

Recommendation 1: Create a Central Administrative Position

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

We feel that the Town should establish a part-time central administrative position to oversee daily activities of the Town, including: supervision of staff, budget development, grant-writing, and procurement of goods and services, etc.

A part-time central administrator responsible to the Board of Selectmen would provide opportunities to improve management practices in key operational areas in the Town.

Time Frame: Year 1

Note: There is a cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 2: Combine and Appoint the Treasurer and Tax Collector Positions

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

We recommend that the Board of Selectmen initiate steps to adopt this recommendation from the Report. This recommendation should be acted upon to “insure efficiencies and sound cash management practices. As an appointed position, the Town can also establish minimum qualifications for the job and select the applicant who best suits the demands of the office.” The Town has been fortunate that the same competent person has been elected to fill the Treasurer and

Tax Collector positions since 1993. However, as pointed out by the report, there is no guarantee that future elections will provide candidates who are as well qualified. The combination of these two positions requires action by the State Legislature. We recommend that the change be structured in such a way to begin at the end of the current term being served.

Time Frame: Year 2

Note: There is no cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 3: Consider Creating a Department of Public Works

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

We feel that the Town should not create a Department of Public Works because we believe that the cost to implement this recommendation is greater than any benefits that may be realized by the town, and because it seems to us that the Town has more important issues for which to spend their limited resources.

Time Frame: n/a

Recommendation 4: Conduct a Full Review of the By-Laws

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

Because it has been quite some time since the By-Laws have been reviewed, we recommend that the Board of Selectmen conduct a full review of Dunstable's General By-Laws, with *immediate attention* to the Advisory Board By-Law, which was last amended in 1962.

Time Frame: Year 2 and Year 3

Note: There is no cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 5: Establish a Financial Management Team

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

We recommend that the Town form a Financial Management Team and codify it through the adoption of a by-law. This team's "participation in general financial and budget activities helps ensure that more than one person knows all facets that need to be gathered, analyzed, and monitored continually and provides institutional continuity if someone leaves town service."

Time Frame: Year 1

Note: There is no cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 6: Adopt a Formal Budget Process

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

We recommend that the Town adopt a formal budget process that emphasizes consensus building and involvement of the Selectmen, Advisory Board, and Financial Team. This should include the seven steps offered in the Financial Management Review so that there are clear expectations by everyone in order to promote communication and exchange of information in a timely manner.

Time Frame: Year 1

Note: There is no cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 7: Fix Salaries of Elected Officials Annually

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

We agree with this recommendation in order to be in compliance with Massachusetts General Laws c. 41 & 108.

Time Frame: Year 1

Note: There is no additional cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 8: Establish a Capital Planning Committee

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

For the purpose of defining the capital needs of the town and developing a strategy to assist in the accomplishment of the plan, we recommend that a Capital Planning Committee be formed. By creating a long-range capital plan and annually reviewing the needs of the town, this committee could eliminate sudden unexpected expenditures in the budget that could have an adverse outcome to the town. Long-range planning would allow sufficient time to budget for expenditures, which could prevent the necessity of raising taxes. This committee most likely could be comprised of some members of existing committees, as well as new community members who are knowledgeable in the areas of construction and/or finance.

Time Frame: Year 1

Note: There is no cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 9: Develop a Multi-Year Forecast

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

We recommend that the Town Accountant develop a multi-year revenue and expenditure forecast with input from the financial team. A long-term forecast, in conjunction with a capital plan, would help identify programs that might not be

funded, highlight capital requests that could be deferred, and assist in long-range financial plans. A multi-year forecast would also allow residents of the Town to be aware of future expenses the Town may incur.

Time Frame: Year 1

Note: There is no cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 10: Centralize Procurement

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

We agree that the procurement of goods and services should be centralized under the control of either a central administration or the Town Accountant.

Having a person on staff that is certified by the Inspector General's office would ensure that bidding laws are adhered to, proper documentation is maintained, and consolidations of purchases are emphasized. The likelihood of incurring expensive penalty costs for not complying with the state's bidding laws would be minimized if a knowledgeable person were responsible for purchasing. The person charged with procurement responsibilities could review and make recommendations concerning procedures for so-called "exempt services," and he/she could work with Town Counsel to ensure that proper contracts are used when necessary.

Time Frame: Year 2

Note: There is a cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 11: Adopt Formal Financial Practices

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

We agree that fiscal planning, revenue, and expenditure policies should be adopted to guide budget development and long-term planning. In order to be more efficient and to provide accountability, the Town should adopt formal financial policies. These policies would lead to consistency in the budget preparation process, and they would strengthen the Town's financial management practices.

Time Frame: Year 1

Note: There is no cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 12: Re-advertise for Auditing Services Periodically

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

We agree that the Town should re-advertise for auditing services periodically. We note that this would be an ideal time to advertise, since there is currently no contract for auditing services. Simply put, to advertise for services reflects sound business practice. By advertising periodically, the Town will ensure that it is receiving the best price for the required service. If a contract with a term of more than three years is

advisable, Town Counsel should be asked if Massachusetts General Laws c. 30B, section 12[b] should be adopted at a Town Meeting.

Time Frame: Year 1

Note: There is no cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 13: Require an Authorizing Signature on All Payroll Submissions

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

We agree with this recommendation. State law requires a department head or the members of a board, committee, or commission to verify an employee's time by way of a signature, or signatures. Enacting this requirement would ensure compliance with the law. This responsibility cannot be assigned or left to a staff member. However, a board, committee, or commission is permitted to delegate this approval authority, by a vote, to one of its members.

Time Frame: Year 1

Note: There is no cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 14: Consider Changes to the Personnel System

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

We agree with this recommendation. Dunstable's government has not been built around a central management authority. That has led to an ad hoc creation of personnel policies.

The state recommends that the Town adopt a personnel by-law by town meeting vote. The current personnel policies include much of which is typically found in a personnel by-law. Adoption of the by-law would formalize the Town's classification and compensation plans. This would boost transparency and enhance fairness and efficiency.

The state also recommends that the Town develop an employee handbook to complement the by-law. Doing so would ensure that employees know both their rights and their responsibilities.

The state also recommends that the Town develop a detailed personnel evaluation program and conduct annual performance reviews for all employees. This will provide uniform standards and guidance as well as benchmarks by which each employee's job performance may be measured. Implementing this portion of the recommendation may require a substantial amount of time and effort, so the assistance of NMCOG or MIIA may be beneficial. Because of the effort this would involve, this may be a two or three-year project.

Time Frame: Year 2 and Year 3

Note: There is cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 15: Evaluate Health Insurance Options

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

We agree that health insurance options should continue to be evaluated. Doing so would enable the Town to pursue cost-effective means of delivering health care to the Town's employees, especially in light of recent legislative health care changes.

Time Frame: Year 1

Note: There is no cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 16: Fill the Accounting Officer's Position

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

We agree with this recommendation, and we are pleased that the Board of Selectmen has appointed an Accountant. Given that Dunstable's government has not been built around a central management authority, the accounting officer's position is an extremely important one. Establishing stability and continuity in this position will help ensure that financial policies and procedures are in place and are being adhered to. The Selectmen may or may not combine the Accountant's and Clerk's positions, but if they are combined, care should be

taken to ensure that Town Hall duties are sufficiently covered and that boards and committees are able to access the financial data that they need.

Time Frame: Year 1

Note: There is no cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 17: Coordinate Inspectional Department Visits

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

We agree with this recommendation because working with the Fire Department and the Building Inspector to coordinate visits to homes will ensure that information added to the assessing database and reviews of improvements are done in a timely manner. Residents will also benefit because the number of visits to their homes will be reduced.

Time Frame: Year 1

Note: There is no cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 18: Place Assessor's Property Records on Website

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

We agree with this recommendation. In addition to reducing the counter traffic and the telephone calls that interrupt staff, on-line access will be more convenient to residents because property records will be available to review 24 hours a day.

Time Frame: Year 2

Note: There is a cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 19: Establish a Town Collector Position

Governance Committee Comment and Rationale:

We agree with this recommendation because it is a prudent practice to include a check and balance system whenever revenues are collected. Without a check and balance system in place, financial controls may be jeopardized.

Time Frame: Year 2

Note: There is a cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 20: Automate the Cash Book and Use Vadar Management Reports

Governance Committee Comments and Rationale:

We agree that the operations in the Treasurer's Office will be enhanced by utilizing software programs to automate the cash book and to generate management reports.

Time Frame: Year 1

Note: There is no cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 21: Codify and Expand Role of Technology Advisory Committee

This committee has been very effective in the past. Adding responsibilities to the committee will generate more community interest in serving on it. Because of the importance of technology in managing data in municipalities, it is prudent for the Town to provide oversight of the technology-related services. Charging the Advisory Committee with new responsibilities will ensure that plans will be developed for short and long-term computer and software acquisitions, training, policy reviews, and updates to the townspeople.

Time Frame: Year 1

Note: There is no cost associated with this recommendation.

Recommendation 22: Expand the Content on the Town Website

We agree with this recommendation. Finishing the construction of the website and providing more information on it, e.g., monthly expense reports and audit results, will help generate more public awareness and confidence in government.

Time Frame: Year 1

Note: There is a cost associated with this recommendation.