



TOWN of HANOVER
TOWN MEETING
Tuesday
July
13th

TOWN
of
HANOVER
TOWN
OFFICES

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TOWN MEETING
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Being Accountable and Collaborative

10

Our municipal government will provide high quality public services in a manner that is equitable, transparent, and consistent with all other values in our Sustainability Master Plan and will engage in local and regional partnerships to achieve mutually shared goals and objectives.

GOALS:

10-1. The diversity of individuals contributing to Town decision-making and operations will be expanded.

10-2. The Town's focus on promoting excellence in governance standards and practices will be continued.

10-3. Municipal departments will be supported in providing outstanding public services.

10-4. The Town will continue to collaborate with local and regional entities including Dartmouth College and Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

Introduction

In order to build trust, municipal governments must be accountable in their management and operations. Accountability measures range from the elimination of fraud and abuse, all the way to recycling at the Town Offices. Transparency in decision-making provides residents and the business community with confidence that the government is driven by the community's best interest for human and environmental health, well-being, and prosperity. Underlying municipal accountability and transparency is a need for meaningful local and regional engagement that enables collaborative and inclusive decision-making.

The following sections present the Town of Hanover's goals, their context, and related strategies that support achieving the community's vision for improving government operations, with a focus on

representation and engagement, governance standards, public facilities and services, and partnerships.

Goal 10-1. The diversity of individuals contributing to Town decision-making and operations will be expanded.

Similar to many New England communities, the Town of Hanover has a traditional, selectboard/town meeting form of government. Hanover's Selectboard is comprised of five elected residents. The Selectboard serves as the executive branch of the town's government, responsible for carrying out decisions made by the larger community at the annual Town Meeting, as well as setting the agenda for initiatives. Residents essentially serve as the legislative branch at Town Meeting, where they debate and vote by ballot to elect Selectboard members, adopt zoning amendments, and on warrant articles concerning municipal budgets and other policy questions. Students at Dartmouth College who are domiciled in Hanover are eligible to vote in local elections and on ballot questions. Dartmouth students have previously run for Selectboard positions, though none have been elected to date.

Routinely, more residents vote by ballot at the polls that are open for 12 hours than attend the in-person 2- to 3-hour annual meeting. Only those that can make a nighttime meeting can participate. Daytime and weekend meetings have been considered but the evenings are thought to be the best time for the most people. Town Meeting is regularly scheduled – with recent COVID-19 exceptions – so ample time is given to participants to make plans to attend. To boost participation at the Town Meeting, on-site childcare and transportation could be provided. Notably, Kendal at Hanover offers transportation for its residents to get to Town Meeting.



Public Participation at the May 21, 2022, Sustainability Master Plan Development Solutions Workshop. Credit: VHB



Public Participation at the 2020 Hanover Town Meeting. Credit: James Patterson, Valley News

In addition to participating in Town Meeting, residents are encouraged to attend municipal meetings, including those held by the Town's boards and commissions, such as the Planning Board and the Bike Walk Committee. Per RSA Chapter 91-A, such meetings are required to be open to the public and to be adequately noticed. The Town often goes above and beyond requirements to provide such notice through advertisements in the Valley News, letters to the editor, banners across Main Street, and postings on the Town's website (<https://www.hanovernh.org/>) and email newsletter.

Residents also volunteer for the Selectboard-appointed boards and commissions. Town staff report that this participation is enthusiastic. These volunteers are generally representative of the larger population in terms of their race and ethnicity, and thus are predominantly White. In terms of age, they skew toward older age cohorts, potentially explained by their reduced family and work responsibilities – or their life experience in juggling these and other responsibilities. The Town's solicitation of volunteers is carried out through word of mouth, advertisements on the Town's website and through its email newsletter.

As part of this master planning process, the community expressed a desire to see Town government be more inclusive to various demographics. Accordingly, the Town should seek to target its engagement and outreach to underrepresented demographics, such as communities of color and younger age cohorts. This effort to be more inclusive and welcoming should also involve increasing the **diversity** of the Town's representation, taking into account its elected officials, employees, and volunteers, as well as its business partners. Relating to the latter, the Town does not currently have purchasing guidelines that promote minority- and women-owned business enterprises (MWBES).

Goal 10-1: Supporting Strategies

- ▶ **Strategy 10-1.1:** Increase **diversity** amongst the Town's officials, employees, and volunteers by setting **diversity** targets, followed by practical initiatives that include outreach to prospective candidates, enhancing hiring or volunteer pools, and encouraging sponsorship or mentorship opportunities.
- ▶ **Strategy 10-1.2:** Support **inclusion** within the Town's labor force by mandating unconscious-bias training, providing on-going related reminders and tips and celebrating **diversity** through visible actions.
- ▶ **Strategy 10-1.3:** Explore opportunities to increase participation at the in-person Town Meeting by eliminating or reducing barriers to attendance, such as by providing or coordinating childcare and transportation. Employ a virtual option if it becomes allowable by RSA Chapter 91-A.
- ▶ **Strategy 10-1.4:** To increase youth participation in local government, establish student positions that will serve to provide the Town with the student perspective on current issues and opportunities, as well as encourage broader participation by students on the Town's boards and commissions.
- ▶ **Strategy 10-1.5:** Establish a living database of community organizations and influencers that represent traditionally underrepresented population groups (e.g., low-income, communities of color, students, etc.), which can be shared with the Town's board and commissions as a resource for ongoing outreach.

- ▶ **Strategy 10-1.6:** Develop an inclusive meeting guide and share it with the Town's board and commissions to increase participation by and to better accommodate diverse voices. Harvard University's Office for **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion**, and Belonging offers an example that can be found here:
https://edib.harvard.edu/files/dib/files/inclusive_meeting_guide_final_1.pdf?m=1617641674.
- ▶ **Strategy 10-1.7:** Adopt procurement practices that encourage qualified diverse business enterprises to become part of the Town's supply chain and prioritize local business enterprises.

Goal 10-1: Performance Metrics

- ▶ **Diversity** profile of the Town's elected and non-elected officials
- ▶ Number of unconscious-bias trainings
- ▶ Percent of officials, employees, and volunteers taking unconscious-bias trainings
- ▶ Number of residents attending Town Meeting
- ▶ Number of students on Town boards and commissions
- ▶ Number of persons from traditionally underrepresented populations at Town meetings
- ▶ Establishment of student positions on boards and committees
- ▶ Creation and distribution of the Community Contact/Influencer Database
- ▶ Creation and distribution of the Inclusive Meeting Guide
- ▶ Percent of Town purchases made from diverse business enterprises
- ▶ Percent of Town purchases made from local businesses

Goal 10-2. The Town's focus on promoting excellence in governance standards and practices will be continued.

Good governance requires a clear set of rules that a governmental entity must follow in order to obtain and maintain public trust (i.e., ethics). It also requires the ability of public officials to answer for the decisions made on the public's behalf (i.e., accountability).

With respect to ethics, the Town of Hanover has ethics embedded within its Employment Policies that guide the conduct of all Town employees. These policies are provided to each new hire; however, there are no regular trainings provided to reinforce elements of the policies. Members of the Town's boards and committees are guided by the bylaws of their specific organization. Most bylaws include the ethical consideration of conflict of interest.

The Town advances accountability by adhering to the previously mentioned open meeting law (RSA Chapter 91-A), which includes a requirement to notify the public about meetings and to post meeting minutes providing a record of decision making. Communication of the Town's decisions, as well as general happenings, are provided through the Town's website and email newsletter. The Town's website also provides the information necessary to communicate directly with individual departments via phone and email. Departments are responsive to all inquiries. If concerns or issues cannot be resolved at the department level, they are advanced to the Town Manager. Accountability is, to an extent, built into department decision-making through resident participation in department-related boards and commissions (e.g., Parks and Recreation Advisory Board).

Mechanisms to prevent financial fraud or abuse in Hanover include annual financial audits and oversight by the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration (DRA). Further, the Town is responsive to

public questions about its budget and finances. According to Town staff, these mechanisms are sufficient.

Underlining good governance is the provision of clear directives that guide municipal operations. Many Town departments have a clear mission; however, there is no clearly stated and advertised overarching strategic direction. The Town should consider conducting a strategic planning process to identify an overarching mission, vision, core values, and critical success factors.

Goal 10-2: Supporting Strategies

- ▶ **Strategy 10-2.1:** Develop, mandate, and track participation of ongoing employment policy trainings to reinforce the Town's ethics policies. Extend the required ethics trainings to board members.
- ▶ **Strategy 10-2.2:** Continue to respond to public requests via multiple means (e.g., in person, computer, phone, paper).
- ▶ **Strategy 10-2.3:** To reinforce public transparency, continue to make data generated and used by the Town accessible to the general public.
- ▶ **Strategy 10-2.4:** Explore establishing a Communications Manager, who would be responsible for the routine, non-emergency external messaging of all Town departments, boards, and commissions across mediums.
- ▶ **Strategy 10-2.5:** Develop a strategic planning framework to guide municipal operations. This framework should include a mission, vision, core values, and critical success factors.

Goal 10-2: Performance Metrics

- ▶ Number of trainings administered on the Town's Employment Policies
- ▶ Percent of officials, employees, and volunteers taking trainings on the Town's ethics policies
- ▶ Designation of a Communications Manager
- ▶ Completion of a strategic planning framework

Goal 10-3. Municipal departments will be supported in providing outstanding public services.

The Town's daily operations are overseen by the Town Manager, who is appointed by and reports to the Selectboard. This person is responsible for implementing the policies of the Selectboard, working with the Selectboard to set annual administrative goals, and preparing proposed budgets and capital spending plans. Major capital purchases are planned well in advance with annual appropriations made into ten capital reserve funds. Withdrawals from these reserve funds to pay for equipment purchases and facility repairs must be approved by the Town Meeting.

As part of their day-to-day duties, the Town Manager also manages the Town's various departments: Police; Fire; Public Works; the Howe and Etna Libraries; Parks and Recreation; Planning, Zoning, and Codes; Administrative Services; Assessing; Human Resources; and Information Systems. The Town's departments work well together as a team and there are no known concerns regarding the overall structure.

During the development of this Sustainability Master Plan, a questionnaire was issued to the Town's department/division heads. The intent of this questionnaire was to ascertain noteworthy issues and

opportunities facing the Town’s public facilities and services. Major highlights from the responses to this questionnaire, as well as other direct department/division engagements, include:

► **Department of Public Works**

- The Town’s water distribution system is aging, with approximately two-thirds of the system having poor hydraulics and a history of failure.
- The Water Reclamation Facility (WRF) is aging, with much of the facility dating to its original construction in the 1960s. There was a 1989 upgrade. Capacity constraints could hamper future growth. A 20-year planning study for this facility was released in September 2022.¹
- The Town’s new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit will require a significant investment (greater than \$15 million) over the next 3 to 5 years.

► **Public Safety**

- The main fire station, which was built in 1974, does not meet current needs. This includes a lack of accommodation for a diverse labor force (i.e., locker rooms, shower facilities) and the absence of decontamination facilities.
- The existing police station, which adjoins the fire station, is adequate for today’s needs, but may not be large enough to accommodate future growth.



Winter Operations, Department of Public Works



Hanover Public Safety Building – Police, Fire, and EMS. Credit: VHB

¹ The 20-Year Facility Planning Study 2022-2042 Hanover Reclamation Facility (WRF) is available at https://www.hanovernh.org/sites/g/files/vyhlif3226/f/uploads/hanoverwrf_final_facilityplan_2022_09_22.pdf.

► **Parks and Recreation**

- The Town relies heavily on third-party recreation facilities, which constrains programming.
- After-school and summer camp programs are hindered from expanding due to reliance on School facilities. There is a lack of available indoor space for these programs, which is problematic during the winter months. Further, some of the indoor facilities that are used do not have air conditioning that can relieve heat stress during the summer months.

Limited funding is available for turf management, and this is a growing concern due to increased weather-related stressors.

[Chapter 9, Improving Health and Well-Being For All](#) discusses and provides strategies related to enhancing the Town's recreational facilities and programming.

► **Cross-Cutting Concerns**

- Many departments cited concern over the constraints of attracting quality talent, especially young adults and young families, due to the inability to afford the cost of living in Hanover. Those that do take municipal positions often have long distance commutes. [Chapter 3, Expanding Housing Opportunity](#) discusses housing needs and solutions in Hanover.
- There is a need to transition the Town's fleet (vehicles and equipment) to electric alternatives to meet the Town's renewable energy goals; however, cost premiums and charging infrastructure are barriers to adoption. [Chapter 8, Addressing Climate Change](#) discusses sustainable fleet conversions.

- There is no dedicated employee of the Town that tracks and pursues grant opportunities; rather, they are pursued on an individual or project basis.

Goal 10-3: Supporting Strategies²

- **Strategy 10-3.1:** Administer a regularly scheduled public survey to measure the public's satisfaction with the Town's facilities and services. Ensure that these surveys capture the public's evolving needs.
- **Strategy 10-3.2:** Explore the procurement of an asset management platform that will enable the Town to better understand the assets it has, along with their location, age, and condition. Integrate this asset management platform with the Town's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).
- **Strategy 10-3.3:** Pursue state and federal grants in a coordinated and centralized manner, such as through the assignment of a dedicated Grants Coordinator to fund projects.
- **Strategy 10-3.4:** Pursue public-private partnerships and/or partnerships with adjoining municipalities to offset the cost of large infrastructure projects.
- **Strategy 10-3.5:** Replace the aging components of the Town's water distribution system.
- **Strategy 10-3.6:** Determine the feasibility of instituting stormwater impact fees based on the impervious areas on a property to be used as a funding source for the Town's stormwater program.



² Strategies accompanied by an icon are those that enable greenhouse gas emissions reduction.



- ▶ **Strategy 10-3.7:** Explore the modernization of the Town’s main fire station. Ensure **net-zero** building practices are incorporated into any facility renovation or new construction.
- ▶ **Strategy 10-3.8:** Continue to assess the need to expand the police station or otherwise provide additional facility space to accommodate growth in staff and assets aligned with projected service needs.

Goal 10-3: Performance Metrics

- ▶ Administration and results of the regularly scheduled public facilities and services survey
- ▶ Procurement and implementation of an asset management platform, and its integration with the Town’s CIP
- ▶ Percent of the total cost of municipal programs and projects funded by state or federal grants
- ▶ Number of and cost savings associated with public-private or regionally shared infrastructure projects
- ▶ Percent of the Town’s municipal water distribution system in good repair
- ▶ Feasibility and financial impacts of instituting municipal stormwater impact fees
- ▶ Ongoing condition and needs assessments of public safety facilities

Goal 10-4. The Town will continue to collaborate with local and regional entities including Dartmouth College and Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

The Town of Hanover engages a raft of organizations across the Upper Valley region and the rest of New Hampshire to address its current and anticipated challenges, as well as to provide support to others in the realization of their missions. These partnerships may be based on having specific roles and responsibilities on projects or programs, shared interests, or collective problem solving, etc.

Examples of Town partnerships include:

- ▶ The Pine Park Association for the preservation of the oldest conservation area in Hanover.
- ▶ Advance Transit for the provision of free public transit.
- ▶ The Upper Valley Transportation Management Association for the development and implementation of programming that addresses regional transportation challenges.
- ▶ The New Hampshire Municipal Association, which promotes effective municipal government by providing support in the areas of education, training, advocacy, and legal advice.
- ▶ The Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission, which provides planning assistance to municipal boards.

In addition to these and other partnerships, it is worth noting that the Town has also taken a leadership position in advancing regional objectives. For example, the Town's current Sustainability Director was a founding chairperson of the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire and continues to participate as a member. Additionally, the Town's current Police Chief is the immediate past president of the New Hampshire Association of Police Chiefs and remains a member.

The Town coordinates extensively with Dartmouth College on a variety of issues. Notably, a member of the Dartmouth community serves on the Selectboard and members (including students) served on the Advisory Committee that supported the development of this Sustainability Master Plan. However, during this master planning process, the community expressed the need for better coordination between the two entities, particularly in the areas of housing and economic development.

Goal 10-4: Supporting Strategies

- ▶ **Strategy 10-4.1:** Encourage both the Town Manager, Selectboard and the highest levels of Dartmouth College administration to include strengthening the Town and Gown relationship as a top priority on their annual agendas/goals.
- ▶ **Strategy 10-4.2:** Continue to work with Dartmouth College on the issues and opportunities facing each entity and workable solutions.
- ▶ **Strategy 10-4.3:** Continue to work with Dartmouth College to plan together for needed public improvements and to troubleshoot activities that could adversely impact the community.
- ▶ **Strategy 10-4.4:** Actively participate in regional organizations to work on current issues, plan for future needs, and explore areas for future collaboration. Ensure data sharing is an included component.

- ▶ **Strategy 10-4.5:** Regularly document the Town's successes and failures, along with lessons learned, for the benefit of residents and other municipalities.

Goal 10-4: Performance Metrics

- ▶ Summary of major joint achievements between the Town and Dartmouth College
- ▶ Number of project planning discussions held between the Town and Dartmouth College
- ▶ Number of regional meetings attended by Town staff
- ▶ Annual lessons learned sharing with residents and regional counterparts