



**Hubbardston**  
Massachusetts

# TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

APRIL 16, 2024

As we move into spring, I'm excited to provide an update on some of the key initiatives and happenings around town. This report aims to keep you informed about important dates, opportunities, and projects in a professional yet friendly manner.

## **2024 Annual Town Election**

One of the most significant events on the horizon is our Annual Town Election on Tuesday, June 11th. This is your opportunity to make your voice heard by voting for the candidates you feel will best serve our community's interests. Several positions are open this year across town boards and committees.

If you or someone you know is interested in running for office, nomination papers are currently available at the Town Clerk's office. The deadline for returning completed nomination papers is April 23rd by 5pm. For more information please visit the town website.

## **Annual Town Meeting - June 4th**

Before the election, we will hold our Annual Town Meeting on Monday, June 4th. This is the evening for residents to hear updates on town affairs and finances, and vote on any warrant articles. The final warrant will be posted in the coming weeks, but I expect articles pertaining to the FY2025 budget, capital projects, bylaw changes, and more. I hope you'll make plans to attend this important annual gathering.

## **Quarter 3 Financial Report**

I'm pleased to report that through the third quarter of FY2024, our revenues and expenditures are aligning closely with budgetary projections. We continue prioritizing fiscal responsibility and transparency. The full Q3 report with all the details is available on the town website.

## **Community Awards & Scholarships**

On a positive note, we have two opportunities to celebrate the outstanding individuals and students in our community:

## **Country Hen Scholarship**

Students, be sure to get your applications in by April 22nd for a chance at this scholarship for graduating seniors pursuing higher education. Three years of residency in Hubbardston and community involvement are key criteria.

## **Citizen of the Year Award**

New this year, the Citizen of the Year Award aims to recognize a resident, group, or organization that has gone above and beyond to enhance Hubbardston's quality of life. Nominate your pick for this prestigious honor by April 25th. The winner will be celebrated at the Town Meeting.

I'll close by encouraging you to get involved - whether that's voting, serving on a committee, or running for office.

## **Personnel Updates**

This section highlights personnel changes, staff training opportunities, expression of appreciation, and initiatives around professional development, human resources, and workplace improvements.

Stress Management and Safety workshop on Wednesday, May 22nd with speaker Jerry Posner. This engaging session titled "Less Stress Equals A Safer Life!" is being provided through a safety grant from our insurance provider. Jerry will cover highly relevant topics like managing stress triggers, keeping calm under pressure, cultivating patience, and staying safe at work. All staff are encouraged to attend this valuable training where we'll learn practical tools and strategies to reduce stress and increase positive outcomes professionally and personally. The workshop will be held right here at the Town Offices with lunch provided. Further details on start time to follow.

On the professional development front, I will be attending the "Elevating Excellence! Effective Community Engagement" webinar. This will cover strategies for navigating communication challenges, creating effective conversations with the community, fostering meaningful relationships, and leveraging technology - all aimed at enhancing our administration and community impact.

We are in the process of on-boarding a 12-hour per week Assessors Clerk, which will be on the next meeting agenda for approval.

Updates are coming soon on HR/Benefits processes like onboarding efficiencies and time/attendance tracking to streamline operations.

Welcome to Melody Green who began training with Denise this past week to prepare for her April 22nd start date as the new Town Clerk. We're excited to have her on board!

Special thanks to Tricia for leading the Citizens Academy program, Vice Chair Katie Young for treating staff to a baked potato bar luncheon, and DPW's Neil Goguen for refurbishing the Town Clerk's office drop box.

Appreciation to all staff for the assistance provided during the budget and Town Meeting preparation process. Your team effort is valued.

Work is underway to develop Standard Operating Procedures to ensure proper knowledge transfer and enhance workflows going forward.

## Projects & Initiatives

There are a number of important projects and initiatives currently underway that I'd like to highlight:

- I want to thank the finance and admin staff for their hard work on this year's audit, which was done during the second week of April. Their diligence and willingness to work with auditors ensures proper oversight of town finances. I anticipate the results in a few weeks.
- We are working closely with legal counsel and local establishments to update our Marijuana Host Community Agreements in accordance with new state laws. There are complete waivers and outlines available, and I hope to finalize these updates during May.
- IT modernization continues to be a priority. We are in the process of transitioning to a new, more secure server to better protect town data and systems.
- I am collaborating with department heads to identify potential ADA compliance projects to strengthen our application for a competitive state grant program.
- I recently submitted multiple Expressions of Interest for the Community One Stop for Growth grant program. The proposed projects align with our Master Plan goals around growth management planning, infrastructure, streamlining permitting processes, pedestrian/bike enhancements, and wireless communications bylaws. We await feasibility review before preparing full applications.
- The RFP process is underway for a major new library foundation project. We are actively evaluating submissions.
- Contract negotiations with DPW unions for FY25-27 commence this week after some weather delays.
- Over April vacation, crucial clean out work will be done to empty the crawlspace at Hubbardston Center School..
- Website updates are in progress to improve constituent experience.

This is just a sample of what's in motion to enhance services, plan for future needs, and keep Hubbardston thriving. As always, I welcome any questions residents may have.



I attended several important meetings were attended over the past few weeks:

- I attended my second Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) Municipal Regional Policy Committee meeting to collaborate with other municipal leaders on statewide issues.
- Select Board Member Peter Walker and I represented Hubbardston at the Ware River Watershed Advisory Board Meeting to discuss regional water resources.
- I attended the economic forecast presentation hosted by the North Central Chamber of Commerce that provided insightful data on regional economic trends.
- I participated in a rural communities check-in call with Department of Revenue Senior Official Sean Cronin to get updates on programs and policies impacting rural towns like Hubbardston.
- The kick-off meeting was held for our Green Communities grant initiatives. I look forward to these projects enhancing our sustainability efforts.
- The Emergency Management Committee convened to discuss preparedness planning and updates to our Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan.
- I met with the Library Trustees to discuss upcoming projects, facility needs, and vision for library services.
- The Community Preservation Committee also met, where we worked on drafting a bylaw change to revise the housing authority composition to include one member with direct housing experience. Alice Livdahl has expressed interest in filling that role.

Regular meetings like these allow me to stay connected with regional partners, state officials, town boards/committees, and emerging issues that impact our community. An open dialogue is critical for effective leadership and ensuring Hubbardston's interests are represented.

## **Communications**

On the media and communications front, several opportunities arose to discuss Hubbardston happenings:

- I did an interview with Gardner Magazine focused on previewing the upcoming budget season and Annual Town Meeting.
- Channel 5 News visited Hubbardston to do a feature piece on how the community handled this past winter's weather challenges.
- The Gardner News covered the launch of our new Citizen of the Year Award program. They noted plans to highlight the inaugural recipient once named at Town Meeting.
- Select Board Chair Jeff Williams will join me as my next guest on the Hubbardston Headlines podcast/video program.

Proactive communications through traditional and modern channels allows us to share important town news while also promoting Hubbardston's achievements and initiatives with a wider audience. I remain committed to transparency and keeping residents informed.

# 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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