WHAT'S GOING ON IN

Dunstable?

FALL EDITION | OCTOBER 2025

Union Building Exterior Restoration Complete

Pappas Industries, the Town's General Contractor, has recently completed all final punch list items at the Union Building. With construction now substantially complete, the building looks beautiful and represents an exciting milestone for the community. To date, construction costs total $702,581.90, reflecting a significant investment in preserving and restoring this historic asset.

The Town, through the Union Building Rehabilitation Committee, has worked closely with Gienapp Architects throughout this project, whose expertise has been instrumental in guiding the rehabilitation and ensuring the building's historic character is respected while preparing it for future use.

The Union Building Rehabilitation Committee will meet on October 8 to review responses to the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) the Town issued for the building's interior design. Shortly after, the committee will bring forward a recommendation to the Select Board for consideration.

As the interior design process moves ahead, the Town will also begin developing a clear plan for the building's future use. While a re-use process has already outlined a framework of possibilities, further work is needed to refine those ideas and finalize a long-term vision.

The Union Building is an important part of our town's history, and its restoration marks an exciting beginning of a new chapter. With the exterior work nearing completion, we are on our way to transforming the building into a vibrant space that will serve residents for generations to come.

BEFORE



AFTER



Town of Dunstable

CONTENTS

2 Special Town Meeting - November 17

3 Compensation and Classification Study

5 Fire Department Receives FEMA Grant

8 New Businesses Open

9 News in Brief

Special Town Meeting: Monday, November 17

Mark your calendars! The Select Board has called a Special Town Meeting scheduled for Monday, November 17 at 7 PM in the Swallow Union Elementary School gym.

The warrant for this Special Town Meeting is currently open and will remain open until Monday, October 27 at 4 PM. During this time period, citizen petition articles may be submitted for consideration. Once the warrant closes, the Select Board will review and finalize the articles to be included.

Town Meeting is the community's opportunity to directly participate in the legislative process by voting on important issues that impact the Town. All residents are encouraged to attend and make their voices heard.

As the warrant is finalized, more information on each article will be shared.

Municipal Citizens Academy off to great start!

The second annual Dunstable Municipal Citizens Academy started September 11. After a successful first year, we're thrilled that 17 residents pre-registered to participate in this year's program.

The Citizens Academy is a free, interactive program designed to engage residents, demystify how local government works, and foster stronger community connections. Over the course of several weeks, participants meet town staff and learn firsthand about the departments and services that keep Dunstable running.

Each session focuses on a different area of town government. Thus far, program participants have learned from the Groton Dunstable Regional School District, Library, and State Representative Margaret Scarsdale. Upcoming sessions will include presentations on general governmental functions, budget and finance, and public safety.



Team Building at Camp Massapoag

This week, the team at Town Hall participated in a thoughtful, engaging, and energizing team-building activity at Camp Massapoag, led by the Greater Lowell YMCA.

The afternoon combined fun with purpose, focused on communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills that are important to our work in local government. While each of us has a different role and background, we work together with a common mission: to serve the residents of Dunstable with dedication and care with the best interests of the community always in mind.

We're grateful to the Greater Lowell YMCA for making this opportunity possible and to our employees for embracing it with such enthusiasm. Experiences like these remind all of us how fortunate we are to have a committed and collaborative team.



AgeSpan Grant to support senior programs

The Town has been awarded a $5,000 Title III grant from AgeSpan to create health and wellness programming for residents ages 60 and older.

The grant will support a new Senior Wellness Program designed to nurture the mind, body, and spirit. Beginning this fall, residents will be able to participate in a rotating weekly exercise series featuring Zumba, Yoga, Barre Fusion, and Meditation. These programs seek to serve residents of all interests and abilities.

In addition, the program will include a monthly Reiki practitioner, providing 90 minutes of Reiki sessions in 5 to 10 minute intervals. This holistic practice is intended to promote relaxation and balance, adding to the Town's wellness offerings.

The Town is excited to bring these opportunities to our community and we encourage residents to join in the a activities. More information on schedules and how to participate will be shared soon.

AgeSpan
Choices for Life's Journey

Compensation and Classification Study Completed

Last month, the Select Board began its review of the final report detailing the work and recommendations of the Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management for the Town's Compensation and Classification Study. Their work has been ongoing for several months and was focused on ensuring that our job descriptions, position classifications, and compensation structures are fair, accurate, consistent, and competitive with neighboring communities.

The process to get to this point was comprehensive and inclusive including employee questionnaires, interviews, and the development of updated job descriptions. These descriptions have now been finalized to clearly define the responsibilities and requirements of each position. In addition, all positions were evaluated using a point-factor method to ensure internal equity across roles. The Collins Center evaluation tool is one that has been used in communities throughout Massachusetts.

The compensation portion of the study included a salary survey which received responses from 12 comparable municipalities. Based on this data, the Collins Center recommended adjustments to the salary ranges in each position grade. It should be noted that the Collins Center did not make recommendations on how to implement a new salary schedule just provided the salary ranges for each job grade.

After reviewing the final report and salary ranges, the Town Administrator developed a recommendation which was presented to the Select Board. The proposal was developed through consultation and discussions with the Collins Center. In summary, it included the following:

- A 30% range between minimum and maximum steps (current is 19 - 20%), consistent with the Collins Center recommendation.
- A 10-step schedule with 3% increases between steps (currently 2%).
- Step advancements every 2 years (instead of every 3).

These changes are designed to better align us with market conditions, support employee growth, and strengthen our ability to attract and retain talent. Implementation will place employees on the new schedule at the closest step above their current rate.

The Select Board and Advisory Board continue to review the data and recommendations and are expected to take this issue up sometime this fiscal year. The timing of implementation is yet to be determined as the new schedule will need to fit within the constraints of this year's budget, which set aside $10,000 in salary reserve for implementation of the new schedule. Funds in the salary reserve account need to be released and transfers approved by the Advisory Board.

The study also highlighted a few unique circumstances, including employees whose pay is outside their grade range and positions needing updated titles. Many of these adjustments will be addressed as part of the overall implementation process once a definitive decision has been made.

UMASS BOSTON
EDWARD J. COLLINS, JR. CENTER FOR PUBLIC MANAGEMENT
JOHN W. McCORMACK GRADUATE SCHOOL OF POLICY AND GLOBAL STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

Upcoming Timber Harvest at Spaulding Proctor Reservation

The Dunstable Conservation Commission will be conducting a timber harvest during the fall and winter season at the Spaulding Proctor Reservation, located off Pleasant and Groton Streets. This work is part of the Commission's ongoing forest stewardship efforts.

All timber harvesting is carried out under a Forest Cutting Plan that is reviewed and approved by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. These plans ensure that best management practices are followed to protect sensitive areas and enhance wildlife habitat. Licensed foresters oversee the process to ensure responsible and sustainable forest management.

Timber harvesting plays a vital role in maintaining the long-term health of our forests. It helps:

- Prevent overcrowding of trees
- Promote forest regeneration by increasing sunlight and air circulation
- Control the spread of invasive, non-native plant species
- Reduce the risk of insect infestations
- Protect wetlands and improve water quality

For more information, to ask questions, or to share concerns, please contact Carol Rock, Conservation Commission Administrator, at (978) 649-4514 ext. 230 or crock@dunstable-ma.gov.

Final Phase of Bandstand Improvements Set to Begin

The Town Common bandstand is about to receive final improvements. Thanks to a state budget earmark, the Select Board has approved a $27,513 contract with C&K Roofing to complete the last phase of improvements.

The work will focus on both safety and appearance, with updates to lighting, installation of roof caps, refreshed latticework, stairway safety improvements, and repainting. Together, these upgrades will help preserve the bandstand while making it safer and more welcoming for community events.

This project marks the final stage of work funded by the earmark, which has allowed the Town to make significant enhancements in repairing the bandstand and restoring it as a centerpiece of the Common. Once complete, we hope to see you enjoying the bandstand during summer concerts and other community gatherings for years to come.



FY25 Year End Report Available

The Town has prepared its FY2025 Year End Finance Report, covering the period from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025. You can find the report here: https://www.dunstable-ma.gov/town-administrator/pages/financial-reporting.

Total revenues collected reached $13,124,752.82, which was $153,998.82 (1.19%) above budget projections. Real estate property taxes, the Town's largest source of revenue, performed in line with expectations, generating more than $11.84 million. State aid came in slightly stronger than anticipated, while local receipts outperformed significantly, ending the year 18.86% above budget.

Motor vehicle excise taxes continued to be the largest share of local receipts, accounting for $727,865.28 or about 82% of local collections. Other local revenues, like building permits and investment income, also contributed to the stronger results.

On the expenditure side, the Town ended the year with $12,719,773.86 in expenditures, which was 96.24% of the adjusted FY25 budget. This left a balance of $497,390.27 in unexpended appropriations. As in prior years, most departments spent between 80% and 95% of their budgets, with the largest savings coming from health insurance.

The Groton Dunstable Regional School District and Greater Lowell Technical High School were fully expended as budgeted at $8.36 million. Public safety ended the year at 92.5% of its budget and public works came in at 85.8%.

Special Town Meeting articles had a remaining balance of $17,731, which will carry forward into FY26 for capital projects.

When combining the revenue surplus with the expenditure savings, Dunstable ended FY25 with a positive variance of $650,389.09.

The report also highlights several areas to monitor going into FY26. Revenue estimates were more aggressive than in past years, particularly for local receipts and new growth. On the expenditure side, the Town Hall and Technology budgets continue to face cost pressures, and the Snow & Ice account, which was strained by a demanding winter, may require additional support depending on weather in FY26.

Join the Town Administrator for coffee and conversation!

Join Dunstable Town Administrator Jason Silva for casual coffee and conversations at Farmhouse Cafe on Pleasant Street! This is a great opportunity to discuss any local issues and hear directly from the Town officials.

This month's coffee will take place on Thursday, October 23 at 10 AM. Jason looks forward to seeing you there and don't forget, he's buying! Mark your calendars and bring your questions and ideas!

Dunstable Awarded FEMA Grant to Support New Forestry Truck Purchase

The Town has been awarded a significant federal grant to enhance our Fire Department's ability to respond to emergencies. Through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Assistance to Firefighters Grant program, the Town will receive $285,000 to support the purchase of a new forestry truck.

This new vehicle will replace the department's current forestry truck, a 1986 Chevy 125/200/8F with 82,284 miles. The aging vehicle is well beyond its expected service life, making the grant funding especially timely and important.

Forestry trucks are a vital tool in a rural town like Dunstable, where forested areas and back roads can make fire response especially challenging. The replacement truck will provide firefighters with a modern, reliable resource for battling brush fires, responding to off road emergencies, and supporting mutual aid efforts with neighboring communities.

While the federal award covers the majority of the cost, the program requires a local match. Dunstable is required to contribute $15,000 toward the purchase of the new forestry truck.

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant program is highly competitive, with Fire Departments across the country applying each year. Dunstable's successful application highlights the Department's dedication to improving public safety and supporting its first responders.



Town Releases FY27–FY31 Financial Forecast

The Town has prepared its financial forecast for FY2027 through FY2031, providing oversight boards and residents with a picture of the community's forecasted revenues and expenditures in the coming years. The report highlights the continued financial pressures facing the Town, while also outlining the assumptions and strategies guiding long-term planning. You can find the complete report here: https://www.dunstable-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif4361/f/pages/draft_financial_forecast_fy27-fy31_9_22_25.pdf.

For FY27, the Town's operating budget is projected at $14.83 million, an increase of about 6.62% over FY26. Much of this growth is driven by rising school assessments, debt service, and municipal costs. The Groton Dunstable Regional School District assessment is estimated to increase by 6%, while Greater Lowell Technical High School's assessment is forecasted to rise by 5%. Municipal expenses are also projected to grow, with assumptions including the reinstatement of a ninth police officer and expanded emergency medical services through a new partnership with Tyngsborough.

At the same time, the Town faces higher fixed costs, particularly in health insurance (projected at a 10% annual increase) and retirement assessments, which are expected to rise by more than 21% in FY27. Debt service obligations are also increasing significantly with the first payment for the PFAS Mitigation Project, alongside ongoing payments for water infrastructure and the fire rescue truck.

On the revenue side, Dunstable continues to rely heavily on residential property taxes, which account for more than 87% of the Town's operating revenue. Local receipts, like motor vehicle excise taxes, licenses, and fees, are projected at $800,000 annually. State aid is forecasted to grow modestly at about 2% per year but remains a small portion of total revenues at under 3%. Free cash is assumed to continue to be used at FY26 levels to support both operating and capital costs, including school and town projects.

Based on these assumptions, the forecast projects annual operating deficits throughout the five-year period:

- FY27: ($384,833)
- FY28: ($679,951)
- FY29: ($1,009,797)
- FY30: ($1,365,274)
- FY31: ($1,924,317)

These projected shortfalls demonstrate the structural budget challenges the Town faces as expenses outpace revenue growth. While recent efforts have reduced reliance on free cash, the report notes that ongoing use of one-time revenues to balance the operating budget is not sustainable in the long term.

As part of the forecast, the Town also examined Dunstable's average single-family tax bill, which was $9,424 in FY25, higher than the state average of $7,730. This reflects both Dunstable's reliance on residential property taxes and the relatively small size of its commercial tax base compared to neighboring communities. The report also includes robust spending and revenue comparisons with comparable and neighboring communities.

The financial forecast will serve as an important planning tool as Dunstable approaches the FY27 budget season, helping the Select Board, Advisory Board, and residents prepare for the continued fiscal challenges and pressures in the future.

Select Board Sets Goals for FY26

Each year, the Select Board works with the Town Administrator to set goals and objectives to help guide the Town's work and focus. The goals are a roadmap that ensures we're moving forward together as a community, building on past progress while keeping an eye to the future.

Over the past year, we've made efforts to make it easier for residents to connect with their town government. A New Resident Guide was created to help newcomers get settled, and a virtual pre-Town Meeting briefing gave residents a chance to ask questions in advance of Town Meeting. We've also started sharing more updates through YouTube via the Municipal Minute video series and other platforms so residents can stay informed.

n FY26, we're committed to expanding these efforts. More "coffee hours" will be offered at different times and formats, including remote options. We'll also hoping to work with the schools to create a Student Government Day to engage our younger residents. And, a redesign of the town's website is planned to make it easier to find what you need quickly.

We know that when our employees are supported, the whole community benefits. This past year, we introduced regular, monthly staff updates and created an outdoor office and break area thanks to a grant. Looking forward, we plan to continue team-building and communication efforts, as well as workstation improvements, to make sure staff have the tools and encouragement they need to serve the community.

Careful financial management continues to be a priority. Last year, we strengthened reporting and adopted new financial policies. This year, one of our biggest goals is to adopt a budget that avoids reliance on a Proposition 2½ override. We'll also be tightening up policies and practices to make sure we stay on a sustainable path.

From restoring town buildings to planning future trails, Dunstable continues to invest in its buildings and infrastructure. Highlights of the year ahead include converting streetlights to energy-efficient LEDs, weatherization projects for public buildings, and advancing the design of a Town Center Trail Loop.

Behind the scenes, work continues to improve day-to-day services. Online permitting and digital paystubs for employees over last year made things more efficient. This year, we'll build on that by training new staff, expanding technology tools, and exploring shared services with nearby towns improve services.

These goals represent more than just projects and a checklist, they establish a shared vision for our community. We're looking forward to advancing all that we aim to accomplish in FY26!

Town receives MIIA Wellness Grant

Dunstable was awarded a MIIA Wellness Grant which has allowed the Town to improve workstations with more ergonomically friendly furniture and equipment.

The majority of the new equipment is adjustable and adaptable, allowing it to be re-used and re-assigned as staffing changes occur such as standup desk converters, ergonomic chairs and equipment like new keyboards, lamps, and foot/chair mats.

We hope these improvements will support employee health and well-being by reducing or avoiding chronic injuries, discomfort, and fatigue and, by doing so, increasing productivity and morale.

MIIA
Nonprofit
Locally based
Member driven
Serving Massachusetts communities since 1982

Get Involved! Join a Town Board or Committee

Dunstable needs YOU! Volunteer today!

The Select Board is preparing for annual board and committee appointments and reappointments. Now is the perfect time to step up and serve. We're looking to fill vacancies and welcome new voices across a wide range of committees.

Have a passion for the Town?
Want to help shape the future of Dunstable?
Ready to give back and make a difference?

We have opportunities for residents of all backgrounds and interests whether you have a few hours a month or more time to give, the town could benefit from your experience, expertise, insight and commitment.

Submit your interest now! Interested? Send an email to select-board@dunstable-ma.gov.

Recognizing our dedicated volunteers and employees

Making a Difference is a peer-to-peer employee and volunteer recognition program

The Town has created a program, Making a Difference, a peer-to-peer recognition program each month to recognize and acknowledge the amazing work taking place within the walls of Town Hall, and outside of Town Hall, to make a difference in our community.

Many volunteers and employees have been recognized through this program, nominated by a colleague, a volunteer member of a board or committee, or a supervisor to recognize the difference they are making in the community.

For the months of June, July, August, and September the following employees and volunteer have been celebrated through this program:



June
Jon Swift
Erik Hoar
Jason Silva
Sue Fayne

July
Chuck Raffoni
Summer Concert Committee
Jen West and Mrs. E

August
Jeff Hastings
Sue and Bill Psaledakis
Kristine D'Amour

September
Susan Bresnick

Don't Leaf Dunstable's Water to Chance This Fall!

Fall leaves and yard waste can cause pollution and flooding when dumped or stored near wetlands, waterways or storm drains.

Did you know, fallen leaves are loaded with natural fertilizer called phosphorous, which can cause water pollution that harms people and animals? When leaves fall in the autumn, they quickly begin to decompose, and rain washes the natural fertilizers out of them. When leaves fall in a forest or on your lawn, these fertilizers get recycled into the soil and trapped there, helping plants grow in the spring. But when leaves, grass clippings or other organic materials, get dumped into wetlands, waterways or ponds, those natural fertilizers go right into our water and cause problems. It encourages lush growth of pond weeds and algae in the spring that can interfere with swimming, reducing the amount of oxygen in the water needed to sustain fish and aquatic life.

Similarly, when leaves or other yard waste are left on paved areas, rain washes those natural fertilizers into storm drains in your neighborhood that lead right to our waterways without first going to a water treatment plant.

Dumped leaves can also block storm drains and waterways, causing flooding.

Keep Dunstable's waterways clean and healthy this fall with a few simple steps.

- Never dump leaves in wetlands or waterways (it's harmful and illegal)
- Bag leaves in paper bags for disposal by your town
- Compost your yard waste at home in an area away from wetlands and storm drains
- Keep paved areas and storm drains clear of leaves
- Make sure your lawn service is properly disposing of all your waste
- Mow your leaves with a mulching mower and let them stay on the lawn as a natural fertilizer

Town prepares for repairs to Woodward's Mill Dam

The Town has taken the next step in making repairs to Woodward's Mill Dam. A Task Order has been signed with Hoyle Tanner engineers to develop a plan and design for repairs to the Woodward's Mill Dam. This most urgent work will focus on addressing a hole in the dam's raceway, an issue identified in the Phase 2 Assessment as needing immediate attention.

Funding for this repair was approved at Town Meeting, where residents voted to allocate $25,000 in Community Preservation Act funds to support the work. With the design phase now underway, the Town is preparing to move forward with these critical repairs to preserve the integrity and safety of the dam as soon as possible.

Updates will be shared as the design process advances and repair work begins.

Shaping the Future of Route 113 and Town Center

On August 13, residents joined town officials and planners from the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) for a visioning workshop focused on Dunstable's Town Center and Route 113. The meeting was the kickoff to our project to review Route 113 and think about and imagine its future.

The discussion was built on what Dunstable values most - our rural character, history, scenic farms and fields, and landmarks like the Town Hall, Union Building, and Town Common. At the same time, participants talked about how to make the center safer, more welcoming, and easier to navigate for walkers and bikers.

To inspire ideas, examples from other New England towns showed how small improvements like a pocket park, crosswalks, or trails can make a big difference in creating lively, connected centers. Residents imagined possibilities for Dunstable, such as a trail loop through the center of Town currently being planned, a safer Route 113 to navigate, and new land use options that don't exist along Route 113 like a pub or restaurant.

Over the last month or so, a community survey was issued that had over 340 responses! We are now working with NMCOG to compile the data from the survey and planning a follow-up "walk-shop" that will bring the planning conversation right out onto Main Street and end with a meeting at Town Hall. The process is just beginning, but our hope is that we preserve all that makes Dunstable special while planning for a vibrant and connected center where we all can gather and enjoy.



Zoning Board continues its review of MCO Cottage Rentals Proposal

The Zoning Board of Appeals continues its review of the proposed housing development at 164 Pleasant Street under the state's Chapter 40B Local Initiative Program (LIP). The Comprehensive Permit Application was submitted by MCO and Associates.

As a reminder, Chapter 40B is a state law that requires communities to consider affordable housing developments under a streamlined permitting process. At least 25% of the proposed homes must qualify as affordable under state guidelines, and if approved, the units count toward Dunstable's state affordable housing inventory. Currently, Dunstable does not have any affordable housing units.

To date, the ZBA has held 3 hearings on the project with another scheduled in October. Municipal departments and boards have also submitted their comments, raising questions on issues such as stormwater management, septic capacity, and traffic circulation. Independent peer reviewers have also been engaged to provide technical review of engineering and environmental plans.

All project documents, including site plans, studies, and board comments, are available on the Town's website at: www.dunstable-ma.gov/zoning-board-appeals/pages/chapter-40b-local-initiative-program-comprehensive-permit-materials-164

Residents are encouraged to stay informed and participate in the public hearing process as the review continues.

New Businesses Open In Dunstable

We're excited to welcome two new businesses to Town: Mirabelle Wine and Spirits and Dunstable Country Liquors!

Mirabelle Wine and Spirits is located at 11 Pleasant Street and Dunstable Country Liquors is below the General Store at 238 Pleasant Street but the entrance is on Groton Street.

We extend our best wishes for success to both businesses and look forward to seeing them thrive in Dunstable.

Please find the time to visit each location and shop local!



News in Brief

Parks Commission begins evaluation of Larter Field

The Parks Commission is moving forward with plans to improve Larter Field. The Commission has selected Bobrek Engineering to assist the Town with the evaluation of Larter Field and the development of a Master Plan for the site. Bobrek's first task was to oversee and coordinate the utilization of ground penetrating radar to identify problem areas and the cause of sinkholes at Larter Field. This planning portion of the work is being paid for by Community Preservation Act funding.

The Town has applied for a PARC (Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities) grant. If awarded, this funding will help offset a portion of the construction costs once we've developed a plan to address the issues at the field. At this time, we are still awaiting notification on the status of our grant application.

Town Receives Second PFAS Settlement Payment

The Town has received its second check in connection with the nationwide class action suit against PFAS manufacturers. Napoli Shkolnik, the Town's legal counsel in this case, recently forwarded a payment of $153,734.76 from 3M's settlement fund.

This most recent payment represents 45.6% of the total gross award from 3M allocated to the Town. Combined with the initial payment, Dunstable has now received a total of $219,764.32 through this settlement.

These funds represent compensation for costs and damages associated with PFAS, also known as forever chemicals, which have impacted communities across the country. The Town will continue to work closely with legal counsel to monitor the distribution of any additional settlement payments.

Streetlight Conversion Project Completed

Several years ago, the Town took steps to reduce energy use and lower costs by converting nearly all of our streetlights to LED technology. While most of the fixtures were updated at that time, a handful remained unconverted.

Recently, the Town identified those fixtures and worked with Groton Electric Light to complete the updates. In total, about eight streetlights were converted, bringing the project to full completion.

This effort ensures that all of Dunstable's streetlights are now energy-efficient LEDs, helping the Town save money on costs while also supporting a more sustainable future.

Stop Signs Installed Throughout Town

Based on the recommendations of the Police Chief, the Select Board approved the installation of stop signs at 13 intersections in Town. The additional stop signs are intended to enhance safety at intersections where visibility, traffic patterns, road configurations, or accident history indicated a need for greater controls. It is the Town's hope that these additions will help slow traffic, reduce confusion, and protect pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers.

T-Mobile plan to install cell infrastructure continues to progress

Progress continues on the T-Mobile cell tower project in Dunstable. Following a recent utility walk with town officials, T-Mobile is finalizing a revised set of construction documents to reflect the findings and updates from that visit.

According to the current schedule, groundwork is expected to begin in November and take approximately 4-6 weeks to complete. After that, the installation of antennas is anticipated in March 2026, though this timeline could change depending on weather conditions.

The Planning Board previously approved the project through a special permit, ensuring compliance with local zoning and siting requirements.

$475,000 Grant Awarded for Route 113 Design

Dunstable has been awarded a $475,000 state grant to design safety and accessibility improvements along Route 113. This award was funded through the Commonwealth's Rural Development Fund and will help us move forward with a Complete Streets redesign.

The project will focus on the section of Route 113 from Main and Pleasant Streets to the site of the proposed MCO Cottage Rentals, a 48-unit mixed-income rental development on Pleasant Street, the Town's first affordable housing project. The goal of the project is to create a safer and more welcoming roadway which will better connect new and long-time residents to Town Center: Town Hall, Swallow Union Elementary School, Police and Fire Stations, recreational fields, and local businesses.

At present, this stretch of road has no sidewalks, and lacks safe crossings for pedestrians and cyclists which make walking in some areas feel unsafe especially for students of the school. With this grant, we'll be able to design a safer, more walkable, and bike-friendly corridor that will benefit the entire community.

This project aims to make sure that young families, seniors, and new residents can move safely through town. We hope an added benefit will be allowing residents to build new connections, encourage community interaction, and create a stronger sense of place and access to Town Center.

While this funding supports the design phase, the Town will continue working with our state and regional partners to secure funding for construction. Once complete, this redesigned Route 113 corridor will serve as an accessible and safe gateway to Dunstable!

School District Operational Audit Results and Next Steps

Earlier this year, the Groton Dunstable Regional School District conducted an independent operational audit to look at how the district is organized and how resources are being used. The audit was conducted by The Abrahams Group LLC and focused on administrative staffing levels, student services and supports, and the use of school buildings and facilities. The overall goals were to identify cost savings, efficiencies, and ways to ensure long-term financial sustainability.

The full audit report is available for residents to review at www.gdrsd.org. While the report includes a wide range of findings and areas for potential improvement, one option highlighted has been the source of resident concern: the possibility of closing Swallow Union Elementary School and moving all Dunstable K–4 students to Groton.

It is important to note that this was not a recommendation of the audit, but rather one scenario considered in the analysis. In fact, the Superintendent's presentation outlined several challenges and concerns with this option, including:

- Negative impacts to educational programming across grades K–12.
- Major disruptions to grade configurations, including shifting 4th grade to the middle school and moving 8th grade to the high school.
- Loss of Swallow Union as Dunstable's community elementary school despite it being one of the highest-performing schools in the state.
- Increased transportation costs for the district.
- Significant capital investments planned at Swallow Union, including roof replacement with MSBA support.
- The fact that such a closure would face strong opposition from Dunstable residents, creating potential budget and legal challenges.

Given these impacts, the Superintendent emphasized that closing Swallow Union is not being considered at this point. However, the building itself is in clear need of investment, and that was an important part of both the audit and the discussion during the recent public meeting. Ensuring that Swallow Union remains safe, modern, and equipped for students needs to be addressed by the district and the community.

To give residents a chance to learn more and share their feedback, a joint meeting of the Select Board, Advisory Board, and School Committee was held on Tuesday, September 30, at Dunstable Town Hall. During this meeting, the audit results were presented, followed by discussion between the boards and residents.

As this process moves forward, the Town and School District are committed to keeping the community informed and engaged.

Dunstable Awarded 2025 MassTrails Grant!

The Town's application to the 2025 MassTrails Grant Program has been selected for funding! The MassTrails program, administered by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, supports the development and improvement of shared-use paths, rail trails, and other outdoor recreational opportunities across the Commonwealth.

This grant will support the advancement of design for the Town Center Trail Loop Project in Dunstable. This project is aimed at improving trail connectivity, enhancing pedestrian access to Town Center, and creating new opportunities for residents and visitors to explore.

This state funding represents another important step forward in the town's efforts to expand recreational opportunities and pedestrian access.

Stay tuned for updates as this exciting project continues to move ahead!



COA Trip to SeaGlass Restaurant and Salisbury Beach

The COA recently enjoyed an outing to SeaGlass Restaurant and Salisbury Beach. Fourteen of the residents climbed aboard the COA's "Party Van" for a scenic ride to the coast. The trip included great food, ocean views, and plenty of laughter. Thanks to everyone who joined the trip! Keep an eye out for upcoming announcements for more opportunities to connect with friend and neigbors!



Tyngsborough-Dunstable Historical Society Upcoming Event

The Tyngsboro Dunstable Historical Society, supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, is hosting Gothic Victorian Tales by Candelight on October 25.

Step into the eerie charm of 19th-century New England!

The event will include a spellbinding theatrical experience inspired by the haunting tales of Sarah Orne Jewett. Encounter a cursed family, a mysterious stranger, and a possibly immortal old woman, all brought to life by Rita Parisi of Waterfall Productions.

This atmospheric performance will leave you wondering what's real and what's legend.

Save the date! You won't want to miss it! You can find more information on the event here: https://www.facebook.com/share/14SFC4h3C6z/.

Town Recreation and COA Notes

Stay in the loop! The Council on Aging now offers a Weekly E-Alert with events, updates, and resources for local seniors. Sign up here: dunstable-ma.gov/subscribe

Group exercise class, Barre Fusion is still being offered on Mondays at 11:30 AM at Town Hall. There is a $10 per class fee.

On November 9, Recreation is offering Angels Among Us with Teresa Baker-Opland from 1 PM to 3 PM, a mediumship event. The fee for the program is $45.

Town of Dunstable
511 Main Street
Dunstable, MA 01827

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Town Awarded $41,600 Digital Equity Grant

The Town has been awarded a $41,600 Digital Equity Grant from the Massachusetts Municipal Digital Equity Implementation Program. This grant will fund several new projects designed to improve public spaces, expand access to electronic devices, and offer hands-on support to residents who want to build their digital skills.

At Town Hall, new updated videoconferencing equipment will be added to two meeting rooms, making it easier for residents to participate in remote and hybrid public meetings. At Groton Dunstable High School, the grant will fund the purchase of six interactive smart boards, giving teachers and students modern tools for learning.

At the Library, the grant will fund a laptop lending program with the purchase of eight new laptops and a charging cart for residents who don't have a computer at home.

One of the most exciting pieces of the grant is the creation of an intergenerational partnership that will pair high school students with older adults to provide one-on-one digital skills support. Students will receive stipends for their time and service, while seniors gain more confidence using technology.

Together, these projects aim to close the digital divide and make sure that everyone in Dunstable has the tools and support they need to stay connected in today's digital world.

Dunstable Residents – Census Mailing in January

Did you know that local census data plays a significant role in both education and local government budgeting?

The information we gather from a census helps us determine specific needs of the community, for example:

- School funding: Based on population data, local schools receive funding.
- Infrastructure planning and projects
- Allocation of public funds: a higher population may require more funds for local services like fire and police departments, road maintenance or public health services.

Take a minute or two and fill it out to help us help you. Make sure your occupation is listed, phone number and emails. With the census, you'll also receive a dog license registration form.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Dunstable Rural Land Trust's FallFest 2025

The Dunstable Rural Land Trust is sponsoring FallFest 2025 on Sunday, October 19 from 11 AM to 2 PM at the McLoon Barn, 370 Thorndike Street.

The event will include draft horse wagon rides, old fashioned cider press demonstration, scavenger hunt, free refreshments, raffles, and more!

The live wildlife presentation starts at 12 PM.

