



Annual Town Meeting, May 20, 2024

A Message from the Maynard Select Board

Welcome to Town Meeting! You will be asked to vote on important decisions tonight. Thank you for taking the time to participate in the governance of our wonderful town. As small as Maynard is, it is a very complex town that provides a multitude of services and has many competing needs. We would like to celebrate Maynard's recent accomplishments and review the challenges residents will be asked to weigh in on in the next several years as we continue to move the Town forward.

Maynard has shown its characteristic resilience responding to the challenges of the past few years. We endured a pandemic as a community with great agility. Maynard was one of the first towns in Massachusetts to successfully hold outdoor Town Meetings and we changed our sesquicentennial plans to keep people safe while still celebrating our history in style. The Town also quickly established an outdoor dining program, supporting restaurants and enhancing the downtown, which continues today each spring through fall.

Capital and Infrastructure

Maynard continues to prioritize improvements to town facilities:

- Last year we opened a new Fire Station on Sudbury Street, greatly improving living and operating conditions for the Fire Department and providing the room necessary to house modern equipment needed for effective emergency response.
- Detailed design is underway for a new Green Meadow School, which was approved at Town Meeting last fall. The Town of Maynard has worked closely with the Massachusetts School Building Authority during this project. They will pay for approximately a third of the costs for this new school.
- The School Committee is planning to bring designs for new Alumni Field bleachers to the fall Town Meeting.
- The Senior Center Committee is exploring options for an improved Senior Center.

The DPW continues to be central in addressing infrastructure needs:

- The Well 4A and Treatment Plant Project is nearing completion, part of a long-term plan to address Maynard's water capacity issues.
- The Town is considering multiple options for future capacity needs to meet stricter regulations for clean water. This includes working with our neighbors to connect to the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority systems that bring drinking water from the Quabbin Reservoir to Boston.
- Plans, including funding, are being developed for improved stormwater management systems needed to replace aging infrastructure, prevent pollutants from entering the Assabet River, improve street drainage, and comply with federal regulations.
- The Town is conducting a feasibility study to replace the aging Winter Street garage.
- The Solid Waste and Recycling Task Force is finalizing recommendations on management of trash and recycling services in the face of rising costs.
- The Highway Department is maximizing the usage of limited road improvement funding received from the State.

Maynard is currently working to find solutions for municipal owned properties no longer in use:

- The former Coolidge School has been sold and has received historic state tax credits allowing renovations to move forward and to provide affordable housing.
- The Town is currently seeking proposals for the sale of the former Fire Station at 1 Summer Street.

- The old Fowler School, former home of ArtSpace, is now over 100 years old. Tonight the Select Board will be asking voters for permission to sell the property on the terms and conditions it deems appropriate.

The Capital Planning Committee has done great work in recent years assessing the Town's capital needs. They have a systematic process to evaluate requests ranging from new police cruisers and roof repairs to new buildings. The Select Board is aligned with their assessment that Free Cash distributions are insufficient to meet long term capital planning needs for the Town.

Operating Needs and Growth

In addition to evaluating the capital needs listed above, Select Board continues to work to maximize the effectiveness of the resources available for operating needs in the general fund. Salaries and benefits, particularly healthcare, are the primary expenses of the operating budget. Salaries are driven by the need to provide an appropriate standard of living in Massachusetts which faces a housing shortage. In addition to continued rising costs, the Select Board remains concerned by Maynard Public School's plan to maintain their operating budget from their reserve funds. This strategy is unsustainable by definition. Two thirds of the Town's operating budget supports education.

Most of Maynard's revenue comes from property taxes, supplemented by state aid and smaller income streams. To support the needs of the town while minimizing increases to the cost of living we should seek out opportunities for economic development:

- The sale of Town buildings no longer in use has the potential to broaden the tax base while encouraging redevelopment beneficial to the community.
- The multi-year Powder Mill Corridor Initiative can provide increased housing options, expand our commercial tax base, increase riverfront access, and improve pedestrian connections to the downtown. The initiative is a great example of collaboration with our neighbors in Acton.
- Careful planning should continue to be used to encourage smart infill growth opportunities in the downtown area.
- Maynard should continue to support a strong Cultural District through the many events, festivals, parades, concerts that draw people to the downtown.

Conclusion

The Select Board extends its gratitude to all the Town staff and volunteers who keep Maynard moving forward. Maynard employees are teaching in our schools, keeping us safe day and night, running our library, repairing our roads, bringing clean water to our homes, and so much more. They are supported by a network of citizens who serve on committees working year-round to chart the best possible path forward for Maynard. We encourage you to read through the Town Report to understand the depth and breadth of work that goes into planning for our future. In addition, we want to thank the many non-profit organizations in town who bring aid to those in need, support local businesses, and organize the many events that bring the Maynard community together.

Maynard has a long and proud history of meeting challenges over the last 150 years, and our town has shown resilience through tougher times than today. Residents are going to be asked to make difficult decisions in the coming years to balance needs and wants against the costs of services and capital projects. If you have the time and passion, we encourage you to join the amazing volunteer corps who research, deliberate, plan, and guide the future of our community. Tonight, we want to thank you for attending Town Meeting, learning about the issues facing our community, and participating in our democratic process.

Approved by unanimous vote (5-0) at Select Board meeting held Wednesday, May 8, 2024