

CITIZENS GUIDE TO THE BUDGET

We are pleased to provide the following fiscal year 2025 budget proposal document for your review. This comprehensive guide outlines the Town of Hubbardston's plans to invest taxpayer dollars in programs, services, and initiatives that will help shape the shared future of Hubbardston. The proposed budget is the result of a collaborative effort by the Select Board, Finance Committee, Town Administrator, and Municipal Departments, who have worked diligently to allocate limited resources in a manner that best serves the diverse needs and interests of the community.

As a town governed by the Town Charter and By-Laws, Hubbardston operates under a democratic system where a popularly elected, five-member Select Board serves as the executive branch of the local government. The Select Board is responsible for setting policies, making appointments, and overseeing the general management of the town. The Town's legislative body is an Open Town Meeting, a form of direct democracy that allows any registered voter to participate and vote on important matters affecting the community. The Town Administrator, as the chief administrative officer, is responsible for overseeing Town departments and managing day-to-day business, ensuring that the decisions made by the Select Board and Town Meeting are implemented effectively.

In accordance with the Town Charter, the Town Administrator is required to submit an annual operating and capital budget to the Select Board for review. From March through June, the Select Board and Finance Committee carefully examine these proposals, providing recommendations and making necessary adjustments before presenting the final budget to the Town Meeting for a vote. At the Annual Town Meeting, registered voters have the opportunity to review, discuss, and adopt versions of both budgets, ensuring that the final spending plan reflects the collective will of the community.

Developing an annual budget is a complex process that involves making difficult tradeoffs and prioritizing competing needs with limited resources. Hubbardston is fortunate to have an Open Town Meeting governance system that empowers all registered voters to directly participate in this process and exercise their decision-making authority. By engaging in the budget development process, citizens can help shape the future of their community and ensure that tax dollars are spent in a manner that aligns with the communities values and goals.

We strongly encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to participate in the democratic process. There are several ways you can get involved, including attending informational budget forums, reaching out to Town officials with your questions and concerns, volunteering to serve on boards and committees, and most importantly, exercising your voting rights at Town Meeting.

This comprehensive budget document is designed to provide you with a thorough understanding of Hubbardston's finances across both short and long-term horizons, with varying levels of detail to suit your interests and needs. Inside, you will find:

- Town Administrator's Budget Message, which provides an overview of the proposed budget and highlights key priorities and challenges.
- Financial Summaries and Forecasts, which offer a high-level view of the Town's financial position and projections for the coming years.
- Department Budget Details, which break down the proposed spending plan for each Town department, including an explanation of their functions, goals, and performance metrics.
- Capital Investment Plan, which outlines the Town's long-term strategy for investing in infrastructure, equipment, and other critical assets.
- Appendix with Key Policies and Terminology, which provides additional context and definitions to help you navigate the budget document.

The proposed investments reflected in this budget are guided by our commitment to maintaining high-quality services in the face of rising costs. These priorities have been identified through ongoing discussions with community members, town officials, and various stakeholders who have provided valuable input on the needs of the community. By carefully balancing competing demands and allocating resources strategically, we aim to create a budget that not only meets our current obligations but also positions Hubbardston for a prosperous and sustainable future.

We hope that you will take the time to thoroughly review the enclosed budget details and actively participate in the decision-making process. Your informed participation is essential to ensuring that our budget reflects the values and priorities of our entire community. We look forward to working together to create a bright and prosperous future for our town.