ANNUAL TOWN MEETING



MONDAY
MAY 12, 2025
7 PM
SWALLOW UNION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

WARRANT ARTICLE GUIDE

ARTICLE 1
REPORTS

This article is a standard article that requests Annual Town Meeting to accept the Town's Annual Town Report and also allows boards, committees, and town officials to update Town Meeting which could include project updates, upcoming initiatives, or other relevant information for residents and answer any questions Town Meeting attendees may have.

ARTICLE 2
UNPAID BILLS

This article is a standard article requesting approval for payment of unpaid bills from a prior fiscal year. This is typically necessary when the Town receives an invoice after the books have closed for the previous fiscal year. When this happens, under MGL Chapter 44, Section 64, the Town can't pay it without Town Meeting approval. This year, the Town has 5 prior year bills requiring payment for a total of $1,488.48. This article requires a 4/5ths vote for approval.

ARTICLE 3
TRANSFER TO WATER ENTERPRISE FUND

This is a standard article to consider transferring additional funding to support the Water Enterprise Fund, which supports the operations and maintenance of the water system. This article is included as a precaution in case the enterprise fund needs supplemental support. This year, the Water Enterprise Fund is balanced through user fees and its own revenue so the Town expects to recommend no action on this article.

ARTICLE 4
TRANSFER TO GENERAL STABILIZATION

This article seeks to transfer $50,000 of Free Cash to the Town's General Stabilization Fund to strengthen the Town's financial reserves, support long-term financial planning, and improve fiscal stability. This request is consistent with the Town's newly adopted financial policies and Department of Revenue's recommended best practices.

ARTICLE 5

TRANSFER TO THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM STABILIZATION FUND

This article requests approval to allocate $50,000 of Free Cash to the Capital Improvement Program Stabilization Fund to support future capital projects, such as anticipated repairs/renovations to municipal buildings, and major vehicle and equipment purchases. This fund helps the Town prepare, plan for and manage significant capital expenditures.

ARTICLE 6

OPERATING BUDGET



This article requests the approval of the Town's FY26 Operating Budget. This year, Town Meeting will be presented two budgets, both contingent on override votes. The FY26 Recommended Budget is a level services budget for both municipal and regional school districts contingent on a $480,841 general override.

ARTICLE 7

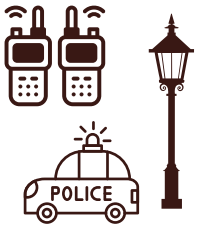
REVOLVING FUND EXPENDITURE LIMITS



Article 7 is necessary to establish expenditure limits on Town Revolving Funds, of which there are six. Under MGL Section 44, Section 53E ½, municipalities are annually required to set spending limits for the Town's revolving funds. These revolving funds are already established in the Town bylaw, and they are established to use fees collected for specific services to pay for related expenses, without requiring separate appropriations from the general fund.

ARTICLE 8

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS FOR MUNICIPAL DEPARTMENTS



Article 8 is necessary to appropriate $120,000 for capital purchases for municipal departments. These purchases include, but are not limited to, a new police cruiser, mobile radios for Fire, spreader/sander for a Highway truck, new tasers for Police, and lighting improvements at the library.

ARTICLE 9

WATER SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

This article requests $35,000 from Water Enterprise Retained Earnings to fund general water infrastructure improvements. The Department of Revenue certified retained earnings at $68,532. This funding will be used by the Water Department to repair and improve the Town's water infrastructure.

ARTICLE 10

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Article 10 is a standard article to appropriate or reserve from the Community Preservation Act annual revenues in the amounts recommended by the Community Preservation Committee for debt service, community preservation projects, and potential administrative expenses. In accordance with MGL Chapter 44B, Section 6 this article is necessary to transfer no less than 10% of the annual revenues of the Community Preservation Fund for each of the following categories: open space, historic resources, and community housing. No more than 5% can be used for administrative and operating expenses. This article also includes the debt service payments due for the Ferrari Farm property and the exterior restoration of the Union Building.

ARTICLE 11

REMOVAL OF INVASIVE WEEDS AT LAKE MASSAPOAG

This article requests $3,500 of CPA funds to remove invasive weeds at Lake Massapoag.

ARTICLE 12

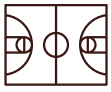


LARTER FIELD IMPROVEMENTS

Larter Field has experienced multiple sinkholes with some areas of the field settling significantly. $80,000 of CPA funds are being requested for professional services to conduct a field assessment, evaluation, and to design improvements to stabilize the field. This will assist the Town in determining a permanent solution to this chronic problem that is becoming more severe each year.

ARTICLE 13





LARTER FIELD MASTER PLAN

Building off the field assessment work, the Recreation Commission is requesting $40,000 to support the creation of a Master Plan for Larter Field to seek community input on its future and to help guide future investments.

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MORE INFORMATION

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ARTICLE 14

WOODWARD'S MILL DAM IMPROVEMENTS

This article requests $25,000 of CPA funds to make repairs to Woodward's Mill Dam. This work follows a comprehensive Phase II Assessment of the Dam. Now that the assessment is complete, the Town better understands the condition of the dam and required repairs. As part of the assessment, a large void in the top of the raceway was identified, which jeopardizes support for the Dam crest and road, creating a potential safety hazard for vehicles if not repaired soon. This funding request will support these necessary improvements from design to repair.

ARTICLE 15



TENNIS AND PICKLEBALL COURTS AT LARTER FIELD

To complete the construction of the tennis and pickleball courts at Larter Field there may be a need for a supplemental appropriation of $11,240 for additional work required that was not included in the original scope of work. This article is a placeholder for that appropriation from CPA funds if it is required.

ARTICLE 16



ESTABLISHMENT OF DUNSTABLE COMMISSION ON ACCESSIBILITY

This article proposes the creation of a local Commission on Disabilities, named the Commission on Accessibility, to help ensure that residents with disabilities are included in Town affairs, and that Dunstable is proactive in improving accessibility, compliance, and equal participation in programs and services.

ARTICLE 17



LEASE PURCHASE AGREEMENT

Article 17 authorizes the Town to acquire a new truck for the Highway Department through a lease-purchase agreement, which allows the Town to finance the cost over multiple years while maintaining ownership at the end of the lease term.

ARTICLE 18

CHAPTER 90 FUNDS

Article 18 authorizes the appropriation of Chapter 90 funds allocated by the Commonwealth to the Town of Dunstable for roadway and infrastructure improvements. Chapter 90 funds are provided by the state annually to towns to reimburses the cost of improving public roads and related infrastructure. These funds are allocated by formula and must be authorized by Town Meeting before being spent. In FY25, Dunstable's Chapter 90 allocation was $184,722.46.

ARTICLE 19



VETERANS TAX EXEMPTION ANNUAL COST OF LIVING INCREASE

The HERO Act, signed into law in 2022, allows municipalities to adjust the veterans property tax exemptions annually based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Article 19 requests the adoption of this adjustment to ensure that the exemption keeps pace with inflation, providing continued tax relief to eligible veterans and their families.

ARTICLE 20

MUNICIPAL LIEN CHARGES

Article 20 seeks to accept MGL Chapter 40, Section 58 to allow the Town to secure payment for unpaid municipal charges or fees by placing a lien on the property and collecting the charge as part of the property tax bill. The Town is requesting the ability to lien unpaid fees required as a condition of any special permit, variance, license, site assignment, site plan review, or other land use approval that is issued by any board, commission, committee, or officer of the Town, including but not limited to unpaid peer review charges.

ARTICLE 21



AMENDMENT TO AMEND SECTION 15.2: FLOODPLAIN DISTRICT OF THE TOWN'S ZONING BYLAW

Article 21 requests an update to Dunstable's Floodplain District Bylaw to align with FEMA's latest requirements and flood maps, ensuring compliance and better flood risk management. This is a result of FEMA recently updating its flood maps. The new maps will become effective on July 8, 2025. In order for residents to qualify for the National Flood Insurance Program, all municipalities must adopt the new maps and pass a new bylaw that contains all definitions and provisions contained in FEMA's model bylaw. To amend the Town's zoning bylaw requires a 2/3rds vote of Town Meeting.



MORE INFORMATION

You can find more information about Annual Town Meeting at dunstable-ma.gov/atm2025

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING CHEAT SHEET

TOWN MEETING KEY TERMS

Town Meeting: A gathering of a town's eligible voters and legislative body for towns in Massachusetts.

Majority Vote: Requirement that more than half of Town Meeting vote to approve an article.

Quorum: The minimum number of voters present in order to conduct business at Town Meeting. In Dunstable, the quorum for Town Meeting is 50 voters.

Warrant: The warrant lists a meeting's time, place, and agenda. A Town Meeting's action is not valid unless the subject is listed on the warrant.

Article: Articles are items on the warrant.

FUNDING TYPES

CPA Funds: Dunstable voted to adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) in 2006 allowing the addition of a 3% surcharge on local property taxes matched by the state annually.

Chapter 90: Funding the state provides for improvements to and investments in local transportation infrastructure.

Free Cash: Unappropriated surplus revenue from the prior fiscal year certified by the Department of Revenue for use by the Town.

Revolving Fund: Accounts established for specific purposes that fall outside of the Operating Budget and funded by user fees.

Retained Earnings: Unappropriated, surplus revenue collected by Enterprise Funds.

KEY TERMS

Capital Projects: One-time expenses to either construct new facilities, make significant, long-term improvements to existing facilities, or to improve the operation of Town Departments.

Fiscal Year: Abbreviated as "FY." The year on which the Town budget is based, running from July 1 to June 30.

Operational Budget: The annual budget that funds the operation of all Town services.

Enterprise Fund: An enterprise fund establishes a separate accounting and financial reporting mechanism for a municipal service for which a fee is charged in exchange for goods or services.