

# *Users Guide to the Budget Process*

Prepared by the Hopkinton School Board  
December 9, 2008

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## **Foreword**

The Hopkinton School Board welcomes community participation as we constantly look to improve our schools to meet the needs of our community. While the Board's budget deliberations generally occur in November and December, consideration of what programs and services to offer in our school system is an ongoing process. School Board meetings are open to the public and typically take place on the first and third Tuesdays each month at Maple Street School. Meeting schedules, agendas, and minutes as well as audio recordings are available on the District web site [www.hopkintonschools.org](http://www.hopkintonschools.org) and at the SAU office.

School Board members represent community interest in the operations of the Hopkinton School District. Please understand the primary purpose for School Board meetings is to allow your Board members to discuss and take action on business pertaining to the Hopkinton School District. It is also important for School Board members to know what is important to you. Most meetings provide at least one opportunity for public comment so that all members of the Board can hear what is important to you. You can also contact Board members at [schoolboard@hopkintonschools.org](mailto:schoolboard@hopkintonschools.org). Individual Board member email addresses are listed on the District's website. Your Board members are also accessible other ways too, for instance by phone, and of course just about anytime we see each other around Town.

# 2008-09 Calendar of Budget Meetings

Please check Town and District calendars to confirm specific times and locations.

For Budget Committee meetings: <http://www.hopkinton-nh.gov/>

For School Board meetings: <http://www.hopkintonschools.org/>

Date	Time	Day of Week	Schedule*	Meeting	Meeting Location
6-Oct-08		Monday	Capital Budget Approval	CIP Committee	
6-Oct-08		Monday	Submission of Budgets by Town Directors to Selectmen		
13-Oct-08	9:00 p.m.	Monday	Town Clerk, Finance, Personnel, Debt, Principal, Cemetary, Planning, Property Liability	Selectmen	Town Hall
20-Oct-08	5:30 p.m.	Monday	Human services, Recreation, Highway Dept, Buildings and Grounds, Transfer Station, Solid Waste, Sewer	Selectmen	Town Hall
22-Oct-08	6:30 p.m.	Wednesday	Budget Committee Meeting-Timeline set		Town Hall
27-Oct-08	5:30 p.m.	Monday	Library, Ambulance, Fire, Police, Emergency Mgmt, Animal Control, Executive, Street Lighting, Patriotic, Assessing, Legal, Community Health, Economic Development, Conservation Commission	Selectmen	Town Hall
12-Nov-08	6:30 p.m.	Wednesday	Budget Committee Meeting	Budget Committee	Town Hall
17-Nov-08	5:30 p.m.	Monday	Selectmen Budget Deliberations	Selectmen	Town Hall
18-Nov-08	6:30 p.m.	Tuesday	School Budget meeting with School Board - First Meeting	School Board	Maple Street
24-Nov-08	5:30 p.m.	Monday	Selectmen Budget Deliberations	Selectmen	Town Hall
25-Nov-08	6:30 p.m.	Tuesday	Budget Committee Meeting	Budget Committee	Town Hall
1-Dec-08	5:30 p.m.	Monday	Selectmen Budget Deliberations	Selectmen	Town Hall
2-Dec-08	6:30 p.m.	Tuesday	School Budget meeting with School Board - Second Meeting	School Board	Maple Street
9-Dec-08	6:30 p.m.	Tuesday	School Board Budget Workgroup meeting	School Board	Maple Street
10-Dec-08	6:30 p.m.	Wednesday	Review of Meetings by Budget Committee Members	Budget Committee	Town Hall
16-Dec-08	6:30 p.m.	Tuesday	School Board Vote on School Budget	School Board	Maple Street
22-Dec-08	5:30 p.m.	Monday	Town Selectmen Vote on Town Budget	Selectmen	Town Hall
2-Jan-09		Friday	1st Day of Bond Hearing Notice		
7-Jan-09	6:30 p.m.	Wednesday	School Budget Presentation to Budget Committee	Budget Committee	Town Hall
14-Jan-09	6:30 p.m.	Wednesday	Town of Hopkinton, Hopkinton Village Precinct, Contoocook Village Precinct and Library Budget Presentation to Budget Committee	Budget Committee	Town Hall
21-Jan-09	6:30 p.m.	Wednesday	Review of All Budget and Q&A	Budget Committee	Town Hall
28-Jan-09	6:30 p.m.	Wednesday	Budget Committee Deliberations	Budget Committee	Town Hall
3-Feb-09		Tuesday	Petitioned Warrant Articles-Town		
4-Feb-09	6:30 p.m.	Wednesday	Review of Public Hearing Presentation	Budget Committee	Town Hall
5-Feb-09		Thursday	Petitioned Warrant Articles-School		Town Hall
5-Feb-09	6:30 p.m.	Thursday	Public Hearing on All Town Budgets	Budget Committee	High School
9-Feb-09		Monday	Hold Special Revenue Fund Hearings		
11-Feb-09	6:30 p.m.	Wednesday	Final Budget Committee Deliberations	Budget Committee	Town Hall
13-Feb-09		Friday	Last Day for Budget Committee to Deliver Budget and Warrant Article recommendations		
16-Feb-08		Monday	Last Day to post notice of bond hearing		
7-Mar-09	9:00 a.m	Saturday	School District Meeting	School Board	High School
14-Mar-09	9:00 a.m	Saturday	Town Meeting	Selectmen	High School

# First Stop: School Board's Budget Process

Throughout the year, the School Board considers programs and services that can impact budgets. Discussions about the curriculum, school lunch program, transportation, fuel purchases, teacher contracts, and sports programs, just to name a few, all have potential fiscal impact. Each School Board meeting provides insight into the direction of the District, Board initiatives and priorities. It also provides opportunities for members of the public to let Board members know what is important.

Focused work on the budget starts over the summer some twelve to twenty-four months before the final dollars will be spent. The budget work ends when a budget is approved by the voters on the floor of the School District meeting in early March. School Board meetings provide the opportunity for members of the Board and the public to learn about the proposed budget. Much of the Board's budget process involves understanding the costs of the educational programs and services being provided. The Board also hears about sources of revenue to pay for these programs. The Board's greatest responsibility is to present and defend a responsible budget that wins support from the voters at the District Meeting.

## STEP 1 – Over the Summer

The Superintendent meets with building Principals and other district staff and faculty to consider programs and services.

## STEP 2 – Early October

Superintendent collects budget requests from Principals and other members of the Leadership Team, including the Technology Director, Business Administrator, and Director of Student Services.

## STEP 3 – October and November

The Superintendent meets with the Leadership Team to work out a budget to propose to the School Board.

## STEP 4 – School Board meeting in late November

The Superintendent presents a proposed budget to the School Board. The Board asks questions and provides any guidance as necessary.

## STEP 5 – School Board meetings in December

The Board meets with the Superintendent and Leadership Team to analyze the proposed budget and understand the fiscal impact of programs and services. The Board may ask the administration to do some "what if" analysis; such as what would the impact be if a certain sum of money were cut from the budget. The Board may host additional "School Board Budget Workshops" as necessary. At its final meeting in December, the Board will adopt a responsible budget that provides for the best education the town can afford.

## Next Stop: the Budget Committee

The School Board's budget is now sent to the Hopkinton Budget Committee. Under New Hampshire statute, in Towns with a Budget Committee, the Budget Committee is charged to prepare the budget as required by the State of New Hampshire, and hold a public hearing before the budget is presented to the voters at the School District meeting. The duties and authority of the Budget Committee are spelled out in New Hampshire statutes and are available online at <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/III/32/32-16.htm>.

The Budget Committee meets several times throughout the year, but the frequency of meetings increases during budget season. Budget Committee meetings are open to the public. While the Budget Committee may not make arbitrary decisions, such as elimination of specific educational programs, it can provide guidance to the School Board with respect to total spending.

The Budget Committee will meet at the Town Hall several times in January and February to consider the School Board's budget. These meetings are open to the public. *Prior to making its final recommendations, the Budget Committee will hold a public hearing in early February at the High School. It is important for members of the public to come to this hearing and let the Budget Committee know what is important.* The Budget Committee can ultimately recommend a budget not supported by your School Board.

Please refer to the budget meeting calendar for specific times and locations.

## Final Stop: Your Vote at the District Meeting

The budget that appears on the warrant for the School District meeting is the budget that has been moved forward by the Budget Committee. It may or may not be the budget as recommended by your School Board.

On the floor of the meeting there will be much discussion and many questions. There also may be motions to add money to the budget or cut money away from the budget. During the meeting, the School Board and administration will be prepared to answer questions regarding the budget, contracts, and other warrant articles. They will also be prepared to answer questions on the potential impacts that proposed changes to those items may have on the educational programs and services provided in the District.

Your School Board is committed to build and defend a responsible budget to meet the educational needs of our community. In arriving at a responsible budget, the School Board takes into consideration much input from our educational leaders and members of the community. In the final analysis, it is your vote that sets the amount of money the School District can spend.

Please be sure to mark your calendars now. The District Meeting is March 7<sup>th</sup>.

## Some More Important Dates

The Hopkinton School Board appreciates the support and feedback we have received from the community thus far this year.

The Board feels that many well informed voices of the community are more effective than a few and invite all from the community to attend the School Board and Budget Committee meetings and to express your ideas and concerns.

### School Board Budget Workshop

Tuesday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. at Maple Street School

Agenda: The School Board will be reviewing at the detailed level, the Superintendent's Proposed 09/10 Budget. The public is invited to attend and listen.

### Hopkinton Budget Committee Meeting

Wednesday, December 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Hall

Agenda: Discussion of School Board's budget work in progress

### School Board Meeting

Tuesday, December 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. at Maple Street School

Agenda: Regular business including School Board Approval of District Budget to be submitted to Town's Budget Committee for review.

### Hopkinton Budget Committee Meeting

Wednesday, January 7<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Hall

Agenda: Deliberation of the School District budget

### Hopkinton Budget Committee Public Hearing

Thursday, February 5<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. in the High School Auditorium

Agenda: Presentation of budgets and public feedback

### Hopkinton Budget Committee Meeting

Wednesday, February 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Hall

Agenda: Finalize School District's 2009-2010 budget to appear on the Warrant

### School District Meeting

Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. at Hopkinton High School

Agenda: Voters consider warrant articles including the operating budget and collective bargaining agreements

### Town and School District Elections and Ballot articles

Tuesday, March 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 a.m. at Hopkinton High School

Agenda: Elections for Town and School Board seats

# School Board FAQs

*Why can't we ask questions during the School Board meeting?*

Good question... The Board needs time to conduct District business. The only time we get to do this is during a School Board meeting. Specific questions are usually best addressed by asking a teacher, a building Principal, or the Superintendent. Asking an individual Board member is okay too and often times we'll have to go find the answer and get back to you. But the time we have around the table is limited and during public comment we need to hear about what's important to you.

*So if I can't ask questions, why have public comment?*

Often, a comment from a member of the public will yield a discussion by the Board at a future meeting. We need to know about your concerns and ideas so we can establish priorities and initiatives for the District.

*What if I have a question about something I heard during the meeting?*

If you aren't sure about something you think you heard during the meeting, it makes sense to ask a clarifying question. However, please try to wait until the appropriate time in the agenda.

*Why does the Board conduct non-public meetings?*

Under New Hampshire's "Right to Know" law, public boards must conduct business during a meeting open to the public unless the business involves specific personnel or contracts. When the Board needs to discuss such things, it does so in a non-public session pursuant to specific provisions of the "Right to Know" law.

*Does the School Board use email?*

Yes, but not to discuss or conduct District business. You can reach all Board members at [schoolboard@hopkintonschools.org](mailto:schoolboard@hopkintonschools.org) or individual Board members at [name@hopkintonschools.org](mailto:name@hopkintonschools.org) where name is the first initial followed by the last name, for example [dluneau@hopkintonschools.org](mailto:dluneau@hopkintonschools.org).

*Why does the Board meet around a table?*

It comes down to the fact that the School Board meeting is a board meeting, and it's helpful for members to face each other around a table as we discuss and take action on District business. From time to time the Board will hold a community forum and these are typically done in a larger setting with Board members facing the public.

*Why doesn't the Board meet during the day or on weekends?*

It's rare that the Board will hold a daytime or weekend meeting. Most Board members have other obligations during days and weekends, plus evening meetings tend to be more convenient for members of the public to attend.

*What's a good site to use for my web browser's home page?*

There's a lot going on in the schools, from basketball games to robot design to the incredible Celebration of the Arts. Find out about what's going on at <http://www.hopkintonschools.org/calendars/month.php>