

What is Going on in Dunstable?

The goal of this newsletter is to share information from the town's municipal departments as well as volunteer boards & committees. Please note, that some information could be subject to changes. <https://www.dunstable-ma.gov/board-selectmen/faq/how-do-i-contact-member-select-board>

❖ Jan/Feb/March 2021

1. The Governance Committee was formed in the fall of 2018 and began meeting in 2019 to review the structure of town government and to determine whether the town would benefit from having a Town Charter. After several discussions it was determined that there are areas of town government that would benefit from having a formal structure as well as definitive process, i.e., the budget and a defined role of the Town Administrator. Subsequently, the committee has been drafting a Special Act Charter with the help of a consultant. Currently, the draft charter is near completion. Once done, it will be reviewed by the Select Board and town departments for input. After there will be forums for public input and upon arriving at a final version, it will be presented at a town meeting for a vote. With approval it will be submitted to the Commonwealth. For more information, please go to the town website <https://www.dunstable-ma.gov/town-governance-committee> or contact the Town Hall 978 649 4514 ext 224

2. MUD Housing Project

- The town purchased the 28.5 acres MUD property at 170 Pleasant St. (behind the Post Office) in 1999 for \$390,000 to be used as a location for senior and/or affordable housing.
- For the past 8 years at least, the Affordable Housing Committee has been working to develop the property with a town-initiated 40B housing project.
- The Committee's primary goal for the Property is to ensure the development of mixed-income non-age-restricted rental housing at least 25% affordability at 80% or lower AMI. The Committee's decision to build affordable rental housing for mixed ages on the Property was based upon community input, research, and an extensive feasibility study. The plan currently proposes to include 48 unit with a mix of 1, 2 and possibly 3-bedroom units.
- All units will be counted towards the town's 40B housing obligation (which the state says should be 10% affordable). For more information, visit the town website <https://www.dunstable-ma.gov/affordable-housing-committee> , contact the Town Hall 978 649 4514 ext 224 or review the minutes of the Select Board from 2020 and 2021.

3. Forestry, the selective harvesting of trees, provides for regeneration of plant species, improves habitat for many wildlife species, maintains forest health, and helps shape the forest for the future. It is an important form of agriculture and is common in Dunstable by a town department i.e., the Town Forest Committee or Conservation Commission, and by private owners i.e., the Dunstable Rural Land Trust, farmers, or individuals. In the last couple years there were several selective tree harvests including Pierce Town Forest, the Helen Hogg Conservation property, and the McLoon property. There were also 2 large tree removal operations for the 2 private solar fields. Presently, the Dunstable Rural Land Trust (DRLT) is conducting a timber harvest on about 35 acres between the North Pond and Main Street, Signs have been placed on the trails, abutters have been notified, and the cutting plan approved by the State. DRLT has worked closely with The Nature of Things school to protect areas they use for hut-building, and trails to the pond, which classes use extensively. The goal is to leave some of the straightest pines and almost all the hardwoods, and to allow ground cover to re-establish a

more diverse & attractive forest. The entire project should be completed by the end of February; there is a March 15, 2021 deadline as many of these areas are listed as habitat for protection due to a rare turtle species. For more information visit <https://www.dunstable-ma.gov/conservation-commission> or the DRLT.

4. 91 River St. In 2019, the Town issued a Request for Proposals for the lease of this property to private solar companies for the construction of a solar field to generate lease revenue and tax revenue. The Town selected SunPower as the responsible respondent and has been working with them over the past eighteen months. SunPower has completed a limited amount of permitting and has been working with National Grid on utility interconnection matters while it works to negotiate a lease with the Town. This project is still in its earliest phases of development and the hope is to report progress in the coming future.

5. Green Communities. The Town was recently designated a Green Community and awarded a Green Communities Designation Grant of approximately \$120,000. So far, the Town has been able to complete weatherization at the library, replacement of interior lighting with LED lighting at the police station, obtained funding to offset the cost of police cruiser replacements (hybrids), and will replace the HVAC system at the police station in the near future. The Town will also be able to convert its street lights to LED's using this funding source, see next item.

6. Street lights. During 2020, the Town acquired ownership of the street light fixtures (not the poles) from National Grid at the cost of \$1. The concept behind ownership is that the maintenance charges National Grid charges from for the street lights are removed from the bill. Going forward the Town will only have to pay for what maintenance it needs and has hired a qualified contractor to do so. Ownership of the lights also enables the Town to replace the light fixtures with LED's which will save the Town money on the generation portion of the utility bill. Based on an audit of the street lights a couple lights will be relocated and a couple lights will be added as part of the conversion project to LED's. The audit and conversion are being funded by grant money received from the State of Massachusetts Green Communities Program.

7. A Request for Proposals have been sent out to install cellular antenna on the new water tower. The project is still in its earliest phases of development and there will be additional information shared at a later date. Cell antenna lease revenue would partly defray the rate increase needed to pay the debt service on the recently completed water system improvements.

8. Route 113 Traffic Improvements. The Town is currently programmed to receive over \$4,000,000 of federal funding toward road improvements on Route 113. These include traffic calm measures, targeted widening, limited sidewalks, and other improvements. The project area is from the intersection of Main and Pleasant headed west to stop just short of 416 Main Street. A link to the plan can be found here https://www.dunstable-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf4361f/uploads/town_meeting_row_plans.pdf

The Town is working closely with the State Department of Transportation to keep this project on track to be bid in the fall of 2021 with construction to commence in spring of 2022. Currently, the Town is focused on the right of way acquisitions needed to support the project, a measure that was recently approved at Special Town Meeting in January.