



## *Office of the Town Administrator*

May 12, 2023

Honorable Hubbardston Select Board  
7 Main Street #3  
Hubbardston, MA 01452

### **RE: Town Administrator's Entry Report**

Dear Hubbardston Select Board,

It is my pleasure to present to you my entry findings as the Town Administrator for the past six months. As you know, I began my tenure in November 2022 and was tasked with carrying out the goals that I set forth during the interview process. Over the past six months, I have been dedicated to improving the quality of service for all residents of Hubbardston. This report will highlight the progress we have made in key areas, including communication, public safety, open space protection, budgetary issues, and educational relations. I am excited to share my findings and goals with you, and I hope that you find this report informative and useful as we continue to move forward together as a community.

My first few months will serve as building blocks for the rest of my time as Town Administrator. This time has been valuable and will lead to operational improvement plans, strategic planning, budget development goals, and board management priorities. Partnered with an effective communications plan centered around weekly Town Administrator reports, public engagement, and effective use of social media as a marketing tool, we will ensure that the municipality is ready for success in the future.

### **Entry Goals**

- Learn about Hubbardston's internal process, values, and culture.
- Cultivate relationships and build rapport through active listening.
- Develop a written assessment of town operations to create initial and subject-specific goals based on the annual goals of the Hubbardston Selectboard.
- Create department-specific operation plans

## **Phase I**

- Conduct document analysis, including the review of essential documentation, such as town policies, financial documentation, town reports, and other relevant municipal and state documents
- Interview employees
- Implement a communications plan to increase transparency with the public, employees, and town officials
- Meet with both elected and appointed boards and committees to review their short and long-term goals

## **Phase II**

- Hold at least one virtual and one in-person public meeting to determine the priorities of the residents
- Visit local businesses and organizations to better understand their needs and how the town can best partner with them
- Tour all relevant town infrastructure to better understand where the town stands and how to best use the capital planning process.

I hope that in my time here I was able to demonstrate my priorities and leadership style. In a small municipality an administrator must not only be an active member of the team, but the team's biggest cheerleader. Based on data collected and the identified goals, this report will offer an analysis of the following areas:

- Communications
- Infrastructure
- Economic Development
- Human Resources
- Budget
- Financial Management
- Override
- Long Term Planning

## **Communications**

Hubbardston is an engaged community with capable volunteer boards who must communicate budget, economic development, staff operations, events, and infrastructure momentum to attract educated voters and board/committee volunteers.

Since assuming this position, one of my top priorities has been to improve communication channels between the town administration and the public. I recognized early on that it was essential to establish open lines of communication to create a transparent, collaborative, and

responsive municipal government. To this end, I have implemented various communication strategies, including hosting town hall meetings, updating the town's website and social media channels, and creating a monthly cable access show to inform residents of the latest news and events.

Improving municipal communication is essential for building trust and engagement with the Hubbardston community.

1. Create a comprehensive communication plan that includes town hall meetings, social media platforms, and newsletters.
2. A citizen advisory committee should be created to provide feedback on various town initiatives and serve as a liaison between the community and the town administration.
3. Continue open office hours as they are essential in promoting transparency and accessibility in local government. By setting aside specific times when the Town Administrator is available to meet with residents, the town can allow community members to ask questions, share concerns, and provide feedback on town operations. This fosters community engagement and builds trust between residents and local officials.
4. Publish regular reports to track progress on critical initiatives. By prioritizing transparency, the town can build trust with residents and demonstrate a commitment to open and honest communication.
5. Use targeted marketing campaigns to attract new appropriate businesses to the area, highlighting the town's natural beauty and cultural offerings. By promoting economic development, the town can stimulate growth and create new job opportunities for residents while also improving the quality of life for everyone in the community.

### **Public Buildings**

The municipality is in dire need of public building improvements, particularly in public safety and administration. The current infrastructure cannot keep up with the community's demands. The buildings need repair and renovation, and the public safety infrastructure, including the police and fire departments, require reconstruction.

To better its infrastructure and secure the safety of its inhabitants, Hubbardston should concentrate on specific goals.

1. Prioritize restoring and refurbishing its public safety facilities.
2. Continue allocating funds for modern equipment and technology for emergency services,

including updated vehicles, radios, and other necessary instruments.

3. Work with Public Safety Building Committee on a feasible option for a new Public Safety Building with minimal tax implications.

## **Economic Development**

Hubbardston has excellent potential for economic development, particularly in eco and agro-tourism. The town is surrounded by beautiful natural scenery. In addition, it boasts a rich agricultural history, making it an ideal location for visitors looking to experience the outdoors and learn about sustainable agriculture. However, the town needs to realize these assets' economic potential fully. With strategic investments in eco and agro-tourism, Hubbardston can create new jobs, boost local businesses, and attract visitors from around the region.

A lack of infrastructure and marketing is one of the biggest challenges facing Hubbardston's eco and agro-tourism industry. The town needs more facilities like campgrounds, hiking trails, and farmers' markets to support a thriving eco and agro-tourism industry. Additionally, the town has yet to fully promote these assets to visitors, making it difficult for businesses to attract and retain customers.

Moving forward, there are several key goals that we should focus on to develop its eco and agro-tourism industry:

1. Complete our supplemental uses bylaw with the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC). This bylaw will allow local landowners to utilize their beautiful agricultural land to create businesses other than traditional farming. By enabling the creation of new businesses on agricultural land, we aim to attract new residents, generate additional revenue, and support the local economy. Completing the supplemental uses bylaw with the MRPC is an important step forward for Hubbardston and its efforts to create a vibrant and sustainable business community.
2. The town should invest in the necessary infrastructure to support eco and agro-tourism, such as hiking trails, campgrounds, and farmers' markets.
3. The town should develop a comprehensive marketing strategy to promote its eco and agro-tourism assets to visitors from around the region.
4. The town should work with local businesses and organizations to create new business experiences, such as farm-to-table dining and sustainable agriculture workshops.
5. Working with regional economic development partners such as chambers of commerce and business incubators is a valuable strategy for Hubbardston to attract and retain small businesses. These partners can help Hubbardston identify businesses that may be interested in moving or expanding to the town and provide resources and support to help those businesses succeed. This can help diversify the local economy, create new job opportunities, and promote growth and innovation.

By pursuing these goals, Hubbardston can create new economic opportunities and attract visitors.

## **Human Resources**

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the town of Hubbardston requires human resources improvements to help adapt to the changing needs of the workforce. Moving forward, there are several key goals that Hubbardston should focus on to improve its human resources infrastructure:

1. The town should invest in training and development programs for employees to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to navigate the changing landscape of the workforce.
2. Hubbardston must update its human resources policies in light of recent turnover and pandemic-related disruptions. With the loss of key personnel, the town must reassess its hiring and retention practices to ensure that it attracts and retains top talent. Additionally, the pandemic has created new challenges for workplaces, and HR policies must be updated to reflect these changes and ensure the safety and well-being of employees. By addressing these issues, Hubbardston can create a more stable and resilient workforce that can better serve the needs of the town's residents.
3. One of the critical goals of our office is to ensure that all employees are performing the tasks outlined in their job descriptions. While the pandemic and turnover may have necessitated employees taking on additional responsibilities outside of their regular duties, it is essential to rein that back in to maintain clarity and accountability within the organization. By clearly defining job roles and responsibilities, employees will have a better understanding of what is expected of them and how they can contribute to the overall success of the office. This will also allow for more efficient use of resources and ensure that all tasks are completed promptly and effectively. Ultimately, reinforcing job descriptions will help to improve employee morale, increase productivity, and drive the continued success of our office.
4. Improve the file storage system and onboarding process, which must be updated and more efficient. The plan is to create a more streamlined and user-friendly method for accessing information and to provide new hires with the tools and support they need to be successful in their roles.

## **Budget**

Budgeting improvements are necessary for Hubbardston, Massachusetts, to ensure the town's finances are well-organized, transparent, and accountable to the community. With just over 4,000 residents, the town's budget is small but complex, with numerous departments and projects to manage. To ensure that tax dollars are spent effectively and efficiently, the town

needs to improve its budgeting processes and increase transparency around its financial decision-making.

One of the biggest challenges facing Hubbardston's budgeting processes is more organization and transparency. The town's budgeting process often needs to be clarified and easier to understand, making it hard for residents to participate in the decision-making process. Additionally, the town's financial records often need to be more organized and easier to access, making it hard for residents to understand how tax dollars are spent.

Moving forward, there are several key goals that Hubbardston should focus on to improve its budgeting processes:

1. The town should work to increase transparency around its financial decision-making by making financial records more accessible to the public and engaging residents in the budgeting process.
2. The town should organize its budgeting processes more effectively by streamlining and improving department communication.
3. The town should work to ensure that its budgeting decisions align with the community's priorities by soliciting feedback from residents and prioritizing funding for essential services.
4. Utilize centralized budgeting software to increase transparency and streamline the budgeting process. The software will allow departments and the general public to track the process as it evolves, monitor spending, adjust budgets as needed, and forecast future expenses.

By pursuing these goals, Hubbardston can improve its budgeting processes and ensure tax dollars.

## **Financial Management**

Improving financial management is essential for the long-term financial health of Hubbardston, Massachusetts. Effective financial management helps ensure that the town's resources are used efficiently and transparently and that financial decisions align with the community's priorities. To improve financial management, Hubbardston should focus on several key areas, including staff training, accountability, and policy reinforcement.

One area of focus for Hubbardston should be staff training. It is essential to train new staff in financial management and to provide ongoing training to existing staff to ensure they have the necessary skills to manage the town's finances effectively. This training should cover budgeting, financial reporting, and compliance with regulations.

Another area of focus for Hubbardston should be accountability. It is essential to ensure that departments check the accountant's work against their documentation to ensure accuracy and completeness. This helps to minimize the risk of errors or fraud, which can be costly and damaging to the town's financial health.

Finally, Hubbardston should reinforce financial policies post-pandemic. The pandemic has significantly impacted the town's finances, and it is essential to review and revise financial policies to ensure they are up-to-date and effective. This will help ensure that the town can respond effectively to future crises and maintain financial stability in the long term.

Moving forward, there are several key goals that Hubbardston should focus on to improve financial management.

1. Prioritize staff training and provide ongoing support to ensure staff have the necessary skills to manage the town's finances effectively.
2. Increase accountability by ensuring that departments check the accountant's work against their own documentation.
3. Review and reinforce financial policies to ensure they are up-to-date and effective.

Pursuing these goals, Hubbardston can improve financial management and ensure the long-term financial health of the town.

## **Override**

Hubbardston faces a multi-million-dollar structural deficit, meaning the town's expenses exceed its revenues. This has resulted in a financial crisis threatening the town's ability to provide essential services to its residents. One potential solution to this problem is a Proposition 2.5 override, which would allow the town to increase property taxes above the limits set by state law. While a Proposition 2.5 override is a difficult decision, ensuring the town's financial stability may be necessary.

Moving forward, there are several key goals that Hubbardston should focus on to address its structural deficit:

1. The town should work to increase revenue streams by pursuing grants, exploring new revenue-generating opportunities, and partnering with neighboring towns to share resources.
2. The town should work to reduce costs by streamlining operations, reducing unnecessary expenses, and renegotiating contracts with vendors.

3. The town should engage residents in decision-making by soliciting feedback on budget priorities and communicating clearly about the town's financial situation.
4. Create a municipal override committee will be created to ensure the town's budget is appropriately reviewed and any areas needing additional funding are identified. This committee will consist of members with expertise in finance and budgeting who will recommend and promote a Proposition 2.5 override based on sound financial principles.

Pursuing these goals, Hubbardston can address its structural deficit and ensure the long-term financial stability of the town.

### **Long Range Planning**

Updating our long-range plans is essential for the future success of the town. While we have some plans, they need to be updated due to turnover and the pandemic. This makes it difficult to effectively plan for the future and address the needs of our community. By updating our long-range plans, we can ensure that we are prepared to meet the needs of our town both now and in the future.

1. Improve infrastructure and public services improvement plans. As our town grows and changes, we must ensure that our infrastructure and public services keep pace.
2. Update long-range plans to promote economic development, job creation, roads, technology infrastructure, and financial planning.
3. Update long-range plans to revamp our capital improvement plan. This plan outlines significant projects and investments that will be made over a multi-year period. By updating the capital improvement plan, we can ensure that we are making strategic investments that align with the priorities of our community.

### **Conclusion**

In closing, I would like to reiterate that there is much work to be done in Hubbardston, but I am confident that, together, we can make meaningful progress. The guidance outlined in my entry report provides a solid foundation for the work ahead. I look forward to working collaboratively with the Select Board, town officials, and community members to implement these goals and create positive change for our town.

As I continue in my role as Town Administrator, I plan to utilize the process outlined in my first six months as a framework for future progress. This includes ongoing communication with town officials and community members, identifying priorities and goals for the town, and implementing effective strategies to achieve those goals. With this approach, we can ensure that our efforts are focused, efficient, and productive.



I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as the Town Administrator of Hubbardston and am committed to working tirelessly to make our town an even better community. Thank you for your trust and support as we move forward on this journey together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. R. B.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Nathan R. Boudreau, MPA**  
Town Administrator