



Hubbardston
Massachusetts

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

MARCH 4, 2024

As the days get longer, energy is surely returning to Town Hall. It's been a dynamic few weeks filled with activities aimed at propelling Hubbardston forward. Last week was a whirlwind of essential meetings, project updates, and collaborative efforts that showcased the dedication and energy of our town's staff and community members. The commitment to our shared goals is the driving force behind the vibrancy of Hubbardston.

One pivotal focus has been the meticulous crafting and management of the town's budget. This past week, we've diligently worked on the general budget, striving to propose the allocation of resources efficiently to cater to the diverse needs of the community. This intricate process involves thoughtful consideration of priorities, community input, and a steadfast commitment to fiscal responsibility. Our upcoming presentation on March 18, 2024, during the select board meeting will shed more light on our efforts to ensure the economic and social thriving of our town.

The inaugural 8-week Hubbardston Citizens Academy kicked off with enthusiasm. Approximately 20 residents joined in for an insightful overview of our town's government operations. The presentation, led by Land Use Clerk Tricia Lowe and myself, provided valuable insights into the structure of key departments and their service to the community. Missed the kickoff? No worries! Subsequent sessions will delve into public safety, town administration & finance, public works, and more. I encourage everyone to sign up for the remaining meetings [here](#) and join us in deepening our knowledge and commitment to the betterment of Hubbardston.

In our ongoing commitment to transparent communication, I had the pleasure of engaging in "Coffee and Conversations" with community members. These laid-back sessions offer a valuable platform to hear directly from residents, understand their concerns, and exchange ideas. These moments of connection play a crucial role in fostering a responsive administration and contributing to the democratic process.

A heads-up from the Hubbardston Assessor's Office – as part of the property tax assessment recertification process, property data questionnaires were recently mailed. In the coming weeks, a team will be canvassing the town to verify property information. Your assistance in completing and returning the mailed questionnaire promptly is crucial. This ensures our records are accurate, meeting legal requirements and providing fair taxes for all. You can mail back the questionnaire or scan and email it to hubbardstonassessor@rrgsystems.com. Feel free to contact the Assessor's Office for any questions about this process. Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Meetings

School Budget Presentation:

In our most recent interactions with the Quabbin Regional School District Administration, it was disclosed that we their current working numbers include a 12% increase or \$168,000 above our current budget targets (9%). The school administration emphasized that they are in a holding pattern, awaiting additional updates from the state before considering further budgetary adjustments.

Rutland Dispatch Annual Budget Discussion:

Rutland Regional Dispatch held its annual budget discussion, publically revealing a notable increase. Engaging in constructive dialogue, we explored various avenues to enhance our relationship and ensure the continued effectiveness of emergency services. These discussions are integral to maintaining the high standards of public safety that our community deserves.

Emergency Management Meeting:

A Emergency Management Committee meeting was conducted with Chief Couture, Chief Hayes, and EMD O'Donnell to assess and refine our emergency management strategies. This collaborative session allowed us to align our priorities and strengthen our preparedness for potential crises. The commitment of our emergency management personnel is crucial to ensuring the safety and well-being of our residents. I look forward to working with this group on the COOP plan in the coming weeks.

Hubbardston Fire Union Meeting:

I met with James Ares, President of the Hubbardston Fire Union to address pertinent issues related to staffing, rates, and overnight operations. These discussions are essential to maintaining a transparent and collaborative relationship with our dedicated emergency responders. I look forward to working with them in the future.

Structural Deficit Working Group (SDWG):

Our ongoing efforts to address structural deficits were discussed in the SDWG meeting. Anticipating an update in April on revenue considerations and the subsequent steps, the working group is actively assessing strategies to ensure the financial sustainability of the town. This collaborative effort involves thoughtful deliberation on the long-term fiscal health of the community.

Negotiation Planning with DPW:

Preparations for negotiations with the Department of Public Works (DPW) have commenced, with a scheduled meeting early in April.

These meetings underscore our commitment to proactive governance, collaboration, and open communication as we navigate the intricacies of budgetary challenges and community development. I look forward to continued engagement and progress in the upcoming weeks.

Upcoming and Ongoing Initiatives:

Budget:

Our dedication to responsible financial stewardship continues through ongoing efforts that involve constant evaluation, prioritization, and collaboration with key stakeholders. The goal is to ensure that our financial allocations align seamlessly with the ever-evolving needs of our vibrant community.

Data Equity Grant Submission:

Securing a Data Equity Grant marks a significant stride in our commitment to advancing technology for the benefit of residents. This grant will serve as a catalyst for initiatives that champion equitable access to data resources, ensuring that information becomes a powerful tool for inclusivity and community empowerment.

Communications Plan:

In the works is a strategic communications plan designed to fortify the information flow between the town administration and our residents. This initiative is geared towards enhancing transparency, elevating community engagement, and fostering a more informed and connected citizenry. We firmly believe that effective communication is foundational to building trust and ensuring the active participation of our valued community members.

Fee Review:

A comprehensive review of town fees is currently underway, aiming to align our fee structure with the services provided and maintain fairness for all residents. This meticulous process involves careful consideration of community feedback, benchmarking against regional standards, and making adjustments as necessary to ensure the financial sustainability of our town.

Enhancing Commercial Carrier Cellular Service:

In collaboration with Rutland, we are taking a significant step to explore the feasibility of commercial carriers for our emergency dispatch located at 21 Gardner Road. Recognizing the importance of increased cell service in Hubbardston, this initiative aims to boost connectivity for the community. The Request for Proposal (RFP) will be sent out soon to initiate this exploration and open avenues for improved emergency communication.

As we propel forward with these upcoming and ongoing initiatives, our commitment to responsible governance, community engagement, and strategic planning remains steadfast. These collective efforts play a pivotal role in enhancing the overall well-being and prosperity of our town, reflecting our unwavering dedication to the principles of transparency, equity, and progress.

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.



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