

# GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

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## Background

The Government Structure and Function subcommittee began their process by reviewing the Government Structure and Function section of the previous Village of Lake Placid/Town of North Elba Joint Comprehensive Plan adopted in 1996. The subcommittee was encouraged by the



progress made by the local political process in achieving the former plan's goals. The previous subcommittee had a strong focus on "land use" in the Village and Town. The goals "to consolidate the Village and Town Comprehensive Plans and Land Use Codes" and "to restructure and consolidate the planning/zone-related entities" were successfully achieved. These accomplishments have played a major role in shaping the Town and Village's future as a leader in government efficiency and economic sustainability as well as making this town a place so beloved and

appreciated by residents, seasonal residents and visitors from around the world.

The Lake Placid/North Elba community is proud of what our elected officials, municipal employees and residents have already accomplished. The subcommittee's new goals aim to keep Lake Placid and North Elba at the forefront of developing policy that is economically sustainable, environmentally-friendly and geared to enhancing all season mountain and lakes resort town living. The subcommittee believes that by increasing the efficiency at which all levels of government function, the costs of government will decrease and in-turn decrease the costs to individual taxpayers. The subcommittee includes suggestions for sharing services and costs, modernizing positions, and streamlining the budget process.

In the past the Town, Village, and School District employed a grant writer. All of the stakeholders with which the current subcommittee spoke mentioned the void that eliminating this position has left. The stakeholders spoke enthusiastically about the infrastructure upgrades and other community projects that were funded utilizing monies secured by the grant writer. By creating the Community Development position, the subcommittee hopes to again have real time access to the grant cycles that can supplement funding, leverage tax dollars to secure grant monies, and bring additional amenities and services that the community might not be able to offer otherwise. All departments will also have the benefits of a staff member who has planning and mapping skills.

# GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

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## Vision for Government Structure & Function

The community is committed to efficiency at all levels of government as a cost saving measure. In addition, the community will strive for energy efficiency and increasing the role of alternative, renewable, self-sufficient energy. The subcommittee sees the Lake Placid area as a model for other all-season mountain resort towns around the world. As a leader in smart growth and sustainable living, the community continues to provide an exceptional way of life for future generations.

## Goals, Objectives and Implementation Measures

**Goal #1:** *To improve the operation of all village and town government departments to optimize efficiency.*

**Objective 1:** Explore the idea of a “Municipal Manager” position to serve as a liaison between departments and Town and Village boards.

### Implementation Measures

- Conduct a feasibility study to identify costs and benefits associated with creation of a Municipal Manager position. Consider local examples such as the Village of Saranac Lake.
- Create a multi-department and multi-board member task force to consider implementing recommendations of the feasibility study.

**Objective 2:** Create a Community Development position.

### Implementation Measures

- Seek funding that would allow for a shared position, possibly outsourced, to prepare and administer grants to advance the Comprehensive Plan including Smart Growth principles and Complete Street practices.

## **GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION**

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**Objective 3: Coordinate 5-year Capital Improvement Plans to better plan for future expenditures.**

Implementation Measures:

Continue to prepare 5-year Capital Improvements Plans for both communities.

- Include an Asset Management Plan, which will track depreciation and maintenance costs of equipment in order to keep a replacement cycle / lease purchase plan for town/village property including trucks, police cars, and other equipment.
- Coordinate annually to maximize efficiencies and to reduce duplication of expenditures.

**Objective 4: Move toward basing the Town and Village Park maintenance and capital improvements funding on assessed values.**

Implementation Measures

- Conduct a Feasibility Study to evaluate a special district created for park maintenance and improvements.

**Objective 5: Investigate the possibility of appointing, not electing, the Town Highway Superintendent in an effort to consolidate the Village and Town highway departments.**

Implementation Measures

- Review related legislation to determine feasibility.
- Identify key stakeholders to review options.

**Objective 6: Consider utilizing County Tax Collector for assessments and collection of all taxes.**

Implementation Measures

- Convene meeting between Town Tax Collector and County Tax Collector to determine feasibility.

## GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

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**Objective 7: Explore the idea of creating a shared “purchasing agent” position to organize joint bids and purchasing in collaboration with other towns, villages, school districts and NYS Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA).**

### Implementation Measures

- Convene a meeting with elected officials, school districts and ORDA to discuss creation of a shared purchasing agent position.

**Objective 8: Enhance Efficiency, Transparency, and Access to Municipal Information/Records.**

### Implementation Measures

- Increase transparency in government by providing “IT” capability at Village and Town Hall for various applications including web-based (GIS) mapping, live streaming of Village and Town Board meetings, meeting minutes and agenda, local laws, etc.
- Re-design meeting rooms with presentation technology.

*Goal #2: Decrease Town/Village energy consumption and make existing usage more efficient.*

**Objective 1: Decrease Town/Village overall energy usage by 10% by the year 2015; 25% by 2020; 40% by 2025.**

### Implementation Measures

- Work with Superintendent of Electric Department to research the feasibility of these benchmarks.
- Apply for New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) and New York Power Authority (NYPA) grants that will fund educating all town and village entities including ORDA, LPSD, business owners, and first and second homeowners on ways to decrease energy usage by responsible use and by improving building energy efficiency that will in turn decrease town's total consumption.
- Include a simple, easy-to-read educational pamphlet on responsible, efficient energy usage with Village of Lake Placid Electric Company bills on an annual basis.

## GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

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- Increase awareness among elected officials and the public regarding the economic development benefits associated with alternative energy, including entrepreneurial opportunities and high paying skilled job opportunities.
- Require and enforce certain standards of energy efficiency in new construction of commercial and residential buildings.

**Objective 2: Explore supplementing Lake Placid Electric Company energy sources with local renewable sources of energy including reopening local dams, solar panels, wind turbines, geothermal energy and biomass furnaces for individual school, municipal and ORDA buildings where appropriate.**

### Implementation Measures

- Conduct an inventory and review of Adirondack Communities who have successfully implemented cost savings measures. Consider the Town of Chester as an example.
- Partner with North County Regional Development Council and the Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) to identify potential renewable energy funding opportunities.

**Objective 3: Increase energy efficiency of school district and ORDA facilities.**

### Implementation Measures

- Continue to conduct energy efficiency audits of school district buildings, ORDA facilities and transportation systems.

**Goal #3:** *Continue to foster strong and cost-effective relationships among all government entities including the Village, Town, Lake Placid Central School District, surrounding Towns and Villages, Essex County, ORDA, and New York State*

**Objective 1: Move toward sharing school administration positions with Saranac Lake Keene, and Tupper Lake whenever possible.**

### Implementation Measures

- Encourage talks between school districts to continue.
- Encourage School Board to keep in touch with Community Development Board.

# GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

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- Have a Community Development Board member attend regularly attend School Board meetings.

## **Objective 2: Reduce the costs of government employee health care.**

### Implementation Measures

- Combine health care benefit bargaining of town, village, school district as well as other municipalities and school districts.
- Develop a health care consortium with other municipalities and school districts.
- Adjust ratios of employer/employee cost sharing by offering wellness programs and annually exploring other plans.

## **Objective 3: Explore reorganizing law enforcement, fire districts, and the judicial system to increase efficiency and reduce cost as per the Center for Governmental Research study.**

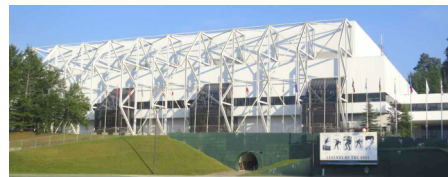
### Implementation Measures

- Organize Village Police Department jurisdiction to align with water and sewage district lines. Increased tax base would decrease actual tax totals for all services.
- Consider Lake Placid Police Department becoming branch of Essex County Sheriff's Department.
- Consider the town constable system, which would include Ray Brook and Saranac Lake side of North Elba.
- Investigate the possibility of cost redistribution among Fire Districts.

## **Objective 4: Create a Community Advisory Committee to partner with ORDA.**

### Implementation Measures

- Hold quarterly meeting with Supervisor, Mayor, Sports Complex manager, representative from the School District and ORDA management to share information, have open communication, and collaborate on seasonal planning and event details.



# GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

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## Objective 5: Collaborate Between Town, Village and County to Obtain Grant Funding

### Implementation Measures

- Partner with Essex County Planning Department to obtain grant funding and land use/planning technical assistance.
- To ensure a competitive grant application, seek opportunities for regional cooperation in obtaining grant funding.

