



Hubbardston
Massachusetts

CITIZENS GUIDE TO

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

June 4, 2024
Hubbardston Center School
7:00 PM

A MESSAGE FROM THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Dear Residents of Hubbardston,

It is with great enthusiasm that I write to you as we approach the upcoming Annual Town Meeting on Tuesday, June 4, 2024, at 7 pm at the Hubbardston Center School. I am excited about this year's Town Meeting, as it presents an opportunity for the community to come together and collectively shape the future of your beloved town.

Communication is a cornerstone of an engaged and thriving community, and I am committed to exploring new ways to share important information effectively. This document outlines the articles and proposals that will be discussed and voted upon during the Town Meeting. It is a comprehensive guide that will help you understand the issues at hand and make informed decisions.

One of the key focuses of this year's Town Meeting will be the Fiscal Year 2025 budget. Despite the ongoing challenges posed by economic uncertainties and rising costs, Hubbardston has remained resilient and fiscally responsible. The proposed budget reflects our commitment to maintaining essential services and invest in critical infrastructure while exercising prudent financial management.

Notably, we have prioritized funding for public safety, including provisions for an overnight on-call stipend program to support our dedicated Fire Department's ambulance service (Article 13). Furthermore, we aim to allocate resources for road repairs, equipment replacements, and facility maintenance (Articles 7 and 12), ensuring the continued upkeep of our town's infrastructure.

Additionally, we are proposing measures to bolster our financial reserves, such as transfers to the General Stabilization Account (Article 14) and the Capital Stabilization Account (Article 15). These actions will help us weather future uncertainties and invest in long-term capital projects that benefit our community.

One of the notable articles on the warrant is Article 22, which proposes the addition of a new section to the Zoning Bylaws, regulating Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS). This forward-looking measure aims to establish guidelines and safeguards for the installation and operation of these systems, ensuring the safety and well-being of the community while embracing sustainable energy solutions.

I encourage you to review the guide carefully and reach out to the Select Board, Moderator, Finance Committee, or myself with any questions or concerns you may have. Your input is invaluable, and we value your active participation in shaping the decisions that impact your town.

Please mark your calendars for Tuesday, June 4, 2024, at 7 pm at the Hubbardston Center School, and join us for this important event. Your presence and active participation will contribute to the success of the Town Meeting and our shared commitment to making Hubbardston an even better place to live.

I extend my sincere gratitude to all the town employees, Select Board members, Finance Committee members, and volunteers who have worked tirelessly to prepare for this Town Meeting. Their dedication and efforts are truly appreciated.

I look forward to seeing you all at the Annual Town Meeting and engaging in discussions that will shape the future of Hubbardston.

Sincerely,

Nathan R. Boudreau, MPA, MCPPO
Hubbardston Town Administrator



**VIDEO
GUIDE TO**

**ANNUAL
TOWN MEETING**

June 4, 2024
Hubbardston Center School
7:00 PM

CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO HUBBARDSTON TOWN MEETING

Welcome to the Citizen's Guide to Hubbardston Town Meeting!

As an engaged resident of Hubbardston, it's essential to understand the players, processes, and critical elements involved in the town meeting. This guide will provide an overview of Hubbardston's town meeting, including the participants, the process, and the warrant.

Participants:

Moderator: The town meeting is led by moderator Reneé Lafayette, who is responsible for maintaining order, overseeing the proceedings, and ensuring fairness during discussions and voting.

Town Clerk: Town Clerk Melody Green keeps official meeting records, including minutes, and assists in verifying voters' eligibility.



Select Board: The Select Board members are elected officials representing the town's interests and often present and support proposals during meetings.

Town Officials: Various town officials, such as department heads and board chairs, may attend the meeting to present reports, answer questions, or provide updates.

Town Residents: Any registered voter in Hubbardston is encouraged to attend and participate in the town meeting. Residents can speak, ask questions, and vote on issues.

Before we go:

Warrant Preparation: The town warrant is a document listing the warrant articles, their descriptions, and the recommendations of the Select Board and Finance Committee. The warrant is prepared by the Town Administrator and published ahead of the meeting.

Reviewing the Warrant: As a resident, studying the warrant before the town meeting is essential. The warrant can be obtained from the town clerk's office or the town website. It details the proposed articles, allowing you to come prepared with questions and insights.

GET TO KNOW THE PROCESS

Opening: The town meeting begins with the moderator calling the meeting to order and introduce the key participants. The Pledge of Allegiance is usually recited, and any necessary announcements are made.

Reports: Town officials, boards, and committees present their reports, outlining accomplishments, challenges, and plans.

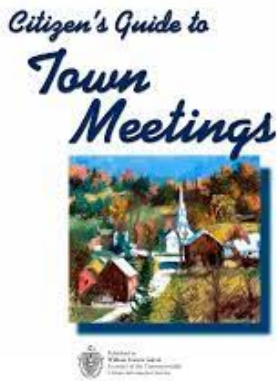
Consent Agenda: A group of articles voted together. The Select Board, Moderator, Town Counsel, and Finance Committee select non-controversial articles. If a voter wants to discuss an article, they shout "hold" and it is discussed separately. Amendments must stay within the scope of the original article and require a simple majority vote. If an amendment passes, the original motion is replaced and voted on again.

Warrant Articles: The main focus of the meeting is the warrant articles, which are items to be discussed and voted upon. Each article addresses specific issues, such as the town budget, bylaws, or proposed projects.

Discussion and Voting: The moderator opens the floor for debate on each warrant article. Residents can ask questions, voice their opinions, propose amendments, and debate the issues. Eventually, a vote is taken on each article.

Adjournment: Once all warrant articles have been addressed and voted upon, the moderator officially adjourns the town meeting.

By familiarizing yourself with the players, process, warrant, and adjournment of Hubbardston's town meeting, you can actively participate in shaping your community. Attending town meetings and contributing your thoughts and votes play a vital role in the decision-making process that affects the town's future.



Articles that have received the recommendation of the Select Board (LEFT) or Finance Committee (RIGHT) have the following symbols in their guideline header



Finance Committee only offers recommendations on non-CPA finance matters.



ARTICLE 1

Submitted by the Select Board
Majority Vote Needed

Language: To choose all necessary officers.

Explanation: Article 1 is a pro-forma article that allows the town to seat any newly elected or re-elected members to boards, committees, and other town offices/positions that were voted on in the previous Town Election.



ARTICLE 2

Submitted by the Select Board
Majority Vote Needed

Language: To hear the reports of the Town Officers and Committees and act thereon.

Explanation: Article 2 allows various town government entities to provide reports summarizing their activities and accomplishments over the past year to promote transparency.



ARTICLE 3

Submitted by the Select Board
Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to enter into agreements with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Transportation for the construction and maintenance of public highways for the twelve-month period beginning July 1, 2024; or take any other action relative thereto.

Explanation: This authorizes the Select Board to enter into the standard annual agreements with MassDOT governing state-funded road construction, maintenance and repair projects. Approving this allows Hubbardston access to certain state resources and reimbursements.



ARTICLE 4

Submitted by the Select Board
Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to accept educational grants and aid for Fiscal Year 2025, to be expended for authorized purposes by the Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School and the Quabbin Regional School District; or take any other action relative thereto.

Explanation: When the regional school districts receive state or federal grants, this allows the district to accept them for the intended educational purposes without municipal involvement.



ARTICLE 5

Submitted by the Select Board
Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the continuation of the Holden Hospital Account #2481-000-5780-0000 for Fiscal Year 2025, to be used for the purposes specified in the trust fund settlement; or take any other action relative thereto.

Explanation: This continues the special revenue fund account established from monies remaining in a trust after the 1990 closing of Holden Hospital. The funds in this account come from a previous legal settlement that stipulated how the money must be used going forward. In recent years, the Holden Hospital funds have been utilized in a variety of ways, but mostly to benefit the town's emergency medical services (EMS). Authorizing the continuation of this account allows those specified funds to keep being expended for their intended purposes per the settlement terms.



ARTICLE 6

Submitted by the Select Board
Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to fix the maximum amount that may be spent during Fiscal Year 2025 beginning on July 1, 2024, for the revolving funds established pursuant to Chapter IV of the Hubbardston General By-Laws-laws for certain departments, boards, committees, agencies or officers as follows, in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 53E½; or take any other action relative thereto.

Explanation: This standard article establishes the Fiscal 2025 spending limit for the town's approved revolving accounts.

CONSENT AGENDA EXPLAINED

The consent agenda groups Articles 1-6 as they are considered, routine, presumably non-controversial articles, together at the start of Town Meeting to allow them to pass easily through a single vote, unless a voter requests an article be held out for further discussion. By bundling Articles 1-6 into a consent agenda, Town Meeting can quickly approve them as one omnibus motion if no voters have objections or desire to debate any of them individually. However, the consent agenda allows for any specific article to be removed from the bundle for separate consideration simply by having a voter make such a request. This efficient process avoids unnecessarily opening up each pro-forma or straightforward article for lengthy deliberation when there is no controversy, while still preserving the ability for scrutiny of any article if desired.



ARTICLE 7

Submitted by the Select Board
Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate from taxation, transfer from available funds, or otherwise provide the following sums of money to meet the salaries and compensation of Town Employees, and Town Officers, as provided by MGL Ch. 41 §108, expenses, and outlays of the Town Departments, and other sundry and miscellaneous, but regular, expenditures necessary for the operation of the Town for Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025) as printed in the attached Appendix A, but not including funding for the Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School District assessment or the Quabbin Regional School District budget and debt, and further, to accept and expend Federal and State Funds to offset certain salaries or expenses and outlay; or take any other action relative thereto.

Explanation: Article 7 is for appropriating the main operating budget for the Town of Hubbardston for Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025). The total proposed operating budget is \$4,353,454, broken down into the following categories:

General Government: \$688,908
Public Safety: \$1,554,762
Public Works: \$905,481
Human Services: \$31,454
Culture and Recreation: \$92,544
Debt: \$146,862
Indirect Costs: \$933,442
Total: \$4,353,454

This operating budget funds the day-to-day operating costs and essential services provided by the Town's departments and personnel, excluding the regional school assessments which are appropriated separately.

The 5.3% budget increase over the prior year represents a modest rise overall, but difficult cuts were required in some areas like Police Wages, DPW Road Materials, and financial offsets to keep the increase sustainable given rising fixed costs. Our town staff continues to provide vital services with constrained resources year after year.

The proposed spending plan aims to maintain core service levels while addressing unavoidable increases in areas like insurance, retirement assessments, and debt service payments. It funds the dedicated efforts of town employees to deliver quality municipal services to residents despite budgetary constraints.



ARTICLE 8

Submitted by the Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School District
Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$357,138 for the Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School District assessment for Fiscal year 2025; or to take any other action relative thereto.

Explanation: This funds Hubbardston's \$357,138 assessment for the annual operating budget of the Monty Tech vocational school district.



ARTICLE 9

Submitted by the Quabbin Regional School District
Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$6,370,774 to pay its share of the Quabbin Regional School District operating budget for Fiscal Year 2025; or take any action relative thereto.

Explanation:

This article funds Hubbardston's \$6,370,774 assessment for the annual operating budget of the Quabbin Regional School District for FY2025. This represents a 9.46% or \$550,709 increase over Hubbardston's FY2024 assessment of \$5,820,065.

Hubbardston is the only member town experiencing a growing student population in the district. The other towns are seeing flat or declining enrollments:

Town	% Change
Barre	+5.09%
Hardwick	+4.00%
Hubbardston	+9.46%
New Braintree	+0.60%
Oakham	+3.28%

The total 5-town operating assessment is increasing 5.70% from \$19,111,494 in FY2024 to \$20,200,061 in FY2025. While obligated to meet this assessment, funding increases of 9.46% is simply unsustainable for Hubbardston given constraints on revenue growth. This large spike strains town finances and requires very difficult choices, use of one-time-funds, and cuts to other municipal services to absorb the added costs. Advocacy for sustainable, equitable district budgets that reflect the ability of growing and shrinking member towns to pay is critically needed going forward.



ARTICLE 10

Submitted by the Quabbin Regional School District
Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$56,318 to pay its share of the Quabbin Regional School Debt for FY 2025; or take any action relative thereto.

Explanation: This \$56,318 assessment pays Hubbardston's share of the existing debt obligations for the Quabbin Regional School District.



ARTICLE 11

Submitted by the Select Board
Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$30,000 for the salaries, benefits, committee stipends and other operating expenses of the Hubbardston Cable Advisory Committee for Fiscal Year 2025, and to meet said appropriation, that the sum of \$30,000 be transferred from the PEG Access and Cable Related Fund; or take any other action relative thereto.

Explanation: This allocates \$30,000 in cable fees to fund the operations of the Cable Advisory Committee.



ARTICLE 12

Submitted by the Select Board
Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of \$271,235 from Free Cash to pay for the following Fiscal Year 2025 cash capital expenses, including all costs incidental and related thereto; or take any other action relative thereto.

FY25 CIP Proposed Annual Capital Expenditures		
DEP	Project Title	FY25
DPW	Gasboy Fuel Pump	\$13,235
DPW	Additional Road Repair (Annual)	\$100,000
LIB	Heat Pump Grant Match	\$12,000
DPW	John Deere Z920M Mower	\$9,000
TC	Vault Organization and Management	\$10,000
POL	Police Cruiser (cycle)	\$87,000
IT	Town Office IT Replacements (Annual)	\$20,000
Fire	SCBA Replacement	\$20,000
	TOTAL	\$271,235

Explanation: This article funds \$271,235 in capital expenditures for FY2025 using available free cash reserves. The Capital Improvement Committee evaluated and prioritized these requests given the limited funding available from free cash this year. Investing in this equipment and infrastructure is critical to maintaining core municipal services and assets. We thank the Capital Improvement Committee volunteers and department heads for their diligent work developing and vetting this capital plan focused on prudent, priority investments for the town.



ARTICLE 13

Submitted by the Select Board
Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to transfer and appropriate the sum of \$15,000 from Free Cash to fund an overnight on-call stipend program for the Hubbardston Fire Department's ambulance service or take any other action in relation thereto.

Explanation: This provides \$15,000 to establish an overnight on-call pay stipend program for Fire Department ambulance staffing.



ARTICLE 14

Submitted by the Select Board
2/3 Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of \$50,000.00 from Free Cash to the General Stabilization Account, or take any other action relative thereto.

Explanation: This transfers \$50,000 from free cash into the General Stabilization Fund reserve account.



ARTICLE 15

Submitted by the Select Board
2/3 Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate \$65,000.00 from the Capital Stabilization account to complete the funding for the purchase of a new boiler at Hubbardston Center School, or take any other action relative thereto.

Explanation: This appropriates \$65,000 from the Capital Stabilization Fund to fund a new boiler for the Center School.



ARTICLE 16

Submitted by the Select Board
Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to enter into a lease agreement with Pitney Bowes for a mail machine, for a term not to exceed five years, or take any other action relative thereto.

Explanation: This allows the Select Board to enter into a 5-year lease agreement for a leased mail machine for town offices.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT

ARTICLES



ARTICLE 17

Submitted by the Community Preservation Act Committee
Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate and transfer \$10,000 from the accrued Community Preservation Act Open Space reserve account as a portion of the required town matching contribution toward an \$85,000 state MassTrails grant. This appropriation will be combined with ARPA funds and community labor to form the full match amount. The grant will fund a fully accessible trail to the Dottie Rock scenic vista at Malone Conservation area.

Explanation: This appropriates \$10,000 in CPA funds as part of the local match for an \$85,000 state grant to construct an accessible trail and scenic vista in Malone Conservation area.



ARTICLE 18

Submitted by the Community Preservation Act Committee
Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate and transfer \$31,260 from accrued Community Preservation Act Undesignated Reserve account to fund the FY2025 debt service obligation for the Rainbow's End playground improvement project as previously approved under Article 18 of the June 23, 2020 Annual Town Meeting; or take any other action relative thereto.

Explanation: This appropriates \$31,260 in CPA funds to pay the annual debt service on bonding for the Rainbow's End playground project.



ARTICLE 19

Submitted by the Community Preservation Act Committee
Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate or reserve from the Community Preservation annual revenue the amounts recommended by the Community Preservation Committee for committee administrative expenses, reserves for historic resources, community housing, open space, and remaining undesignated reserves as listed in the warrant; or take any other relative action thereto.

Explanation: This reserves and appropriates the annual CPA surtax revenues as recommended by the CPA Committee into the various fund categories and for administrative expenses.

BYLAW ARTICLES



ARTICLE 20

Submitted by the Community Preservation Committee
Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to amend the General Bylaws, Chapter XIV, Community Preservation Committee, Section 1 by modifying the composition and appointing authorities for committee members as stated in the warrant.

Explanation: This amends the General Bylaws to change the composition and member appointment process for the Community Preservation Committee. The proposal recommends changing the Housing Authority appointment to a resident with experience in housing related matters, as Hubbardston does not have a Housing Authority.



ARTICLE 21

Submitted by the Planning Board
2/3 Majority Vote Needed

Language: To see if the Town will vote to amend the Zoning Bylaws by adding a new Article 23, Battery Energy Storage Systems, to regulate the permitting, construction, and operation of Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facilities within Hubbardston.

Explanation: This establishes comprehensive new zoning bylaws to regulate the permitting, construction, and operation of Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facilities within Hubbardston. These utility-scale projects that store and discharge electrical energy are a new technology the town wishes to allow but ensure they are designed and operated in a safe manner with proper safeguards.

The bylaw categorizes BESS facilities into three tiers based on their storage capacity and characteristics, setting detailed regulations and requirements that Tier 2 and 3 projects must meet through the special permitting process. This covers areas like utility interconnections, signage, lighting, vegetative screening, setbacks, fencing, noise limits, fire safety, decommissioning plans, financial surety, and annual reporting requirements.

The intent is to allow these facilities in appropriate areas of town where they can meet all the criteria, while giving the Planning Board thorough oversight through permitting, bonding, reporting and the ability to enforce operational conditions. The requirements aim to ensure BESS facilities do not pose undue risks or hazards if properly constructed and maintained according to the bylaw.

Have Feedback?

Please contact the Town of Hubbardston via phone at 978-928-1400 or email us at admin@hubbardstonma.us with questions, comments or suggestions regarding the information in this report. Additionally, you may review the Town's other Reports on the Town website.

Questions?



Nathan R. Boudreau, Town Administrator
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admin@hubbardstonma.us

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