

TOWN OF HINSDALE E-NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2016

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 413-464-6534 or town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov.

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

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. Funding from the Town’s Chapter 90 program allocation will also be made available as needed/appropriate to cover project costs in excess of what was budgeted for in the Complete Streets grant request. 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 464-6534 or by email at town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov, or to Rene Senecal, Highway Superintendent, at 655-2304 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 a 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.

HINDALE 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 464-6534 or by email at town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov, or to Kathe Warden, Administrative Assistant, at 655-2245 or by email (select.board@hinsdalema.gov).

INTRODUCING THE NEW BUILDING COMMISSIONER AND WIRING INSPECTOR

The Town of Hinsdale recently hired a new building commissioner and electrical/wiring inspector. During its November 30 business meeting, the Hinsdale Select Board appointed Paul Greene as the Town's 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.

The new Building Commissioner officially began serving the Town during the week of December 5. 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).

Also, following final interviews that took place in late-November and early-December, the Hinsdale Select Board appointed Dana Spring 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.

Questions about these recent hires should be directed to Ryan Aylesworth, Town Administrator, at 464-6534 or by email at town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov

ANNOUNCING SPECIAL TOWN MEETING - 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 will likely 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.

In accordance with state law, the official warrant for the STM will be posted conspicuously in Town Hall and other locations throughout town no less than two weeks prior to the meeting date.

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.

The Police Department wishes all a wonderful holiday season!!!

OFFICE HOURS FOR NEW 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 first scheduled office hours will be taking place at Town Hall on December 14 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

UPDATES ON PREVIOUS NEWS

HINSDALE LAUNCHES OFFICIAL FACEBOOK PAGE!

The Town of Hinsdale has launched an official Facebook page ("Town of Hinsdale, Massachusetts") that can be accessed at the following web link: www.facebook.com/HinsdaleMA

This page will be maintained by town officials and be used to help disseminate important updates about community affairs and alert residents when new/detailed information is available on the Town's official website (www.hinsdalemass.com). We hope you will "Like" this page and start receiving regular updates on your Facebook news feed!

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 464-6534 or by email at town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov

“LISTENING SESSIONS” ANNOUNCED FOR VISION PLAN

As has been previously reported, the Town of Hinsdale is in 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.

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 to share information about existing conditions, explore the values and perspectives residents hold toward our community, identify areas of potentially needed improvement, and generally obtain additional resident input that will help inform development of the preliminary draft of the vision, goals, and objectives. At least two of these listening sessions (both of which will be convened in the Community Room on the 1st floor of Town Hall) are open to the general public and will be taking place on the following dates/times:

- **Saturday, December 10 beginning at 10:00 AM**
- **Thursday, December 15 beginning at 5:30 PM**

These sessions are anticipated to be up to 90 minutes in duration. Light refreshments will be available to participants. We hope you will participate!

If you have specific questions about the Vision Plan listening sessions or related opportunities for public involvement, please contact Ryan Aylesworth, Town Administrator, at 413-464-6534 or 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

Notice to all Dog Owners

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.

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

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.

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 413-655-2304 or dpw.highways@hinsdalema.gov.

EZ PASS REQUIRED BEGINNING OCTOBER 28TH

Massachusetts will be requiring the use of an EZ-pass when travelling on the turnpike to avoid surcharges. You may receive a free transponder by going to: <https://www.massdot.state.ma.us/highway/TrafficTravelResources/EZPassMAProgram.aspx> or by calling customer service, toll free, at 1-877-627-7745.

All Electronic Tolling Activated as of October 28; Toll Plaza Demolitions Have Begun.

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>

SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

The Fall 2016 issue of Central Berkshire Regional School District's quarterly newsletter can be accessed here:

[http://www.cbrsd.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_295441/Image/News/Newsletters/CBRSD%20Newsletter%20\(Fall,%202016\)%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.cbrsd.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_295441/Image/News/Newsletters/CBRSD%20Newsletter%20(Fall,%202016)%20(1).pdf)

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).

ONLINE BILL PAY IS NOW AVAILABLE!

We are very excited to announce that Hinsdale residents now 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 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 413-464-6534 or town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov.

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 413-464-6534 or town.administrator@hinsdalema.gov, or Jonathan Flagg, Building Commissioner, at 413-374-4773 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)

- December 12 @ 9:30 AM – Water & Sewer Committee
- December 13 @ 7:00 PM – Conservation Commission
- December 13 @ 10:30 AM – Council on Aging (meets at Town Library)
- December 14 @ 5:15 PM – Mission & Vision Working Group
- December 14 @ 7:00 PM – Select Board
- December 26 @ 9:30 AM – Water & Sewer Committee
- December 28 @ 5:15 PM – Mission & Vision Working Group
- December 28 @ 7:00 PM – Select Board
- January 3 @ 9:30 AM – Board of Assessors
- January 3 @ 6:30 PM – Planning Board
- January 5 @ 7:00 PM – Finance Committee
- January 9 @ 9:30 AM – Water & Sewer Committee
- January 11 @ 5:15 PM – Mission & Vision Working Group
- January 11 @ 7:00 PM – Select Board

UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS (SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

- December 9 @ 11:30 AM to 2:00 PM – Hinsdale Senior Christmas Party (sponsored by the Council on Aging; Hinsdale Fire Station; program will include a delicious turkey dinner and carols sung by the Kittredge Elementary school children; RSVP is required. Please direct questions/RSVPs to Marion Tinney (655-2292).
- December 10 @ 10:00 AM – General Public “Listening” Session #1 for the Vision Plan; meeting will take place in Town Hall Community Room; light refreshments will be made available to all participants.
- December 15 @ 5:30 PM – General Public “Listening” Session #2 for the Vision Plan; meeting will take place in Town Hall Community Room; light refreshments will be made available to all participants.