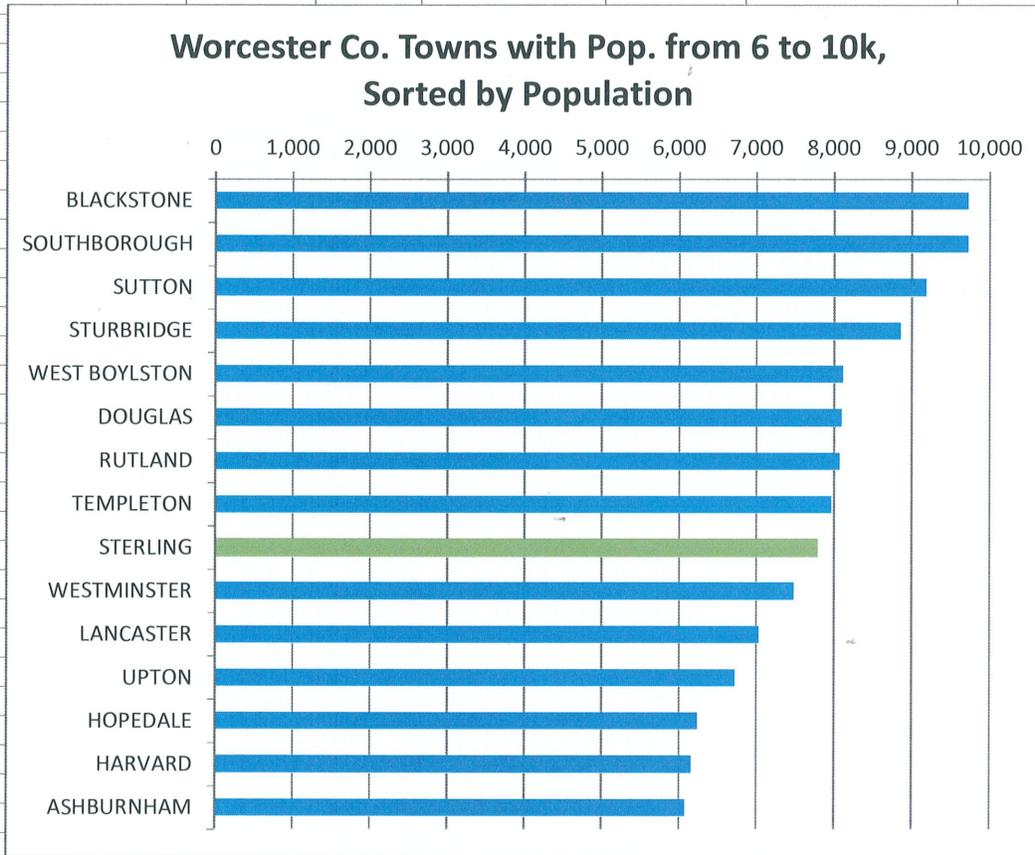


Towns with Population from 6 to 10k, Sorted by Tax Rate

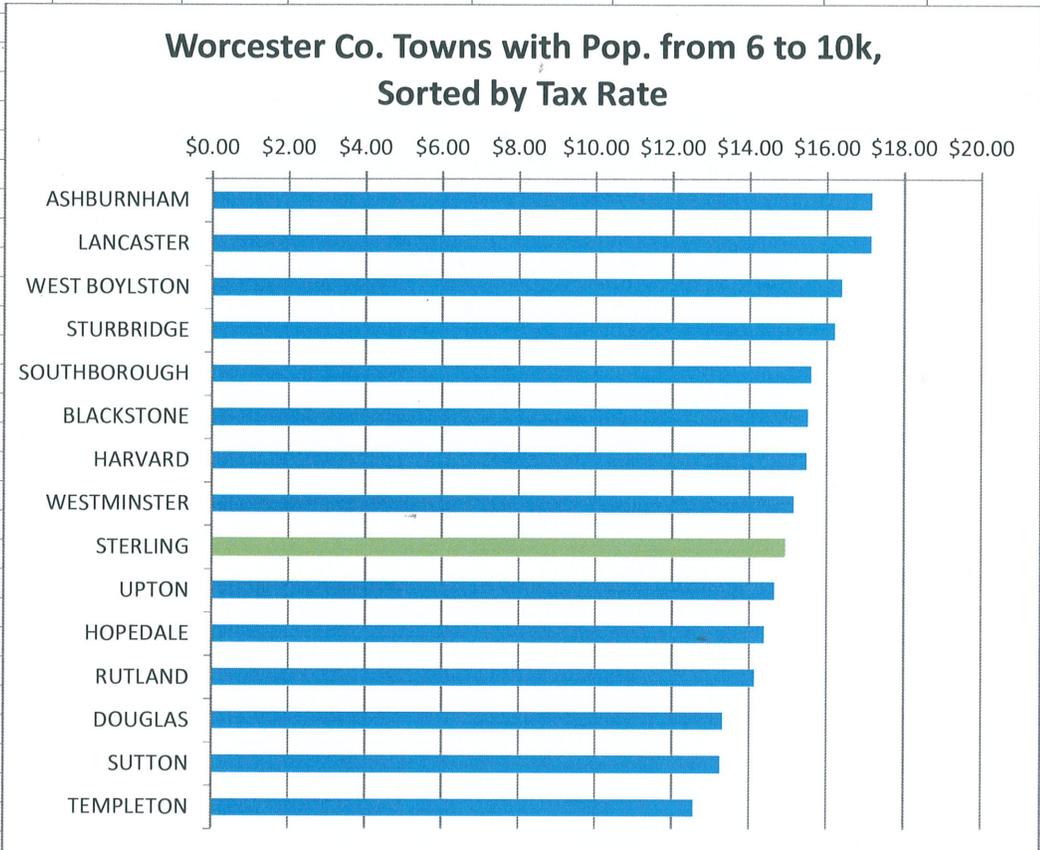




Municipality	County	2009 Population	FY10 Operating Budget	FY09 Budget Per Capita	FY 11 Assessed Value	Parcels	FY11 Average Value	FY11 Tax Rate	FY11 Single Family Tax Bill
BLACKSTONE	Worcester	9,725	\$17,642,297	\$2,035	\$513,448,900	2,017	\$254,561	\$15.51	\$3,948
SOUTHBOROUGH	Worcester	9,724	\$45,642,032	\$4,779	\$1,415,148,300	2,776	\$509,780	\$15.58	\$7,942
SUTTON	Worcester	9,180	\$27,264,749	\$3,011	\$922,363,900	2,824	\$326,616	\$13.25	\$4,328
STURBRIDGE	Worcester	8,859	\$27,657,172	\$3,137	\$804,652,200	2,981	\$269,927	\$16.19	\$4,370
WEST BOYLSTON	Worcester	8,109	\$23,115,380	\$2,819	\$505,026,700	1,942	\$260,055	\$16.38	\$4,260
DOUGLAS	Worcester	8,099	\$24,298,368	\$3,195	\$665,391,300	2,569	\$259,008	\$13.31	\$3,447
RUTLAND	Worcester	8,068	\$15,916,331	\$1,933	\$616,640,000	2,437	\$253,032	\$14.14	\$3,578
TEMPLETON	Worcester	7,963	\$14,508,350	\$1,796	\$440,326,400	2,396	\$183,776	\$12.55	\$2,306
STERLING	Worcester	7,786	\$21,329,729	\$2,795	\$743,765,900	2,509	\$296,439	\$14.90	\$4,417
WESTMINSTER	Worcester	7,478	\$20,556,476	\$3,227	\$638,689,600	2,557	\$249,781	\$15.14	\$3,782
LANCASTER	Worcester	7,034	\$17,204,591	\$2,555	\$597,074,400	1,997	\$298,986	\$17.13	\$5,122
UPTON	Worcester	6,722	\$16,906,129	\$2,591	\$812,853,400	2,185	\$372,015	\$14.64	\$5,446
HOPEDALE	Worcester	6,241	\$22,113,660	\$3,712	\$444,401,390	1,470	\$302,314	\$14.39	\$4,350
HARVARD	Worcester	6,156	\$21,858,972	\$3,671	\$931,387,600	1,659	\$561,415	\$15.47	\$8,685
ASHBURNHAM	Worcester	6,070	\$14,652,663	\$2,512	\$521,370,000	2,386	\$218,512	\$17.15	\$3,747



Municipality	County	2009 Population	FY10 Operating Budget	FY09 Budget Per Capita	FY 11 Assessed Value	Parcels	FY11 Average Value	FY11 Tax Rate	FY11 Single Family Tax Bill
ASHBURNHAM	Worcester	6,070	\$14,652,663	\$2,512	\$521,370,000	2,386	\$218,512	\$17.15	\$3,747
LANCASTER	Worcester	7,034	\$17,204,591	\$2,555	\$597,074,400	1,997	\$298,986	\$17.13	\$5,122
WEST BOYLSTON	Worcester	8,109	\$23,115,380	\$2,819	\$505,026,700	1,942	\$260,055	\$16.38	\$4,260
STURBRIDGE	Worcester	8,859	\$27,657,172	\$3,137	\$804,652,200	2,981	\$269,927	\$16.19	\$4,370
SOUTHBOROUGH	Worcester	9,724	\$45,642,032	\$4,779	\$1,415,148,300	2,776	\$509,780	\$15.58	\$7,942
BLACKSTONE	Worcester	9,725	\$17,642,297	\$2,035	\$513,448,900	2,017	\$254,561	\$15.51	\$3,948
HARVARD	Worcester	6,156	\$21,858,972	\$3,671	\$931,387,600	1,659	\$561,415	\$15.47	\$8,685
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SUTTON	Worcester	9,180	\$27,264,749	\$3,011	\$922,363,900	2,824	\$326,616	\$13.25	\$4,328
TEMPLETON	Worcester	7,963	\$14,508,350	\$1,796	\$440,326,400	2,396	\$183,776	\$12.55	\$2,306



Municipality	County	2009 Population	FY10 Operating Budget	FY09 Budget Per Capita	FY 11 Assessed Value	Parcels	FY11 Average Value	FY11 Tax Rate	FY11 Single Family Tax Bill
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HOPEDALE	Worcester	6,241	\$22,113,660	\$3,712	\$444,401,390	1,470	\$302,314	\$14.39	\$4,350
SUTTON	Worcester	9,180	\$27,264,749	\$3,011	\$922,363,900	2,824	\$326,616	\$13.25	\$4,328
WEST BOYLSTON	Worcester	8,109	\$23,115,380	\$2,819	\$505,026,700	1,942	\$260,055	\$16.38	\$4,260
BLACKSTONE	Worcester	9,725	\$17,642,297	\$2,035	\$513,448,900	2,017	\$254,561	\$15.51	\$3,948
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RUTLAND	Worcester	8,068	\$15,916,331	\$1,933	\$616,640,000	2,437	\$253,032	\$14.14	\$3,578
DOUGLAS	Worcester	8,099	\$24,298,368	\$3,195	\$665,391,300	2,569	\$259,008	\$13.31	\$3,447
TEMPLETON	Worcester	7,963	\$14,508,350	\$1,796	\$440,326,400	2,396	\$183,776	\$12.55	\$2,306

