

SELECTBOARD NEWSLETTER

TOWN OF SUDBURY

SUDBURY TOWN MEETING

By Dan Carty, Member

The New England town-meeting is an institution that originated in the exigencies of New England colonial life, and sprang into existence at the call of men who opposed the concentration of political power, and who would confer it on no person or persons, only as it was conferred on them by the people's choice. Situated far remote from the home government in Europe, too much time was consumed in the transmission of laws, and too little acquaintance was had by the English government with the needs of American life, to make it practicable to rely on such a source of authority. Something was needed to meet an independent and extemporized order of things; and the result was a New England town-meeting, which is unlike any other political assembly.

I have borrowed that quote from Hudson's paramount text "The History of Sudbury



Socially-distanced outdoor seating at 2020 Annual Town Meeting.

Massachusetts 1638 – 1889.” For people not originally from New England, Town Meeting may be a completely new concept. Personally, I grew up in a small city in Massachusetts; we had a Mayor and City Councilors, and while my family knew our Councilor, local government was something that, to me, just seemed to happen. I recall my parents always voting and sometimes going to meetings at

our schools, but that was about it. Upon moving to Sudbury

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February 23, 2021

about 20 years ago, out of curiosity, I attended a Town Meeting and was intrigued by the happenings. There were people on the stage that looked important, but the people in the audience were doing most of the talking! There was civil debate and anyone that wanted to be heard stood up and asked their questions and made their statements. Eventually, the issues were decided right out in the open by members raising their hands either in favor or against the issues. As Hudson points out, the political power was not concentrated, rather it was distributed across anyone that chose to show up. And, as it turns out, Sudbury has been managed this way for a very long time.

In wondering just how long, I noted first the statement from the Town website:

"Incorporated in 1639 with a population of 476, Sudbury is one of the oldest towns in New

England and has one of the oldest and longest running town meeting forms of government." Wondering if it was the oldest in the country, I learned that on Oct. 8, 1633, Dorchester passed an order establishing that form of town government.

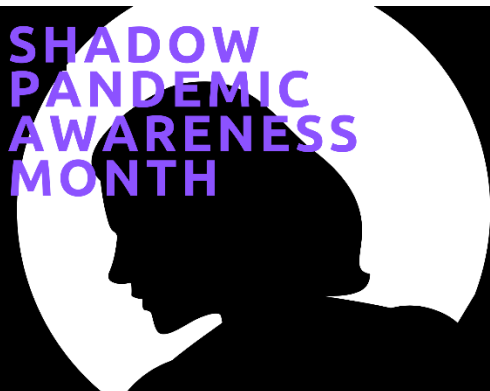
Arguments could be made that the oldest would be Plymouth; William Bradford moderated a meeting at Plimouth Plantation in 1622 with the purpose of dividing up land amongst its inhabitants. And in 1635, the Massachusetts General Court enacted the "New Towne Ordinance," which essentially authorized towns to choose their officers, manage their affairs, and dispose of common property, paving the way for town meetings. Regardless, we have managed our affairs for about 380 years with Town Meeting and your chance to be part of the action is coming up again soon.

Normally, we would meet in the Lincoln-Sudbury High School

Auditorium, but in September Town Manager Henry Hayes and his staff as well as Town Moderator Beth Quirk planned and executed a Covid-19 compliant outdoor Town Meeting. I could find no record if this were the first time, but it certainly was the first in the recent past. We are planning for 2021 Town Meeting to occur on schedule the first Monday in May, at L-S. We are also planning for the likely contingency that we must meet outside again due to the Covid-19 pandemic. If that is the case, Town Meeting will commence on Saturday, May 22. I look forward to seeing you, the real legislators of Sudbury, there.

Special thanks to Town Historian Chris Morely for his research for this article.

**SHADOW
PANDEMIC
AWARENESS
MONTH**



"We urge all community members to shed light on the Shadow Pandemic by informing themselves about domestic violence, providing support to the individuals and organizations working to end domestic violence and making a commitment to Never Commit, Condone, or Remain Silent about Domestic Violence."

MARCH 2021

<https://sudbury.ma.us/selectboard/?p=5589>

SELECT BOARD FINANCIAL POLICIES REVIEW

By Jennifer Roberts, Vice-Chair

One of the Sudbury Select Board's key roles is to create a set of policies to guide decisions and actions by the Board and staff. These policies extend across a variety of subjects from committee appointments to traffic safety signs. Over time and as the need for new topics arise, Select Board policies are revised and expanded; the creation of the Select Board Policies & Procedures Review Sub-Committee has permitted ongoing work to be conducted by selected members. The output of this group is then brought to the full Board for deliberation and vote.

A critical focus for the Select Board is creation of financial policies which help shape the town's financial management. According to the Massachusetts Handbook for Selectmen, the Board "should play a major role in formulating financial policy" and should "participate in the financial planning and budget process, provide leadership in the development of the capital improvement plan, and provide oversight and monitoring of the town's financial performance."¹ In addition to the policy and oversight roles of the Select Board, the Sudbury Town Manager and

Finance Director are responsible for the day-to-day financial management and operations of the Town. The Finance Committee also conducts oversight with its primary responsibility to advise and make recommendations to Town Meeting on the budget and other areas of finance. Ultimately, it is the legislative body of the town – Town Meeting – that makes final decisions relative to the budget, debt issuance, and use of free cash.

Financial Policies and Capital Planning/Funding were established and voted by the Board as its highest [goal for 2021](#). In January 2021, the Policies & Procedure Review Sub-Committee was reconstituted to include Select Board members Jennifer Roberts and Bill Schineller with the goal of producing a revised set of financial policies. Using prior work by both former Town Manager Melissa Rodrigues and current Finance Director Dennis Keohane, the group has recently started its task, planning to meet one to two

times monthly in public meeting for the foreseeable future.

Select Board financial policies typically expound upon a variety of municipal financial topics, including operating budget, revenue, expenditure, reserves and risk management, and debt management policies, amongst others. A key area that has come into focus recently is Capital Budgeting and Planning Policy. In 2019, the Select Board enlisted the help of the Massachusetts Division of Local Services to review



"Review of Capital Improvement Program" presented by DLS in April 2020. Click image above for the full document.

¹ Massachusetts Municipal Association, Handbook for Massachusetts, Selectmen, Fourth Edition 2014.

Sudbury’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and policies and to recommend a roadmap for the future. DLS is part of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue and serves as a financial resource to municipalities through guidance, training, and oversight. Its recommendations were provided to the Board of Selectmen in April 2020.

It is well-recognized that successful capital planning and well-designed funding strategies are

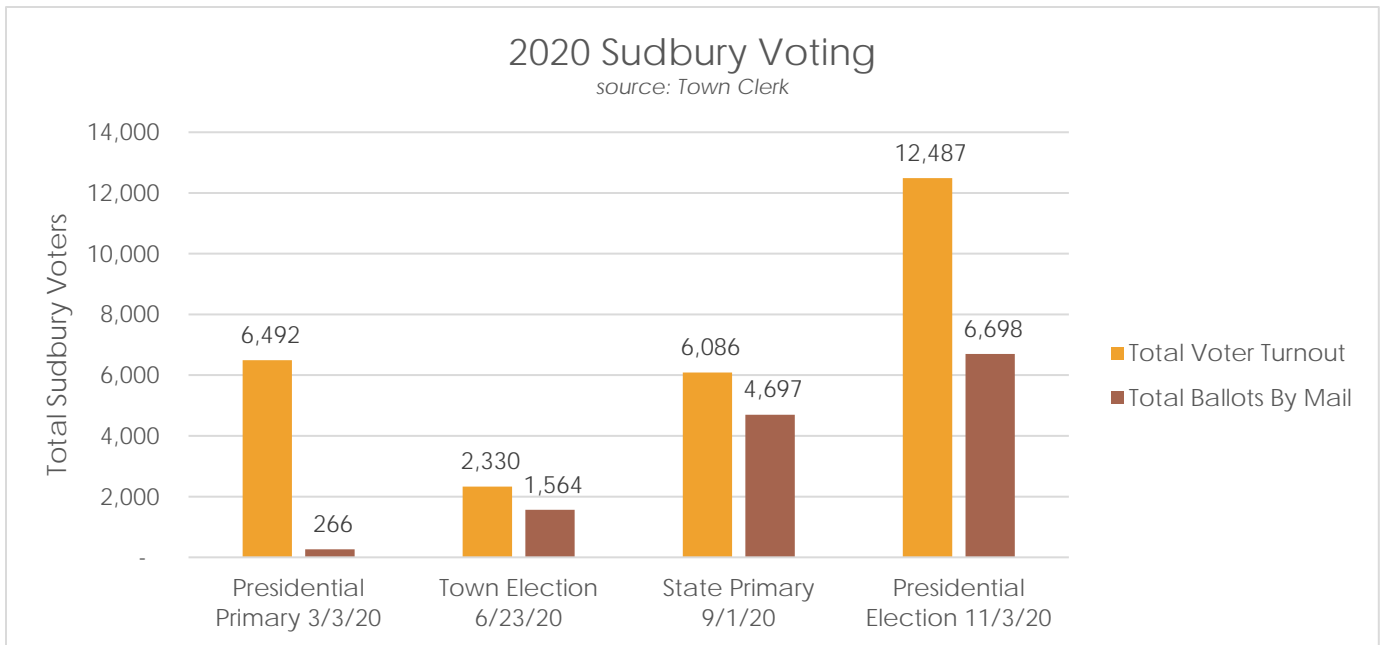
components of strong municipal management. “Capital” refers to long-term community assets such as land, buildings, equipment, and rolling stock. Maintaining and adequately funding capital in a cost-effective way permits Sudbury to sustain desired service levels and prevents premature failure of existing assets. As a result of the DLS study and desire for CIP improvements, the Policies & Procedures Review Sub-Committee and Select Board will

pursue extensive review in this area.

A strong set of policies and procedures, including those for financial and capital management, are critical for a successful Select Board and town government in Sudbury. As the work to revise and enhance these policies proceeds in upcoming months, the Select Board will keep interested committees and residents informed of its progress.

MAIL-IN VOTING MADE PERMANENT?

By Charlie Russo, Member



Among the aspects of everyday life forced to change by COVID-19 pandemic is the voting process. In response to COVID, in June 2020 state legislators expanded voting in a

number of ways to prevent election day crowds from causing super spreader events. The changes allowed mail-in voting without any of the reasons that are ordinarily

required, as well as expanded early in-person voting and the drop off of early voting ballots, in addition to ordinary in-person election day voting. There’s no

question the mail-in voting had an effect.

“It makes voting easier, and boosts voter turnout,” said Sudbury Town Clerk Beth Klein. “It also helped us all avoid exposure to COVID-19.”

The Effect of Mail-In Voting

Statewide, voters set a record in 2020 for the most ballots cast in an election with 3,657,972 votes, or 76 percent turnout. Of the total, nearly 42 percent, or more than 1.5 million votes, were cast by mail.

Here in Sudbury, we saw the effects, too. In 2020, the Town Clerk’s office handled three elections that utilized early and mail-in voting: the June 23 town election, the Sept. 1 state primary, and Nov. 3 Presidential general election.

The 2020 Presidential election saw 12,487 votes cast, representing 89.73% of the town’s 13,916 registered voters. By many reports, this was the sixth-highest turnout for a community, by percentage, among the 351 communities in the Commonwealth. Approximately two-thirds of ballots came by mail, with 7,383 mail-in ballots and 877 absentee ballots. Another 3,076 voted early in person, while 1,161 voted as normal on Election Day.

The Costs of Mail-In Voting

Expanded voting does not come without added costs. Mail-in ballots require added manual data entry, physical handling of multiple envelopes, and extra postage, among other process changes. Expanded early voting requires added staffing, regardless of that day’s turn out.

“For the pre-COVID election we needed about 57 hours of additional staff time,” Klein said.

“For the last Presidential election we needed more than 1,000 hours of additional staff time.”

As an example, Klein noted that 12 different ballots were required in town’s September primary election, due to the different parties and different voting districts, and these all had to be sent to the right people, which complicated the work.

But now, multiple mail-in elections have been completed and there is greater familiarity with the process. Klein hopes the state will further streamline and standardize the process and incorporate lessons from other states that have offered mail-in voting longer than Massachusetts in order to reduce the administrative burden.

The Future

The expansion approved by the state legislature is set to expire on March 31, 2021. Klein notes that many towns in Massachusetts have elections that occur between April and June, and predicts the expansion will be extended, and likely made permanent, in some form. The effect of expanded and mail-in voting on voter turnout was not lost on state officials.

Secretary of the Commonwealth William Galvin, who ultimately oversees state elections, has called for no excuse mail-in voting to become permanent, as well as election day registration.

“Many of us in the legislature were impressed by the great voter turnout in the November elections,” said Rep. Carmine Gentile, of Sudbury, in an email. Gentile noted that several bills to make the voting expansion permanent have already been filed in the State Senate, with House bills likely to be filed in the next several weeks. “It has worked for years in other states and will enable more voters to cast their ballots in every election.”

The next election is Sudbury’s 2021 Annual Town Election, which will be held on Monday, March 29. Early voting by mail is

available and encouraged, due to COVID-19.

More information is available from the Town Clerk on the

Town webpage at <https://sudbury.ma.us>.

SUDBURY CONSERVATION OFFICE

Ensuring the Protection and Care of Sudbury's Natural Environment

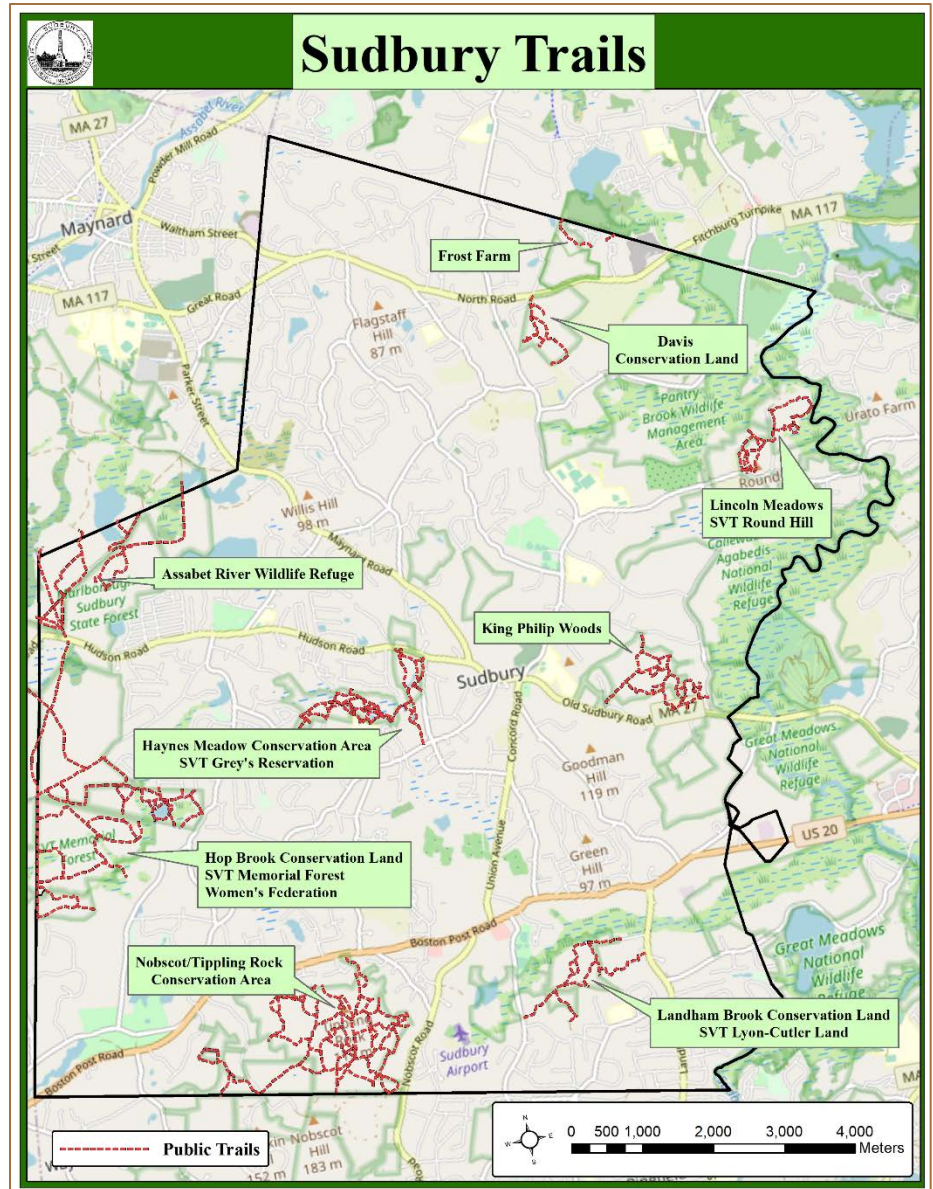
By Janie Dretler, Chair

When asked why people choose to move to Sudbury, they often mention the town's open spaces and beautiful natural environment. That is true for my family as well as many other people who make Sudbury their home.

The Town's Conservation Office plays an important part in ensuring the protection and care of Sudbury's natural environment. The Conservation staff in the Conservation Office carry out the day-to-day operations of the Conservation Commission. The staff also works closely with other town departments including the Department of Public Works, the Building Inspector, the Planning Department, and the Board of Health.

The Conservation Office is responsible for:

- Reviewing wetlands permitting;
- Public outreach and education for residents;
- Managing land management efforts including conservation restrictions (CR);



- Overseeing all town-owned conservation land along with several non-motorized boat launches.

Wetlands

Lori Capone, Conservation Coordinator, has been very

busy since joining the Conservation Office in 2019. Lori, along with Kirsten Roopenian, Conservation Department Assistant, has created a webpage to

document all relevant information for wetland permitting and to help educate residents on the difference between [Conservation Land](#), [Conservation Restrictions and Wetlands](#).

In Sudbury, wetlands are particularly important for maintaining water quality. Sudbury is nearly 33% wetlands, so it is important to know that what we put into the ground as wastewater filters to our aquifers and is reused as drinking water.

The Conservation Office assists the Conservation Commission in overseeing work within 100 feet of wetlands, within 200 feet of perennial streams and within isolated and bordering lands subject to flooding to ensure these resource areas are protected. Any work that occurs within these areas requires permitting through the Conservation Commission. For more information see the [wetland permitting](#) page.

New homeowners receive a brochure when they purchase a home near wetlands, rivers, stream or certified vernal pools in Sudbury. View the [Town GIS system map](#) to find the approximate locations of wetlands, rivers, streams, and certified vernal pools in Sudbury.

Town-Owned Conservation Properties (Approximately 1,200 acres)

The following is the list of the conservation properties in Sudbury with managed trails or non-motorized boat launches that are open to the public:

- [Barton Farm](#)
- [Broadacres Farm](#)
- [Davis Farm](#)
- [Frost Farm](#)
- [Haynes Meadow](#)
- [Hop Brook Marsh](#)
- [King Philip Woods](#) (including the Libby and Dickson parcel)
- [Lincoln Meadows](#) (north and south parcels)
- [Nobscot Conservation Land](#)
- [Piper Farm](#)
- [Poor Farm Meadow](#)
- [Tippling Rock](#)

*The Conservation Office is currently updating the Town Trail Maps.

Programs and Projects

- [Lincoln Meadow Community Garden](#)
- [Hop Brook Water Chestnut Program](#)
- [Eversource Mass Central Rail Trail Notice of Intent](#)

Recent Town Meeting Articles

At the September 2020 Annual Town Meeting, voters approved the following Articles to further protect and conserve our properties:

- [Article 39 - Brimstone Lane Parcels](#)
- [Article 40](#) and [Article 41](#) – Transfer Care & Custody of Town-Owned Water Row Parcels
- [Article 43](#) - Removal of Invasive Species from King Philip Woods
- [Article 45](#) - Remediation of Water Chestnuts from Hop Brook Pond System

Please reach out to Lori or Kirsten with any questions or concerns you may have about Sudbury's conservation efforts. You may also wish to volunteer your time with the Sudbury Land Stewardship Program: [Volunteer Application Form](#).

Lori Capone, Conservation Coordinator, and Kirsten Roopenian, Department Assistant
 Email: concom@sudbury.ma.us
 Phone: (978) 440 – 5471
 Location: [DPW Building](#),
 275 Old Lancaster Road

Conservation Office:
<https://sudbury.ma.us/conservation/>

Conservation Commission:
<https://sudbury.ma.us/conservationcommission/>

SUDBURY RESTAURANT GIFT CARD DRIVE

By Bill Schineller, Member

COVID-19 continues to pose enormous health, economic, environmental and social challenges that are being felt worldwide, as well as close to home.

While local businesses and residents struggle to stay afloat during these times that challenge so many aspects of daily life, one Sudbury resident had an idea that could provide some support to local restaurants and neighbors faced with food insecurities.

In April of 2020, Gabrielle Hencken created the Sudbury Gift Card Drive. An online sign-

up allowed residents to purchase local restaurant gift cards which were privately allocated and distributed by Health Department Social Worker Bethany Hadvab.

Through the kindness of Sudbury's neighbors, the Drive quickly generated 20K in business for our local restaurants while providing a delicious meal to any resident in need.

While the impact of the pandemic on our town continues to reverberate through the community, the HOPEsudbury drive has returned once again this

February 2021 and the overwhelming sign-up response leaves no doubt that the residents of Sudbury will continue to take care of each other, as long as the pandemic continues, and most certainly beyond.

Information about how to contribute or request assistance is on the Town website:

<https://sudbury.ma.us/socialworker/?p=2164>.

Check out the video entitled [Love, Give, Feed](#) created by Sudbury's Stuart Beeby for more details of this great program.

