

TOWN OF HINSDALE E-NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2017

WELCOME MESSAGE

Greetings!

In the interest of helping to keep residents informed of important “goings on” in town, we have begun 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 413-655-2300 X 355 or town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov.

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

EMERGENCY TOWN HALL REPAIRS - STATUS UPDATE

As most residents are now aware, Town Hall experienced significant water damage this past month when a sprinkler head located in attic space above the second-floor unexpectedly failed. Fortunately, the centralized alarm system in the building alerted us to the issue immediately and water flow to the sprinkler system was shut off by our Fire Chief within 15 minutes of the alarm going off. From the moment this incident occurred, town officials have been actively negotiating with our insurance carrier and coordinating with a variety of contractors and subcontractors to ensure that all needed repairs are completed in a timely manner. All steps are being taken to ensure that disruptions to municipal services are avoided or minimized to the fullest extent possible while repairs are ongoing. We are happy to report that the Town’s insurance provider has agreed to cover the costs associated with a repair and renovation project that’s scope extends considerably beyond those areas of Town Hall that were directly experienced water damage. This is a favorable outcome for our tax payers. At this time, pending the timely delivery of replacement building materials, we are anticipating that repairs to Town Hall will be completed within five weeks. Please check the Town’s official website (<http://www.hinsdalemass.com>) and/or Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/HinsdaleMA>) for additional related updates.

We appreciate everyone’s patience while this project is being completed, and please do not hesitate to contact either Kathe Warden, Administrative Assistant, at 413-655-2300 X 345 or select.board@hinsdalema.gov, or Ryan

Aylesworth, Town Administrator, at 413-655-2300 X 355 or town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov.

REMINDER - SPECIAL TOWN MEETING ON JANUARY 18

A Special Town Meeting (STM) is being organized for Wednesday, January 18, 2017 beginning at 7:00 PM in the Kittredge Elementary School gymnasium.

Articles on the warrant include supplemental funding needs/requests for the current fiscal year (FY 2017), outstanding expenses from the past fiscal year (FY 2016), and proposed changes to the Town's bylaws. To review a complete copy of the STM warrant, please click [HERE](#) (http://media.wix.com/ugd/f35351_e045a9aeff8d454d93076b0b8f546460.pdf). In accordance with state law and our Town bylaws, hard copies have also been posted at Town Hall and various public gathering spots around town.

CHANGES TO MUNICIPAL PHONE SYSTEM

The Town of Hinsdale recently updated its phone system to improve efficiencies and take advantage of a wide range of features that our prior phone system (which was not centralized) did not offer. Incoming calls can now be placed to a general line number (413-655-2300) and callers will then be prompted to enter the extension of the person/department they are trying to reach or choose from a menu of options. During this transition, care was taken to port over as many of the pre-existing "direct dial" numbers as possible, and, if callers prefer, they generally still have the option of calling their intended party/department directly without needing to dial the general line and enter an extension. For a complete list of extensions, please visit the directory page on the website: <http://www.hinsdalemass.com/directory>

WATER & SEWER BILLS CAN NOW BE PAID ONLINE

Beginning with the latest round of semi-annual bills that are being mailed this month, Hinsdale residents will now have the ability to securely pay their water and sewer bills online via the town's official website - www.hinsdalemass.com. The convenience of online bill pay was first made available for real estate and personal property tax bills that were mailed out in October 2016.

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 are 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 (usually around 2.5% of the total amount due) 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 413-655-2300 X 355 or town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov.

NEED FOOD AND/OR FUEL ASSISTANCE?

You may be eligible for financial assistance from your friends and neighbors right here in town. Contact the Berkshire Community Action Council at 413-445-4503 or visit their website at <https://bcacinc.org/>. All correspondence is strictly confidential.

****PLEASE BE AWARE****

We have received notice that there is a new scam affecting towns across the county. Someone will contact you, posing as the Massachusetts Census Bureau and asking that you supply all kinds of personal information. DO

NOT RESPOND – This is a SCAM! The Massachusetts Census Bureau does not exist (there is only a U.S. Census Bureau).

JANUARY OFFICE HOURS FOR VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

As has been previously reported, the Town of Hinsdale has entered into an inter-municipal agreement with the City of Pittsfield's Veteran Services Department. Under this agreement, James Clark, Director of Veterans' Services, will serve as our community's Veterans Service Office (VSO). Hinsdale veterans will have access to a full-time VSO with significant knowledge and experience in the field of veteran aide. Office hours will be primarily administered in Pittsfield City Hall, but a limited amount of office hours will also be conducted at Hinsdale Town Hall on a monthly basis (those hours will soon be posted). The next set of scheduled office hours will be taking place at Town Hall on **January 25 at 1:00 PM**

Questions about veterans services should be directed to James Clark, Director of Veterans' Services, at 413-499-9433 or by email at jclark@pittsfieldch.com

ANNUAL CENSUS MAILED TO HINSDALE RESIDENTS

The Town Clerk's Office has mailed the 2017 census forms to residents. It is very important that these forms be completed, updated as necessary, signed and returned in the self-addressed stamped envelope within 10 days.

An annual street listing of all household residents is required under Massachusetts General Law. Information obtained from the census is used in preparing street lists, updating voter lists, preparing school lists, establishing eligibility for resident tuition at state colleges, obtaining monies for veteran's benefits and senior programs, and other important purposes.

New residents or any household that did not receive a form are asked to call the Town Clerk's Office at 413-655-2301 so that a form can be mailed in a timely manner.

REMINDER FOR ALL DOG OWNERS

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU LICENSE AND/OR RENEW ALL DOG LICENSES BY MARCH 31, 2017. AFTER THIS DATE THERE WILL BE A LATE FEE ASSESSED.

All dogs owned or kept in Hinsdale for eleven (11) consecutive days in any calendar year shall be licensed.

- Licensed period April 1 through May 31 each year
- Licenses may be obtained through the Town Clerk
- Failure to license your dog(s) can result in a fine of up to \$50, plus applicable late-fees

Animal Control Officer Burgess is collecting any donations of:

- Bleach, dawn dish soap, disinfectant wipes and sponges
- Bones, large rawhides and training treats
- Toilet paper and paper towels
- Durable dog and cat toys
- Purina One dry dog food
- Canned dog food

ANY DONATIONS ARE FOR THE SONSINI ANIMAL SHELTER
THESE DONATIONS CAN BE BROUGHT TO THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Also, as a reminder, all dogs owned or kept in the Town of Hinsdale shall be restrained from running at large 24 hours a day, each day of the year. Violations are subject to monetary fines.

BURNING SEASON

The Open Burning Season in Massachusetts runs from January 15 to May 1.

According to MA Department of Environmental Protection regulation (310 CMR DEP 7.07), open burning must:

- be a minimum of 75 feet from all buildings;
- be conducted between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.; and
- take place on the land closest to the source of material to be burned.

You must also be sure air quality conditions are acceptable for burning by calling the Hinsdale Fire Department business line: 413-655-2533. You need to provide the dispatcher your name and street address. It is important to note that residents need to call the Fire Department business line every day that they wish to burn (please call the day of as opposed to the day before).

Additional information on air quality conditions can be obtained by calling the Massachusetts DEP Air Quality Hotline at (617) 556-1021 or by visiting the MassAir Online website at

<http://public.dep.state.ma.us/MassAir>

Only Certain Materials Can Be Burned:

- Brush, cane, driftwood, and forestry debris from other than commercial or industrial land clearing operations.
- Agricultural materials such as fruit tree and bush prunings, raspberry stalks, and infected bee hives for disease control.
- Trees and brush resulting from agricultural land clearing.
- Fungus infected elm wood, if no other acceptable means of disposal is available.

Burning Leaves and Other Materials Is Prohibited

- Brush, trees, cane and driftwood from commercial and/or industrial land clearing operations.
- Grass, hay, leaves, stumps, and tires.
- Construction material and debris.

For a more detailed list of safety tips for Open Burning Season, please visit the following page:

<http://www.mass.gov/eopss/docs/dfs/dfs-briefs/april-2016/9-public-education-firefactors-safety-tips-for-open-burning-season.pdf>

If you have any related questions, don't hesitate to contact Larry Turner, Fire Chief, at 413-655-2533 or fire@hinsdalema.gov

RECENT NEWS

HINSDALE RECEIVES \$400,000 "COMPLETE STREETS" GRANT

The Town Administrator and Highway Superintendent are very excited to announce confirmation from the Lieutenant Governor that the Town of Hinsdale's "Complete Streets" program grant request has been approved. The grant award amount is \$400,000 (the maximum amount a municipality is eligible to receive in a given fiscal year), and funds will primarily be used to construct/replace sidewalks on Longview Avenue, Goodrich and Church Streets, and Commonwealth Avenue to help make this area of town more pedestrian-friendly and enhance aesthetics. Grant funds will also be used to install speed feedback signs on Longview Avenue to help promote public safety.

Complete Streets principles are intended to help community's construct and maintain streets for everyone. Streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and public transit riders of all ages and abilities.

The strength of Hinsdale's Complete Streets grant application was considerably enhanced by the professional support provided by the Berkshire

Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) and the thoughtful contributions of the Hinsdale Complete Streets Committee, which was formed in the summer of 2016 shortly after the Town's Complete Streets Policy (a requirement for funding eligibility) was approved by the Select Board. With the help of BRPC and the Complete Streets Committee (big "THANK YOU!" to each of those folks), the Town was able to develop a comprehensive list of transportation projects for potential state funding over a 5-year period. We are hopeful that the Complete Streets grant requests developed in the coming fiscal years we be equally as successful and help the Town continue making considerable progress toward improving municipal roads to meet the needs of all residents and visitors.

Questions about the Town's Complete Streets grant or proposed projects should be directed to Ryan Aylesworth, Town Administrator, at 413-655-2300 X 355 or by email at town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov, or to Rene Senecal, Highway Superintendent, at 655-2300 X 304 or by email (dpw.highways@hinsdalema.gov).

HINSDALE FIRE DEPARTMENT RECEIVES FEDERAL GRANT TO PURCHASE LIFE-SAVING EXTRICATION EQUIPMENT

The Fire Chief is very excited to announce that the Hinsdale Fire Department has received a \$43,600 grant from the "Assistance to Firefighters" grant program administered by FEMA. Grant funds will be used to purchase life-saving extrication equipment. After thoroughly reviewing products made available by a number of vendors, the Fire Department elected to purchase a HURST eDRAULIC Jaws of Life unit. Additional funds appropriated at the May 2016 Annual Town Meeting for extrication equipment will be used to purchase vital accessory equipment needed to maximize the utility of the new Jaws of Life unit.

Questions about the "Assistance to Firefighters" grant should be directed to Larry Turner, Fire Chief, at 655-5233 or by email at fire@hinsdalema.gov.

HINSDALE RECEIVES GRANT FROM MASSACHUSETTS INTERLOCAL INSURANCE ASSOCIATION (MIIA)

We are very happy to announce that the Town of Hinsdale has received a grant (\$7,167) from the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) to fund a variety of projects and equipment purchases intended to reduce the town's risk/liability exposure. More specifically, these funds will be used to:

- Fund a town-wide tree risk assessment (performed by a professional certified arborist) to identify hazard trees located in town rights-of-way
- Enable the Fire Department to procure two new FLIR thermal imaging cameras that will be used to see through smoke, find people and localize hotspots of fires. These cameras will also be deployed for use by other departments as needed for other operations (i.e., search and rescue operations).
- Enable the Hinsdale DPW to procure a large quantity of highway cones with detachable LED lights. A portion of these cones and associated LED lights will be provided to the Hinsdale Police Department for use during emergency response situations.

Questions about the MIIA grant or proposed projects should be directed to Ryan Aylesworth, Town Administrator, at 413-655-2300 X 355 or by email at town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov, or to Kathe Warden, Administrative Assistant, at 655-2300 X 345 or by email (select.board@hinsdalema.gov).

INTRODUCING THE NEW BUILDING COMMISSIONER AND WIRING INSPECTOR

The Town of Hinsdale recently hired Paul Greene as the new building commissioner. Mr. Greene has owned and operated a construction company based in Great Barrington for multiple decades and currently serves as the building commissioner for the towns of Richmond and Washington. Paul officially began serving the Town in early-December. The standard Tuesday office hours for the Building Commissioner will now be 1:00-3:00 PM (they were previously 4:00-6:00 PM). The best way to reach Paul is on his mobile phone, 413-446-0964.

Dana Spring has been appointed as the Town's electrical/wiring inspector. Mr. Spring has owned and operated his own electrician business for over a decade and currently serves as the electrical/wiring inspector for the Town of Becket. The electrical/wiring inspector does not hold regular office hours and all appointments and consultations should be done by appointment. The best way to reach Dana is on his mobile phone, 413-441-5135.

Questions about these recent hires should be directed to Ryan Aylesworth, Town Administrator, at 655-2300 X 355 or by email at town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov

POLICE SHARE TIPS FOR BAD WEATHER DRIVING

Prepare:

- Maintain your car: check battery, tire tread and air pressure, wiper fluid and antifreeze levels.
- Have emergency equipment (jumper cables, shovel, ice scraper, blankets) in the car.
- For long trips, take food and water, medication and a cell phone.
- If stalled, stay with the car. Clear the exhaust pipe; run the engine enough to stay warm.
- Practice driving on icy or snowy surfaces in an empty lot (slowly).
- Check your owner's manual for braking instructions on slick surfaces.
- Don't let the engine idle for a long time with the windows up or in an enclosed space.

Protect Yourself:

- Always buckle up and use child safety seats properly
- Never face a rear-facing infant seat in front of an air bag.
- Children 12 and under are much safer in the back seat.
- Sit back 10 inches from an air bag.

Prevent Crashes:

- Never mix drugs and alcohol with driving.
- Slow down and increase distances between cars in bad weather.
- Make sure that windshields and headlights are always clear of snow and ice to improve visibility.
- Watch for pedestrians walking in the road.
- Avoid fatigue. Get plenty of rest, stop frequently, and rotate drivers if possible.

VACANCIES ON TOWN BOARDS

The Town is seeking applicants interested in filling vacancies on the following boards and committees: Mission & Vision Working Group, Cemetery Commission, Board of Health, Zoning Board of Appeals (alternates), and a designee to the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA).

Anyone interested in serving in any of these capacities should contact Ryan Aylesworth, Town Administrator, at 413-655-2300 X 355 or by email at town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov

**CENTRAL BERKSHIRE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT (CBRSD)
BUILDING PROJECT UPDATE**

CBRSD has been approved by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) to proceed with the process of either building a new Wahconah

Regional High School, refurbishing the existing building, or a combination of both. The process has just begun and could be 4 or 5 years in length. The Building Committee for this project is comprised of 26 individuals and each of the District's seven communities are represented. For additional information on this process, please click the below link:

http://www.cbrsd.org/m_s_b_a_building_project

UPDATE FROM THE POLICE CHIEF

During these winter months the Police Department would like to remind all vehicle operators to remove all snow from their vehicles before any operation on the roadways.

License to Carry (LTC) and Firearms Identification Cards (FID)

Applications for renewals can be found at the following URL:

<http://www.mass.gov/eopss/firearms-reg-and-laws/frb/firearms-forms-and-applications.html>

Completed applications must be turned in to the Hinsdale Police Station, where applicants can schedule a subsequent appointment with the Chief of Police to review their application.

Questions about PD-related business should be directed to Susan Rathbun, Police Chief, either in-person or by email (police.chief@hinsdalema.gov).

UPDATE FROM THE HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT

Street Parking During Winter Months

The Hinsdale Highway Department would like to kindly remind all residents that the Select Board has adopted a policy pertaining to parking on roads during winter snow events. More specifically, the new policy prohibits parking on a public way (including both town and state roads) or any private way open to the public, obstructing snow removal from November 1 to April 15 between the hours of 12:00 AM (midnight) and 8:00 AM. Towing costs and fines will be the responsibility of the vehicles registered owner as stated in the Town of Hinsdale By-Laws.

In addition to adhering to the above policy, we also ask motorists to exercise discretion when electing where to park for extended periods of time during significant snow events taking place during daytime hours. When cars are parked along public ways both during and immediately after a significant

snow event it is more difficult for the Highway Department to plow as effectively. Keeping these roadways free of cars therefore helps promote public safety.

Information Provided by Residents

Although the Town's dedicated crew of Highway Department workers regularly monitors the condition of town-owned/town-maintained roads and other public infrastructure to identify and resolve any issues that could pose potential safety risks, we want to remind residents that informative calls are always welcomed and appreciated. Timely information provided by residents can help our Highway Department ensure that hazards are removed as quickly as possible. Please direct information and/or concerns to Rene Senecal, Highway Department Superintendent, at 413-655-2300 X 304 or dpw.highways@hinsdalema.gov.

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY SAFETY TIPS

Visit www.mass.gov/KnowPlanPrepare. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) has set forth a statewide campaign to encourage Massachusetts residents, families and communities to make plans and prepare for public health and medical emergencies, threats and disasters.

A preparedness checklist is available on the DPH campaign website listed above, and it is posted as a fillable pdf. Individuals can enter the personal information for themselves and all family members. This includes relevant medical information, evacuation locations, family meeting places and important identification data.

Important themes of the campaign are:

- Build an emergency kit
- Create a family communication plan
- Plan for all medical needs
- Stay safe and well
- Include your pets in planning

Again, www.mass.gov/KnowPlanPrepare is the campaign website that can provide information, tips and links for the public. Other useful websites on emergency preparedness are:

<http://www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/mema/emergencies/hurricanes>

<http://www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/mema/be-prepared>

<http://www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/mema/emergencies/power-outage>

ONLINE PERMITTING IS NOW AVAILABLE!

Hinsdale residents 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 are 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 413-655-2300 X 355 or town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov, or Paul Greene, Building Commissioner, at 413-446-0964 or building@hinsdalema.gov.

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@hinsdalema.gov.

UPCOMING PUBLIC MEETINGS (SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

- January 17 @ 9:30 AM – Water & Sewer Committee
- *January 18 @ 7:00 PM – Special Town Meeting (Kittredge Elementary)*
- January 25 @ 5:15 PM – Mission & Vision Working Group
- January 25 @ 7:00 PM – Select Board
- January 30 @ 9:30 AM – Water & Sewer Committee
- February 2 @ 7:00 PM – Finance Committee
- February 7 @ 9:30 AM – Board of Assessors
- February 7 @ 6:30 PM – Planning Board
- February 8 @ 5:15 PM – Mission & Vision Working Group
- February 8 @ 7:00 PM – Select Board
- February 13 @ 9:30 AM – Water & Sewer Committee
- February 14 @ 7:00 PM – Conservation Commission

UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS (SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

- January 18 @ 5:30 PM – General Public “Listening” Session #3 for the Vision Plan; meeting will take place in Kittredge Elementary School Gymnasium
- February 12 from 8:00 AM to 11:00 AM – Pancake Breakfast hosted by the Hinsdale Volunteer Firemen’s Association at the fire station; proceeds will benefit the Forward family who is caring for a young child who is very sick (\$8 adults, \$5 children under 12)