

# TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

## FEBRUARY 4, 2025

### GOVERNOR FILES MUNICIPAL EMPOWERMENT LEGISLATION

Gov. Maura Healey today filed a multifaceted package of reforms and local options aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of local government operations.

The governor said the Municipal Empowerment legislation — very similar to a bill she filed last year — is intended to help local governments reduce long-term fiscal pressures, attract a talented workforce, provide high-quality services, and streamline operations. The governor announced her plan to file the bill on Jan. 24 during the MMA's Connect 351 conference.

Efficiency measures carried over from the previous bill would permanently enable the existing local flexibilities for remote and hybrid public meetings, reform procurement rules, and establish enforcement mechanisms to expedite the removal of doubled-up utility poles, among other provisions. Several new provisions have been added to help local officials improve public health and lower costs.

“Our administration knows that city and town officials know their communities the best,” Healey said. “And that’s why we want to empower them with the tools to make the choices they need to provide the best local services that meet the unique needs of their communities.”

Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll, a former mayor who led a statewide listening tour last year to gather local officials’ input for the package, said, “Our administration’s deep, collaborative relationships with municipal leaders informed every provision in the filed Municipal Empowerment Act,” and the bill “will equip our cities and towns with the resources and policy levers they need to continue making life better for our residents.”

As they did at the MMA conference, local officials were quick to signal their strong support for the legislation.

“Cities and towns across the Commonwealth are extremely grateful to the Healey-Driscoll administration for their very thoughtful and practical Municipal Empowerment Act,” said Franklin Town Administrator Jamie Hellen, who’s president of the MMA. “At a time when cities and towns are struggling to balance budgets and maintain the quality services that all residents rely on, this legislation would remove obstacles to efficiency, reduce regulatory burdens, help communities solve persistent problems, and help address workforce challenges. I’m particularly excited about reforms to procurement and the permanent allowances for remote or hybrid public meetings.”

#### **Provisions**

The following Municipal Empowerment Act provisions are new or updated:

- **Double poles:** Extending the statutory prohibition against double poles from 90 days to 180 days, while giving municipalities enforcement authority with penalties for utilities that fail to comply, and empowering the Department of Public Utilities and Department of Telecommunications and Cable to establish a process allowing speedier removal while giving municipalities enforcement authority with penalties for utilities that fail to comply.
- **Preventing drug overdoses:** Ensuring that anyone who administers fentanyl strips, including local public safety officials, will not be subject to criminal or civil liability.
- **Snow hauling services:** Easing procurement by aligning these services with procurement procedures for snow removal.
- **School bus service costs:** Repealing a law that limits the ability of districts to start in-house school bus services when private transportation companies are available.

- The following Municipal Empowerment Act provisions have been retained from the previous version:
- **New property tax exemptions for seniors:** Allowing cities and towns to adopt a senior means tested property tax exemption for qualifying seniors and to increase existing senior property tax exemptions.
  - **Long-term benefit funding:** Establishing a new Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Commission to take a fresh look at opportunities to address unfunded liabilities from non-pension employee benefits.
  - **Regional boards of assessors:** Allowing municipalities to create regional boards of assessors in order to streamline duties and reduce significant staffing challenges.
  - **Post-retirement employment:** Creating additional temporary flexibilities by expanding the process for seeking exemptions to post-retirement employment rules for the next three years.
  - **Procurement reforms:**
    - Clarifying that groups of cities and towns can award multiple contracts through an RFP process under Chapter 30B and purchase both supplies and services from collectively bid contracts.
    - Equalizing Chapter 30B thresholds for advertised procurements to \$100,000 for all municipal purchasing, not just schools.
    - Eliminating the requirement to publish notice of invitations for competitive bids on COMMBUYS.
  - **Telecommunications and utility valuations:** Helping to address workforce challenges by centralizing, through the Department of Revenue’s Division of Local Services, the valuation of telecommunications and utility property in order to relieve cities and towns of the cost of individually hiring experts and consultants.
  - **School projects:** Updating borrowing rules to increase the bond term from 30 years to 40, to more closely reflect the life expectancy of school projects.
  - **Local-option revenues:** Empowering communities to generate more local revenues for local services in order to help reduce pressure on local property taxes. At local discretion, municipalities would have authority to:
    - Increase the maximum local-option tax on hotel, motel and other lodging rentals from 6% to 7% (or from 6.5% to 7.5% in Boston).
    - Increase the local meals tax ceiling from .75% to 1%.
    - Add a new surcharge of up to 5% on motor vehicle excise bills that can be dedicated to local stabilization funds (a provision that could benefit every community in Massachusetts).

**Advocacy**

At Connect 351, Healey and Driscoll urged local leaders to join them in advocating for the Municipal Empowerment Act, as well as their Chapter 90 proposal, and key accounts in their state budget.

“There will be a need for you to message and explain and tell your story about the acuity of the crises you’re facing in your cities and towns,” Healey said. “Costs have gone up for everything, and that money from the federal government, that was enjoyed a few years ago, is long gone. So it’s important for everybody to understand what it is you’re really confronted with.”

Visit the [Municipal Empowerment Act web portal](#) for more information about the bill.

*Written by John Ouellette, Senior Executive and Director of Communications*

**DEADLINES AND IMPORTANT INFO. – 2025 ELECTIONS AND TOWN MEETINGS**

Date – Year 2025	Event
March 18, 2025	Last day to submit a Citizens Petitions for the Annual Town Meeting: 4:00 pm
April 11, 2025	Last day to Register to Vote at the Annual Water District Meeting: 4:30 pm

April 22, 2025	Annual Water District Meeting
April 25, 2025	Last day to Register to Vote in both the Annual Town Meeting & Annual Town Election: 5:00 pm
May 6, 2025	Last day to apply for a mail-in ballot (absentee or early) for the Annual Town Election: 5:00 pm
<b>May 6, 2025</b>	<b>Annual Town Meeting: DYIMS, 286 Station Ave., S. Yarmouth: 7:00 pm</b>
May 12, 2025	Last day and hour to apply for an in-person absentee ballot: 12 noon
<b>May 13, 2025</b>	<b>Annual Town Election, polls open from 7:00 am – 8:00 pm</b>

### Town Meeting Information

Annual Town Meeting - May 6, 2025 - 7 pm

Deadline to Register to Vote: Friday, April 25, 2025

Last Day to Submit Citizens Petitions: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 at 4:00 pm

Location: D-Y Intermediate/Middle School: 286 Station Ave. South Yarmouth, MA, 02664

### Voter Registration

The Town Clerk's office will be open until 5:00 pm 10 days before an Annual Town Meeting or Special Town Meeting to register voters. As the Town has accepted G.L. c. 41, §110A, if the voter registration deadline falls on a Saturday, it will then be moved to 11 days prior, Friday, until 5:00pm.

### Town Meeting Information

The Town of Dennis has an Open Town Meeting which means that all registered voters may speak and vote at the meeting. The Annual Town Meeting convenes on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May. Special Town Meetings are anytime when necessary to conduct Town business.

The responsibilities of the Town Meeting are to:

- Appropriate funds for operating and capital budgets for the upcoming fiscal year (July 1 to June 30)
- Approve all General and Zoning By-Laws (contained in the Code of Dennis); and
- Accept certain "local option" statutes of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

### Process & Procedures

The Town Clerk reports on the actions of each Town Meeting session and is the keeper of the official minutes. All matters of Town Meeting business are included in the Warrant. Each item of business is called a Warrant article. The Select Board determines the content and order of articles in the Warrant and sets the deadline for closing the warrant.

The Town Moderator, presides over the business and conduct of the Town Meeting. Operating procedures and rules are dictated by statute, by-laws, or tradition; in their absence Roberts' Rules of Parliamentary Practice governs. Citizens may address the Town Meeting, and when recognized by the moderator, may make motions and may participate in votes taken.

To hold an Annual Town Meeting there needs to be a quorum of 150 legally registered voters. For Special Town Meetings, a quorum of 75 legally registered voters needs to be present for the meeting to take place.

### Related Documents

1. [Blank Petition Form \(PDF\)](#)
2. [Citizens Petition to Town Meeting Instructions \(PDF\)](#)

## **TRANSITION TO OPENGOV**

In an effort to make online permitting more streamlined and accessible, the Town of Dennis has adopted the **OpenGov** platform.

Many surrounding towns on the Cape have implemented this software, making the registration and application process more simplified for residents, contractors and businesses operating in multiple towns, as only one account will be required.

While the number of different applications was able to be reduced with the new system, further streamlining it, applications from departments that weren't included in the previous platform are now available. The **OpenGov** online permitting portal can be found at [www.town.dennis.ma.us/permitting](http://www.town.dennis.ma.us/permitting) by clicking on **Online Permitting** in the **Services** section of the Town website.

## **TOWN OF DENNIS ANNUAL TOWN CENSUS**

Town Clerk Terri Bunce reports - the Town of Dennis's Annual Town Census has been mailed out to over 8,800 households. These started hitting the mail boxes on Saturday, January 4, 2025.

An accurate count of residents leads to better municipal, state, and federal services, as the current population count of the Town is the basis for determining eligibility and allocation of State and Federal funds, programs, and grants. Returning the Annual Town Census helps to keep our records up-to-date, and thus ensures more informed decision making and effective governance.

Pursuant to MGL, Chapter 51, section 4 & 37, residents have 10 days to return their Annual Town Census forms. Should a Voter fail to respond to the Census, they will then be sent a second notice and can be placed on the "Inactive Voter List". If the Voter does not vote in the next two (2) biennial state elections following such notice, a voter may be removed from the voting list.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Town Clerk's Office at [clerksoffice@town.dennis.ma.us](mailto:clerksoffice@town.dennis.ma.us) or (508) 760-6112.

## **DENNIS FIRE DEPARTMENT RECEIVES DEPARTMENT OF FIRE SERVICE GRANT FUNDING**

On behalf of the Healey-Driscoll administration and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS), we are pleased to announce the Department of Fire Services (DFS) grant awards for the FY25 Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant program. This program provides reimbursement to fire departments for the purchase of essential firefighter turnout gear, hoses, nozzles, communications equipment, hand tools, and more.

A total of 273 local fire departments will share in more than \$4.5 million in funding. Dennis received a \$19,000 award for upgrading and replacing hoses and nozzles. Over 100 types of equipment were eligible for reimbursement, with scoring focused on those items that help departments meet current National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards.

Please note, this marks the final installment of the grant program, which has been funded by a five-year bond bill.

Should you have any questions or need further details, please feel free to reach out.

Best regards,



**Will Ramsdell**  
Deputy Legislative Director  
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Mass.gov](http://Executive Office of Public Safety and Security | Mass.gov)

## **STICKER SALES**

### **Beach, Transfer Station, & Harbor**

Sticker sales will be available via online or in-person purchase only (ORV online only). Online purchasing is recommended to avoid long lines/wait times. See links to the left to purchase.

**The Town of Dennis will start Sticker sales on the following schedule:**

**February 18, 2025** - Transfer Station permits available for online purchase.

**March 17, 2025** – Beach and Harbor permits available for online purchase.

**March 31, 2025** – Sticker Office open for in person purchase of Transfer Station, Beach and Harbor Permits. ORV online only. (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 10am – 2 pm)

**April 28, 2025** – Sticker Office open for in person purchase of Transfer Station, Beach and Harbor Permits. ORV online only. (Monday – Friday 10am – 4pm)

**May 17, 2025** – Sticker Office will add in person sticker purchase hours on Saturday and Sunday, 10am – 2pm

Mutual respect and courtesy are expected of sticker sales personnel and customers. Non-compliance with the Town's guidelines will result in denial of service and seasonal stickers.

## **STATE BUILDING CODE NOW REQUIRES ANNUAL INSPECTIONS FOR SHORT-TERM RENTAL PROPERTIES – BUILDING DEPARTMENT**



**As of October 11, 2024, Massachusetts has adopted the 10th edition of the State Building Code.**

This update mandates annual inspections for short-term rental properties, as defined in 780 CMR Chapter 2, and Residential Use Groups as determined under Section 310 of the BBR 10th edition 780 CMR building code.

The Town of Dennis has improved its inspection scheduling process to better accommodate these new requirements and integrate them with existing building permit inspections. Residents can request morning or afternoon inspections through the [application portal](#), and inspectors will try to meet specific time requests when possible. The Town is committed to conducting all inspections as efficiently as possible.

# CAPE COD READY RENTER PROGRAM - AFFORDABLE HOUSING



**APPLY NOW!** This notice expires April 9, 2025.

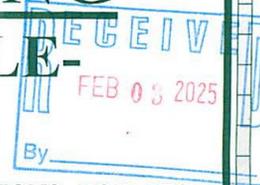


## **Cape Cod Ready Renter Program**

# **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

## **FALMOUTH - BARNSTABLE -**

## **YARMOUTH - DENNIS**



**THE READY RENTER PROGRAM IS NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR ITS GENERAL WAIT LIST FOR UNITS IN FALMOUTH, BARNSTABLE, YARMOUTH & DENNIS.** The list is used to fill existing scattered-site affordable rental units in Yarmouth (30 units), Dennis (24 units), Barnstable (5 units) and Falmouth (21 units). Units include studios, one-bedroom, two-bedroom, three-bedroom units, and a four-bedroom unit. Units are located in apartment buildings, duplexes and single-family homes.

**PICK UP AN APPLICATION AT:**

Town of Yarmouth, Main Lobby or the Affordable Housing Office, 1146 Route 28, S. Yarmouth, MA

**TO REQUEST AN APPLICATION OR TO ASK A QUESTION CONTACT:**

Mary Waygan, Town of Yarmouth, 508-398-2231 x1275 mwaygan@yarmouth.ma.us

**ATTEND AN INFORMATION SESSION:**

Feb 12, 2025 6:30 PM Dennis Police Station Training Room, 90 Bob Crowell Rd, South Dennis

Feb 20, 2025 1 PM Yarmouth Town Hall Hearing Room, 1146 Route 28, South Yarmouth  
Remote access by Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85702838325>

March 6, 2025 6 PM, Yarmouth Town Hall Room A, 1146 Route 28, South Yarmouth

**RETURN/MAIL/ DELIVER COMPLETED APPLICATION TO:**

Plymouth Redevelopment Authority, 26 Court Street, Plymouth, MA 02360

**APPLICATION DUE DATE AND TIME: APRIL 9, 2025 4 PM** Applications must be delivered or postmarked by the due date and time listed here. Applications postmarked by the due date and time must be received no later than 5 business days from the due date.

In order to qualify, your household income must not exceed set income limits. For most units, the program income limit is 80% of the Area Median Income: 68,500 for a household of 1, \$78,250 for a household of 2, \$88,050 for a household of 3, \$97,800 for a household of 4, \$105,650 for a household of 5, and \$113,450 for a household of 6. Some units have a slightly lower program limit of 65% of the Area Median Income: \$57,590 for a household of 1, \$65,845 for a household of 2, and \$74,035 for a household of 3, \$82,290 for a household of 4, \$88,920 for a household of 5, and \$95,485 for a household of 6. Other requirements apply. Here are some of the units filled from this list: Brick Kiln Apartments, East Falmouth, Teaticket Highway Accessory Apartment, East Falmouth, Bell Tower Mall, Centerville, Cape Cod Times Building, Hyannis, Appleby Court, Apply Road, West Yarmouth, Cap'n Galdcliff, Route 28, South Yarmouth, Neptune Place, Neptune Lane, South Yarmouth, Wilfin Road, South Yarmouth, Windrift Cottages, West Yarmouth, Scattered Site Homes and Duplexes in Yarmouth, Swan River Road, West Dennis, Fjord Drive, South Dennis, Trotting Park Apartments, Main Street, West Dennis, Division Street, Dennisport

**Households with a rental voucher are encouraged to apply.  
This is an Equal Housing Opportunity.**

**APPLY NOW! This notice expires April 9, 2025.**

# **Cape Cod Ready Renter Program AFFORDABLE HOUSING LOTTERY**

**530 Main Street, West Dennis, MA**

**1 Bedroom Apartment**

**\$1,606 a month, utilities not included**



**Pick up an application at:**

Town of Dennis, Planning Dept., 685 Route 134, South Dennis, MA 02660 or at any Dennis Public Libraries

**To request an application contact:**

Mary Waygan, Ready Renter Program  
508-398-2231 x1275 mwaygan@yarmouth.ma.us

**Attend an Information Session:**

Feb 12, 2025 6:30 PM Dennis Police Station Training Room, 90 Bob Crowell Rd, South Dennis, MA  
This location is accessible. Call 508-398-2231 x 1275 by February 5, 2025 to request reasonable accommodations.

Feb 20, 2025 1 PM Yarmouth Town Hall Hearing Room

1146 Route 28, South Yarmouth, MA 02664

Remote access by Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85702838325>

This location is accessible. Call 508-398-2231 x 1275

by February 13, 2025 to request reasonable accommodations.

March 6, 2025 6 PM (Rescheduled from March 11, 2025)

Yarmouth Town Hall Room A

1146 Route 28, South Yarmouth, MA 02664

This location is accessible. Call 508-398-2231 x 1275

by February 27, 2025 to request reasonable accommodations.

Other affordable housing lotteries may be presented at these info sessions.

**Return/mail/ deliver completed application to:**

Plymouth Redevelopment Authority  
26 Court Street, Plymouth, MA 02360

**Application Due Date and Time: April 9, 2025 4 PM**

Applications must be delivered or postmarked by the due date and time listed here. Applications postmarked by the due date and time must be received no later than 5 business days from the due date.

Direct all questions about the application or apartment to:

Maggie Spade-Aguilar, Housing Coordinator, Town of Dennis, mspade-aguilar@town.dennis.ma.us

To be considered for this unit you must apply using the 530 Main Street Application and submit a completed application with all required documentation attached **by April 9, 2025, 4 PM to the Plymouth Redevelopment Authority, 26 Court Street, Plymouth, MA 02360.** To qualify households must earn no more than 80% of the Area Median Income. The current income limits are: \$68,500 for a household of 1, \$78,250 for a household of 2, and \$88,050 for a household of 3. Other requirements apply. Successful applicants shall be ranked by lottery. The lottery will consist of all qualified applications received by the due date listed in this advertisement. After the lottery, the lotteried list shall be used to select the tenant for the affordable rental unit. Qualified applicants not placed in the unit shall be placed on the wait list for future affordable housing vacancies at this property in the order from the lottery.

**Households with a rental voucher are encouraged to apply.  
This is an Equal Housing Opportunity.**

## **WASTEWATER IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT UPDATE**

Our Wastewater implementation team has continued to make progress on multiple fronts:

- With the Select Board's approval, on October 4, 2024 an application was submitted for the FY25 Natural Resource Nitrogen Sensitive Area (NRNSA) Grant program. This grant has been made available to Cape Cod Communities with NRNSA designated watersheds to fund Watershed Management Plans and Watershed Permits. The requested amount is for \$175,000 with a required Town fund matching amount of \$ 175,000. This work is a required part of our permitting process for the identification effluent recharge sites. A decision is anticipated to be made early February 2025. This would be the second phase of the \$50,000 award we received last year.
- On December 18, 2024, we hosted a Wastewater pump training at the Dennis Police Department for surrounding communities' wastewater operators. In addition to the valuable information on the pumps, this was also a fantastic opportunity for information sharing with other Cape communities implementing wastewater programs.
- We have fully executed our contracts for Owner's Project Manger services with Environmental Partners for the oversight of the WRRF construction and GHD for the oversight of the collection system construction.
- A favorable vote was made at the Clean Water Trust's January 2025 meeting approving the funding for the portion of the award for Phase 1
- The Town is in receipt of a Restricted Project Approval Certificate from MassDEP for the Town's State Revolving Fund (SRF) loan for construction of the Phase 1 Water Resource Recovery Facility (WRRF) and collection system from the Department of Environmental Protection. Final approval will allow us to award the construction contracts and commence work. We are anticipating approval to award the WRRF contract any day.
- The Town and CDM Smith continue to coordinate with MassDOT to obtain Highway Access Permits for Contract Nos. 3 and 4 (Contract No. 2 permit has been issued). The MassDOT permit is required to gain the SRF approval for the contract award for the collection system construction.

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- On January 14, 2025, representatives of CDM Smith, GHD, and Town Officials met with representatives of the Dennis Water District to review the results of the ongoing effluent recharge site screening efforts, conclusions and next steps. The meeting was constructive. It was agreed upon to look at the process holistically to protect our potable water and recharge our aquifers with the highly treated effluent as one goal. This holistic approach best serves the people of Dennis as a whole. The next step includes both Town's and the Water District's consulting modelers to collaborate to achieve this goal.
  - The Town, the Water District, CDM Smith and GHD have meet regularly with MassDEP staff to discuss effluent recharge permitting issues and further evaluation of potential recharge sites. These meeting were paused temporarily and are set to resume again next month. The focus will now be the permitting of recharge at the Bob Crowell Road site.
  - FY26 we will see the Wastewater operational budget and Enterprise Fund as a stand-alone budget request. We are also at the point to reconvene the financial cost recovery sub-group to begin developing a plan for Entrance Fees and a billing rate structure.
  - Next steps will also include working with the Board of Health and the Select Board (Sewer Commissioners) to complete the sewer regulations.

We are eagerly awaiting the final approvals from MassDOT and MassDEP to allow us to award our construction contracts. The contractors have already initiated the process to obtain local building permits. Site work for the WRRF plant could start late February with the collection system not far behind.

Once the collection system contracts commence, we will be creating a robust web page specifically to inform our residents of project status, anticipated construction schedule and areas to expect driving delays and detours. We are looking forward to the transitional phase from funding, contracting and permitting to actual construction.

### **NEXT MEETING DATES OF THE DENNIS SELECT BOARD**

The Dennis Select Board will meet on February 11, 2025 for regularly scheduled business. Upcoming meeting dates of the Select Board can be found on the [Town of Dennis website here](#).

All are welcome to attend and participate in our open and public meetings. The agenda for each meeting is posted 48 business hours prior to the scheduled meeting time and can be accessed through the Select Board's webpage or the Town calendar webpage.

Attend in-person at the Town Hall, Stone Meeting Room. Or for alternative public access join the meeting online via zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8780036813> or participate by phone by dialing 1-646-558-8656 and entering Conference ID: 878-003-6813

### **JOIN THE TEAM! THE TOWN OF DENNIS IS HIRING**

Are you or someone you know looking for work? The Town of Dennis is hiring! Several full and part-time positions available. Apply and view current job openings [here](#).

Thank you and be well, everyone!

Elizabeth C. Sullivan, Town Administrator