

# **Governmental and Community Facilities and Services**

## **GOALS:**

- 1. Ensure the continuation of adequate ambulance and fire protection services in the Town.**
- 2. Ensure the continued efficiency and effectiveness of Town operations and services.**
- 3. Ensure the continuation of responsible Town government for the residents of the Town.**

## **Town Facilities and Services**

The locations of Town facilities are depicted on Map

### **Town Hall**

The Owasco Town Hall is located on Bristol Avenue in the "Avenues" neighborhood. The Town Hall contains the offices of the Town Supervisor, Town Clerk, Code Enforcement Officer, Assessor and Court Clerk. The Town Hall also contains a multi-purpose meeting room used for Town Board, Town Planning Board and Town Zoning Board of Appeals meetings, and for Town Court.

### **Town Highway Barn /Water Filtration Plant**

The Owasco Highway Barn, which houses the Highway Department's trucks and other vehicles and equipment, is located on East Lake a short distance north of the Swartout Road intersection. Also located on the site are the Town's salt storage facility, recycling center and water filtration plant.

***INSERT PICTURE OF TOWN HIGHWAY BARN***

### **Town Clerk's Office**

The Town Clerk is responsible for the maintenance and safe keeping of all official Town records and documents. The Town Clerk also serves as the Registrar of Vital Statistics, and issues birth and death certificates, marriage licenses, hunting and fishing licenses, and dog licenses. The Town Clerk is also responsible

for collecting property taxes and receiving water bill payments.

### **Town Assessor**

The Town Assessor is responsible for the preparation of the tax roll. This involves assessing the market value of real property in the Town, and updating values from time to time as new construction occurs and as the real estate market changes.

### **Town Code Enforcement Officer**

The Code Enforcement Officer is responsible for issuing zoning and building permits and enforcing the property maintenance code. The Code Enforcement Officer is also responsible for inspecting new construction to ensure compliance with the NYS Fire Prevention and Building Code.

### **Town Council**

The Town Council, the legislative body of the Town, is comprised of five elected officials, i.e., four Council members and the Supervisor. The Town Council, more commonly referred to as the Town Board, is responsible for establishing Town policy, enacting Town legislation (local laws, ordinances, and resolutions) and for appropriate of funds through the adoption of the Town budget. The Town Supervisor, in addition to serving on the Town Board, serves as the chief executive and administrative officer of the Town and is responsible for overseeing the day to day operations of Town government.

### **Town Planning Board**

The Planning Board is comprised of seven members appointed by the Town Board. The Planning Board is responsible for subdivision approval.

### **Town Zoning Board of Appeals**

The Zoning Board of Appeals is comprised of seven members appointed by the Town Board. The Zoning Board is responsible for the issuance of special use permits. The Zoning Board also serves as a quasi-judicial body which hears appeals of applicants who have been denied zoning permits by the Code Enforcement Officer. The Zoning Board has the authority to override the Zoning Officer's denials by granting use and area variances from the zoning regulations.

### **Assessment Review Board**

The Assessment Review Board is a five member board appointed by the Town Board. The Assessment Review Board serves as a quasi-judicial body which hears appeals of property owners who disagree with the assessment of their property. The Assessment Review Board has the authority to lower property assessments.

### **Town Court**

Owasco is mandated by State Law to provide a Justice Court. The Town has two Justices and Town Court is held weekly in the evening.

### **Recreation Committee**

The Recreation Committee is an informal committee comprised of five members appointed by the Town Board. The Recreation Committee is responsible for interviewing applicants for the Playground Director positions for the Summer Playground Program and making hiring recommendations to the Town Board.

### **Summer Playground Program**

Owasco provides a summer playground program for the children of Owasco in the Town's two playgrounds. The program is described in greater detail in the Parks and Recreation Chapter.

### **Senior Citizen Clubs**

Two senior citizen clubs are active in Owasco. The Melrose Park Seniors Club which meets at the Sacred Heart Church, and the Owasco Lake Seniors Club which meet at Fire Hall No. 2 in the Hamlet of Owasco. The activities of both clubs are partially funded by the Town.

### **Highway Department**

The Owasco Highway Department, unlike typical town highway departments, provides several services in addition to maintaining Town roads. Each service is identified and described below:

- **Road Maintenance**

The Owasco Highway Department repairs Town roads including resurfacing the roadways, clears snow and ice from roadways, and cleans debris and sedimentation from ditches and culverts. The Department also clears snow and ice from 1-1/2 miles of County roads (i. e., Oakridge Road and School and Emma Streets). The Owasco Highway Department has mutual-aid agreements for sharing equipment and labor with the Highway Departments of the Towns of Fleming, Sennett, Throop, Niles, Brutus, Moravia and Aurelius. Some of the mutual-aid agreements have been formalized, others are in-

formal.

- **Cemetery Maintenance**

The Owasco Highway Department is responsible for maintaining three inactive cemeteries.

- **Trash and Recycling Center**

The Owasco Highway Department operates a drive through trash and recycling center. The recycling center is open to the public on Wednesday evenings from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., and on Saturdays from 7:00 am. to 1:00 p.m. Garbage, trash, metals, plastic, glass, paper, cardboard and grass and brush are all accepted. There is no charge for recyclable, but there are fees for the disposal of garbage, trash, furniture and appliances. Garbage, trash and recyclable are disposed of at the Seneca Meadows landfill and recycling center. Grass and brush are converted into compost which is made available to Town residents.

- **Brush and Leaf Pickup**

The Owasco Highway Department provides curbside brush and leaf pick-up service monthly from the beginning of April until the end of October. There are no fees charged for this service.

- **Water Service**

The Owasco Highway Department is responsible for operating the Town's water filtration plant and for maintaining and repairing the watermains that serve the Owasco Water District. Two of the Highway Department employees are licensed water plant operators. Owasco water service is described in greater detail in the Transportation and Infrastructure chapter.

- **Sanitary Sewer Service**

The Owasco Highway Department is responsible for maintaining, cleaning and repairing the sanitary sewer lines that are within Owasco Sewer District No. 1. The Town of Owasco does not operate a wastewater treatment plant, but contracts with the City of Auburn to treat sewage generated within the Owasco Sewer District. Owasco sewer service is described in greater detail in the Transportation and Infrastructure chapter.

- **Sanitary Sewer Lateral Cleaning**

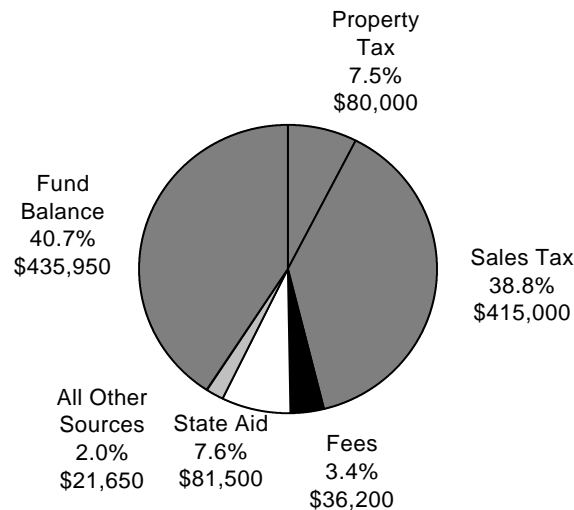
The Owasco Highway Department provides sewer lateral cleaning services for private sewer laterals upon request and for a fee. A \$25.00 fee is charged for this service if performed on a weekday, \$50.00 if on a weekday evening, and \$75.00 if on a weekend.

## **Town Budget**

### **Revenues**

The Town's 2001 operating budget for the General and Highway Funds combined totals \$1,070,300. The largest source of revenue is the sales tax which accounts for 38.8% of all revenues. State aid and property tax are the two next largest sources accounting for 7.6% and 7.5% of the Town's revenues respectively. Governmental fees and other sources account for very small percentages. Fund balance (i. e., Town equity) was appropriated to balance the 2001 budget and represents 40.7% of the revenue appropriated.

**Town of Owasco  
2001 Budgeted Revenues  
General and Highway Funds Combined**

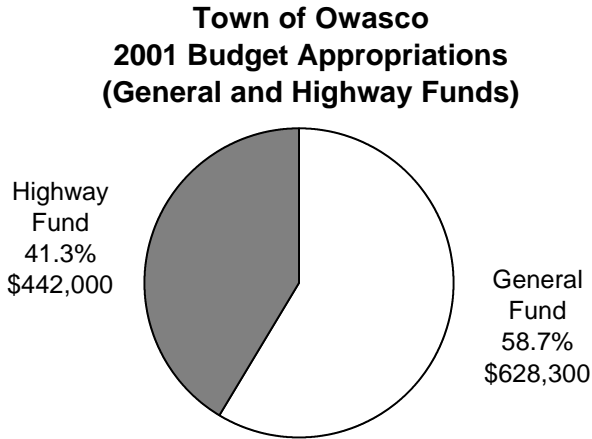


The formula for the distribution of sales tax within Cayuga County is noteworthy. Sales tax is distributed among the Towns proportionately based on property assessments.

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Each town receives a proportion of the local sales tax collected by Cayuga County equal to the proportion of the total assessed value of all property in Cayuga County that is within each Town.



### **Expenditures**

The General Fund represents 58.7% of the Town's operating budget. General governmental operations are funded through the General Fund. The Highway Fund represents 41.3% of the Town's operating budget. Highway Department operations, i. e, road maintenance, snow removal, and equipment maintenance are funded through the Highway Fund.

## **Services Provided by Other Agencies**

### **Fire Protection**

Fire protection is provided by the Owasco Volunteer Fire Department in conjunction with the Owasco Fire District. The Owasco Fire District is a legal entity, separate from the Owasco Town government, with a Board of Commissioners that oversees the functions of the Fire District. The Board of Commissioners has taxing authority and the Fire District raises all of its own revenue by levying property taxes on the property within the Fire District. The Town of Owasco is wholly contained within the Fire District as the Town and the Fire District have coterminous boundaries. The Fire District, owns and maintains two fire halls, and is responsible for purchasing and maintaining the fire apparatus and equipment.



The Owasco Fire Department is exclusively a membership organization comprised of volunteer firefighters. The Fire Department has a total of 80 members, approximately 40 of whom are active. The Fire Department provides the firefighters who utilize the Fire District's fire halls, apparatus and equipment to provide fire protection within the District. The Fire Department is responsible for providing its own personal protection gear. The Fire Department has no taxing authority, but relies on fund raisers and donations to raise the funds its needs.

The Fire District/Town is divided into two service areas, a northern and southern service area with a Fire Hall located in each (see Map 14 at the end of this Section). Swartout Road serves as

the boundary that separates the two service areas. Fire Hall No. 1 is in the northern service area on Owasco Road near the Town Hall. Fire Hall No. 2 is in the southern service area in the Hamlet of Owasco. The Fire Department is also divided into two fire companies. The fire apparatus and equipment at Fire Hall No. 1 is assigned to Company No. 1 which generally provides fire protection to the northern part of Owasco. The fire apparatus and equipment at Fire Hall No. 2 is assigned to Company No. 2 which generally provides fire protection to the southern part of Owasco. Both fire companies supplement each other in the two service areas as needed.

Historically, Owasco has had a very low incidence of fires. This is due, probably in large part, to the fact that most of the Town is rural and not densely developed.

The Fire Department has mutual-aid agreements with the surrounding towns and with the City of Auburn for both fire and ambulance service. Fire and ambulance dispatching is provided by Cayuga County through the County's 911 emergency dispatching system. The Owasco Fire Department is automatically dispatched to fire calls within the Niles Fire Department service area due to a shortage of volunteer firefighters on the Niles Fire Department.

The Owasco Fire Department also provides assistance to boaters who are stranded on Owasco Lake, and occasionally participates in rescue and recovery operations. The Fire Department has two boats it uses for these purposes.

### **Ambulance Service**

The Owasco Fire Department also provides ambulance service in the Town. The Fire Department has two certified ambulances. One is housed in Fire Hall No. 1, and the other in Fire Hall No. 2. The Fire Department has approximately 18 members who have Emergency Medical Technician certification and are capable of providing Basic Life Support service. If Advanced Life Support service is needed, Rural Metro Ambulance Service is utilized. Rural Metro is a private, for-profit ambulance service with facilities in the City of Auburn. Most patient transport, regardless of which ambulance service is used, are to the Auburn Memorial Hospital. During the course of a typical year, the Owasco Fire Department receives approximately 225 to 250 ambulance calls.

### **Police Service**

The Cayuga County Sheriff's Department is the primary agency that provides police protection within the Town of Owasco. Cayuga County is divided into six patrol zones. One zone is comprised of the Town of Owasco and a small portion of the Town of Sennett. During the day and evening there are generally five to seven patrol

cars on duty each assigned to a zone. Between midnight and 6:00 a.m. the number of patrol cars on duty is reduced, and the patrol area is reduced to the Towns adjoining the City of Auburn. The Sheriff's Department coordinates with the State Police using the "closest car" policy to dispatch patrol cars to incidents.

The Sheriff's Department also patrols Owasco Lake. As most boating and recreational activity occurs in the northern portion of the lake, this is where the Sheriff's patrols spend the most time. The Sheriff's Department have two water craft for patrolling, a motor boat and a personal water craft (jet ski). Owasco Lake is patrolled seven days per week from 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. from mid May to mid September.

Owasco is located in the State Police Troop E service area. The State Police have from one to three patrols on duty depending on the time of day. Generally, the State Police patrol in the more rural areas of Cayuga County.

### **Public Education**

The Town of Owasco is divided between two school districts, i.e., the Auburn Enlarged School District and the Skaneateles Central School District. Map 15 depicts the areas of the Town of Owasco contained within each school district.

#### **Auburn Enlarged School District**

The Auburn Enlarged School District encompasses the City of Auburn and portions of each of the Towns that adjoin the City. Owasco Elementary School on Letchworth Avenue is the only school building located in the Town of Owasco. The Middle School and High School are located in the City of Auburn. Student enrollment at the Owasco Elementary School totals 475. Bus transportation is provided only to students who reside more than one mile from the school. Four additional kindergarten classrooms were added to the Owasco Elementary School in 2000. The School District has no existing expansion plans that would require the acquisition of additional property.

#### **Skaneateles Central School District**

The eastern portion of Owasco is within the Skaneateles Central School District. Skaneateles Central schools are located in the Village of Skaneateles. All Skaneateles School District students who reside in Owasco are provided with bus transportation to and from school.

## **Senior Citizen Nutrition Program**

The Cayuga County Office for the Aging (OFA) Senior Nutrition Program provides senior citizens with meals. Meals are provided at congregate meal sites and through home delivery routes. The congregate meals sites nearest Owasco are in the City of Auburn and the Village of Moravia (Town of Niles). Owasco senior citizens may avail themselves of the meals offered at either congregate meal site, but they must provide or arrange for their own transportation.

OFA does provide home delivered meals in areas outside of Auburn if there is a sufficient number of clients to warrant establishing routes. Generally a minimum of eight to ten seniors are needed to establish a delivery route. During weekdays, one hot meal and one cold meal are delivered to the home of each client. On Fridays, frozen meals are also delivered for consumption during the weekend. Currently there are no home deliveries in Owasco.

## **Transportation Services**

### **Centro of Cayuga**

Centro of Cayuga is the bus company that provides public transit service in the City of Auburn. One route, i.e., the Emerson Park Route provides service to a very small area in the northwest corner of Owasco. The buses on the Emerson Park Route travel along Owasco Road only as far south as Emerson Park. There are no designated bus stops between Emerson Park and the City of Auburn, but buses may be hailed at any intersection along the way. On weekdays, buses operate between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. On Saturdays, the number of bus runs is significantly reduced and the buses operate only between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. only. No bus service is provided on Sundays.

### **Senior Citizen Transportation Services**

Senior Citizen Aid to Transportation, Inc. (SCAT) is a not-for-profit agency funded through the United Way. The Town of Owasco also contributes funding. The agency provides transportation to senior citizens in Cayuga County. The agency owns and operates seven vans that serve different areas of Cayuga County. Generally, there are two to three vans operating within the City of Auburn and one van operating in and around the Village of Moravia. The vans in Auburn and the van in Moravia are used to provide transportation to Owasco senior citizens.

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SCAT vans provide transportation not only to senior citizens (age 60 and over), but also to disabled persons under age 60. All the vans are wheel chair accessible and the service is provided door to door. Transportation is provided Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. SCATS may be used for medical appointments, for shopping and personal errands, for social visits and to congregate meal sites. Reservations must be made at least two days in advance and may be made up to two weeks in advance. Service is provided on a first-come-first-served basis. There is no charge for the service, but riders are asked to make donations.

SCAT also operates a mini-van to provide transportation to medical appointments in Syracuse. The service, which is also door to door, is provided on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Reservations must be made one week in advance. The van is not wheel chair accessible. There are no charges for the service, but riders are asked to make donations.

## **ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Recruiting and Retaining Fire Department Volunteers**

The Owasco Fire Department has experienced some difficulty recruiting and retaining volunteer members. This is a problem that confronts many volunteer fire departments. The large amount of training required to meet New York State mandates is a contributing factor. Although the existing situation is a concern, it has not, to date, prevented the Department from responding to fire or ambulance calls as needed.

### **Emergency Vehicle Accessibility to Lake Front Property**

The access roads to lakefront property are privately owned roadways. Emergency vehicles have difficulty using the private access roadways as many are in poor condition and/or narrow and/or do not provide sufficient space to enable emergency vehicles to turn around. In winter, the private roadways to seasonal residences may be impassable due to snow.

### **Limitations of Existing Fire Apparatus**

Due to the height of some of the houses that have been constructed in recent years in Owasco, the Fire Department has some concerns about the limitations of the existing fire apparatus to reach the roofs of the higher buildings.

### **Speeding along Owasco Road**

Speeding along Owasco Road is a safety concern. The speed limit on Owasco road is not routinely enforced. Moreover, the 35 mile per hour speed limit is too high given the volume of traffic and road conditions.

## **Recommended Actions**

- 1. Continue to encourage Town residents to volunteer their services to the Owasco Volunteer Fire Department.**
- 2. Continue to encourage lakefront property owners to improve and/or maintain their private roadways to enable emergency vehicles to access their properties.**
- 3. Incorporate provisions in the Town Code to require property owners to maintain their private roadways in a condition suitable for emergency vehicle use.**
- 4. Encourage the Owasco Fire District Board of Commissioners to periodically evaluate the suitability of existing fire apparatus and equipment as new development occurs in Owasco.**
- 5. Appeal to the Cayuga County Sheriff and the New York State Police to intensify speed enforcement on Owasco and Oakridge Roads.**
- 6. Appeal to the NYS Department of Transportation to reduce the speed limit on Owasco Road between the City of Auburn and Oakridge Road to 30 miles per hour.**