

Town of Amesbury



Annual Report
July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010

Front Cover Photo By

Annual Report Photo Contest Winner
“What I love about Amesbury”

Ron Wiedemann of Amesbury, MA
View of Lake Gardner from Battis Farm

“What I love about Amesbury is its scenic beauty and varied recreational opportunities.”



Dear Amesbury Citizens,

It is with great pleasure I present our new Annual Report. We conducted a year-long study of citizen-defined measures of performance and best-practices to guide our efforts. The annual report has been designed to be citizen centric, from the front cover photo, to the information contained within. Our design goal was to be more accessible, informative, and useful to you.

My mission for the city is to provide excellent municipal services at a cost our residents can afford. The task is not an easy one, as the two components of the mission are often in opposition. However, through innovation, good management, and critical data analysis, we balance the two and provide a quality of life that makes Amesbury a great place to live, work and visit. This report has been designed to summarize our efforts in achieving the mission of excellent services at an affordable cost during fiscal year 2010.

Achievement 1: Union Partnership on Cost Savings

After nine months of negotiations, the city and its employees agreed to health plan design changes that increased co-pays and reduced premium increases, saving the city 6% on health care costs for the FY11 fiscal year. This combined with the shift in employee premium contributions from 80% to 75% are allowing the city to make progress on controlling health care costs. Managing insurance premiums and co-pays are two of the most critical efforts in ensuring Amesbury is affordable. Our work in this area is not done, and I will continue to push the state to assist cities and towns in making progress on health care cost control.

Achievement 2: Regionalizing For the Better

Does direct local control and ownership of a process, product or operation ensure the best service? In some cases, the answer is decidedly "no", yet municipalities continue to pay a premium to have their "own" of everything. In the past year, we have made great strides towards regionalizing those services that make sense to regionalize, sharing resources, costs and benefits with our neighbors while lowering the cost to our taxpayers. In FY10 we implemented our regional health services program, lowering costs by 50% and improving service for inspections, animal control and health programs. We also made great strides in moving towards regional emergency dispatch services. Scheduled for implementation in 2012, regional dispatch services will save the city \$100,000 annually and provide enhanced capabilities.

Upcoming Challenge 1: Reducing the Burden on Residential Tax Base

Despite all our efforts, the real strides in controlling taxes will come through growth of commercial and industrial business in the city. In the past four years, we have been able to press forward long stalled infrastructure enhancement projects that will attract businesses and non-residential growth. We need to continue to market and pursue viable and appropriate growth in our Golden Triangle, the Lower Millyard, along Route 110 and within our downtown.

Upcoming Challenge 2: Aging Public Infrastructure

In the name of cost savings, the city has long neglected its public buildings, deferring regular maintenance and replacement of critical systems until those buildings or systems fail. A number of municipal buildings are shifting from being assets to liabilities, as they fall further behind in accessibility requirements, safety compliance, and experience large system failures. Investments are necessary over the next few years to ensure we can continue to support the services and functions residents need and want.

This report, in combination with our Operating Budget, Capital Improvement Plan, and other publications should provide a comprehensive picture of the city’s administrative and financial activities and status.

As with many endeavors, our efforts to improve the annual report will be iterative and evolving. I look forward to hearing citizen feedback and working in suggestions over the next few years.

Finally, I wish to congratulate our first annual Photo Contest Winner, Ron Wiedemann. His photo was selected from 16 stunning photos of our great city! We also selected a runner up, Mark Voitunski; his photo appears on this page.

I am honored and excited to serve as Amesbury’s Mayor and look forward to tackling the challenges and celebrating the successes of the next year with you.

Sincerely,



Thatcher W. Kezer III
Mayor



Photo By: Mark Voitunski

“What I love about Amesbury is how beauty is around every corner.”

Overview

The city known as the Town of Amesbury exists to provide six essential services to our citizens:

Public Education

Amesbury Elementary
Cashman Elementary
Amesbury Middle School
Amesbury High School
Academy Charter School

Public Safety

Police
Fire & Rescue
Emergency Management

Public Works

Public Works
Engineering
Water Treatment
Waste Water Treatment
Recycling & Refuse
Snow & Ice Removal

Permits & Land Use

Community Dev
Economic Dev
Inspection & Health
Conservation
Planning
Zoning

Health & Human Services

Senior Services
Youth Services
Veteran Services
Public Library

Admin & Finance

Finance
Assessing
Treasurer/Collecting
Licenses and Permits
Public Records

The city conducted an informal survey of residents regarding the Annual Report. What we learned was that 53% of responders have not read the Annual Report in the past two years.

What they liked about the prior reports:

- “insight into the where the money is being spent.”
- “information about what the departments within the city are doing and what is considered their projects and priorities.”

What they did not like about the prior reports:

- “would have liked to see a bit more charting of previous years than just a comparison from prior year on the budget.”
- “many people do not want to read through a lot of the report.”

We asked survey participants to indicate their three most important indicators of success for Police, Fire & Rescue, Public Works, Economic Development, Inspectional Services, and Finance. The top three selections for each function appear within this report.

Finally we learned that if the report included these top indicators 61% of responders said they are likely or highly likely to read the annual report.

With this input and the results of the focus group study conducted in the spring, we are pleased to present this report.

Amesbury Public Schools

Amesbury Public Schools are committed to ensuring that all students experience success through the development of attitudes and skills necessary for lifelong learning.

Making Cents

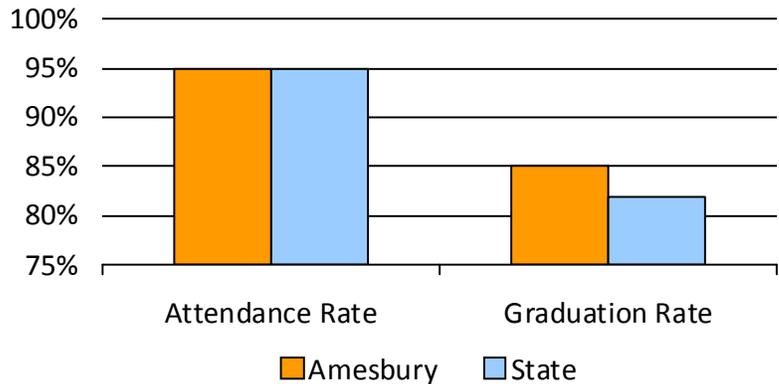
51¢ of every tax dollar is spent on K-12 public education.

Amesbury tax payers spend \$12,154 per student per year. The state average is \$13,006.

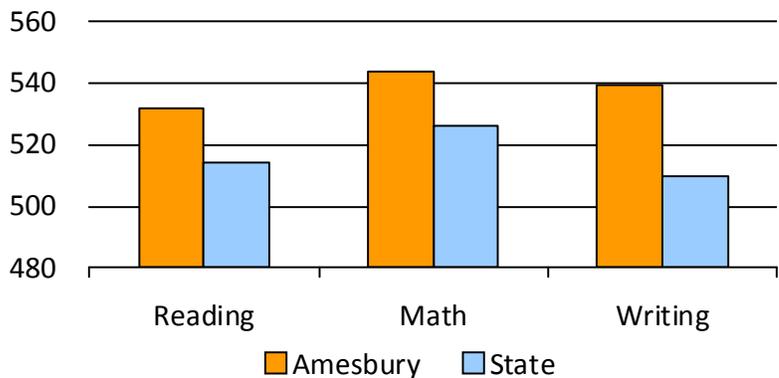
Amesbury has more children choosing to attend Amesbury Public Schools from other communities (Choice In), than Amesbury children choosing to attend school in other communities (Choice Out).

\$151,820 = NET revenue the city receives from School Choice.

Attendance & Graduation Rates

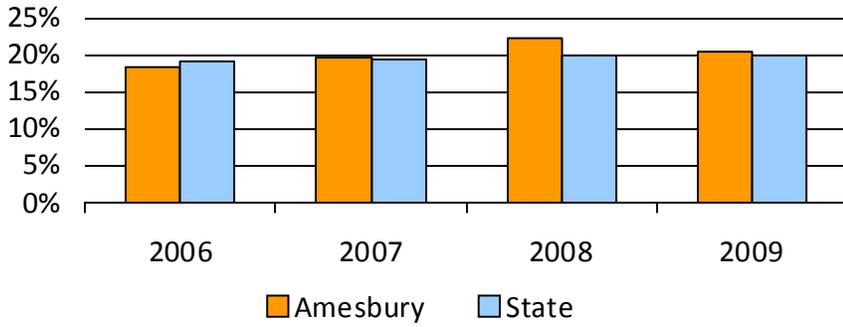


SAT Scores



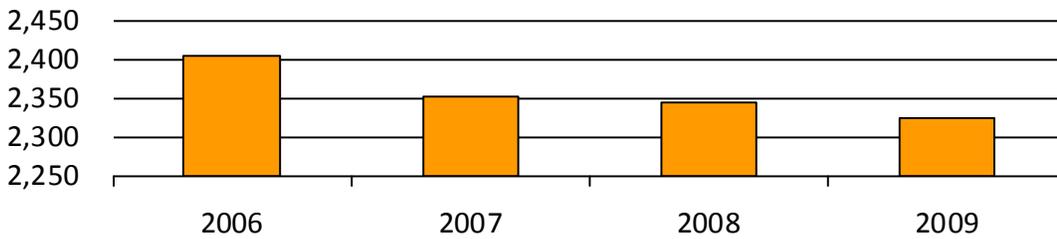
Indicator	Amesbury	State
Grade 9-12 Dropout Rate	1.6%	2.9%
Average # of days absent	8.4	9.3
In-school Suspension Rate	2.2%	3.3%
Out-of-school Suspension Rate	3.4%	5.3%

Special Education Expenditures as a % of School Budget

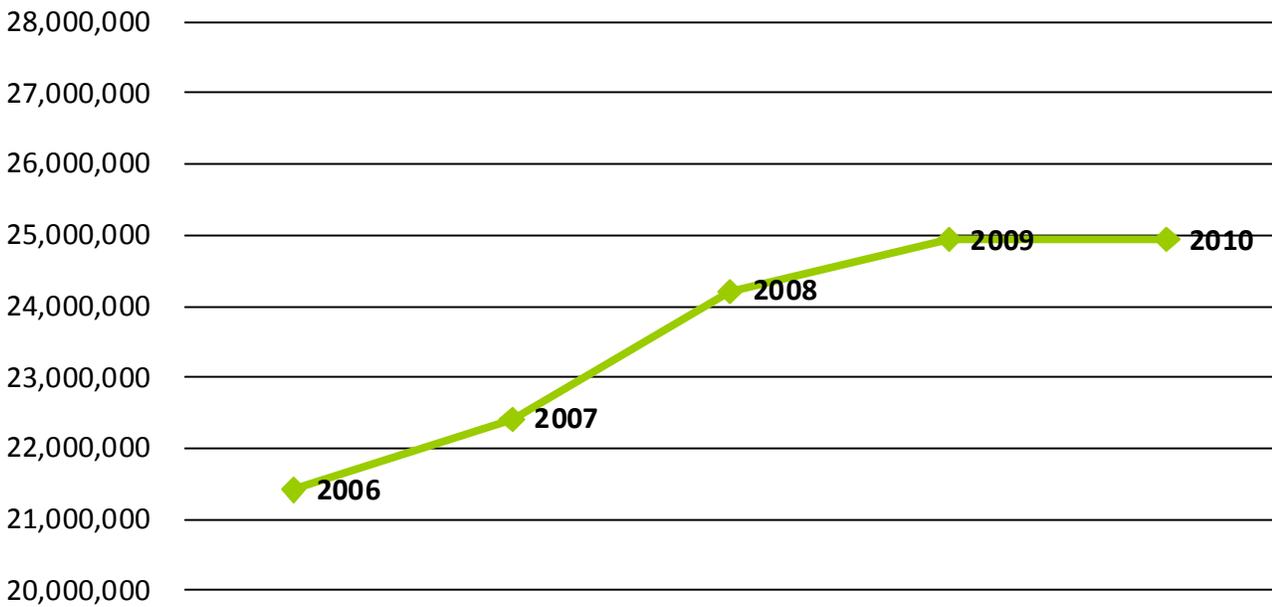


2,424 students attended Amesbury Public Schools in the 2009-2010 school year.

Enrollment in Public School



School Total Spending by Fiscal Year



Police

The Amesbury Police is committed to maintaining and enhancing the safety of the city through prevention and response to crime, traffic enforcement, and through involvement in community events and outreach.

What are the THREE MOST IMPORTANT indicators of success for Police services:

- Response times to calls for service (54%)
- Violent crime response and prevention (50%)
- Property crime response and prevention (45%)

Making cents

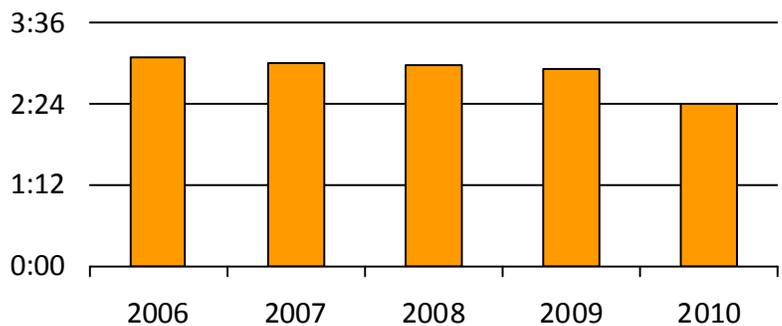
7¢ of every tax dollar is spent on police and police dispatch.

Amesbury tax payers spend \$198 per person per year for 24-hour crime prevention and response.

Average Cost Per Capita for Sworn Police Officers (salaries, overtime, etc):

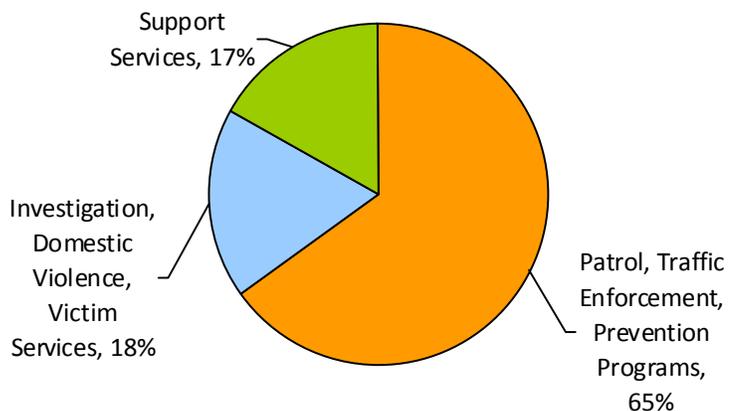
Amesbury
2006: \$181
2007: \$182
2008: \$186
2009: \$178
2010: \$182

Average Response Time (mins)



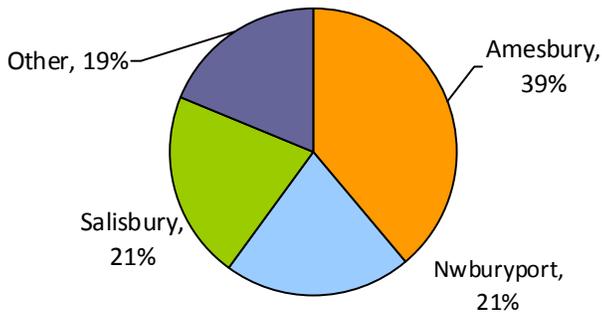
Note: Automatic vehicle location systems installed in 2010.

Police Resource Allocation



Domestic Violence Cases

Jeanne Greiger Crises Center for Domestic Violence

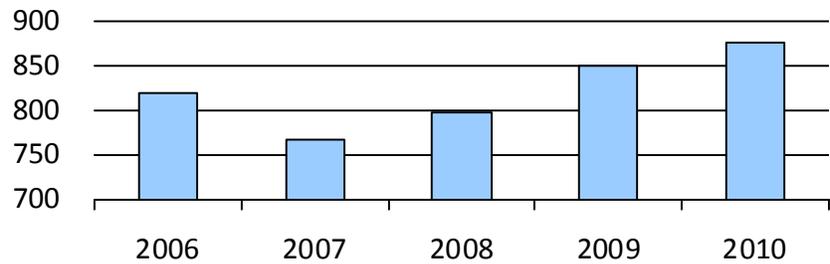


Prevention programs include community policing, **domestic violence victim checks**, vacation watch, child seat safety checks, "Watch Words" weekly articles, Coffee with the Cops hour, School Safety programs, National Night Out, crime analysis, Click It or Ticket, Prom Safety programs, and Downtown patrols.

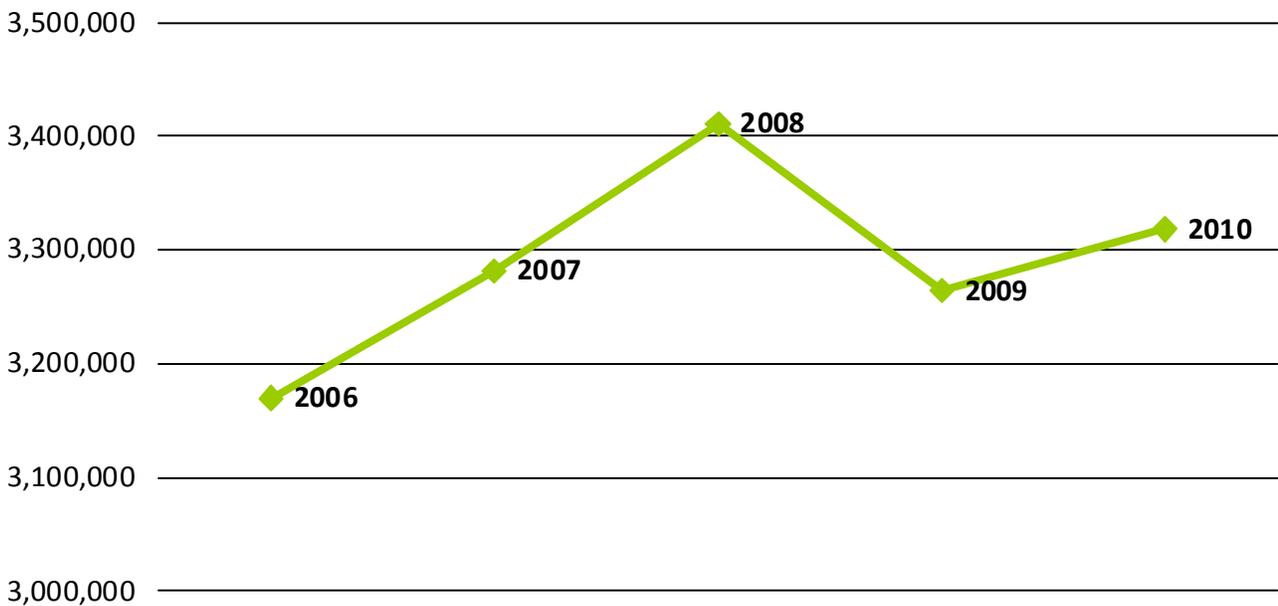
New England cities with populations of 10,000 – 24,999 residents employ 1 officer per 555 people.

Amesbury employs 1 officer per 548 people.ⁱ

Calls per Sworn Officer



Police Total Spending by Fiscal Year



Fire & Rescue and Emergency Management

Amesbury Fire & Rescue and Emergency Management are committed to maintaining and enhancing the public safety and health of the community through fire prevention, emergency medical response, and planning and response to natural and man-made emergencies.

What are the THREE MOST IMPORTANT indicators of success for Fire & Rescue services:

- Response to medical emergencies (86%)
- Response times to calls for service (77%)
- Fire response and suppression (54%)

Making Cents

6¢ of every tax dollar is spent on medical, fire and emergency response and dispatch.

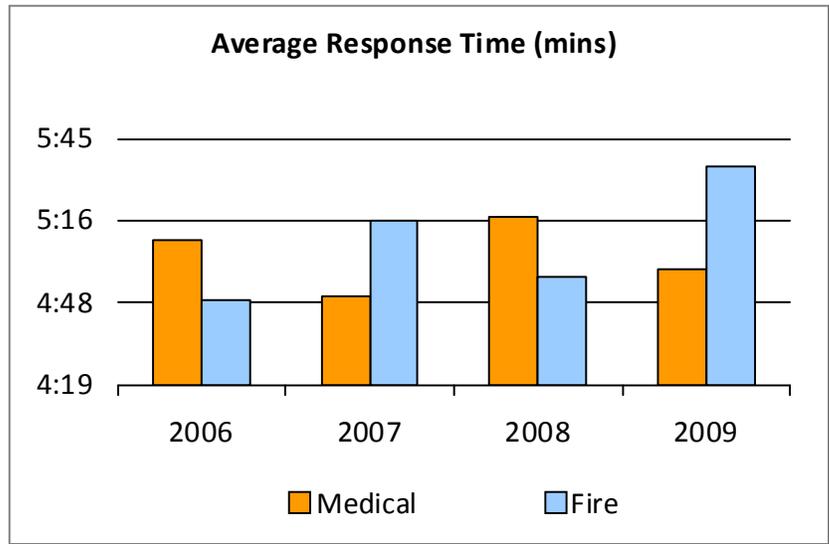
Amesbury tax payers spend \$129 per person per year for 24-hour response to medical, fire, natural and man-made disasters.

Ambulance revenues offset taxpayer costs for Fire & Rescue. \$317 = average revenue per ambulance call.

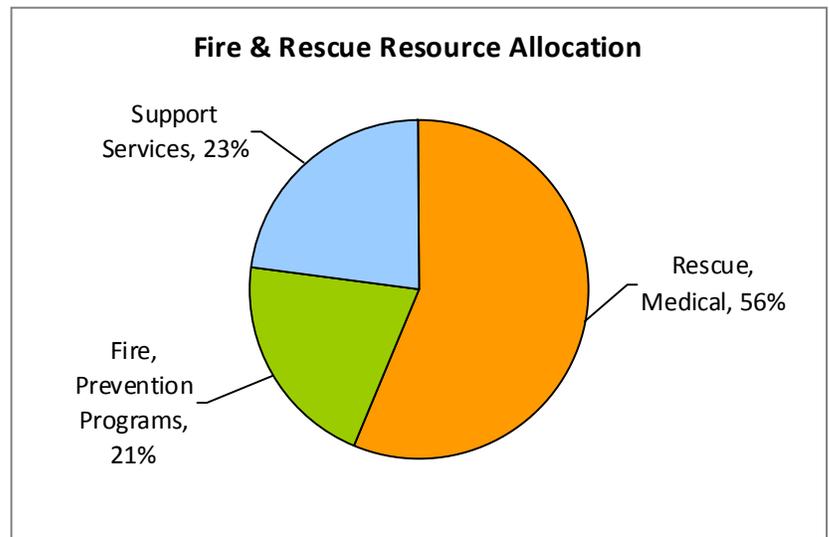
In 2008, the city implemented the first-in-the-state Chase Car program.

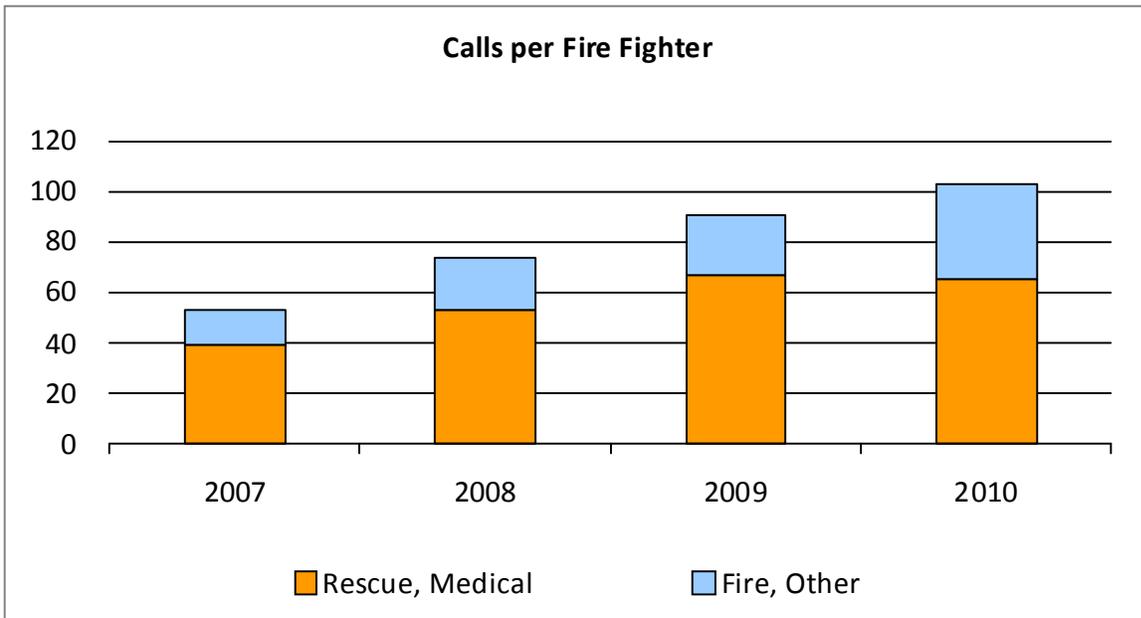
A standard passenger SUV responds with the ambulance to 80% of all medical calls INSTEAD of the fire engine.

Results:
30% reduction in fuel costs
40% reduction in vehicle maintenance costs



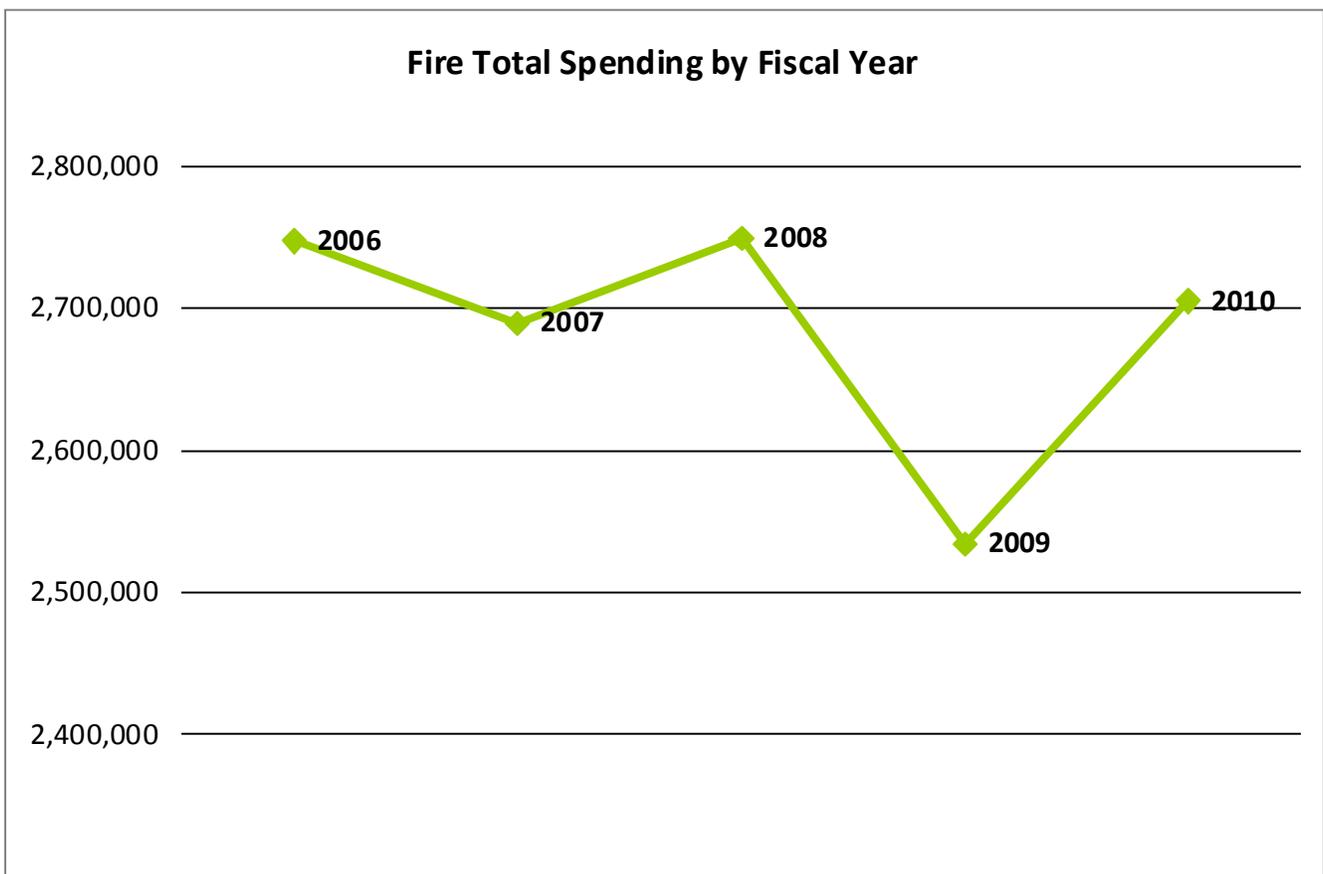
Ambulance response times of **5 minutes or less** double the survival rate of patients in cardiac arrest.ⁱⁱ





Note: Fire force was reduced by 4 firefighters in 2009.

Amesbury employs 1 firefighter for every 567 people in the city. 12 Firefighters are certified EMTs. 13 Firefighters are certified paramedics capable of providing advanced life support response.



Department of Public Works

Amesbury Public Works is committed to enhancing quality of life through management and improvement of public facilities and infrastructure, provision of clean drinking water, safe removal of waste water, recycling, trash and snow & Ice.

What are the THREE MOST IMPORTANT indicators of success Public Works services:

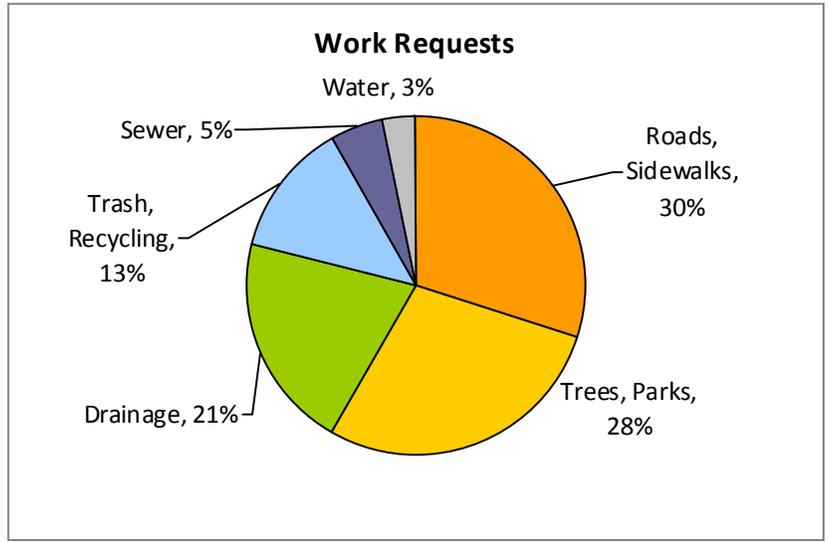
- Street & Sidewalk Conditions & Improvements (86%)
- Drinking Water Quality and Quantity (50%)
- Response to Snow & Ice Storms (50%)

Making Cents

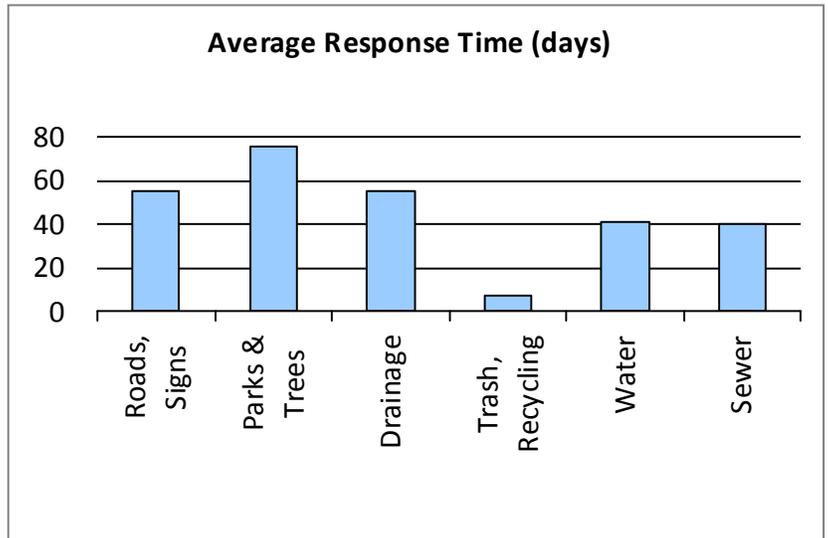
5¢ of every tax dollar is spent on the maintenance of roads, sidewalks, parks, drainage, waste removal, and snow and ice operations.

1/2¢ = cost of 1 gallon of clean drinking water.

Amesbury taxpayers spend \$136 per person per year for public works services including trash and recycling removal, road, sidewalk, park and cemetery maintenance, snow removal, drainage management, and public facility maintenance.



Source: Requests from Work Order System.

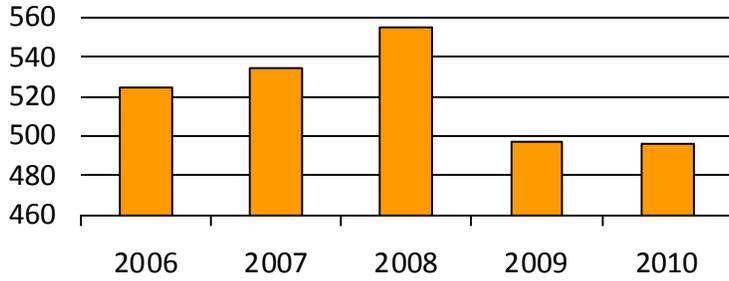


Source: Requests from Work Order System.

Pavement Management Completed 2010 (linear feet)

Roads	3,612
Sidewalks	3,200

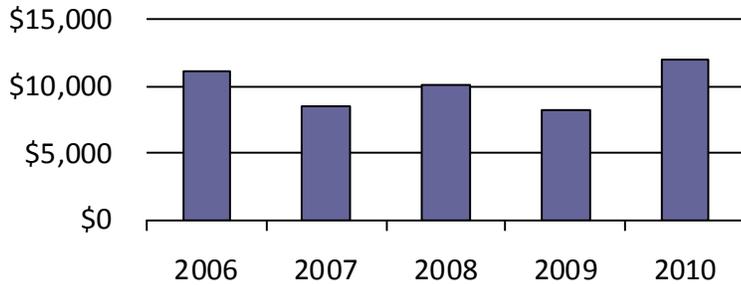
Water Pumped (millions of gallons)



Check out the city's annual water quality report at www.amesburyma.gov.

Search for **Consumer Confidence Report** in the Forms and Documents section.

Cost Per Snow Event

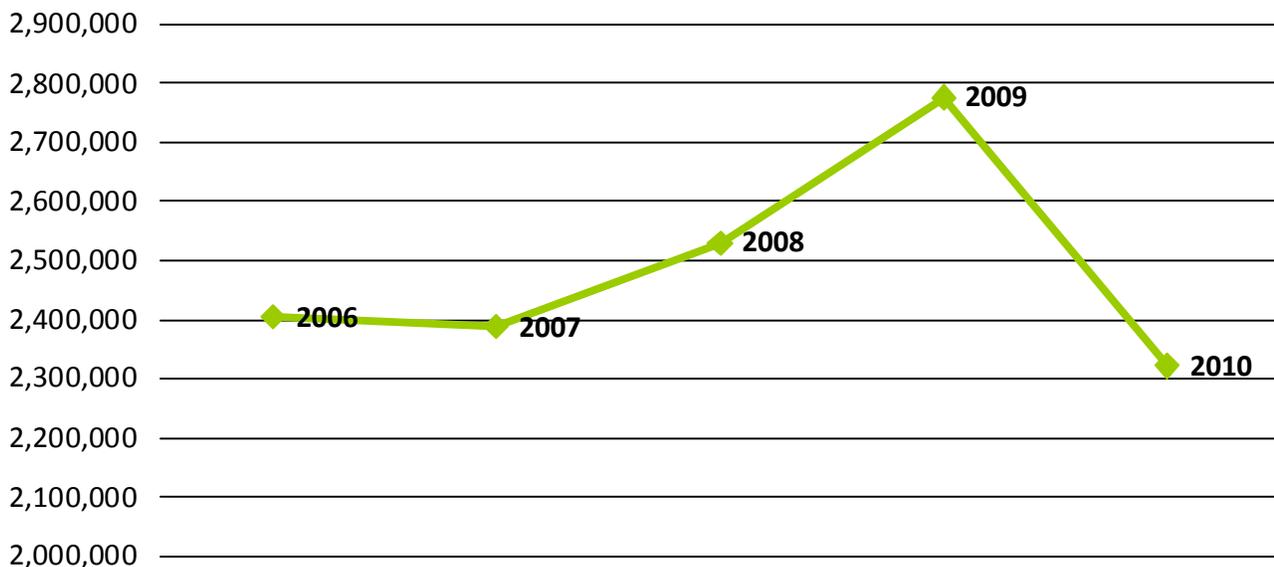


Costs for Snow Operations vary based on the amount of snow per event, severity of icing, and variable cost of sand and salt.

DPW is identifying opportunities to make plow routes and after-hours-resident-requested sanding more efficient.

The majority of the increase in DPW spending in 2008 and 2009 was due to snow operations.

DPW Total Spending by Fiscal Year



Community & Economic Development

Community and Economic Development is committed to enhancing the quality of life in Amesbury through community focused development opportunities, affordable housing availability and management of the city's natural and historic assets.

What are the THREE MOST IMPORTANT indicators of success Economic Development services:

- Business growth in the city (74%)
- Business relocations to the city (57%)
- Neighborhood Improvements and Block Grant Projects (35%)

Making cents

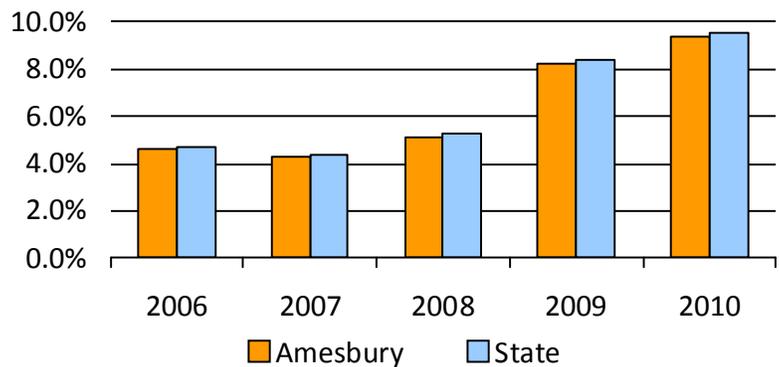
Less than 1¢ of every tax dollar is spent on the promotion, planning and regulation of development in the city.

This function of the city is driven largely by state and federal grants, and fees collected through the permit application process.

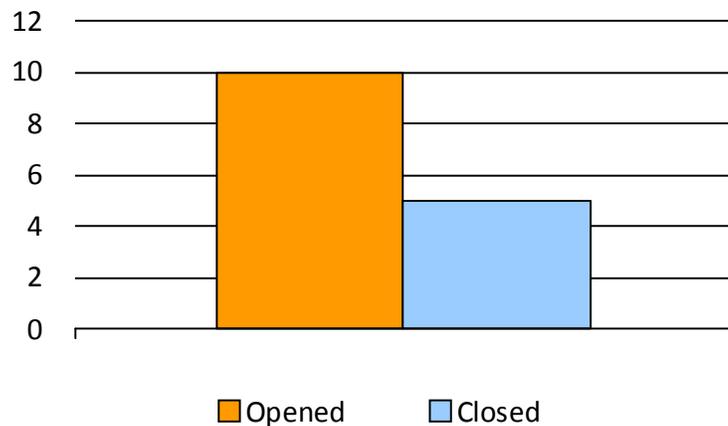
\$1,376,318 = total community development block grant funding since 2006.

Amesbury taxpayers spend \$18 per person per year for planning, conservation, and economic development programs.

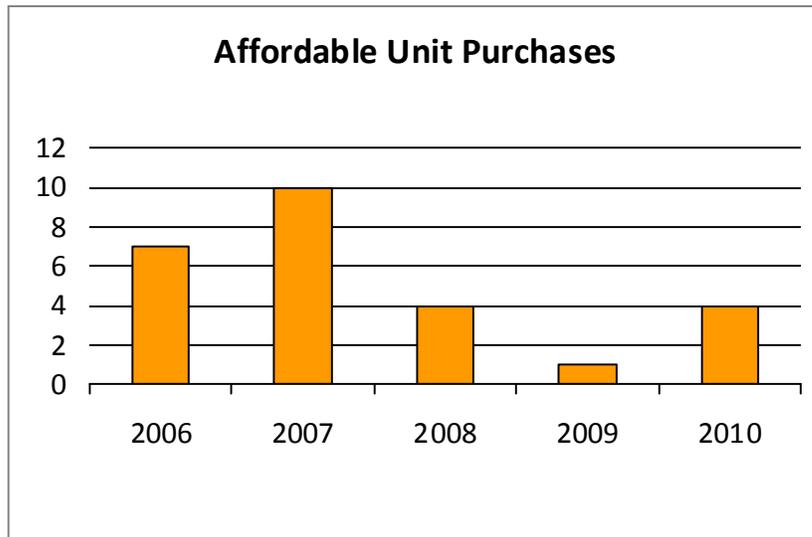
Unemployment Rate



Business Starts & Closures in 2010

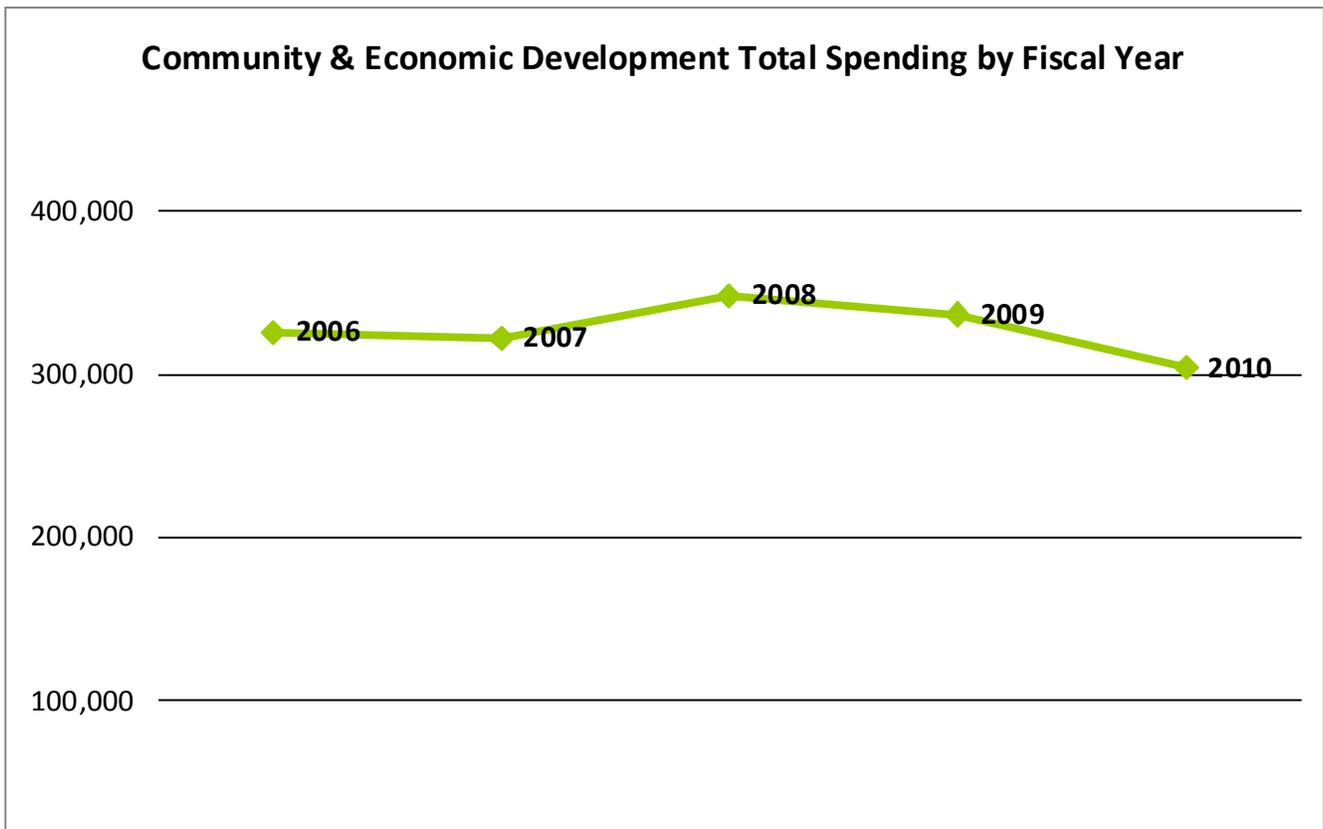


Source: Amesbury Chamber of Commerce and Industrial



A family of four with annual income of \$64,400 or less may qualify for affordable housing programs including downpayment assistance, first-time homebuyer seminars, and affordable housing units.

For more information visit www.amesburyma.gov



Inspectional Services

Inspectional Services enhances public safety and health through the oversight and enforcement of state and local building, health and animal control codes and regulations.

What are the THREE MOST IMPORTANT indicators of success Inspectional services:

- Food sanitation complaints and response (65%)
- Health code complaints (48%)
- Building code compliance (39%)

Making Cents

Less than 1¢ of every tax dollar is spent on the enforcement of building, health and animal regulations.

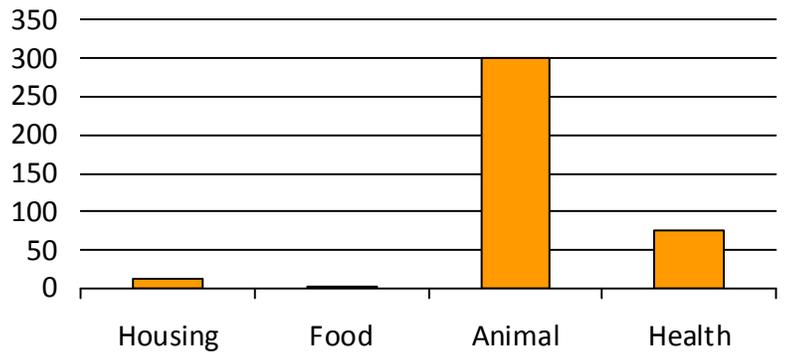
\$124,288 = fee revenue from permits.

Amesbury tax payers spend \$8 per resident per year for building, plumbing, electrical, gas, zoning, health, and animal code enforcement.

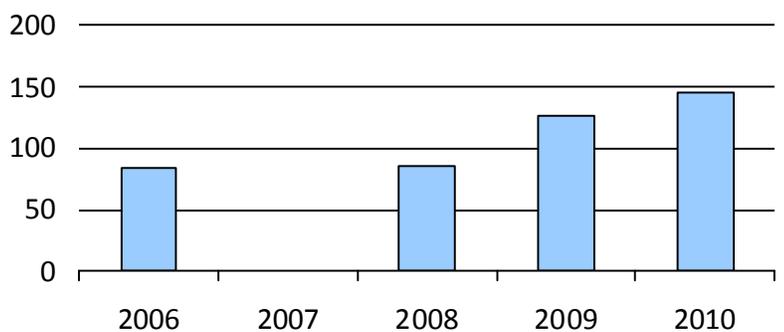
In Oct 2009 the city implemented a regional health services program that combined resources with Salisbury to save on costs and improve effectiveness of services.

Results:
53% reduction in salaries, benefits and expenses.

Health Code Requests for Services/Complaints

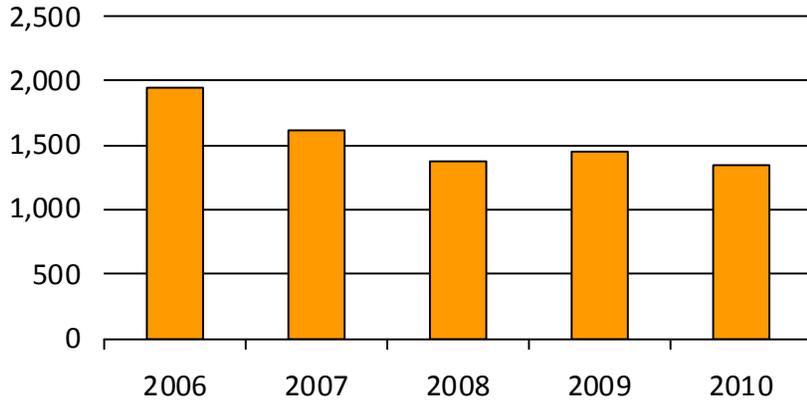


Annual Food Inspections



Note: Data unavailable for 2007.

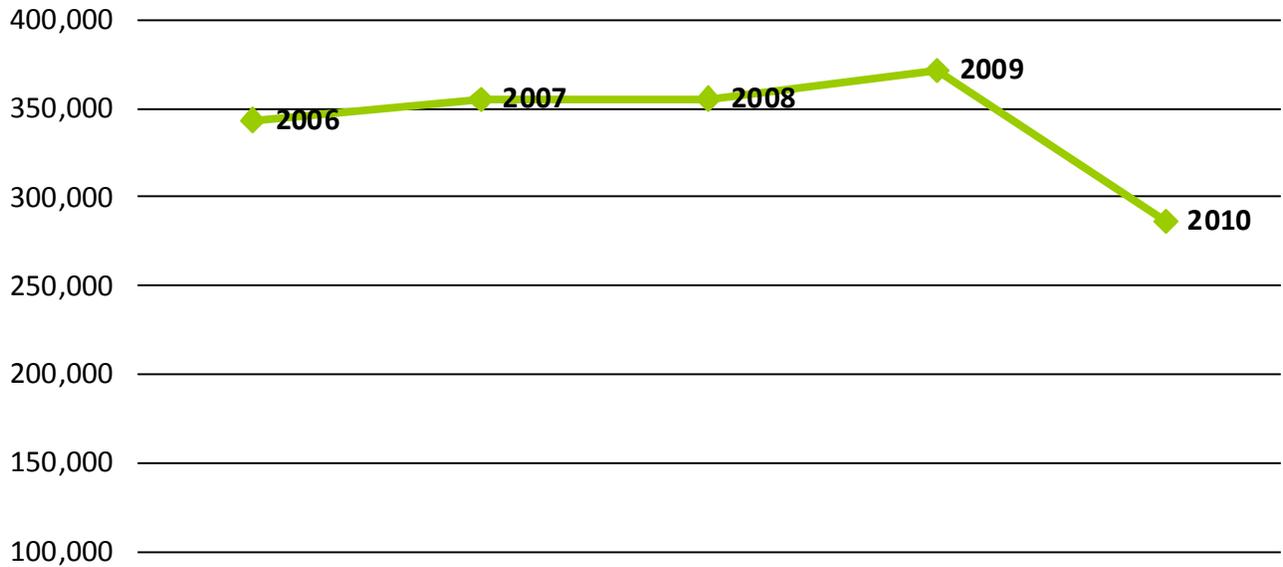
Building, Plumbing, Gas Permits Issued



4 Restaurant or food service businesses opened in Amesbury in 2010.

The city conducted its first ever regional flu clinics in 2009-2010. Regional clinics allowed residents to attend any one of the 12 combined flu/H1N1 clinics held throughout the winter. In the past Amesbury held 1 clinic.

Inspectional Services Total Spending by Fiscal Year



Health & Human Services

Amesbury Health and Human Services is committed to enriching the lives of residents through access to programs, resources, and activities that enhance independence, social interactions, learning, and community connections.

Making Cents

2¢ of every tax dollar is spent on providing free resources and programs for the enrichment of residents.

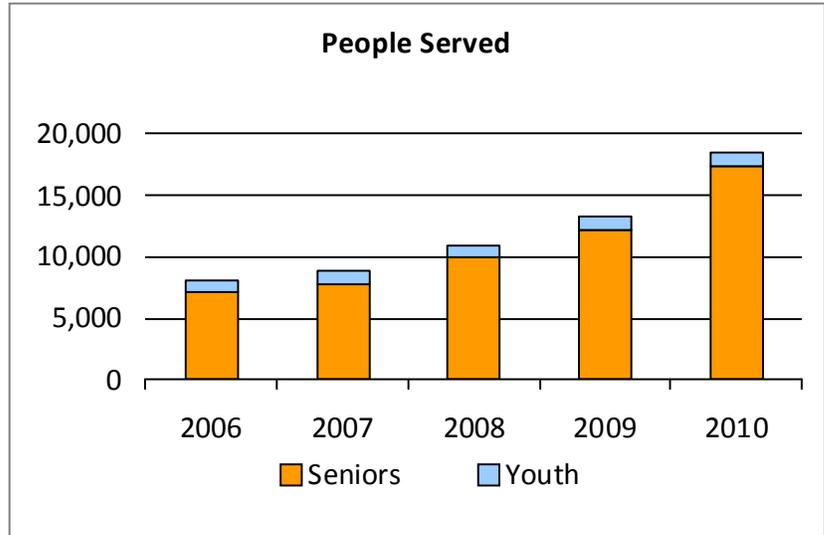
\$0 = tax dollars spent for youth recreation programs. Youth services are supported **entirely** through program fees.

Amesbury tax payers spend \$63 per resident per year for library materials, enrichment programs, senior programs, and veteran support services.

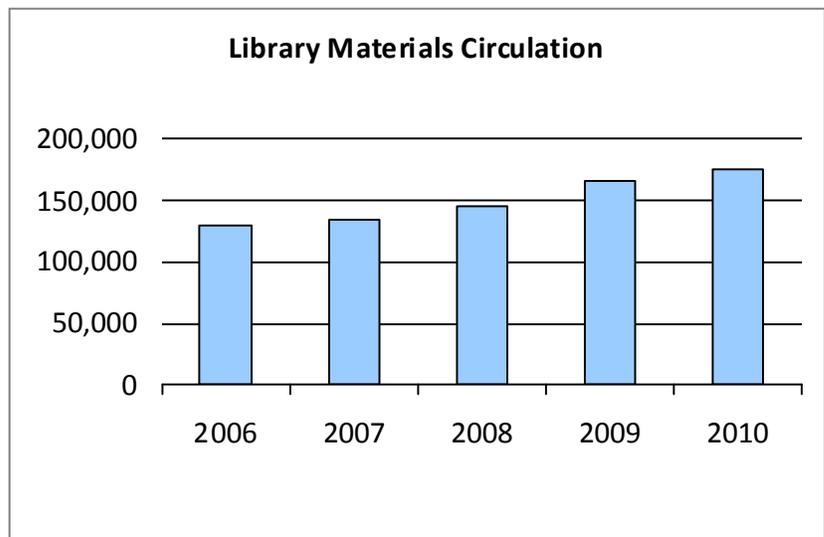
\$2,000,000 = value of materials available for free at the public library. Every person in the city would need to spend \$117 at Barnes & Noble to amass a similar collection.

In 2009 the city partnered with the MVRTA to provide local transportation for seniors.

Results:
\$53,872 in savings to-date.

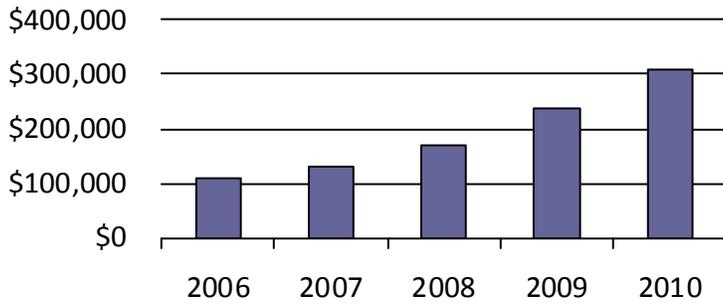


Note: Amesbury welcomes seniors from other communities to attend our programs.



1,219 children participated in After School and Summer Recreational programs in 2010.

Veteran Support Services

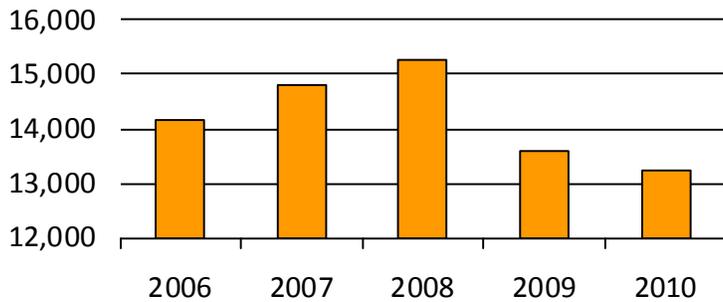


The state reimburses Amesbury for 75% of the Veteran Support Services.

Support Services include supplemental income, housing and fuel assistance, and medical care assistance.

For more information about Veteran Services visit www.amesburyma.gov

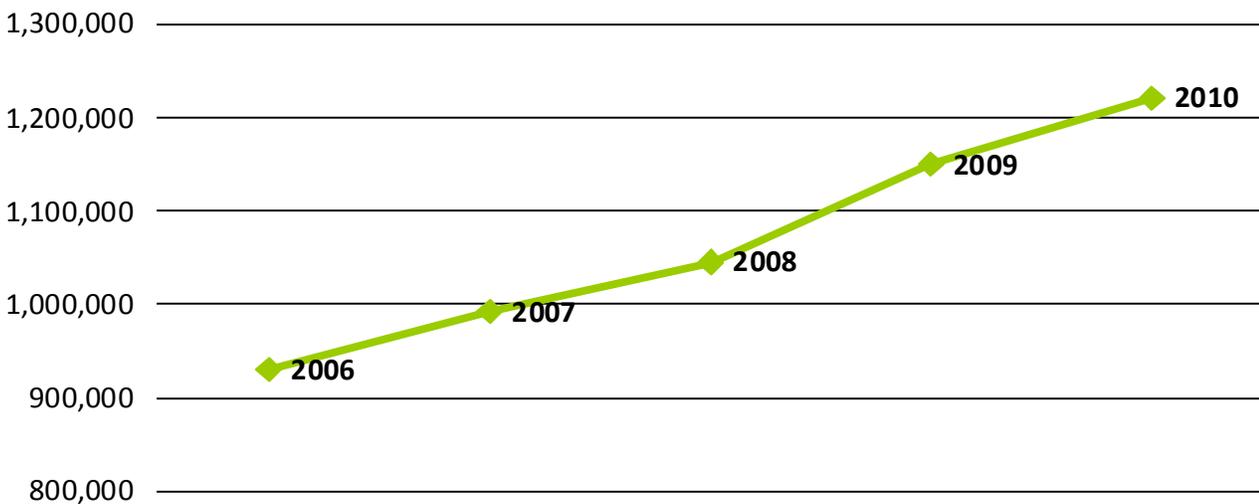
Meals Served



Senior Services include providing seniors in the city with a nutritious hot lunch each day. Some meals are served on site at the Senior Center, while others are delivered with the assistance of volunteers.

These types of programs help make it possible for seniors to live independently in their homes.

Health & Human Services Total Spending by Fiscal Year



Note: Increase is due directly to increase in number of veterans receiving benefits.

Finance & Administration

Finance & Administration is committed to the responsible stewardship of the city's assets, finances and records through sound financial management principles and adherence to state regulations and professional standards.

What are the THREE MOST IMPORTANT indicators of success Finance services:

- Budget planning and development (74%)
- Funds collected and processed (48%)
- Overdue accounts and tax title proceedings (48%)

Making Cents

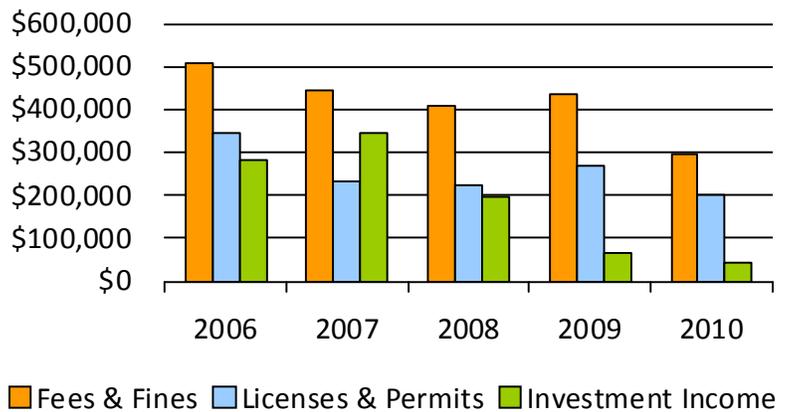
3¢ of every tax dollar is spent on the management of the city's cash, real assets, elections and records.

\$1,907,592,445 = total value of all residential, commercial, industrial and personal property in Amesbury.

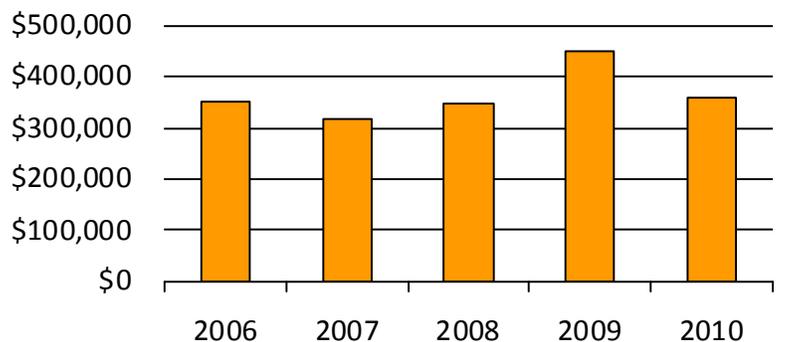
Amesbury tax payers spend \$65 per resident per year for assessing, collections, accounting, information management, license management, elections, records management, and clerk services.

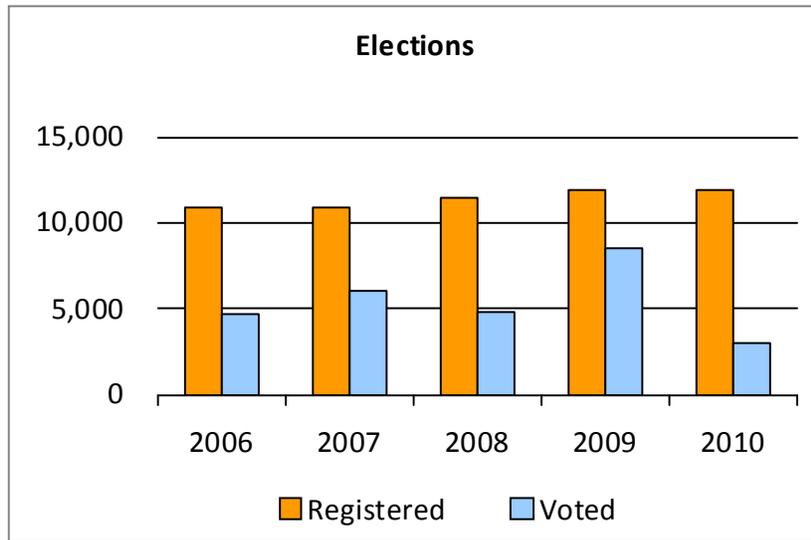
\$69,806,383 = receipts recorded and processed in 2010.

Revenues from Non-Tax Sources



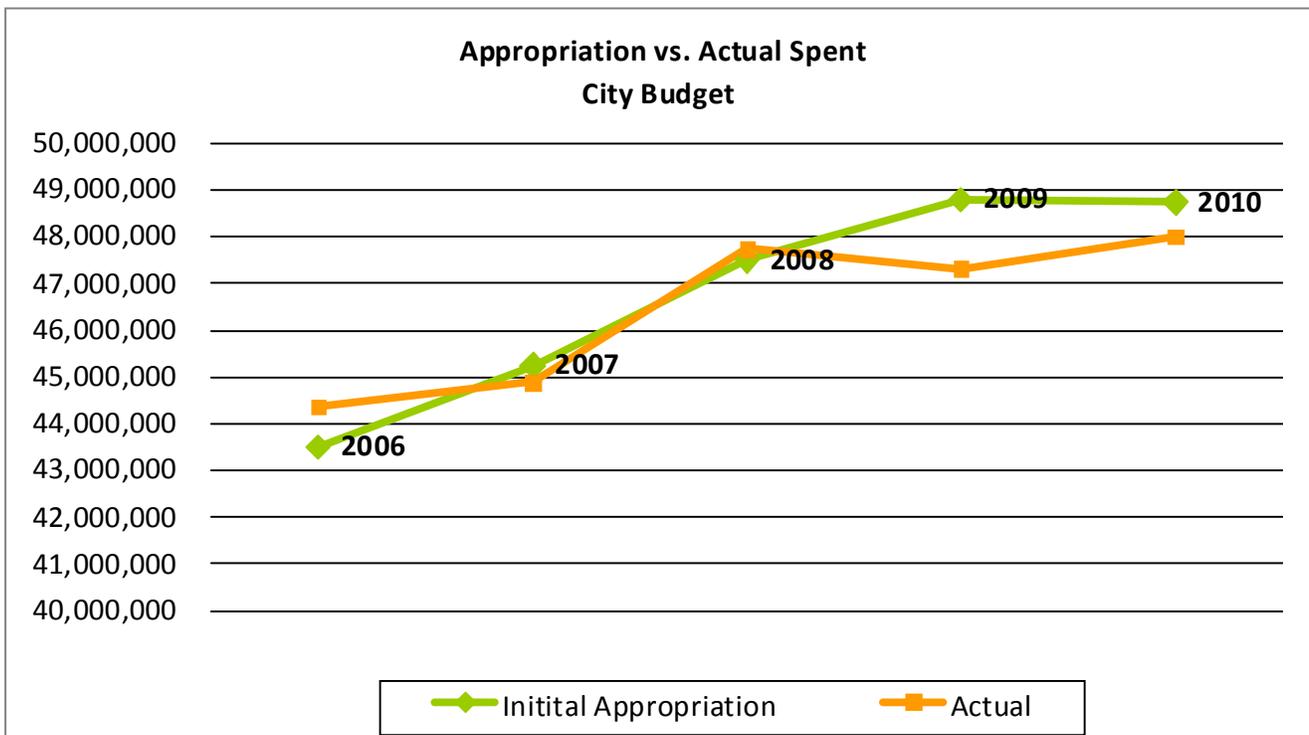
Overdue Taxes





The City may expend more than originally appropriated only by vote of the Municipal Council. The Municipal Council must approve each expenditure over the appropriated amount either through transfers within the budget or from other sources.

In 2006 and 2008, the Municipal Council appropriated additional funds for snow and ice removal expenses resulting from winter storms.



Additional Information and Resources

The city publishes other useful and informative reports on topics of interest to our citizens. The reports are available at the Public Library, Amesbury Town Hall or online at www.amesburyma.gov, Forms and Documents section.

Annual Budget ~ contains a detailed breakdown of the fiscal year's anticipated expenditures by department, category and line item. The budget contains a financial summary, revenue details, and prior-year comparisons. The Annual Budget is published in May.

Capital Improvement Plan ~ contains all of the known capital investment needs for the city, including proposed implementation schedules, cost estimates, and anticipated outcomes of projects. Spending on each budget is approved either with the annual operating budget vote or on an individual basis if projects cannot be funded through normal operations. The Capital Improvement plan is published in February.

Audit Report ~ contains a statement of the city's balance sheet, assessment of its financial management policies, and an independent report of the city's books. The Audit is published in January.

Wages Report ~ contains the gross salaries for all employees of the city by fiscal year and includes all reportable wages including regular wages, overtime, details (paid for privately), and stipends applicable with IRS code. The Wages Report is published in September.

Municipal Council Report ~ contains a record of all actions of the Municipal Council for a fiscal year including vote results for each item considered by the Council. The Municipal Council report is published in September.

Consumer Confident Report ~ contains information about drinking water quality, and updates and notices regarding water treatment. The Consumer Confidence report is published in July.

Revenue Projections and Financial Report ~ contains revenue projections for the coming five years, and the financial statements for the city's water and sewer enterprise funds. The Revenue Projections and Financial Report is published in February.

Public Records Request

Can't find what you are looking for? Consider a public records request. The Massachusetts Public Records Law provides that every person has a right to access public information. The right to access public information includes the right to inspect, copy or have copies provided upon payment of a reasonable fee. Public records requests should be made directly to the department housing the information, or to the Mayor's Office for general requests.

For more information about Massachusetts' Public Records Law contact the State Public Records Division at (617) 727-2832.

ⁱDepartment of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigations, Law Enforcement Personnel, Table 70, 2004.

ⁱⁱ"Effect of Reducing Ambulance Response Times on Death from Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest", Jill P. Peil, Jane M. Sirel, Andrew K. Marsden, Ian Ford, Stuart Cobbe.