

**Ad Hoc
Industrial Development Committee**

Initial Report

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Initial Findings of the Ad Hoc Development Committee

Goals and Objectives: “Need For Change”

The major goal of Hubbardston’s Ad Hoc Economic Development Committee is to develop a viable additional source of revenue, and through that, a solid future for our Town.

With a strong industrial base we can hope to see:

1. Increased revenue from both Real Estate and Personal Property Taxes.
2. More jobs for local people.
3. Better support for our present local businesses.
4. Increase in home sales.

Instead of exporting capital out of Hubbardston, as we are doing today, we need to import capital into our community. We must create a diversified and sustainable economy for our Town.

Westminster Comparison: (ref. Appendix A & B)

The Town of Westminster is of comparable size to Hubbardston. To date they have exhibited a very strong fiscal position. Their tax rate is usually in the same range as Hubbardston’s. In the year 2007 their Total Assessed Valuation from Commercial and Industrial Properties was \$ 127,463,905 or 12.7% of their Total Valuation. The ten largest tax payers contributed \$ 1,008,195 in taxes or 8.54% of their Total Tax Levy. Most of the Personnel Departments that I contacted said that 10 – 20% of their personnel were local. Some companies were as high as 50%.

The following table gives a comparison of some fiscal indicators for the towns of Westminster and Rutland as compared to Hubbardston.

	Population	Op.Budget	Tax Rate	Taxes		Stabilization	
Hubbardston 2006	4,598	\$ 5,957,990	\$10.61	Res.	\$4,245,415	General	\$ 422,866
				Com.	86,602	Prop.Update	59,622
				Ind.	48,674	Fire Dept.	33,956
				Total	\$4,380,691	H'Way	36,233
						Mun, Facil.	5,176
						Total	\$ 557,873
Westminster 2006	7,370	\$17,647,800	\$11.73	Res.	\$9,238,836	General	\$ 601,123
				Com.	635,706	Add'l.	1,175,441
				Ind.	706,603	Total	\$1,776,564
				Total	\$10,581,145		
Rutland 2007	8,066	\$15,660,650	\$11.21	Res.	\$8,902,583	General	\$ 754,976
				Com.	194,460	Total	754,976
				Ind.	36,147		
				Total	\$9,133,190		

Westminster and Rutland have almost twice the income of Hubbardston in Residential Taxes which have significant costs associated with them (i.e. Educational Costs). However, these two towns also have the benefit of Commercial and Industrial Taxes that directly improve their fiscal position and defray the Educational Costs and the other costs associated with running a town. It follows that Hubbardston must move forward in attracting Commercial and Industrial Business in order to meet escalating costs and significantly smaller help from the State. We must establish alternate revenue sources.

Industrial Park Project:

The "Gravel Pits" located between Pitcherville Rd. and Rt. 68 are an attractive site for an Industrial Park. They are at the north end of town, generally out of sight, have close proximity to the Rt.2 corridor, and, in addition, are an "eye sore" in their present condition. At present some of the pits are closing down, others are under litigation for various reasons, and still others are presently active. Rietta Ranch is somewhere between ownership by Ronnie LeVesque's heirs and UMass Medical. Piette is in negotiations with Steve Boucher over the purchase of his property. Steve is the owner of Central Mass Sand & Gravel and has developed some massive industrial and residential projects in Lancaster and Leominster. There is a possibility of establishing an Industrial Park at this sight. The alternative will probably be a Residential Development. There is approximately 360 acres of property north of Pitcherville Rd. along Rt.68 and another 460 acres south of Pitcherville Rd. extending all the way to Ragged Hill Rd. along Rt.68. If a few other properties were added, this could possibly amount to a development site of over 1,000 acres. (Reference Appendix C)

Obviously, accomplishing this will be a monumental task, and require enormous amounts of work.

First, Hubbardston owns very little of the land in this area, so there is a need to either (a) buy land (b) seek the cooperation of the present land owners or (c) seek the help of a major land developer. As a start, I have spoken to several of the pit owners, and they are interested at this time.

Second, there are possible problems with all sorts of governmental agencies. Hubbardston Brook flows through the area as well as a tributary from Sawyer's (Bent's) Pond. Most of the area is a major aquifer. There are several vernal pools with the possibility of some endangered species. We will, therefore, have to work closely with DEP, EPA, Mass Wildlife and a whole raft of governing agencies.

Third, there is no infrastructure. We would have to somehow provide roads, septic systems, and water to the area. Consideration must be given to this problem early in the development cycle. Possibilities are: work out some form of assistance from Gardner (as Westminster has done with Fitchburg), convince the property owners and/or prospective tenants to provide the necessary infrastructure, or look for State and/or Federal Grant Money.

Fourth, the area is not zoned for Industrial use. Therefore, the present zoning regulations need to be rewritten with special attention to defining acceptable use and the types of businesses that Hubbardston would approve.

Fifth, we do not know, at this time, how amenable the Town will be toward building an Industrial Park on the outskirts. Assuredly, the abutters will have concerns.

Sixth, with the present state of local, State, and Federal economies today, the future is at best, uncertain. However, the present economy notwithstanding, we would be remiss in not planning for the future. A project of this magnitude could take 5 to 10 years to complete. Starting now puts us in a position to be ready when the economy improves. Attracting businesses to towns has become a highly competitive market. Attached to this report is an advertising brochure sent out by Westminster and several news clippings concerning industrial development.

Seventh, and finally, we need to develop a marketing strategy to attract business to Hubbardston, and a system that will help them get established.

Where do we go from here?

Obviously, this is not a task for a one person committee. I would recommend that we establish a committee of at least seven individuals. Since this is a long term project, the committee members must be willing to commit to its success. In selecting candidates I would hope that the BOS look for the following characteristics:

1. Dedication to the goal of bringing business to Hubbardston.
2. Aggressive and tenacious in working toward this Goal.
3. Backgrounds in Finance, Real Estate, Project Management and Development.
4. Good verbal and written communication skills.

I have an ongoing list of suggested applicants, to which I will continue to add. It is suggested that the Board of Selectmen also add to this list and then perform a

thorough search for qualified candidates. At some point down the road it might be worth considering hiring a Town Planner.

In order to function properly and efficiently, the Industrial Development Committee needs a location to meet and do business. Necessary equipment is: telephone, data storage, and computer access. Desks, chairs, and a conference area are also required.

All other departments should be made aware of the nature of this committee and its goals and objectives. We all should keep in mind the need for open communication and the sharing of information. We have several committees that are presently functioning. There is a need to make sure that we all work together since in some cases there are conflicting goals and objectives. At present we tend to work independently and sometimes are counter productive. Open Space, Affordable Housing, Town Center, Tourist Bureaus, Capital Planning, and The Business Association all have to work in concert with each other for the betterment of Hubbardston.

A better outline of the charter for the Economic Development Committee needs to be established, as well as a clearer organizational structure detailing authority and responsibilities. Do we remain an ad hoc committee? An Economic Development Committee reporting to the Board of Selectman? An Economic Development Authority with a much broader scope? These are some issues that need to be addressed as we move forward. They are not cast in concrete and may even change over time depending on the circumstances.

Some Immediate Tasks for 2009:

1. Poll the Town on the acceptance of businesses coming to Hubbardston, and their proposed location.
2. Update the Master Plan.
3. Research the value of industrial development vs housing development and their respective contribution to the revenue stream of the Town of Hubbardston.
4. Modify and/or rewrite the Zoning Regulations to allow business development and establish larger zones for commercial, light, and heavy industry. Improve and/or expand the definitions of acceptable businesses.
5. Develop a constructive working relationship with the gravel pit owners. Discuss their long term plans for development.
6. Develop a better system for seeking out and applying for private, State, and Federal grants. Involve our State Senators and Representatives in assisting us in our need for both direction and funding.
7. Research through Mass. Regional Planning and other agencies any possible environmental impact relative to our various projects.
8. Perform an Infrastructure Engineering study on availability and feasibility of water, sewer, electricity, and wireless access to the proposed Industrial Park and any other possible areas within the Town.

9. Inventory other potential sites for business development in Hubbardston.
10. Look at methods to improve the system of obtaining the required approvals and permits through the various regulating bodies in Hubbardston. Speed up the permitting process.

Conclusion:

This report has attempted to address the problems and actions required to establish an industrial base in the Town of Hubbardston. The intent is not to completely industrialize the Town, but to slowly and carefully build a base for a new revenue stream that will not destroy the rural atmosphere of Hubbardston, but will blend into our present way of life with minimal disruption.

The task is monumental, but with lots of “good old fashioned hard work” we can preserve our Town and still solve our financial woes.

Although this report has focused on the industrial side of development, there remains the whole concept of commercial business relative to our everyday needs and the tourist related businesses such as hotels, restaurants, etc.

Owner	Parcel#	Acres
Rietta Ranch	60/69/70/71	51.19
A&H Site (Steve Hakala)	60	50.66
Piette/Bates (Steve Boucher)	32/36	71.22
Hubbardston/Judy Marceau	27/27A	36.00
Steve Lowe	19	66.00
Comm.of Mass.	10	41.30
City of Gardner	9	9.00
Norman Brown	181/40/35	36.00
TOTAL		361.37 acres

Fletcher	160/55/56/74	355.48
Town of Hubbardston	73/75/76	35.10
Ragged Hill Trust	77/80	69.20
TOTAL		459.78 acres