

TOWN OF HINSDALE E-NEWSLETTER – OCTOBER 2016
(INAUGURAL EDITION)

WELCOME MESSAGE

Greetings!

Municipal officials and staff in the Town of Hinsdale are dedicated to promoting a high-functioning and close-knit community that appeals to all our residents and visitors. To this end, we are committed to providing accurate information and quality services to members of our community at all times. In the interest of helping to keep residents informed of important “goings on” in town, we will begin producing a town-wide newsletter that will be disseminated by email on a regular basis (likely monthly) to all individuals who subscribe to the mailing list. Our hope is that the number of recipients on this list will continue to grow over time to ensure that most households receive these important updates. If you have friends or family that may be interested in receiving this newsletter in the future, please have them contact Ryan Aylesworth, Town Administrator, at 413-464-6534 or town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov.

Thank you for being a part of our community and we hope you enjoy the inaugural edition of this newsletter!

ONLINE BILL PAY COMING SOON

We are very excited to announce that, beginning next month (November 2016), Hinsdale residents will have the ability to securely pay their taxes (real estate, personal property and motor vehicle excise taxes), water/sewer bills, and other municipal fees online via the town’s official website - www.hinsdalemass.com. This new payment method serves to accommodate those Hinsdale residents who want the convenience of paying their taxes and fees online, anytime day or night. It also benefits the town in that payments are processed automatically, allowing town employees faster balance reconciliation and more time to work on other town issues.

Local officials realize the importance of keeping with the times and offering this new online payment option. The Town of Hinsdale is fortunate to have found a banking partner, UniBank, who has years of municipal/government banking experience and who adheres to strict security methods to protect our residents’ personal information. In fact, UniBank uses state-of-the industry encryption methods to safely handle these transactions so bank account

information remains completely confidential (not even being shared with municipal employees).

The process for residents to pay online is simple: with your bill and checkbook in hand, 1) Go to: www.hinsdalemass.com; 2) Click on the “UniPay – Online Tax and Fee Payment Portal” Button; and 3) Complete each screen to process your payment.

Residents will be able to make payments via “e-check” (applicable check routing number and account numbers will need to be provided) or Master Card, Visa Card, or Discover Card. Payments by e-check will be assessed a flat fee of \$0.25 (less than the cost of a surface mail stamp), and payments by credit card will be assessed a variable fee depending on the monetary value of the transaction. In all cases, e-check and credit card transaction fees will be retained by Unibank and not the Town. Online payment is highly encouraged, but the town will continue to accept physical checks.

If you have specific questions about online bill pay, please contact Ryan Aylesworth, Town Administrator, at 413-464-6534 or town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov.

ONLINE PERMITTING COMING SOON

Beginning in November 2016, Hinsdale residents will also now have the ability to file applications for building, electrical, and gas/plumbing permits online via the town’s official website - www.hinsdalemass.com. Online permitting will allow Hinsdale residents to submit permit requests at any time and avoid unnecessary trips to Town Hall to prepare or deliver a hard copy permit application.

Applicants who register (this takes less than 5 minutes) will have the ability to do the following:

- Have some of the information auto-fill on the permit application
- View the status of their permits
- Edit the application before the permit is issued
- Add attachments (plans, pictures, specs, etc.) to the application
- Print the permit as soon as it has been issued
- View the inspection results

Permit applicants will be able to pay for their permit online with an e-check or Master Card, Visa Card, or Discover Card. Online payment is highly encouraged, but the town will accept checks made out to Town of Hinsdale, 39 South Street, Hinsdale, MA 01235. Checks can be mailed or delivered to the Inspection Department at Town Hall.

If you have specific questions about online permitting services, please contact Ryan Aylesworth, Town Administrator, at 413-464-6534 or town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov, or Jonathan Flagg, Building Commissioner, at 413-374-4773 or building@hinsdalema.gov.

HINSDALE'S "VISION PLAN" – PROGRESS & UPCOMING LISTENING SESSIONS

The value of engaging in proactive long-term planning (complete with inclusive stakeholder engagement processes) is becoming increasingly embraced by communities across western Massachusetts. With the help of a \$15,000 Community Compact initiative grant, the Town of Hinsdale has begun the process of developing a "vision plan" that better enables the Town to identify and attain ambitious goals (spanning broad topics such as municipal services, economic development, transportation and public infrastructure, housing, land use, natural and cultural resource conservation, and recreation and tourism) and generally enhance community vitality. To this end, a "Mission and Vision Working Group" (MVWG) was established in late-December 2015 under the leadership of former Select Board Chair John Genzabella to help facilitate a much needed visioning and planning process. The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) has been actively assisting with this effort since its inception.

During the spring of 2016, a comprehensive survey was developed and administered to all residents, seasonal residents, and business owners/operators. The survey was intended to gain information and opinions about the town, its initiatives, services, and resources, and how they can be improved in the future. This information will be incorporated into the Hinsdale Vision Plan to guide policy, investment, and growth decisions for the town over the next decade. In addition to administering the survey and tabulating response data, BRPC staff also subsequently conducted follow-up interviews with approximately 30 individuals that members of the MVWG identified as key stakeholders based on their past/current roles in town, the uniqueness of their perspectives, the extent of their personal/family roots in town, and other relevant considerations. With help from BRPC, the MVWG has begun to develop an initial working draft of the Vision Plan based on a detailed inventory of initial conditions, review of town policies and historical documents, analysis of the data obtained from the surveys and stakeholder interviews, and other pertinent sources of information.

A primary goal of this process is to promote citizen buy-in and support for the Vision Plan, and a series of "listening sessions" are being planned for November and December to share information about existing conditions and encourage additional resident input that will help inform development of the

preliminary draft of the vision, goals, and objectives. Additional information on the dates, times, and locations of the upcoming listening sessions will be announced in the coming weeks.

If you have specific questions about the Vision Plan or related opportunities for public involvement, please contact Ryan Aylesworth, Town Administrator, at 413-464-6534 or town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov.

FROM THE TOWN COLLECTOR

The first-half real estate, personal property and sewer betterment bills for Fiscal Year 2017 (July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017) are being printed and are scheduled to be mailed October 14th. These bills cover the period July 1 through December 31, 2016. Payment on these bills will be due on or before November 14th. Since the bills had to be printed in advance to allow for mailing preparation, payments received on or after October 11th may not be reflected on the bill you receive. The payment will be reflected on the subsequent bill that will be mailed in early-2017. Interest of 14% will be added to all late payments. The Town Collector's office hours are: Monday 9:00 AM-12:00 PM, Tuesday-Thursday 8:00 AM-1:00 PM, and 5:30-7:00 PM on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month.

The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles controls the names and addresses on motor vehicle excise tax bills. The Town cannot change this information on your behalf; that must be done by the taxpayer with the Registry.

ALL requests for (i) address changes for real estate personal property and (ii) abatements should be sent directly to the Board of Assessors at Hinsdale's Town Hall, not to the Town Collector. Similarly, address changes for water and/or sewer bills should be directed to the Water & Sewer Department.

Please contact Pauline Wheeler, Town Collector, at 655-2306 or tax.collector@hinsdalema.gov, with any questions concerning payments. Questions pertaining to assessment, address and name changes should be directed to Dave Zagorski, Assistant Assessor, at 655-2300 or assessors@hinsdalema.gov, if you have any questions.

FROM THE BOARD OF ASSESSORS

The period to file for real estate and/or personal property tax abatements will begin when the first-half tax bills are mailed (anticipated October 14) and the deadline will be 30 days after the date of mailing (anticipated November 14).

Please contact Dave Zagorski, Assistant Assessor, at 655-2300 or assessors@hinsdalema.gov, if you have any questions.

HIGHWAY UPDATES FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Middlefield Road Overlay

The section of Middlefield Road from the Hinsdale-Peru town line to the intersection with Fassell Road was recently paved using a method known as an overlay. To ensure a quality finished road, preparation work was completed by the Hinsdale Highway Department prior to the application of new asphalt by the selected contractor. The Highway Department crew assisted the contractor with the paving application and this resulted in a highly successful process and overall finished “product.” This project was funded by the [Chapter 90 Program](#), with procurement taking place through [Hampshire Purchasing Cooperative](#) ("county bid"). Please note that this project is intended to serve as a relatively short-term improvement to a particularly deteriorated section of Middlefield Road while the town works to secure more extensive funding through the [Transportation Improvement Program \(TIP\)](#) to completely reconstruct the full length of Middlefield Road no later than Fiscal Year 2021.

Old Windsor Road Reconstruction

The section of Old Windsor Road extending from the Frank Schnopps Road intersection to the Windsor Brook bridge was recently reconstructed. Reconstruction included full-depth reclamation (FDR) with calcium and covered by a material known as double chip seal (an alternative to asphalt). The double chip seal applied was for “new work,” which means three layers of material were applied as opposed to just two layers. This project was funded by the [Chapter 90 Program](#), with procurement taking place through [Hampshire Purchasing Cooperative](#) ("county bid").

If you have specific questions about current or upcoming highway projects, please contact Rene Senecal, Highway Department Superintendent, at 413-655-2304 or dpw.highways@hinsdalema.gov.

UPDATES FROM THE WATER & SEWER SUPERINTENDENT

The water meter upgrade project is nearly complete. As was previously communicated to residents at several public meetings and informational forums, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

required the Town of Hinsdale to install new water meters because we did not have any means of tracking total water usage, and this could mean that there are leaks in our system that allows water to leak out of our underground pipes (causing a problem with respect to water conservation) and potential contaminants to be transported into our underground pipes. If we had not performed the necessary upgrades, the Town could have been fined by DEP up to \$25,000 per day. In addition to avoiding devastating monetary penalties, installation of new meters will allow the town to begin billing water users based on their actual usage, as opposed to the current flat rate system. A usage-based billing model will be far more equitable and help promote responsible water conservation practices. Now that installation of new meters is nearly complete, the Town will conduct a water audit and begin analyzing usage data that will help us establish an appropriate fee/rate structure for usage-based billing that will commence in Fiscal Year 2018 (July 1, 2017).

If you have specific questions about the operations of the Town's water or sewer system, please contact Larry Turner, Water & Sewer Superintendent, at 413-655-2307 or water.sewer@hinsdalema.gov.

2016 ELECTION

Massachusetts Information for Voters – Large Type Edition

Official booklets with the 2016 Ballot Questions for the Tuesday, November 8, 2016 Election are available at Town Hall. Stop by to pick up a copy.

Early Voting

We are pleased to announce that, for the first time ever in Massachusetts, registered voters may opt to vote before Election Day. Early voting is beginning around the region on October 24th and continue through November 4th. Prior to enactment of this new law, voting prior to Election Day was allowed only through absentee voting.

Early Voting Hours

In Hinsdale, early-voting hours will be conducted on October 26 and November 2 from 6:30-8:00pm. Please note that both of these dates are Wednesdays.

The In-Person Early Voting Process:

Registered voters may come to the Town Hall polling location during the scheduled early voting hours. The voter must check in and will be given an

early voting ballot and an early voting envelope. The voter will proceed to a voting booth to fill out the ballot. The voter must also complete the affidavit on the early voting envelope then seal the voted ballot in the envelope.

Upon completion, the voter will hand the sealed envelope to a pollworker. The sealed envelope will be secured until Election Day when early voting ballots will be cast by a pollworker.

Please keep in mind that during the early voting period certain activities are prohibited within the designated polling location. Restricted activities include cell phone use, public exhibition of campaign materials and public announcement of political support.

During the early voting period Town Hall staff will be working as usual.

Please contact Dawn Frissell, Town Clerk, or Mary Lou Galliher, Assistant to the Town Clerk, at 655-2301 or clerk@hinsdalema.gov if you have any questions.

TRANSFER STATION UPDATE

We have “punch cards” on sale at Town Hall for those who don’t want to pay for disposal fees by check at the transfer station. \$20 and \$40 cards are available. The “punches” on the \$20 card are done in \$2 increments (10 punches per card) and the “punches” on the \$40 card are done in \$5 increments (eight punches per card). Cards do NOT have an expiration date and there is no limit on how many you can buy! Transfer station annual stickers (\$65) and punch cards are available for sale at Town Hall during regular office hours of the Select Board Admin Assistant. Any questions, please email Kathe Warden at select.board@hinsdaleme.gov.

OCTOBER PUBLIC MEETINGS (SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

- October 3 @ 6:30 PM (Old Town Hall) - Old Town Hall Conservation Committee
- October 4 @ 6:30 PM – Planning Board
- October 6 @ 7:00 PM – Finance Committee
- October 11 @ 7:00 PM – Conservation Commission
- October 12 @ 5:15 PM – Mission & Vision Working Group
- October 12 @ 7:00 PM – Select Board
- October 17 @ 9:30 AM – Water & Sewer Committee
- October 19 @ 6:00 PM – Board of Assessors
- October 25 @ 7:00 PM – Board of Health

- October 26 @ 5:15 PM – Mission & Vision Working Group
- October 26 @ 7:00 PM – Select Board
- October 31 @ 9:30 AM – Water & Sewer Committee

UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS (SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

- October 15 from 10:00 AM-Noon – Becket Energy Committee Meeting (open to residents of all Hill Towns) at Becket Town Hall
- October 16 from 8:00-11:00 AM – Hinsdale Firemen’s Association Fall Pancake Breakfast
- October 29 @ 7:00 PM – Haunted House organized by Hinsdale Dayz Committee at the Wayne Walton Pavilion (Hinsdale Fire Station)