WARRANT ARTICLE GUIDE

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2025 SWALLOW UNION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 7 PM

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

ARTICLE 1
UNPAID BILLS OF PRIOR FISCAL YEARS

This article is a standard article requesting approval for payment of unpaid bills from prior fiscal years. This is typically needed when the Town receives an invoice after the books have been closed for the previous fiscal year. When this happens, under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44, Section 64, the Town is unable to pay it without Town meeting approval. For this Town Meeting, the Town has one prior year bill in the amount of $488 from DS Graphics to cover the cost of printing the Select Board's quarterly newsletter mailed to residents. This article requires a 4/5ths vote for approval.

ARTICLE 2
LIBRARY HVAC IMPROVEMENTS



The Dunstable Public Library's existing HVAC systems are original to the building, approximately 30 years old and in poor condition. Of the 4 boilers in the library, only 2 are functional. $58,750 of CPA funds are being requested to replace the propane boiler that services the Special Collections area. The Special Collections area houses historic books, documents, textiles, and artifacts that are fragile and at risk of decay in extreme cold, heat, or humidity. This project will help provide a more stable environment for long-term preservation and will be part of a longer-term plan to replace all the boilers at the library.

ARTICLE 3
LIBRARY DIGITIZATION OF HISTORICAL RECORDS

The Dunstable Public Library holds irreplaceable materials: Town records, genealogical resources, photographs, and civil war-era clothing and artifacts. This article requests $41,000 of CPA funds to digitize special collections to preserve records permanently, expand public access to these materials, and reduce handling of the fragile originals.

ARTICLE 5
TOWN HALL HVAC IMPROVEMENTS

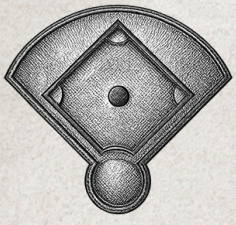
There are two areas of Town Hall that are being cooled by failing HVAC systems over 20 years old. There is one offline due to a freon leak and another that is beyond useful life. For each of these zones at Town Hall, both the condenser and air handling units need to be replaced. This article requests $35,000 of CPA funds to replace these units.

ARTICLE 4
REPLACEMENT OF TOWN HALL CHIMNEY



During two major storm events, the Town Hall roof sustained leaks. One of the affected areas was around the elevator vent or “chimney” at the back of the building. This area is especially critical because the Town’s main server room, which houses all municipal digital infrastructure, is located directly below. While this area of the roof has received a temporary repair expected to last one to three years, to prevent future leaks and damage, the Town sought a permanent repair and initially requested $20,000 in CPA funds for the project. Gienapp Architects was later hired to prepare a cost estimate and construction documents, costing $9,500 and leaving a balance of $10,500. The total project cost is now estimated at $32,500, so the Town is requesting an additional $25,000 in CPA funds to complete the work. The project will include a full replacement of the faux chimney and the surrounding slate roof shingles to ensure a long-term, watertight solution for Town Hall.

ARTICLE 6
BASEBALL FIELDS REHABILITATION



This article seeks CPA funding to repair and restore the Babe Ruth Baseball Field at Town Center to support the growing needs of the Groton-Dunstable Youth Baseball League. With the primary Babe Ruth field in Groton under renovation until at least 2027 and increasing player enrollment, the Dunstable field is needed to accommodate local teams. The field requires significant rehabilitation, including weed removal, infield restoration, grading, re-claying, mound reconstruction, and improved access for players and spectators. The first phase of improvements, planned for Spring 2026, is estimated to cost $36,900 and will make the field safe and playable for youth games.

ARTICLE 7
SWALLOW UNION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND UPGRADES

Swallow Union Elementary School is requesting $131,368.27 in CPA funds to install a permanent shade structure at the playground that will convert an underused outdoor area into flexible classroom space and a shaded gathering spot for students and families. The shade structure will promote hands-on learning, wellness, and safe access to fresh air and sunlight while protecting students and teachers from excessive heat and sun exposure.

ARTICLE 8
FIRE DEPARTMENT FORESTRY TRUCK GRANT MATCH



The Town has been awarded a $285,000 FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant to replace the Fire Department's 1986 forestry truck with a modern vehicle designed for brush fires and off-road emergencies. To accept the grant, the Town is required to provide a local match of $15,000. This article requests these matching funds through a free cash appropriation in this amount. The new forestry truck will improve the Fire Department's ability to respond to forest and off-road incidents, enhance firefighter safety, and strengthen mutual aid capabilities with surrounding communities.

MORE INFORMATION

You can find more information about Special Town Meeting at dunstable-ma.gov/stmnovember2025 as the date gets closer.

ARTICLE 9
CPA APPROPRIATION FOR PARC GRANT MATCH AND FIELD STABILIZATION AT LARTER FAMILY MEMORIAL FIELD

This article requests authorization to borrow and/or appropriate $1.352 million of CPA funds to support the Larter Field Stabilization Project, which was recently awarded $100,000 of grant funding through the state's PARC Grant Program. In recent years, sinkholes have developed across the playing fields at Larter Field primarily caused by a subsurface stump dump, creating unsafe conditions and limiting use for sports, community events, and general recreation. Town Meeting previously allocated CPA funds for the development of a comprehensive master plan for future improvements, assessment of the extent of the subsurface problem, and design and engineer the field stabilization work. Both of these projects are currently underway and ongoing. With the PARC grant now secured, the requested CPA funds will provide the required local share for the construction portion of the work and ensure the Town can access the grant funds. Project work will include stabilizing the sub-base of the fields, access paths, and areas near the playground; incorporating drainage improvements; and preparing the site for future accessibility and recreational enhancements.

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ARTICLE 10
ROUTE 113 COMPLETE STREETS REDESIGN ONE STOP FOR GROWTH (HOUSING WORKS) GRANT MATCH



The Town was awarded a One Stop HousingWorks Grant to complete engineering and design for a Complete Streets redesign of Route 113, extending from the intersection of Main and Pleasant Streets south to 160–164 Pleasant Street, the site of the Town's first affordable housing development near the post office. The proposed redesign will create a safer way for all to travel along Route 113 connecting the new housing and post office to Dunstable's civic, historic, and commercial center. Currently, this section of Route 113 lacks continuous sidewalks, crosswalks, or traffic calming, posing safety risks for pedestrians, including students walking to Swallow Union Elementary. The Town is requesting a free cash appropriation of $28,000 in local matching funds to leverage the awarded $475,000 HousingWorks grant.

ARTICLE 11
TOWN WEBSITE UPDATE

This article requests transfer of $17,000 from free cash to support the redesign and modernization of the Town of Dunstable's official Town website. The updated site will be ADA-compliant, mobile-friendly, and easy for staff to update, with improved navigation, document access, notifications, and online service features. The redesign will enhance communication, accessibility, and transparency for residents while streamlining internal operations across departments.

ARTICLE 12
PRIMARY AND GENERAL ELECTION FOR STATE SENATE

This article requests $5,000 to fund the costs of the unanticipated Special Primary and General Elections to fill the vacancy in the First Middlesex State Senate seat following the unexpected passing of State Senator Edward Kennedy.

ARTICLE 13
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES



The Town is working to improve ambulance and emergency medical services through an intermunicipal agreement with Tyngsborough, under which the Tyngsborough Fire Department would provide ambulance response and transport for Dunstable. This article requests $25,000 to allow the Town to execute this agreement and would cover the cost of ambulance service for the remainder of FY26. Under the draft IMA, this payment is needed to cover a portion of the cost of additional staffing needed in Tyngsborough to support the expanded service area.

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.

Hand Count – When a majority or 2/3 vote can not be determined by the Moderator, a hand count is called for. Each voter is given a card upon entering the meeting. When the Moderator calls for those in favor and against you simply raise your card at the appropriate time and keep it in the air as the tellers count the cards. The tellers will give the count to the Moderator and the Moderator will read the final results.

Moderator – The Moderator's job is to preside over and regulate the proceedings of Town Meeting. They declare the outcome of all votes. It is also the Moderator's duty to rule on all points of order. In Dunstable, the Moderator is elected during the town election.

Motion – There are many different types of motions however what they all have in common is proposing some sort of action at Town Meeting. The most common, the "Main Motion", is used to open a warrant article for debate. Another common one is the motion to "amend" which allows a Town Meeting member to make changes or additions to a pending motion.

Move the Question - A motion to vote to end debate on a pending motion. It may not be preceded by an opinion on the motion by the maker, is not debatable, and requires a 2/3 vote to pass.

Point of Order – When a member of Town Meeting has a question as to Town Meeting procedure, that member should rise and state "Point of Order". That member should not interrupt another speaker unless allowing that speaker to continue would cause a furthering of procedural error. After stating your point of order it will be ruled on by the Moderator.

Reconsideration – To bring a previously discussed article back on the table for renewed attention and a new vote on the original question after further debate.

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.

Grants: A sum of money awarded to a municipality for a specific purpose, typically provided by a government agency or private entity. Generally, grants do not require repayment but must be used in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grantor.

OTHER 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.

Appropriation: Authorization by a legislative body to spend a specific amount of public funds for a designated purpose. It allocates money from available revenues or reserves to support government operations, projects, or obligations.

Intermunicipal Agreement: A formal arrangement between two or more municipalities to share services, resources, or responsibilities for greater efficiency, enhanced services, and/or cost savings. These agreements outline each community's roles, financial obligations, and terms.