



Hubbardston  
Massachusetts

# TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

## FEBRUARY 20, 2024

It has been an extremely busy past few weeks around Town Hall and Hubbardston. This report aims to serve as an update on some recent activities, meetings, and happenings in our community.

Last week, an enjoyable Football Luncheon was held for staff during Super Bowl week. Thank you to all department heads and employees who brought food, snacks, and good spirit to make it a fun event.

The bi-monthly all-staff meeting was held which continues to foster valuable collaboration, information sharing, and alignment among the team. Topics this month included departmental updates, time and attendance policies outlining vacation time procedures, and a refresher on grant management protocols. Preparations for the 2024 Town Meeting were also discussed. Additionally, managers were reminded that annual performance evaluations are due by end of March and provided sample templates to encourage thoughtful feedback. There is pride in the dedicated service the staff provides each day for Hubbardston residents.

In budget news, departments have submitted 3% budget cut scenarios for FY2025 as requested. An initial assessment is that the budget can likely be balanced with an 8% school increase using \$100k from free cash reserves. Over the next month projections will be refined and a final budget proposal finalized with the finance team.

A 2025-2029 communications engagement plan is being developed, which includes distributing a community survey this week to inform Town priorities. Improving two-way channels remains a priority goal. Opportunities to directly connect with residents are always appreciated.

Recently, an interview was held with Sanda Barry for Hubbardston Headlines about her 20+ years of tireless volunteer service in various roles, including the Community Preservation Act, improving parks, and engaging more residents.

Another Coffee & Community Conversations event was held at the Stars and Stripes Diner as a casual forum to exchange ideas for Hubbardston's future and hear from citizens directly. Two more of these productive morning meetings are planned before transitioning to some outdoor and event-based formats once weather improves.

An interview was held with Gardner Magazine about everything happening in Hubbardston from recent developments and initiatives to future plans and priorities. These regular interviews are a great way to consistently inform residents across media platforms, along with quarterly WGAW radio spots. Keeping citizens updated across all available outlets remains a communications priority.

Please feel free to reach out if you need anything or have any other questions! I'm always available by phone (978-928-1400 x200), email ([admin@hubbardstonma.gov](mailto:admin@hubbardstonma.gov)), stopping by the office, or scheduling time to meet.

## Meetings and Trainings

**Board and Committee Collaboration:** Our recent Board and Committee Chair meeting was an invaluable opportunity for our committee leaders to come together, share insights, and explore collaborative opportunities. These biannual gatherings strengthen communication and coordination, fostering stronger community ties.

**The Structural Deficit Working Group:** This group has been diligently analyzing our finances and brainstorming revenue growth ideas, aligning with potential future override proposals. Though long-term in scope, these efforts will greatly benefit Hubbardston.

**Public Safety Building Committee:** A recent 60 Gardner Road site tour has provided the Public Safety Building Committee key insights to consider carefully together regarding future public safety infrastructure plans.

**Legal Awareness Training:** Staff recently completed important bylaw amendment training, ensuring we can navigate local rule and ordinance changes wisely as they arise. Understanding key legal considerations is vital as we modify policies to serve residents.

**Planning Board Collaboration:** In 2024 so far, we have made significant progress updating the Town's master plan and developing thoughtful special permitting policies for recreational facilities that reflect community needs.

**FEMA Assistance Efforts:** Discussions are ongoing regarding denied COVID-19 reimbursement funds. We remain fully committed to rectifying this \$140k shortfall, and appreciate the community's patience and support.

**Board Engagement:** Remaining actively engaged with Conservation Commission, Cable Commission, Library Board of Trustees, and more through regular meetings keeps communication open and alignment strong across the work happening in Hubbardston.

## Projects and Procurement

**Vehicle Repairs:** After engine issues, one 2014 plow truck required urgent repairs. Director Brown's sound budget management allowed fixing this \$30,000 problem without additional funds. This extends the 10-year-old vehicle's service life 8+ more years.

**Hybrid Meeting System:** Within days the new Slade Conference Room grant-funded hybrid meeting system will be activated, enhancing resident meeting participation from home. Instructions for utilizing this technology will be provided to all boards and committees.

**Insurance Quotes:** Gathering 2025 liability insurance quotes from multiple providers, though content with our current insurer, may reveal cost-saving opportunities.

## Grants

I welcome ideas for MA **Community One Stop** feasibility study grants regarding economic development, infrastructure, or broadband improvements.

Our second meeting with the Collins Center on the efficiency through technology grant is February 28th. Staff interviews will inform recommendations on optimizing operations through technology.

We are also actively pursuing grants related to public safety, digital equity, community planning, and more that align with Hubbardston's strategic goals.

**Town Meeting Season:** Hard to believe we are already heading into the 2024 Annual Town Meeting Season. Below please find a proposed schedule for the events leading up to ATM 2024.

2024 Annual Town Meeting Schedule			
Date	Event Description	Responsible Party	Notes
March 18, 2024	Opening of Warrant / TA Budget Presentation	Town Administrator	Warrant opens for submission of articles for inclusion in the Annual Town Meeting.
April 1, 2024	Warrant Closed	Town Administrator	Warrant closes for submission of articles for inclusion in the Annual Town Meeting.
April 15, 2024	Hybrid Public Budget and ATM Hearing (Select Board Meeting)	Town Administrator	An open forum for residents to express concerns for the Budget and Town Meeting.
TBA	Senior Center Public Forum - 10:00AM	Council on Aging	A forum focused on gathering input from seniors about specific Town Meeting articles.
May 1, 2024	ATM Edition of Hubbardston Headlines (Cable Access Show)	Cable Access, TA, TC	A dedicated episode reviewing all articles to be discussed in the upcoming Town Meeting.
May 4, 2024	Article Review Document Released	Town Administrator	An informative document detailing each article's purpose, impact, and background.
May 6, 2024	Warrant Signed	Town Administrator	Select Board Signs Annual Town Meeting Warrant
May 15, 2024	Voter Registration Deadline	Town Clerk	Deadline for residents to register to vote in the Annual Town Meeting.
May 21, 2024	Final Day to Post	Town Clerk	Distribution of finalized warrant to residents, including all articles to be discussed.
May 28, 2024	RAVE Community Communications Alert (1 week before)	Town Administrator	Notify residents about the upcoming Annual Town Meeting and its agenda.
June 4, 2024	RAVE Community Communications Alert (Day of)	Town Administrator	Send a reminder to residents about the ongoing Annual Town Meeting.
June 4, 2024	Annual Town Meeting	Town Administrator & Staff	The main event - discussion, voting, and decision-making on proposed articles.



We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the Department of Public Works for their exceptional dedication and winter preparedness efforts, which have significantly contributed to the well-being of the community. The DPW team's proactive approach in ensuring safe road conditions and implementing efficient snow removal measures has set a commendable standard for public service in our region. The Department of Public Works consistently goes above and beyond, making a positive and lasting impact on the community. Their contributions are truly appreciated, and we are grateful for the tireless efforts that define the spirit of public service within the Department of Public Works. Join us in recognizing and celebrating their commitment to keeping the community safe.

# Have Feedback?

Please contact the Town of Hubbardston via phone at 978-928-1400 or email us at [admin@hubbardstonma.us](mailto: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.



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## 5-YEAR ROADS PLAN

PUBLIC FEEDBACK OPPORTUNITY

SUBMIT BY FEBRUARY 28, 2024  
[BOS@HUBBARDSTONMA.US](mailto:BOS@HUBBARDSTONMA.US)

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