



## Town of Ashland, *Office of the Select Board*

**SELECT BOARD MEETING (HYBRID)  
January 7, 2026 – 7:00 PM  
Town Hall, 101 Main Street, Ashland, MA**

Present at the meeting were: Joseph Magnani (Chair), Claudia Bennett, Yolanda Greaves, Makeda Keegan, and Brandi Kinsman. Also in attendance were Town Manager Michael Herbert, Assistant Town Manager Katherine Bird, and Executive Assistant Susan Robie.

### **1. Call Meeting to Order**

Mr. Magnani called the January 7, 2026 meeting to order at 7:17 PM; he announced that the meeting was being recorded and broadcast live by WACA-TV and livestreamed on Facebook. Remote participation is available using the Zoom Video Conferencing platform. Any disruption with the Video Conferencing Platform will result in the platform being shut down. In the event of a disruption, broadcasting will continue on WACA-TV and livestreamed on Facebook.

Mr. Magnani recognized the retirement of Ed Burman from the Wayland Police Department; Ms. Bennett thanked Mr. Burman for all of his efforts during Covid to keep Ashland Schools open and safe.

### **2. Citizen's Participation**

None.

### **3. Scheduled Appointments**

#### **a. Rajit Gupta, Public Health Director and Dr. Zachary - Discuss Nicotine-Free Generation Proposal Jointly with the Board of Health.**

Dr. Zachary Rich discussed his background as a lung and critical care physician; he shared a slide presentation that overviewed the Nicotine-Free Generation policies.

**What:** Policies target those born after a certain birthday, rather than age. It has been a global effort, with Brookline becoming first to implement the policies in 2020. There are currently 21 communities in Massachusetts that have passed Nicotine-Free Generation. Dr. Rich discussed this being a bipartisan issue, much of this work stems from the Tobacco-21 work; which Ashland was a leader in.

**Why:** 70% of people wish they never started. 90% of adults started by age 18. Dr. Rich discussed the impact on school-aged children; he encouraged having a forum with high school students in attendance.

**How:** Dr. Rich shared proposed language from the Public Health Advocacy for creating a Nicotine-Free Generation policy for Ashland.

Ms. Kinsman noted that there is a 21+ age restriction before anyone can purchase tobacco products in Ashland. It becomes a slippery slope when telling adults what they can and cannot do; she expressed concern

that it will not dissuade people from using tobacco products, only from purchasing it in the Town, which will hurt Ashland's business owners. She would prefer the State to take action, not town-by-town implementation.

Ms. Bennett expressed concern with children who are exposed to tobacco use in schools, who worry about their friends who are vaping. Ms. Bennett inquired as to the impact on businesses who have implemented this policy; Dr. Rich noted that in Brookline there are no retailers who have had to shut down their stores.

Ms. Keegan noted it is an interesting proposal but believes the net effect makes it impossible for people of legal age to make a choice to smoke or not; she expressed concern with the implementation, particularly the impacts to small business owners; Ms. Keegan inquired, and Dr. Rich responded, that they are having similar conversations with the surrounding towns; many towns take a wait and see approach to see what their neighboring towns are doing.

Ms. Greaves recognized Ashland's leadership role in passing Tobacco-21 laws, and voting to not allow marijuana; she would be interested in obtaining more information regarding what other communities are doing.

Professor Katharine Silbaugh of Brookline, MA, noted that it was not until 151 towns passed Tobacco-21 before the State acted and implemented it.

Mr. Magnani discussed his career as a Police Officer and his experience dealing with youth issues; Ms. Keegan would like to hear from the youth in Town as they are the ones being impacted; Mr. Magnani agreed and stated that he will send an invitation up to the High School.

Alex Wetheral, is a convenience store owner in Sherborn, MA, and was in attendance tonight to lend support to his peer retailers in Ashland. Mr. Wetheral spoke of the accelerating decline in tobacco sales. He feels that NFG demonizes retailers and stated that less than 5% of Massachusetts Towns have implemented this policy.

Steven Helfer, Cambridge resident, stated that he is a part of Cambridge Citizens for Smokers Rights; and stated that according to the CDC and FDA, the teenage smoking rate is the lowest it has been on record, it is a form of total prohibition over time.

Rick Lopez, Member of the Reading Board of Health, discussed passing NFG in June 2024 after a two-hour hearing. They received 200 emails, and pros and cons communications from residents, it was a very active process which they decided to move forward; he noted that no retailers have gone out of business. Mr. Lopez said they have an 8-12% of students use nicotine products in Reading; any decline in use would be helpful.

Paul Kendall, resident, discussed the need to be careful when implementing policies, not to restrict freedoms and choices; he stated that when it comes to public health, smoking is one of the reasons why our health care system is strained, which impacts us all. Mr. Kendall encouraged the Boards to continue the conversation, to seek more information; to make a sound decision.

Ken Elstein, Member of the Belchertown Board of Health, discussed passing NFG one year ago; he noted the retailers have adapted. Mr. Elstein noted that Amherst is the latest community to pass NFG.

John Byrnes, Ashland Board of Health Vice Chair, explained that during their December 16<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Board Members agreed that this is more of a personal health / personal choice issue; it is interesting to hear from Members of other Health Boards from around the State. Mr. Byrnes stated that the Board felt this is

more of a personal choice issue, and for it to have a true democratic process, would be through a Citizens Petition, and ultimately to Town Meeting, to let the residents vote on it. If it were to pass, the Board of Health would implement the measures that would need to be put in place.

Ms. Kinsman agreed, noting she may not be comfortable with making that decision for the entire community without having the community being able to weigh in on it.

Ed Burman, Ashland Board of Health Chair, explained that the Board discussed this in length, and noted that the Members did not feel it should be left to the five Board Members to make this kind of decision for the whole Town; therefore, they asked that the Health Director, Rajit Gupta, bring it to the Town Manager, to discuss with the Select Board.

Mr. Magnani inquired as to the Board of Health's availability for a public forum; Mr. Burman agreed they can be available. Mr. Magnani inquired, and Dr. Rich responded, that of the 21 communities that have passed this, 19 were passed by Boards of Health.

Susan Jensen, resident, discussed her personal experience with cigarettes and tobacco, and the impact it had on her life; she feels this is a public health issue under the Board of Health's purview.

Amy Turncliff, resident, public health policy advocate, spoke in favor of the NFG policy and discussed the harmful effects of nicotine, and the tobacco industry's development of addictive products that appeal to young people who become lifelong customers; she believes this policy will impact adolescent perceptions in a positive way.

Scott Francis, resident, stated he works for MOAR (Massachusetts Organization for Addiction Recovery) which is in support of the Nicotine-Free Generation legislation; he said of all the addictions, tobacco is the most difficult to overcome. Mr. Francis discussed the negative impacts of tobacco use, and second-hand smoke.

Chuck Lidz, resident, explained how he has been impacted personally by tobacco use by others.

Jonathan Leopold, Cambridge, Smokers' Rights volunteer, stated that he finds smoking enjoyable.

Mr. Magnani said this will be taken under advisement; he does not disagree with it being brought to Town Meeting and having the people vote on it; Ms. Greaves recommended the Board of Health hold a public forum, at a time where high school and middle school students, and others who may be impacted by this, may attend.

*b. Rob Scherer – Discuss creation of a sub-committee to craft a resolution regarding Elon Musk Companies.*

Mr. Magnani explained that Rob Scherer is here representing a group of individuals who are proposing the creation of a subcommittee regarding Elon Musk.

Mr. Scherer explained that their ad hoc citizens group had proposed a Citizen's Petition at Special Town Meeting regarding the Town not doing business with Elon Musk, not using the X platform, and writing a letter to the Middlesex County Board of Retirement regarding investments. They are here tonight to discuss the formation of a subcommittee to come up with a set of recommendations.

Mr. Magnani discussed being a member of the Middlesex County Board of Retirement, and noted he would need to recuse himself from any and all of those discussions. Mr. Scherer noted being a member of the State Retirement System; Ms. Bennett noted getting clarification on the ethics, as it could affect her as well. Ms. Keegan suggested a working group to look at, not an individual, but rather guidelines around areas such as purchasing. Ms. Greaves noted that people are in business to be profitable, we want them to be profitable so they can donate that money to nonprofits. What we can look at is ethical procurement. Ms. Kinsman discussed the Select Board and Town Management Guiding Values and Principles; they may be able to include in there, their guiding principles and include other specific things like procurement and how taxpayer dollars are spent.

Mr. Scherer stated he wants to focus on Elon Musk and billionaires; he asked that two Select Board Members be appointed to a subcommittee. Susan Jensen said their hope is to see meaningful progress.

Mr. Magnani stated they will need to speak with Town Counsel to ensure they stay within the guidelines, and policies that are going to be worked on; they cannot target individuals, only ideologies, and try to change it for the betterment of everyone. Mr. Herbert agreed that there needs to be a conversation with Town Counsel. Mr. Herbert suggested one Member could be the point person for the group; if there were two, they would need to be formally appointed, it would become a subcommittee, and would be subject to the Open Meeting Law. Ms. Keegan stated she would prefer a subcommittee rather than a working group; a subcommittee will allow more transparency. Board Members agreed to vote on this at the next meeting, and if approved, appoint subcommittee Members.

#### **4. Old/New Business**

##### **a. Vote to Open the Annual Town Meeting Warrant.**

Ms. Bird reviewed the Warrant guidance and schedule.

- February 27<sup>th</sup>: Deadline for the Notice of Intent to submit proposed Articles.
- February 27<sup>th</sup> through April 24<sup>th</sup>: Select Board presentations and discussions.
- February 28<sup>th</sup> through April 24<sup>th</sup>: Any public hearings will be held.
- March 23<sup>rd</sup>: Deadline for finalized proposed Articles.
- April 1<sup>st</sup>: The Board may vote and close the Warrant; the Warrant can be posted.
- April 27<sup>th</sup>: The Board will receive Finance Committee recommendations.
- April 29<sup>th</sup>: The Warrant will be posted.
- May 6<sup>th</sup>: Annual Town Meeting will be held.

Ms. Greaves inquired as to whether they can get Finance Committee recommendations sooner, possibly by April 22<sup>nd</sup>, so that it could possibly be posted a week earlier; the clearer and sooner the community can see the Warrant, the better. Ms. Bird noted her goal is to have it posted early; Mr. Herbert noted that once the Warrant is posted, changes cannot be made.

**Motion:** Ms. Greaves motioned to open the Annual Town Meeting based on the current guidelines, this will be for the Annual Town Meeting happening on May 6, 2026; the motion was seconded by Ms. Kinsman.

**Vote:** 5-0-0. Motion approved.

*b. Discuss the Project Matrix.*

Downtown: Mr. Herbert reported they are still in the process of making those underground connections, working with Daigle Electric and Eversource. Eversource has informed us that as soon as those connections are made, Verizon Comcast should be ready to start taking the wires down, and then the poles will immediately start coming down. The holes will be filled in with concrete or brick, and they will do some power washing, before a final unveiling.

Pond Street: Mr. Herbert reported that they found that some substandard concrete had been used on one of the sidewalks, they will be redoing that in the Spring. There is some utility pole work remaining, as well as old streetlights, signs, manholes, and other adjustments. Mr. Magnani inquired as to a letter received regarding snow removal of the sidewalks, whose responsibility it is. Mr. Herbert noted that the State is responsible but the Town has been picking up the slack; Mr. Herbert will inquire as to a reimbursement from the State.

Mr. Herbert reported that the Middle School Field Lighting Project has been completed; some of the traffic-calming measures planned, including street signs, have been completed; sidewalk plan designs on a section of Cedar Street have been completed, and for High Street as well. The Union Street/Fountain Street underground work has been completed. Mr. Herbert noted they are still in the engineering/design phase for the Cordaville Road bridge.

Ashland Arboretum is in great shape; framing will soon be starting at the Warren Barn. The Dog Park is moving along, there were some challenging aspects of that; Beth Reynolds has been doing a great job working on those issues.

*c. Wednesday February 4, 2026 - Open Meeting Law Training from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm.*

Mr. Magnani reminded all about the Open Meeting Law Training, which will be held in-person and online, on Wednesday, February 4<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM.

*d. Update on 40B Projects.*

10-60 Main Street: Mr. Herbert reported that this project is expected to be closed out at the ZBA meeting this coming Tuesday; some draft conditions have been completed, but there are still some questions on some of the conditions within the Decision. They are anticipating filing with Conservation soon. Once the ZBA closes their hearing and issues a Decision, and there is no appeal, it would be clear to go. If there is an appeal by the applicant or the Town, or an outside party, that process would go to the Housing Appeals Court, as an administrative procedure. The Conservation Commission will be hearing the applicant in relation to the Wetlands Protection Act, not the Town Bylaw.

61 Waverly Street: The applicant has their Decision from the ZBA, and has filed with the Conservation Commission; the Conservation Commission and DEP have very serious concerns with their stormwater system due to the degraded condition of the culvert on Waverly Street, they have asked that they redesign it.

55 West Union Street: This project also has significant concerns from the Conservation Commission, as well as DPW and DEP; one issue is the location of the sewer line, they want to do a significant amount of work and install it very deep, due to easements on the property.

## 5. Consent Agenda

- a. Accept the Regular Session Minutes from December 3, 2025.
- b. Notification of the Town Managers Appointment of Jeffrey Tucci, Local Building Inspector in the Department of Inspectional Services with a request to waive the 15-day waiting period.
- c. Notification of the Town Managers Appointment of Hannah Bowlby, Recreation Administrative Assistant with a request to waive the 15-day waiting period.
- d. Appoint Elizabeth Byrnes to the Stormwater Advisory Committee with a term that will expire on August 31, 2026.
- e. Approve the Parade Permit Request from the Boston Athletic Association for the 130<sup>th</sup> Boston Marathon to be held on Monday April 20, 2026.
- f. Accept the Donation from GreenUp Ashland to the Sustainability Department in the amount of 466.00 to purchase holiday light recycling bins.
- g. Accept the Emergency Medical Dispatch Grant in the amount of \$22,107.40 for training.
- h. Accept the Emergency Medical Dispatch Grant in the amount of \$55,758.00 for cost associated with 911 dispatching.
- i. Accept the Emergency Medical Dispatch Grant in the amount of \$25,000.00 for cost associated with Certified EMD Resources.
- j. Accepted the revised BAA Grant and Select Board Community Grant Policy to include a 12-Month Sunsetting Clause.
- k. Release \$4,041.70 in Ashland Day Funds to the Ashland Day Committee.

**Motion:** Ms. Greaves motioned to approve the Consent Agenda as presented; the motion was seconded by Ms. Kinsman.

**Vote:** 5-0-0. Motion approved.

**Motion:** Ms. Greaves motioned to go past 10:00 PM; the motion was seconded by Ms. Kinsman.

**Vote:** 5-0-0. Motion approved.

## 6. Town Manager Report

### a. Budget Update - Discuss Next Tri-Board Meeting.

Mr. Herbert reported that potential dates for the next Tri-Board meeting have been sent out; we need to figure out if there are any refinements the Board would want to make in regards to Option #3. Jim Adams is looking at how they can restructure the budget to make it more sustainable moving forward, and it is an opportunity for us to really look for efficiencies and zero-base our budget, as he explained to Department heads today. Mr. Herbert noted that he will be looking at having a budget meeting with the Department heads and will invite the Select Board, and Finance Committee. It may be a longer meeting and more of a question-and-answer format; he has asked Department heads to be ready to speak on the implications of a level-funded budget.

Board Members discussed the communication aspect, the importance of public forums, allowing time for the community to ask questions, and showing quantifiable measures. Mr. Herbert noted the importance of understanding the goals, with transparency being the ultimate aim; he expressed concern that some members of the community feel intimidated to take a certain position in a public forum, that they may be afraid of being targeted online or in some other way; Board Members agreed it is important to establish ground rules to ensure

that people feel safe and know that they can express their opinions in a civil way. Board Members discussed submitting comments and concerns anonymously. Ms. Kinsman noted that it is important for clarity surrounding the budget, to show the breakdowns (cost of insurance, retirement, what employees are doing to provide services to the community, how much is negotiable).

*b. Update on State Aide.*

Mr. Herbert reported that the State had their consensus revenue hearing, they are looking at projections for 2027 for tax collections to be 1.7% to 3.1% more, which does fall in our projections, a potential 2% increase over last year. GIC is looking at an 11% increase. Mr. Herbert will do one round of overall budget revisions at the end of January when the Governor's budget comes out, and see where we are with GIC, and then we will lock that in.

*c. MMA Conference*

Mr. Herbert reported the MMA Conference coming up in a couple of weeks, which some Board Members have registered for; MMA has asked that he assist in the setting up of the affinity meeting for MetroWest at the Conference.

**7. Board Reports**

Yolanda Greaves: Ms. Greaves discussed an upcoming MetroWest Regional Collaborative Meeting on January 15<sup>th</sup>, and will attend the MMA Conference. Ms. Greaves is looking to set up a meeting regarding the Upper Charles Trail.

Makeda Keegan: Ms. Keegan discussed attending Illuminate Ashland, and the Holiday Stroll; it was beautiful to participate in those events. It was great to see many local shoppers. Ms. Keegan attended a Historical Commission meeting last month, they are in the process of redrawing their map for Downtown Historical District.

Claudia Bennett: Ms. Bennett agreed Illuminate Ashland was very special; she noted being very honored to attend the Employees Recognition Luncheon, it was nice to see the employees come out together and be recognized.

Brandi Kinsman: Ms. Kinsman will be attending a Sustainability Committee meeting tomorrow; she has reached out as Select Board liaison to ZBA, Conservation, and Sustainability. The Committees seem happy to see that we are taking this initiative to connect. Ms. Kinsman acknowledged the release of \$4,000 from the Select Board Gift Account to the Ashland Day Committee; it is great that they were able to put on Ashland Day, and still have \$4,000 to kick off this upcoming year. Ms. Kinsman expressed her gratitude to Diane Mortensen, Cindy Cincotta, and Stephanie Pemberton, who came through in a great way with a compressed time schedule, they were fantastic to work with. Ms. Kinsman noted that Illuminate Ashland was amazing.

Joseph Magnani: Mr. Magnani discussed having the opportunity to sit in with the Affordable Housing Trust during the lottery for the Habitat for Humanity house at 487 Main Street. There were four applicants that met the criteria; the selection was made and hopefully we will hear next week who the individuals were. Mr. Magnani enjoyed being Santa during the Ride around Town; he loved to see the faces of the people. Mr. Magnani and Ms. Bennett discussed meeting with the representative from the Donnelly Property who was signing the Deed over to the Town.

Board Members agreed it was a great and busy year.

**8. Next Select Board Meeting – January 21, 2026.**

**9. Adjournment.**

Motion: Ms. Greaves motioned to adjourn; the motion was seconded by Ms. Kinsman.

Vote: 5-0-0. Motion approved.

The motion adjourned at 10:15 PM.

**Documents Reviewed during the January 7, 2025 meeting:**

- House Pending Legislation, Senate Pending Legislation, NFG
- Sub-committee Proposal, Elon Musk
- 2026 Town Meeting Warrant Guidance
- Draft Meeting Minutes, December 3, 2025
- Recommendation of Elizabeth Byrnes, Stormwater Advisory Committee
- Parade Permit Request from the BAA
- GreenUp Ashland Donation to Sustainability Department
- Emergency Medical Dispatch Grants for: Training, 9-1-1 Dispatching, and, Certified EMD Resources
- Revised BAA Grant and Select Board Community Grant Policy
- Ashland Day Funds – Spreadsheet

November 18, 2025

Select Board  
Ashland Town Hall  
101 Main St,  
Ashland, MA 01721

Board of Health  
Ashland Town Hall  
101 Main St,  
Ashland, MA 01721

Dear Members of the Ashland Select Board, and Ashland Board of Health,

Some municipalities in Massachusetts are contemplating the adoption of “Nicotine Free Generation” (NFG) regulations to ban the sale of all nicotine products locally. We ask that you reject any attempts to adopt this regulation. Such a policy undemocratically infringes on 21-plus adults in your community and fails to effectively impact youth access to age-restricted products.

Eliminating youth access to age restricted products is a goal retailers share with health officials and NFG proposals, by design, drive nicotine products into the illicit, unregulated market. Removing these legal adult products from regulated environments makes them more, not less, attractive to youth who will seek to obtain such products illegally.

The proposed NFG changes to local tobacco regulations typically state:

“Prohibition of Sales – No person, firm, corporation, establishment, or agency shall sell tobacco or e-cigarette products to anyone born on or after 1/1/2004. Any person, firm, corporation, establishment, or agency who or which shall violate any provisions of this regulation and upon written notification shall be fined and suspended in accordance to the schedule set forth under the Regulation of the Board of Health Restricting the Sale of Tobacco Products.”

Proponents of NFG claim the policy is intended to protect youth by banning sales, but not access to nicotine products for adults 21 years of age or older. NFG has nothing to do with minors under the age of 21. The adoption of the above or similar language would not reduce youth access to nicotine products in your community but rather would prevent 21-plus adults from purchasing nicotine products just as they currently do alcohol, cannabis, lottery or engage in sports wagering according to the rights granted by the state to those age 21 or older.

It is important to understand why NFG regulation is unnecessary and inappropriate for 21-plus adults, local retailers, and your community:

- Youth access and use of nicotine should be a primary concern when considering novel nicotine regulations. NFG does nothing to prevent access to nicotine for minors under the age of 21.

- Significant concerns about the creation of a “massive,” unregulated illicit market with potentially dangerous products, along with concerns about the loss of tax revenue, led New Zealand to repeal a briefly adopted ban of nicotine products.
- Youth and legal aged adults will continue to find ways to acquire nicotine products just as they did with alcohol during prohibition, and when cannabis was illegal.
- Both retailers and local and state economies will suffer financially as this NFG policy is effectively a de facto prohibition of the product.

**Licensed retailers responsibly age verify all regulated nicotine sales by law.**

NFG policy is overreaching and not only fails in its attempt to regulate nicotine use, but it is also destructive to the valuations of local businesses that have been built over many years and provide a critical resource for your community. The impact of the regulations will result in harm to local stores, their families, and the local and state economy. Claims that the sunset nature of the policy is “virtuous” demonstrates a complete lack of knowledge and empathy. It is not virtuous, but punishing, since the moment this policy is passed, the value of businesses with a license to sell nicotine products will be destroyed.

We ask both now and in the future that you weigh any similar proposals with sensibility, facts, and fairness in mind.

**Adulthood is the ability to make legal choices, despite others’ personal morals.**

Many adults choose to responsibly use nicotine products. Your community should maintain a legal way for these adults to obtain them in a regulated environment subject to unannounced inspections.

Some adults choose to use nicotine in its many forms, for many personal reasons, just as they use alcohol and marijuana or wager on sports. The rights and freedoms of adults to make decisions about their individual lives is a key tenet of our democracy.

Your community has historically displayed the wisdom of keeping adult products in regulated and permitted stores and off the streets. Yet, NFG policies represent a tipping point in your community where NFG proponents target all nicotine products as morally wrong, while other adult products that have similarly been deemed harmful remain acceptable. This is bad governance and policy making that tramples on civil liberties and harms small businesses.

It is an inconvenient truth that cities and towns like yours financially benefit from the sale of marijuana, alcohol, and tobacco alike. Ignoring this truth is selective self-deception which erodes faith in government and helps erode faith and confidence in the government’s ability to operate fairly for all. Anti-tobacco advocates have gone too far in using the lure of “youth prevention” to push this policy, when in reality, the NFG policy only prohibits adults’ rights to use legal adult products.

**Brookline Committees Rejected NFG.**

After significant deliberation and consideration, every Brookline board and committee that held a hearing voted "NO ACTION" on Nicotine Free Generation (NFG) policy.

Despite their elected and appointed leaders' rejections of the proposal, a small majority of Brookline Town Meeting members voted to adopt the policy, but they did so without the same time and attention given by boards and committees. Furthermore, they voted on the NFG warrant article (14) two hours into the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 3 straight "arduous" nights of voting. It would not be a stretch to say energy and attention to this issue were suboptimal by the time the vote was made.

Please consider the implications of instituting a policy such as NFG. It threatens the rights of adults, undermines small business owners, and hinders the local and state economy. Many products, such as alcohol, marijuana, and gambling/lottery are age restricted, with reason, but the trend has been to regulate and monitor the sale and usage of these products to ensure that youth access is restricted while allowing adults to make adult choices. The same should hold true with tobacco and nicotine products.

Citizens lose faith in government when policies regarding regulated products are inconsistent, like the NFG policy, because they contradict common sense.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Peter A. Brennan

CC: Edward D. Burman, Board of Health Chair  
Michael D. Herbert, Town Manager

Pro Democracy Ashland Proposal for 1/7/26 SB Meeting Date: 1/2/26

**Background:** The adhoc citizens committee known as Pro Democracy Ashland proposed the actions as detailed on the attached Warrant Article for the Fall Special Town Meeting.

During previous discussions with the Selectboard, it was suggested that the Selectboard could take some of these actions. Our committee then agreed to withdraw the warrant article from Town Meeting in order to have these discussions with the Selectboard.

**Process Proposal:** To facilitate these discussions it is our proposal that the Selectboard appoint a subcommittee of two of their members to meet with three of our members over the next several weeks. The adhoc citizens committee (PDA) plans to meet before the Selectboard meeting to select and propose the three members who will meet with the Selectboard subcommittee.

**Tasks and Goals:** The task is to review, discuss and formulate the actions the subcommittee will recommend to the Selectboard. The goal is to have mutual agreement as to the specific action the Selectboard will take to address the concerns raised in our warrant article.

**Proposed Timeline:** Subcommittee meetings from January to March, 2026.  
Recommendations to full Selectboard in April, 2026.

**TOWN OF ASHLAND  
CITIZENS PETITION FORM**

Received by BOR

We, the undersigned registered voters of the Town of Ashland, do hereby petition the Select Board pursuant to MGL Ch. 39, S. 10 to include the following Article in the Warrant of the next Town Meeting **November 19, 2025**.

(Each sheet must contain text of Article below.)

**Will the Town approve a RESOLUTION** requiring that agents of the Town of Ashland to the extent allowable by law, do no future business, including procurements, subsidies or other use of public monies to purchase goods or services from Tesla, SpaceX, X, Starlink, xAI, The Boring Company and any other Musk-owned or controlled business entity.

WHEREAS, Despite Elon Musk's departure from the federal government, he retains the means and incentives to continue exerting influence on elections, elected officials, and government agencies. The basis of that influence is his personal wealth, derived from these companies.

WHEREAS, It is imperative that local governments take swift action to erode Musk's influence by prohibiting any business arrangements, partnerships, or de facto endorsements that would further enrich or empower Musk to continue doing harm to the American public. Every public dollar invested in Tesla, or other Musk owned entities, or used to procure products and services or to subsidize Elon Musk's business empire may be used later to undercut the welfare of the government and citizens of the Town of Ashland.

WHEREAS, Elon Musk has spread xenophobic and racist disinformation through the use of his social media company X and removed fact-checking and ethics screens from the X platform, actions which are counter to the values of the Town of Ashland.

WHEREAS, in his role at DOGE, Musk has been responsible for actions that many experts believe to be unconstitutional and illegal. DOGE's acts have caused extensive harm and negatively impacted important programs affecting the citizens of Ashland.

**NOW THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT:**

1. The Selectboard, Town Manager, School Committee and Superintendent of Schools shall ensure to the extent permitted by law, that no Town of Ashland departments shall procure products or services from any Musk-controlled business entity.
  2. The Selectboard, Town Manager, School Committee and Superintendent of Schools order that no Town of Ashland departments shall use the X Social Media platform for any official communications.
  3. The Selectboard and Town Manager shall urge the County of Middlesex Pension Fund to not make any new investments in Tesla or other Musk-owned entities; and
  4. The Selectboard and Town Manager shall urge the Middlesex County Pension Fund to sell any shares that it currently holds in Tesla stock or other Musk-owned entities.
- Or act on anything related thereto.

Submitted by Robert Scherer, Charles Lidz, Bethany Robertson, Susan Brostrup Jensen, Richard Oman and others

**INSTRUCTIONS TO SIGNERS:** For your signature to be certified, you must be a registered voter in the Town of Ashland. SPOUSES MAY NOT SIGN FOR ONE ANOTHER. Signatures are verified through the VRIS (Voter Registration Information System)

	Printed Name (As registered)	Signature (To be made in person, see instructions)	Residential Address (Street, Number & Apt. #)
1			
2			
3			

	<b>Printed Name (As registered)</b>	<b>Signature (To be made in person, see instructions)</b>	<b>Residential Address (Street, Number &amp; Apt. #)</b>
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**CERTIFICATION OF NAMES** At least three registrars names must be signed or stamped below.

Town of Ashland \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

We certify that \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of names (Use numbers & words) \_\_\_\_\_

Above checked are the names of qualified voters for Ashland \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
TOWN OF ASHLAND – REGISTRARS OF VOTERS

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**Fwd: [External] [boardofhealth:12459] Fwd: Ashland Board of Health Meeting**

1 message

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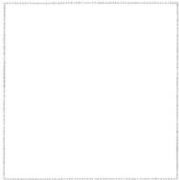
**Rajit Gupta** <rgupta@ashlandmass.com>  
To: Susan Robie <srobie@ashlandmass.com>

Wed, Jan 7, 2026 at 3:20 PM

Hi Susan,  
Good Afternoon!  
Please see an email thread below and Dr. Jay is asking to share the email with the Select Board.

Thank You!

Sincerely,

**Rajit Gupta, MPH,CHO,RS***Director of Public Health***Town of Ashland**

a: 101 Main Street, Ashland, MA 01721

p: 508-532-7922

f: 508-881-0109



----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Byrnes, John J**

Date: Wed, Jan 7, 2026 at 3:05 PM

Subject: RE: [External] [boardofhealth:12459] Fwd: Ashland Board of Health Meeting

To: Rajit Gupta &lt;rgupta@ashlandmass.com&gt;, Board of Health &lt;boardofhealth@ashlandmass.com&gt;

Thanks Raj. Please share the attached documents with the Select Board as well. I noticed that only the BoH was on this email thread. Thank you and see you tonight.

Jay

--

John Byrnes, M.A., Ph.D.

Department of Comparative Pathobiology

Tufts University

Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine

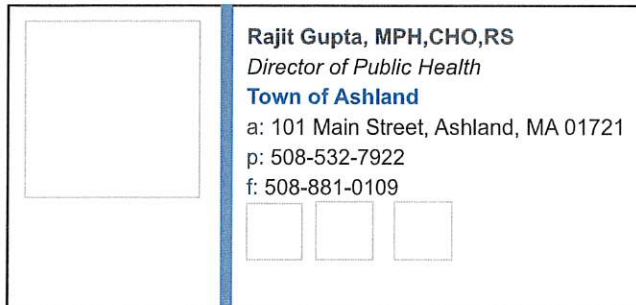
200 Westboro Road

N. Grafton, MA 01536

**From:** Rajit Gupta <[rgupta@ashlandmass.com](mailto:rgupta@ashlandmass.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 2:56 PM  
**To:** Board of Health <[boardofhealth@ashlandmass.com](mailto:boardofhealth@ashlandmass.com)>  
**Subject:** [External] [boardofhealth:12459] Fwd: Ashland Board of Health Meeting

Please see below!

Sincerely,



----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Andrew Parker  
**Date:** Wed, Jan 7, 2026 at 1:16 PM  
**Subject:** Ashland Board of Health Meeting  
**To:** <[rgupta@ashlandmass.com](mailto:rgupta@ashlandmass.com)>

Dear Board of Health Members Burman, Byrnes, Kinsman, Sekesogundu-Simon, and Krasner,

My name is Andrew Parker. I'm reaching out in regards to tonight's Board of Health Meeting on behalf of consumer choice advocates, who believe that Nicotine Free Generation (NFG) regulations would harm consumers and local retailers, while not attaining the public health outcomes these policies purport to achieve. We have attached a testimonial from a medical doctor certified in addiction recovery, as well as academic studies from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Rutgers University. Additionally, we have attached a medical article that quotes Nancy Rigotti, MD, director of the Tobacco Research and Treatment Center at Massachusetts General Hospital and a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. We hope you consider these materials ahead of tonight's meeting.

NFG policies can have the opposite impact proponents present, often leading to increases in illicit purchases from online sources that provide no age-gating verification, as your local retailers provide, or from out-of-town and even out-of-state small businesses that diminish the local revenues you rely on to bolster your public health efforts in the first place.

We also urge the Board to recognize and defer to the FDA's scientific review where applicable. The FDA has authorized the marketing of certain nicotine products through the Premarket Tobacco Product Application (PMTA) pathway following extensive interdisciplinary assessment (chemistry, toxicology, engineering, social science, and medical review). These authorizations reflect that some nicotine products have met federal evidence standards for marketing and are intended to provide adult consumers with regulated alternatives under strict oversight.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

**Andrew Parker**

Account Executive | **Liberty Square Group**

**pronouns:** (he/him/his)

**m:**

90 Sherman Street, Cambridge, MA 02140

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**6 attachments**

-  **Can Nicotine Pouches Help People Quit Smoking\_ \_ Pulmonary Medicine \_ JAMA \_ JAMA Network.pdf**  
1078K
-  **Dr, Racicot Final letter Pouch Retrictions (1).pdf**  
55K
-  **FDA Authorizes Marketing of 20 ZYN Nicotine Pouch Products after Extensive Scientific Review - FDA Press Release - 16 Jan 2025 (2) (1).pdf**  
909K
-  **Oral Nicotine Pouches Studied as a Tool to Quit Smoking \_ School of Public Health & Health Sciences \_ UMass Amherst.pdf**  
488K
-  **Smokers Often Misunderstand Health Risks of Smokeless Tobacco Product, Rutgers Study Finds \_ Rutgers University.pdf**  
1608K
-  **Why the FDA is right about ZYN\_March 2643 (2) (1).pdf**  
1381K

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## Medical News

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# Can Nicotine Pouches Help People Quit Smoking?

Shravya Pant<sup>1</sup>; Samantha Anderer<sup>2</sup>

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 JAMA Medical News

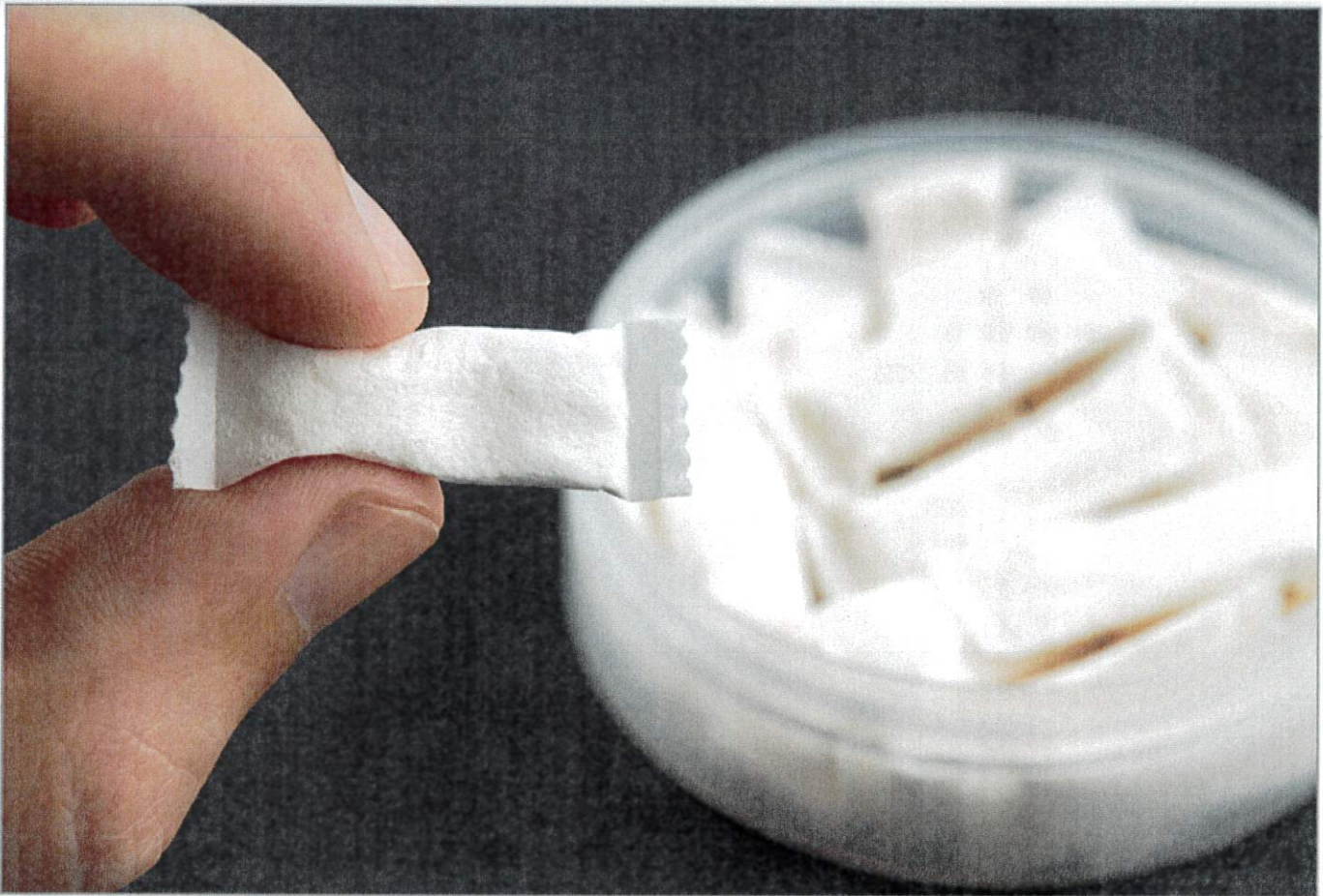
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When e-cigarettes first hit the market, many public health experts hoped they would encourage people who smoke to move away from traditional cigarettes and toward a less harmful nicotine alternative. Although the switch proved successful for some, dangerous marketing tactics paved the way for a **youth vaping crisis**. A **new initiative** by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) may now be placing its harm reduction bet on a different product: nicotine pouches.

  
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In December, the agency **announced the authorization of 6 nicotine pouch products** from the on! PLUS brand. The decisions were the first to come out of a pilot program to streamline the FDA's review of marketing applications for nicotine pouches. The program, launched in September, came after the January 2025 **authorization** of 20 nicotine pouch products from Philip Morris–owned Zyn, the **most popular brand** in the oral tobacco and nicotine market. The FDA has said it is interested in making additional options available for adults who smoke cigarettes and want to switch to less-harmful nicotine pouches.

In addition to Zyn and on! PLUS, the pilot program will consider authorizing pouches from Velo and Turning Point Brands. In their premarket tobacco product applications (PMTAs), **manufacturers must demonstrate** that the "product is appropriate for the protection of public health." The FDA will then weigh the risks and benefits, factoring in whether current tobacco product users would quit if the new product came to market and, conversely, whether it would attract nonusers to tobacco.

The FDA also recently **announced** that its Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee (TPSAC) will



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already-authorized pouches. An MRTP designation would allow Zyn to explicitly market these products as being less harmful than cigarettes.

Research establishing the pouches' effectiveness as a harm reduction tool for cigarette smoking is sparse, but in interviews, public health experts expressed optimism. Nicotine pouches do not contain many of the carcinogenic chemicals found in cigarettes, they say, and their use does not require combustion and inhalation. **Recent data** also show that pouch use is common among those looking to quit smoking or vaping, suggesting that it's an attractive option for this population.

"As far as the risk profile of a single pouch, it looks more like nicotine gum," said Cristine Delnevo, PhD, MPH, director of the Rutgers Institute for Nicotine and Tobacco Studies and chair of TPSAC since 2021.

But with data about smoking cessation effectiveness and youth use still emerging, the FDA faces a challenge in weighing the risks and benefits of this burgeoning product category.

## Safer Than Cigarettes

**Oral nicotine pouches** first appeared in US stores in 2016. Inside their rectangular, microfiber casings, the pouches contain a mixture of ingredients including synthetic or tobacco-derived nicotine powder, sweeteners, and pH stabilizers. Notably, they contain no tobacco and can vary in nicotine concentration and flavors. The currently authorized Zyn pouches come in 3-mg or 6-mg strengths with flavor options including coffee, menthol, peppermint, and cinnamon. The new on! PLUS products are authorized at 6-mg and 9-mg strengths in mint, wintergreen, and tobacco flavors. Unauthorized pouches with higher nicotine concentrations have also become available.

The pouches are kept between the lip and gum, and from there nicotine travels from the oral mucosa to the bloodstream and eventually to the brain. As with other nicotine products, the pouches carry a risk of **dependence**, and they've also been associated with **gastrointestinal issues** and **oral health complications**. A new **expert consensus**, published in the *European Heart Journal*, highlights the cardiovascular toxicity of all nicotine products, including pouches, and calls into question the "the misleading narrative of 'safer nicotine.'"

But the FDA and some public health experts consider nicotine pouches a "**lower-risk alternative**" to other products. The pouches don't involve combustion or inhalation like cigarettes and vapes. And unlike other oral products such as chewing tobacco or snus, nicotine pouches are tobacco free. These factors make pouches safer than other tobacco and nicotine products, according to Delnevo.



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Nancy Rigotti, MD, director of the Tobacco Research and Treatment Center at Massachusetts General Hospital and a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, also likened the products to NRT, noting their lack of heating and their slow uptake into the bloodstream. "The absorption of nicotine is much slower, so it's more like having a nicotine lozenge," she said of the difference between pouches and combustible tobacco products. "It doesn't give you that quick hit."

## Smoking Cessation Tool?

Trends on pouch use are still emerging, but the rates appear low. **Data** from the Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health, or PATH, survey, collected in 2022 and 2023, showed that about 3% of adults and less than 1% of adolescents had ever used pouches.

As for growing youth uptake, the **2024 National Youth Tobacco Survey** found that less than 2% of middle and high schoolers said they had used pouches in the past month, a rate that held steady from 2023 to 2024. The FDA cited these data in its authorization of Zyn products last January.

However, rates for lifetime, past year, and past 30-day use all significantly increased from 2023 to 2024 among 10th and 12th grade students in the **Monitoring the Future Study**. Usage over the past month, for instance, doubled from 1.3% to 2.6%.

The PATH data, published this past May in *JAMA Network Open*, also found a higher likelihood of pouch use among those with current or former cigarette, e-cigarette, or smokeless tobacco use.

"The majority of people using nicotine pouches are not what I would call tobacco or nicotine naive," Delnevo said. "This product might've appealed as a potentially reduced-risk or less risky product."

Delnevo's research similarly has found that nicotine pouch use was highest among adults who currently used **smokeless tobacco products** or had recently quit **smoking, vaping, or both**. Studies have also found dual use of pouches alongside cigarettes or e-cigarettes to be common.

"Some of the work we've done suggests that people that have used e-cigarettes and cigarettes are looking to nicotine pouches as a way to transition away from that particular product," she said.

The approach could hold promise. Rigotti noted that people looking to wean off smoking or vaping often find alternative nicotine products more practical than NRT. She suggested that clinicians shouldn't shy away from these conversations and that the long-term goal should still be to quit all nicotine use.

"Public health somehow has to get around the idea that you just need to quit on your own or with a med,



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paring the effectiveness of various nicotine pouch strengths and flavors for reducing cigarette smoking. The study will also measure how nicotine pouch use changes markers of toxicity and health effects in people who smoke.

The idea of using alternative products to quit smoking isn't new: **e-cigarettes have been shown** to be more effective than NRT for smoking cessation.

Current population-level survey data suggest that pouches could be similarly useful, but "it's not crystal clear," Foulds said, adding that data from clinical trials that compare pouches with NRT—such as those already conducted for e-cigarettes—are needed.

## Avoiding Past Mistakes

Tensions between potential harm reduction benefits, the absence of clinical data, and concerns about youth uptake and dual use alongside other tobacco products have focused attention on the FDA's nicotine pouch pilot program. It wasn't too long ago that e-cigarettes quickly caught on among younger users under the guise of a less harmful alternative to smoking for adults.

The FDA has hinted that because of the pouches' relatively lower risk, the scientific review process may be shortened. The agency said it will "increase efficiency by focusing review on the most critical elements for this product category."

"What remains unknowable, given how few details have been shared, is exactly what part of the scientific review process is going to be altered," said Mitchell Zeller, JD, who served as the director of the FDA Center for Tobacco Products from 2013 before retiring in 2022.

Zeller's successor, Brian King, PhD, MPH, who left the FDA in April 2025, said that improving review efficiency is worthwhile and not uncommon but that there are still unanswered questions.

"Where this can be highly problematic is if the scientific integrity of the process is jeopardized," said King, who now serves as the executive vice president for US programs at the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. "At present, we don't really know that much about the pilot program to be able to make that determination, and so it's important that FDA share that information."

Public health experts also haven't forgotten some of the mistakes made with e-cigarettes. Zeller said it will be critical to ensure that companies are not promoting youth or dual use. Much of this comes down to an evaluation of current sales data and marketing tactics, he added.

A December 2022 study by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids indicated that...



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tion and so-called Zynfluencers, with whom Zyn has said they do not partner, may also attract younger audiences.

King said that such marketing may raise red flags at the FDA. When it authorized Zyn's products, the agency put restrictions on its radio and TV ads and on the age of actors in marketing materials. It also said that a spike in youth use could warrant suspending or withdrawing Zyn's PMTA.

"What's incredibly important is that we collect the data and monitor it carefully over time," Rigotti said.

As for concerns that nicotine pouches could be a gateway to more harmful tobacco use, Foulds noted that there are not enough data to bolster the idea that the products are leading youth to cigarettes or e-cigarettes, especially as youth smoking and vaping rates have been declining. If survey and upcoming clinical trial data continue to support pouches as an effective alternative for people who smoke, their benefits may outweigh the risks.

"The whole idea is to provide a mechanism for companies to move away from highly toxic products like cigarettes and to use their ingenuity and technology to develop much less harmful products and move the whole tobacco field in that direction," he said.

Delnevo described the current nicotine product market as a "wild west." Still, experts said that granting more PMTAs will actually make it easier for the FDA to do its job. The agency could hold brands accountable if it observes a concerning uptick in youth use, and it could have a greater legal basis for targeting companies for poor marketing practices. Bringing more authorized options to the market will also help drive out unauthorized products, which often come in high nicotine concentrations and flavors particularly appealing to younger users.

In its December authorization of on! PLUS pouches, the FDA said its evaluation found the products to contain lower levels of most harmful and potentially harmful constituents than other oral and smokeless tobacco products. While acknowledging that no tobacco products are risk-free or safe, the agency concluded that the authorized pouches have "the potential to provide a benefit to adults who smoke cigarettes and/or use other smokeless tobacco products that is sufficient to outweigh the risks of the products, including to youth."

More decisions on the remaining batch of nicotine pouch applications could be forthcoming. And depending on TPSAC's review of Zyn's MRTP application, more pouch makers may be inspired to file similar "safer than cigarettes" claims.

**Weighing the risks and benefits will be no easy task, Zeller said. "There's no formula."**



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**Published Online:** January 2, 2026. doi:10.1001/jama.2025.22811

**Conflict of Interest Disclosures:** Mr Zeller reported serving as a regulatory policy advisor to an advisor to Qnovia Inc, a start-up developing smoking cessation products. Dr Delnevo reported receiving grant funding from the National Institutes of Health and FDA as well as serving as a special government employee in her role as chair of the FDA's TPSAC. Dr Foulds reported receiving research funding from the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Dr Rigotti reported being an appointed member of the FDA's TPSAC and receiving compensation from Wolters Kluwer for reviewing materials on smoking cessation and e-cigarettes for UpToDate, an online medical textbook, and receiving research funds from Achieve Life Sciences, a pharmaceutical company, to evaluate an investigational drug that is now under FDA review for licensure as a new smoking cessation medication. Dr King reported that the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids receives funding from foundations, nonprofit organizations, and individuals including Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the American Heart Association, and Truth Initiative. No other disclosures were reported.

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2 Comments for this article

EXPAND ALL

January 2, 2026

**Is it really safer given the ease of abuse?**

**Christian Awaraji, MD** | Health Advisor

The below is a personal opinion based on my occupational medical practice.

In practice, patients who have a higher risk to develop a cardiovascular events are the ones who we usually target more aggressively trying to assist them with smoking cessation.

These patients, typically the heavy smoker category, are at a higher risk of abuse nicotine pouches quickly reaching potentially higher levels of plasma nicotine levels potentially capable of triggering a coronary vascular spasm precipitating a heart attack.

I believe that we have to counsel these patients about the maximum daily of milligrams of nicotine and about



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January 4, 2026

### Nicotine pouches, on-ramp to nicotine addiction

**Robert Walter, MD** | Private Pediatric Practice

Really nice focus on this cutting edge medical issue. Thank you. As a community pediatrician, I am obviously biased towards the pediatric populations and this feels like the beginning of the Jules vaping disaster all over again. With flavors like cool mint and cinnamon they're not targeting current smokers who are trying to quit - they are targeting nicotine naive users to create more nicotine addicts! This makes sense - even though these products don't have tobacco in them, their own owned by big tobacco, and they're in the nicotine addiction business. Of course it'll take time ...

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Paul F. Racicot MD  
Director Recovery Clinic  
Concord Hospital  
Medical Director ClearChoice MD

Thank you for allowing my testimony. My name is Dr. Paul Racicot, and I am a native New Englander with 40 years of experience in treating people battling addiction. I have been certified in the field of Smoking Cessation, help manage six convenient care centers in Vermont, and have co-founded the Concord Hospital Recovery Clinic in Gilford, New Hampshire. This clinic takes a holistic approach to treating people struggling with addiction, relying both on counseling services and medication treatment.

I am extremely concerned about municipal governments enacting restrictions on nicotine pouches, particularly efforts to limit their sale to adult only establishments. I understand that these are well-intentioned efforts designed to limit youth access to nicotine products, but as a practical matter, their biggest impact will be to hurt people already struggling with addiction.

By confining nicotine pouches to adult only establishments, the government will be making it substantially more difficult for adults to access these products while having a minimal impact on youth usage rates. Massachusetts and federal laws already prohibit the sale of tobacco and nicotine products to young people under the age of 21, and this policy has helped lead to youth tobacco usage plummeting in this country over the past five years.

The National Youth Tobacco Survey released last fall found that youth usage of any tobacco product was at its lowest rate since the survey began twenty-five years ago, and that only 1.8% of youth reported using nicotine pouches. At the same time, we know that an estimated 11.6% of American adults continue to smoke, and these adults can benefit from switching to a smoke-free alternative like nicotine pouches.

At our clinics, we treat many patients working to overcome a variety of addictions such as narcotics, alcohol, and nicotine. Of those with nicotine addictions, the vast majority are struggling to quit smoking cigarettes. This is especially problematic because health experts including the FDA have recognized that nicotine and tobacco products exist on a "continuum of risk" with some products – cigarettes in particular – posing significantly greater risks than others.

While nicotine is highly addictive, it is not the primary driver of the cancer, heart disease, and pulmonary ailments that plague smokers. It is the toxic chemicals inhaled via cigarette smoke that do the real damage. Therefore, it is in the best interests of smokers to move them toward smoke-free products like nicotine pouches that pose substantially fewer risks to their health.

The FDA has reached the same conclusion. The agency recently authorized the marketing of ZYN nicotine pouches, concluding that "due to substantially lower amounts of harmful constituents than cigarettes" these nicotine pouches "pose lower risk of cancer and other serious health conditions."

While some advocates argue for treating smokers solely through the use of tobacco cessation products like nicotine gum, patches, or lozenges, my experience has been that these methods have a terribly low rate of success. Even prescription medications like Chantix work in less than 10% of people who use them, and carry side effects that can include psychosis and suicidal ideation. In my experience, helping

people overcome addictions requires a tailored approach that frequently involves moving them to lower risk products like nicotine pouches.

What is particularly troublesome about shifting the sales of nicotine pouches to adult only establishments is that traditional cigarettes will remain available at convenience stores and gas stations. Someone struggling to quit smoking would have easy access to deadly cigarettes but require a special trip to buy nicotine pouches that are demonstrably better for their health.

In addition, these policies would be directing nicotine pouch users to adult only vape shops that frequently sell marijuana paraphernalia. Many of my patients struggle with dual addictions and pushing them toward stores that sell marijuana supplies would be needlessly cruel, and could open the door for other relapses.

I appreciate that some policymakers may want to limit the availability of nicotine pouches to young people, but limiting their sale to adult only establishments is the wrong approach for public health. In authorizing ZYN nicotine pouches, the FDA concluded that these products "have the potential to provide a benefit to adults who smoke cigarettes... that its sufficient to outweigh the risks of the products, including to youth."

When it comes to public health, our efforts should be focused on helping adult smokers to quit. This proposed policy would only make that work more difficult, and for that reason, I would urge you to oppose it.

*Sincerely,*  
*Paul A. Racicot MD*

# University of Massachusetts Amherst

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### **Oral Nicotine Pouches Studied as a Tool to Quit Smoking**

Jamie Hartmann-Boyce oversees Cochrane’s first evidence-based review of the popular tobacco-free product

October 24, 2025

[Research](#)



Jamie Hartmann-Boyce

In ongoing efforts to pinpoint the best evidence-based ways to quit smoking, Assistant Professor of Health Policy and Management [Jamie Hartmann-Boyce](#) has turned her attention to a tobacco-free product gaining in popularity across the country – oral nicotine pouches.

In the first [Cochrane review](#) on the topic, the evidence suggests that switching to oral nicotine pouches from smoking reduces exposure to harmful substances, “which is what we would expect to find,” says Hartmann-Boyce, the study’s senior author and an editor for [Cochrane](#), the global health research nonprofit based in the United Kingdom.

Because the Cochrane team only found four small studies that were appropriate for their review, the evidence is not yet clear on whether oral nicotine pouches can help people quit smoking or vaping. But the foundation now exists for Hartmann-Boyce and team to continue their investigation. Their ongoing Cochrane reviews have revealed the best evidence-based ways to quit both **vaping** and **smoking**.

“Other nicotine products, like patches, gums, and nicotine vapes, are definitely beneficial for helping people quit smoking,” says Hartmann-Boyce, a **leader** in tobacco health policy and management in the U.S. “We knew that we weren’t going to have that many studies of pouches in this review when we published the first time, but we also know there are loads in the pipeline, and we hope to regularly update this as those new studies come out. We’ve given ourselves a platform to collect that data and integrate it quicker than we would have been able to before.”

About the size of a tea bag, oral nicotine pouches contain nicotine powder and flavorings, but no tobacco leaf. The pouches are marketed as a smokeless alternative to tobacco products and occasionally as a way to reduce or quit smoking.

Unlike nicotine gum, patches, lozenges, nasal sprays and inhalers, the nicotine pouches are not FDA-approved smoking cessation aids. But earlier this year, the FDA approved the marketing of 20 Zyn nicotine pouches in the U.S., concluding that the evidence showed it offered **“greater benefits to population health than risks.”**

It was the first oral nicotine pouch to be so approved in the U.S., a significant FDA decision, Hartmann-Boyce notes. “An inherent argument behind the decision for these new products to enter the market is that they have the potential to move people away from smoking,” she says.

“From an academic perspective, one of the most interesting things about oral nicotine pouches is that for a long time, we have been promoting nicotine replacement therapies, like patches and gums, to help people quit smoking. The World Health Organization lists them as an essential medicine. They are a critical tool within public health, and it’s currently difficult to come up with a compelling, detailed description of why we think the risks of oral nicotine pouches — if well-

regulated— would be meaningfully different than nicotine replacement therapy to an individual user.”

The pouches are placed between the lip and gum, which allows nicotine to be absorbed through the mouth. They appear similar to snus, a Swedish oral pouch filled with ground-up tobacco leaves and flavorings. The user doesn’t need to spit when using either oral nicotine pouches or snus.

“So in the same way vaping is different from smoking, because it doesn’t involve tobacco leaf, oral nicotine pouches are different from snus,” Hartmann-Boyce says. “Snus isn’t going to increase your risk of lung cancer, but it is going to increase your risk of mouth cancer, throat cancer, and tongue cancer because of the tobacco leaf and chemicals in it.”

She adds that rates of smoking and smoking-related disease and death have gone down significantly in the countries that allow snus. “So, there’s certainly a harm-reduction element in thinking about non-combusted tobacco and nicotine products.”

Hartmann-Boyce notes that for people who don’t use any nicotine products, it’s best not to start. Nicotine is highly addictive, and the risks of new products are not yet well understood, particularly in people who don’t have a history of smoking.

“But it is rational, if you are someone who is addicted to smoking, to switch to using an alternative nicotine product if you can’t quit completely,” she says.

Press release posted in [Research](#) for Faculty , Staff , Current students , Prospective students , and Public

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### **Jamie Hartmann-Boyce**

**Assistant Professor of Health Policy and Management**

Email: [jhartmannboy@umass.edu](mailto:jhartmannboy@umass.edu)

Focus on tobacco control, evidence synthesis, diabetes, health behaviors, health policy

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## Smokers Often Misunderstand Health Risks of Smokeless Tobacco Product, Rutgers Study Finds

By Patti Verbanas

Date March 4, 2019

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Snus — a Swedish word for “snuff” — is a moist powder tobacco that can be sold in a loose form or in small prepacked pouches that users place under the top lip for about 30 minutes.

American smokers mistakenly think that using snus, a type of moist snuff smokeless tobacco product, is as dangerous as smoking tobacco, according to a Rutgers study.

The [study](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0306460318313091) (https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0306460318313091), published in the journal *Addictive Behaviors*, provides new research on what smokers think about snus, a Swedish style product that is popular in Scandinavia, but newer to the United States. Snus — a Swedish word for “snuff” — is a moist powder tobacco that can be sold in a loose form or in small prepacked pouches that users place under the top lip for about 30 minutes. It is typically spit free. About seven in 100 men use some form of smokeless tobacco in the United States, a figure the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/smokeless/use_us/index.htm) (https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\_statistics/fact\_sheets/smokeless/use\_us/index.htm) report is on the rise.

While smokeless tobacco products are addictive, contain cancer-causing chemicals and [are linked](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15598758) (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15598758) with cardiovascular and certain cancer risks, products such as snus have comparatively fewer health risks than smoking when used exclusively — not in tandem with smoking — and may serve as harm-reduction alternatives for



smokers unable or unwilling to completely quit tobacco. In Sweden, snus use [has been linked](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/14660766) (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/14660766) to a decrease in tobacco smoking and smoking-related diseases.

The researchers reviewed how 256 smokers responded to questions about their perceived risk of developing lung cancer, heart disease and oral cancer from using snus versus cigarettes, and whether there were subgroups of smokers with similar patterns of beliefs. More than 75 percent of the participants smoked daily and about 20 percent had tried smokeless tobacco.

The researchers found that smokers fell into three subgroups based on their beliefs. About 45 percent perceived snus to be as harmful as smoking overall and for all three risks: lung cancer, heart disease and oral cancer. About 38 percent perceived that snus poses less risk for lung cancer and heart disease than cigarettes but had the same oral cancer risk as cigarettes, and another 17 percent accurately perceived snus to have lower risks for lung cancer but perceived risks for oral cancer and heart disease to be about the same as that from smoking. Almost 40 percent incorrectly perceived the risk of oral cancer to be higher from snus use than smoking.



Olivia Wackowski, the lead researcher, is assistant professor of Health Behavior, Society and Policy at Rutgers School of Public Health and a member of the Rutgers Center for Tobacco Studies and Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey.

Courtesy Olivia Wackowski



“These findings continue to suggest that the public does not understand that combustion escalates the health risks in tobacco products that are smoked, making them more harmful than non-combusted smokeless tobacco on a continuum of risk,” said lead researcher Olivia Wackowski, assistant professor of Health Behavior, Society and Policy at [Rutgers School of Public Health](https://sph.rutgers.edu/) and a member of the [Rutgers Center for Tobacco Studies](https://sph.rutgers.edu/centers/cts/index.html) and [Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey](https://www.cinj.org/). “They are also significant given that use of Scandinavian snus has not been clearly associated with oral cancer, unlike smoking, which poses a significant risk for oral cancer.”

Quitting all tobacco is the best course of action. However, smokers who have not been successful in quitting or who do not want to quit tobacco entirely may be able to reduce their risks by learning about and switching to a product like snus, Wackowski said. However, this information can be challenging to communicate and is a key area for research work. It's important for smokers to know that the reduced risks may come from completely switching over from smoking to snus use, and not using both products, she said. It's also important that such messaging does not unintentionally encourage product initiation among non-users, especially youth.

The study was co-authored by Anne Ray, an instructor of Health Behavior, Society and Policy at the Rutgers School of Public Health, and Jerod Stapleton, associate professor of medicine at [Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School](https://rwjms.rutgers.edu/) and faculty member at Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey.

(/)

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Newark ([https://newark.rutgers.edu/?utm\\_source=rutgers.edu&utm\\_medium=web&utm\\_campaign=uwide\\_sliver\\_new](https://newark.rutgers.edu/?utm_source=rutgers.edu&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=uwide_sliver_new)) |

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Rutgers Health ([https://rutgershealth.org/?utm\\_source=rutgers.edu&utm\\_medium=web&utm\\_campaign=uwide\\_sliver\\_new](https://rutgershealth.org/?utm_source=rutgers.edu&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=uwide_sliver_new))

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# Why the FDA is right about Zyn

Zyn has proven to be an especially controversial nicotine product. But there is some good news.

PARIS 20, 2024, 4:57 PM EST

By Jonathan Foulds, professor of public health sciences at the Penn State College of Medicine

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently authorized the marketing of 20 nicotine pouch products under the Zyn brand, including flavors like Wintergreen and the “unflavored” Chill. That authorization sparked a new round of proposed legislation, trend pieces and frustration. Meanwhile, the stock price for Philip Morris International Inc., which manufactures the smokeless product, has caught fire.

**Zyn has proven to be especially controversial given a series of buzzy stories about its use by young people and its seeming popularity on social media sites like TikTok.**

and its seeming popularity on social media sites like TikTok. So-called “Zynfluencers” have led to fears that a new and youthful crowd could be looking to exploit the pouches for everything from long work days to chubbing. Most recently, Carrie Batten over at The New Yorker wrote about how Zyn pouches were becoming a “staple for American dudes” in a dispatch announcing “the new nicotine gold rush.”

The good news is some of these fears may be overblown, especially fears about abuse by young people.

The reality is that after being available on the U.S. market for 10 years, only 2.4% of U.S. high school students had used a nicotine pouch in the previous 30 days in 2024 (as compared to 7.8% for electronic cigarettes).

Zyn, like other new “nicotine pouch” products, contains no tobacco. It consists of a pouch, a bit like a mini teabag, containing powdered nicotine, along with a few other ingredients such as noncaloric sweeteners and flavors. Each tin contains 15 pouches which are typically placed under the upper lip for up to an hour to allow the nicotine to be absorbed through the lining of the mouth. The amount of nicotine delivered by the 3 mg and 6 mg strength pouches is slightly higher than that delivered by 2 mg and 4 mg nicotine gum, but the peak is lower and slower than the nicotine delivered by a cigarette.

In deciding whether to authorize these products, the FDA has to scrutinize a very detailed application and assess whether it is “appropriate for the protection of public health” to allow the products to be sold on the U.S. market. This involves weighing the likely risks and benefits to the population, including youth, those not currently using any tobacco products and existing users.

The 68-page summary of the FDA’s January Zyn decision noted that the levels of 42 potentially harmful chemicals were so low in Zyn as to be undetectable. FDA officials concluded that the health risks from Zyn pouches are likely lower than potential risks from using snus (low toxicant smokeless tobacco) and the FDA has already concluded that some snus brands are significantly less harmful than cigarettes.

In their summary decision statement, FDA also referred to data produced by the applicants from studies on the effects of Zyn on existing tobacco users. Officials mentioned that in one study, more than 60% of existing tobacco users reported using Zyn to help reduce or quit smoking. Another study found that nearly a quarter of existing tobacco users completely switched to Zyn. While the manufacturers of Zyn are not claiming that Zyn is a medicinal smoking cessation aid, the fact that relatively few young people are taking up Zyn use, whereas a meaningful proportion of smokers are likely to switch to the product, suggests that the benefits are likely to outweigh the risks. This, combined with the very low toxicant delivery profile of Zyn (particularly compared to cigarettes), convinced the FDA that it is appropriate for public health for Zyn products to be marketed in the U.S.

**This is the FDA doing its job exactly as required by the 2009 Tobacco Control Act.**

This is the FDA doing its job exactly as required by the 2009 Tobacco Control Act. The real controversy about this decision should be in relation to the length of time it took. Over 2,000 brands of cigarettes are currently available on the U.S. market. Each one emits thousands of toxic chemicals, including carcinogens that are inhaled directly into the lungs, with consequences we are all too familiar with. It is a good thing that smokers now have legal access to a product that can deliver the same drug many are already addicted to (nicotine) but with far lower health risks than cigarettes.

The day before announcing Zyn’s marketing authorization, FDA Center for Tobacco Products announced another proposed rule that could have a massive impact on public health: a product standard that would limit the amount of nicotine permissible in cigarettes to nonaddictive levels. The timing may not have been coincidental.

This “low-nicotine cigarette” standard must pass through many steps before it can be implemented. One factor that may be key to its success is a wide selection of legal, less harmful (nonsmoked) nicotine products for nicotine-addicted smokers looking to switch. Zyn could be just such a product. So yes, it may seem like authorizing another nicotine product – especially one with its own youthful cultural cachet – is a risky decision. But when evaluating all the factors, it actually makes sense. #L

Jonathan Foulds

Jonathan Foulds, Ph.D., is a professor of public health sciences at the Penn State College of Medicine, focusing on nicotine addiction and smoking cessation. Foulds has written and published extensively on tobacco and nicotine, and was a founding member and vice president of the Association for the Treatment of Tobacco Use and Dependence (ATTD).

X



# Town of Ashland

## MASSACHUSETTS

To: Ashland Elected Officials / Ashland Committee Chairs / Ashland Department Heads / Ashland Citizens

From: Ashland Select Board

Date: January 7, 2026

RE: 2026 Annual Town Meeting Warrant Guidance

In preparation for the 2026 Annual Town Meeting on May 6, 2026 the Select Board have established a timetable for the submission and review of proposed Town Meeting warrant articles. This timetable is an effort to provide residents and taxpayers with the best available information for making informed decisions on article requests for action.

### 2026 Annual Town Meeting Warrant Timetable

January 7, 2026	Open the Warrant
February 27, 2026	Deadline for Notice of Intent to submit Proposed warrant articles.
February 27, 2026 – April 24, 2026	Due Diligence Period: Select Board presentations and
Discussions	
February 28, 2026 – April 24, 2026	Public Hearings
March 23, 2026 Articles	Deadline for Finalized Proposed
April 1, 2026	Select Board vote to close and post the warrant, including motions.
April 27, 2026	Finance Committee Recommendation.
April 29, 2026	Warrant Posted – No later than date
May 6, 2026	Annual Town Meeting

The Select Board reserves the right to re-open the Warrant after April 1, 2026 to include new articles that address emergency or unanticipated needs and / or circumstances.

### Warrant Article Guidelines:

The Select Board has a goal of collegial and cooperative interaction with all Town Boards, Committees and residents, as well as providing an opportunity for all articles to be fully vetted and well documented. This will allow for thoughtful deliberation and informed decision-making for all Town Meeting participants. All (non-citizen petitions) Warrant Articles are to be submitted to Katherine Bird, Assistant Town Manager at [kbird@ashlandmass.com](mailto:kbird@ashlandmass.com).

The following criteria should be considered in submitting an article for the 2026 Annual Town Meeting Warrant.

Does the proposal address an important need of the town in FY27.

Does the proposal improve a Town Asset?

If funding is required, explain why the proposal is the least expensive, most cost-effective option for addressing the need.

Do alternative sources of funding exist? What are they?

Warrant articles approved at Town Meeting establish Town governance for the new fiscal year and/or address issues of the current fiscal year. It is important that Town Meeting participants have an opportunity to be as fully informed as possible prior to Town Meeting.

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**SWAC appointment**

1 message

**E R ST.GERMAIN** <robstg1@mac.com>

Wed, Dec 3, 2025 at 4:43 PM

To: Select Board &lt;selectboard@ashlandmass.com&gt;

Cc: Susan Robie &lt;srobie@ashlandmass.com&gt;, Michael D Herbert &lt;mherbert@ashlandmass.com&gt;, Becca Solomon &lt;bsolomon@ashlandmass.com&gt;, "E R St.Germain" &lt;robstg1@mac.com&gt;, Elizabeth M Byrnes &lt;elizabeth.byrnes@tufts.edu&gt;, Jeanne Walker &lt;jnewalker@verizon.net&gt;, Jill Vernes &lt;jill.vernes@gmail.com&gt;, Preethi Sreeraj &lt;psreeraj@gmail.com&gt;, Sofia Chrisafideis &lt;schrisafideis@ashlandmass.com&gt;

Hi,

On behalf of the Committee, I am pleased to request that you appoint Elizabeth M. Byrnes to the Stormwater Advisory Committee to serve the remainder of the open term ending on August 31, 2026. She has attended three meetings, has taken an active part in the discussions, and requested this appointment. At last evening's meeting the committee voted this request.

Thank you and best regards,  
Rob

---

Rob St. Germain, Chair  
Stormwater Advisory Committee  
Ashland, MA 01721  
iPhone 774-279-0563

Smiling makes life better



## Online Form Submittal: Talent Bank Form

1 message

noreply@civicplus.com <noreply@civicplus.com>  
Reply-To: noreply@civicplus.com  
To: srobie@ashlandmass.com

Mon, Sep 8, 2025 at 10:52 AM

### Talent Bank Form

#### Page 1

#### TALENT BANK FORM

**Please note that current vacancies can be found by looking at "Volunteer Opportunities".** As vacancies become available we update the website to reflect the opening(s). If you apply for groups that doesn't have an opening your Talent Bank Form will be shared with the chair of the group. The Select Board, the appointing authority will be unable to appoint you if there is no vacancy. Each committee or position has a different level of commitment and the Select Board requests that everyone attend a meeting or two prior to seeking appointment. This allows you to understand what the group is working on and what the actual commitment would be. Most committees meet on a regular schedule, typically once or twice a month in the evening. Committee chairs and or staff are happy to provide additional information or answer any questions you may have about a particular group.

Upon receipt, your Talent Bank Form will be reviewed and shared with the chair and the Select Board. We will not be able to proceed if no matches exists between your request and our openings. Your application will be added to the list of volunteers who have expressed an interest in serving. We thank you for your interest in serving the Town of Ashland and returning this application.

Please remember that all meetings are open to the public, so even if you are not a member it does not exclude you from getting involved.

Name	elizabeth byrnes
Email Address	
Address	
City	Ashland

State	MA
Zip Code	01721
Home Phone	
Cell Phone	<i>Field not completed.</i>

**Page 2**

I am interested in serving the Community Preservation Committee  
Town in the following  
positions:

Other: *Field not completed.*

Finance Committee is *Field not completed.*  
appointed by the Town  
Moderator

**BACKGROUND:**

Employer Tufts University

Position Professor

Education PhD

**Page 3**

Please describe any training/experience you possess I am a Professor of Comparative Pathobiology at Tufts University Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine. I run a research laboratory and have experience managing large multi-year projects.

Please describe other skills and interests I am interested in preserving open space and helping to maintain Ashland's history while also ensuring that it remains a vibrant and welcoming community.

Please describe your government or community volunteer experience (Ashland or elsewhere) I served as the Chair of the Decisions at Every Turn Coalition for several years. I have also been on governmental advisory committees as part of my professional duties, including providing guidance to the World Health Organizations and the National Institutes of Health. I have been an active member of the Ashland community for over 25 years.

Email not displaying correctly? [View it in your browser.](#)



# BOSTON ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

699 Boylston Street, Suite 800, Boston, Massachusetts 02116 • 617.236.1652 • baa.org

December 4, 2025

Joseph Magnani Jr., Chair  
Board of Selectmen  
101 Main Street, 1st Floor  
Ashland, MA 01721

RE: 130th Boston Marathon Parade Permit – Monday April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Chair Magnani:

The 130th Boston Marathon is scheduled for Monday April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2026. The Boston Athletic Association requests that the Town of Ashland issue a parade permit to conduct our annual event.

The field size of 30,000 runners remains consistent as previous years, with 4 waves of 7,500 departing every 25 minutes beginning at 10:00AM. Earlier starts for other groups are expected to begin as early as 9:00AM, as attached. The B.A.A. plans to work within the same footprint used in the past, not impacting additional roadways. The race operations team is reviewing these and other items while coordinating with town, state police, and others as required.

The B.A.A. requests that Ashland's authorization includes permission to control and utilize the roadway, adjacent sidewalks, and other appropriate areas, as determined in our planning sessions, to conduct the race in a safe and controlled manner. This includes permission to deliver and install course signage, hydration stations, portable toilets, medical stations, timing mats, mile markers, and other equipment as outlined in the included attachments. The Town of Ashland is named as additionally insured on our liability insurance policy and a certificate of insurance is included here.

The Boston Athletic Association looks forward to working with Ashland to conduct a safe and successful race on Patriots' Day for the athletes, volunteers, and spectators looking to take part in the 130th Boston Marathon.

Sincerely,

The Boston Athletic Association



# BOSTON ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

699 Boylston Street, Suite 800, Boston, Massachusetts 02116 • 617.236.1652 • baa.org

Monday April 20th, 2026 – Patriots' Day

## Start Times

6:00 AM – Military Marchers  
9:02 AM – Men's Wheelchair  
9:05 AM – Women's Wheelchair  
9:30 AM - Handcycles and Duos  
9:37 AM – Professional Men  
9:45 AM – Professional Women  
9:50 AM – Para Athletics Division  
10:00 AM – Wave 1  
10:25 AM – Wave 2  
10:50 AM – Wave 3  
11:15 AM – Wave 4

**Boston Marathon Course Infrastructure  
Ashland**

Mile Marker	Group	Location	Side of road
2.1	Water	250 W Union St Waterview Lodge Rehab Center	BOTH
2.9	Athlete Toilets	87 W Union Street Ashland Middle School	LEFT
3.3	Medical	Union Street Grassy Area in front of 1 West Union St	LEFT
3.35	Water	On Metropolitan Ave 368 Union Street	BOTH
3.5	Pro Fluid	384 Union Street	BOTH
3.9	Athlete Toilets	Waverly Street Parking Lot after Columbus Ave	RIGHT
4.3	Water	Waverly St (Rte 135) at Ashland Landscape Supply	BOTH
4.5	Athlete Toilets	Dirt Cutout Across from Ashland Landscape Supply 18 Waverly Street	RIGHT

## GIFTS & DONATIONS TRACKER

DONATION/GIFTS	ORGANIZATION OR INDIVIDUAL	DATE GIVEN	VALUE	PURPOSE	RESTRICTED , Y/N?	DEPT.
Check	GreenUp Ashland	12/16/2025	466.00	To be used to purchase a holiday light recycling bin as part of a collaborative effort		Sustainability







## **BAA Marathon Runners and Grant Program**

(Revised 1/7/26)

### Background

In mid-April on Patriot's Day each year, the Town of Ashland welcomes the Boston Marathon runners through our town along Route 135. This is one of our community's favorite days, as our residents love to line up along the route to cheer on the runners. This event also requires a lot of coordination and resources from the Town of Ashland to make it a success—from our first responders as well as the DPW crew and town management.

As part of our partnership with the BAA on an annual basis, the BAA gives the town 25 runners' bibs, which the town can distribute to residents and 501(c)(3) organizations, which we have distributed through a lottery as well as a partnership with NORD (National Organization of Rare Diseases). In exchange for a runner's bib, each individual pledges to raise \$3,000 for Ashland organizations and groups.

These funds go into the Runners' Account, overseen by the Town Manager's Office and Select Board. Twice a year, the Select Board opens up the BAA grant cycle, asking non-profit organizations to apply for grants to fund specific projects or overall operating expenses for their group, with a maximum of \$4,000.00 per application. (\$6,000.00 total in 2 consecutive grant cycles). Non-Profit organizations that do not have 501(c)(3) status can apply for the Select Board Community Grant, with a maximum for \$1,000.00 per application (\$1,500.00 total in 2 consecutive grant cycles). A sub-committee from the Select Board reviews the grant applications and recommends award amounts. The entire Select Board then votes on the awards. Any 501(c)(3) organization grant utilizes the Runner's Account, whereas grants for groups that do not have non-profit status must utilize the Select Board Gift Account (funded by hotel room fees in lieu of taxes at the Warren Conference Center). In order to qualify for these grants, the applicant must be either an Ashland resident, or be proposing a use for the funds that would benefit the Ashland public at-large.

### BAA Grant Program:

1. 501(c)(3) can apply for up to \$4,000.
2. Organization has applied for grant funds in the past, they must provide a summary of the previous request, receipts and/or detailed spending report of how those funds were previously used.
3. Select Board sub-committee reviews application/proposal for use of funds and backup of previous grant spending and if it is a valid request, they will grant the amount of the request up to \$4,000. Applicants must either be Ashland residents or proposing a use of the funds that would benefit the Ashland community at-large.
4. If the total of all requests for a grant cycle exceeds 50% of the balance in the Runners' Account, there will be a pro-rata percentage reduction of all grant amounts to ensure that only 50% of the Account balance is used.

Accepted at February 5, 2025 Select Board Meeting.

5. The BAA Grant includes a sunset provision of 12 months. All funds received must be spent within 12 months of issuance. Any remaining funding must be returned to the account from which it was originally expended.
6. If the organization has requested a BAA grant in the previous cycle (fall/spring), they can make another request up to a total of \$6,000 through the 2 cycles with documentation of previous grant spending.
7. Recommendations of sub-committee come before full Select Board for vote

**For Select Board Community Grant Program:**

1. For non-profit groups that do not have official 501(c)(3) status, they can apply for up to \$1,000 of grant funds, which would come from the Select Board's gift account.
2. If the organization has applied for grant funds in the past, they must provide a summary of the previous request, receipts and/or detailed spending report of how those funds were previously used.
3. Select Board sub-committee reviews application/proposal for use of funds and backup of previous grant spending and if it is a valid request, they will grant the amount of the request up to \$1,000. Applicants must either be Ashland residents or proposing a use of the funds that would benefit the Ashland community at-large.
4. If the organization has requested a grant in the previous cycle (fall/spring), they can make another request up to a total of \$1,500 through the 2 cycles with documentation of previous grant spending.
5. Recommendations of sub-committee come before full Select Board for vote
6. The Select Board Community Grant includes a sunset provision of 12 months. All funds received must be spent within 12 months of issuance. Any remaining funding must be returned to the account from which it was originally expended.

ORG	OBJECT	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	P	CHECK NO
29122	44937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	-3,085.00	Y	0
29122	44937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	-600.00	Y	0
29122	44937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	-300.00	Y	0
29122	44937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	-1,685.00	Y	0
29122	44937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	-270.00	Y	0
29122	44937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	-1,325.00	Y	0
29122	44937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	-300.00	Y	0
29122	44937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	-2,785.00	Y	0
29122	44937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	-2,850.00	Y	0
29122	44937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	-1,100.00	Y	0
29122	44937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	-1,700.00	Y	0
29122	44937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	-250.00	Y	0
29122	44937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	-1,000.00	Y	0
29122	44937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	-1,500.00	Y	0
29122	44937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	-765.00	Y	0
29122	44937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	-2,000.00	Y	0
29122	44937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	-250.00	Y	0
		<b>Total Donation Received</b>	<b>-21,765.00</b>		
29122	54937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	2,000.00	Y	338631
29122	54937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	165.00	Y	0
29122	54937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	1,135.28	Y	0
29122	54937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	714.00	Y	337458
29122	54937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	1,474.58	Y	337465
29122	54937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	239.06	Y	337458
29122	54937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	6,224.63	Y	337459
29122	54937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	400.00	Y	337460
29122	54937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	384.65	Y	337461
29122	54937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	412.10	Y	337462
29122	54937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	2,025.00	Y	337463
29122	54937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	450.00	Y	337464
29122	54937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	499.00	Y	337466
29122	54937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	600.00	Y	337467
29122	54937	ASHLAND DAY DONATION ACCT	1,000.00	Y	337387
		<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>17,723.30</b>		
		<b>Account Balance</b>	<b>4,041.70</b>		



# **Town of Ashland, Office of the Select Board**

## **SELECT BOARD MEETING (HYBRID) December 3, 2025 – 7:00 PM Town Hall, 101 Main Street, Ashland, MA**

Present at the meeting were: Joseph Magnani (Chair), Claudia Bennett, Yolanda Greaves, Makeda Keegan, and Brandi Kinsman. Also in attendance were Town Manager Michael Herbert, Assistant Town Manager Katherine Bird, and Executive Assistant Susan Robie.

### **1. Call Meeting to Order**

Mr. Magnani called the December 3, 2025 meeting to order at 7:01 PM; he announced that the meeting was being recorded and broadcast live by WACA-TV and livestreamed on Facebook. Remote participation is available using the Zoom Video Conferencing platform. Any disruption with the Video Conferencing Platform will result in the platform being shut down. In the event of a disruption, broadcasting will continue on WACA TV and livestreamed on Facebook.

### **2. Citizen's Participation**

None.

### **3. Scheduled Appointments**

#### **a. Lisa Mead and Brian Winner Legal Update.**

Attorney Lisa Mead provided an update to the Board of the work she and her firm have been working on for the Town:

- Work in preparation of Town Meeting, including title work and agreements pertaining to the conveyance of the Donnelly property to the Town Forest Committee.
- An adjacent property to the Donnelly property which they have cleared an older tax-taking issue on.
- Zani property off Brackett Street which the Assessor's Maps do not match the plans, hopefully this will be resolved soon.
- Three 40B projects in Town: 10-60 Main Street, 61 Waverly Street, and 55 West Union Street; they continue to work diligently.
- Working with Katherine Bird on various CPA grants, and in particular, YMCA.
- They have still not received a decision from the Court in the UGC/Gaynor litigation, one is regarding the validity of the P&S; the trial took place almost a year ago, in January. The other litigation is under the same development and is the challenge of the Comprehensive Permit by Gaynor against UGC and the Town, where he cited a lack of site control.
- Working with the Affordable Housing Trust on a grant for Habitat for Humanity on the project they are working on in Town.

- Significant contract review on the water main replacement for Union and Fountain Streets.
- Starting today, they will begin work on the renewal of the Framingham IMA for the MWRA connection; there is a meeting scheduled for next week. It is a 20-year agreement.
- Working with Katherine Bird, at the request of the Chair, on holding an Open Meeting Law training. They are looking at Wednesday dates in January at 6:00 PM. It will be a hybrid meeting.

Mr. Magnani thanked Attorney Mead for all they do for the Town.

Attorney Mead agreed to provide the Board with a cost breakdown for legal services in January, including a budget-to-actual update.

#### 4. Consent Agenda

- a. Accept the Regular Session Minutes from the October 23, 2025 and November 6, 2025 joint meeting with the Planning Board.
- b. Accept the Regular Session Minutes from November 5, 2025.
- c. Notification of the Town Manager's Appointment of Lindsay Ward as Assistant Director/Director of Youth Services at the Library.
- d. Notification of the Town Manager's Appointment of Tyler Pyne as a Public Safety Dispatcher.
- e. Approve the One-Day Liquor License from Iemmallo Winery for December 13, 2025 to participate at Illuminate Ashland from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

**Motion:** Ms. Greaves motioned to approve the consent agenda; the motion was seconded by Ms. Kinsman.

**Vote:** 5-0-0. Motion approved.

#### c. Update on 40b Projects.

**Mr. Herbert updated the Board on each of the 40B projects:**

**10-60 Main Street:** The public hearing currently remains open; the ZBA (Zoning Board of Appeals) intends to close the public hearing on December 9, 2025. The ZBA will then need to issue a Decision within 45 days; they did get some updated answers from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) which was written on behalf of the DEP and EPA; the enhanced responses are now posted on the website.

**61 Waverly Street:** The public hearing is now closed; a working session was suggested to draft the Decision, which was ultimately not necessary. The ZBA is planning to review the draft Decision on December 9th. The Decision, if issued, must be filed with the Town Clerk within 14 days.

**55 West Union Street:** This public hearing remains open, as well as public comment. The next hearing is on December 9th. They are waiting for the second peer review on Stormwater and on Traffic. The first peer review on Civil Engineering is complete. The Applicant needs to respond to the Civil Review, and will likely go through a round of that before they get finalized Decisions.

Once the hearings close, the ZBA has 40 days to issue their Decision, including any conditions they want put on the project.

Joan Gonfrade, speaking as a resident, expressed concern with the State taking away towns' right for oversight and allowing Developers to trample local bylaws. Ms. Gonfrade stated that 501 Pond Street was permitted and 61 Waverly Street will likely be permitted; that should give the Town conditional SHI (Subsidized Housing Inventory), Ms. Gonfrade requested the Town deny the 10-60 Main Street and 55 West Union projects, and let them appeal to the State.

Ms. Gonfrade discussed 10-60 Main Street being built within the Nyanza Plume; she requested the Town hire an independent Engineer to verify testing at the site. The updated responses from DEP continue to refer to the Licensed Site Professional who is paid for by the Developer.

Ms. Gonfrade discussed the historical significance of the Mill Buildings, and the contributions of Henry Warren. Ms. Gonfrade discussed the project's water use; she requested a review be done for the combined project water use and capacity; Ms. Gonfrade expressed concern that the MWRA corridor is being inundated with apartments.

Ms. Gonfrade inquired as to whether Mr. Engler was on probation when he applied to Ashland; she expressed concern that he was not forthcoming in his Mass Housing application. Board Members stated his suspension was lifted after 9 months.

Ms. Bennett stated that conditions will be put on the project as the ZBA works through this; she expressed concern that the Governor has turned her back by supporting Mass Housing and taking all the power away from communities; she suggested that everyone write letters, for the future; that we need to build housing that supports people opposed to enriching developers. Ms. Gonfrade discussed trying to work with Senator Spilka and Jack Lewis, but they were told there was nothing they would do.

Mr. Magnani assured Ms. Gonfrade that her concerns have been well discussed; the Board discussed the challenge of trying to keep a balance with the developer, and the additional financial burden to the Town if it was to end up in the courts. The ZBA's job is to condition the project to bring about the best possible outcome that we can have for the project. Unfortunately, the 40B system is not designed for us to be able to deny a project.

Connie Mannell, resident, inquired as to the Town's SHI (Subsidized Housing Inventory), why more affordable housing wasn't required, and whether a 40B attorney should be brought in. Ms. Greaves noted that the Town's legal team trains other law firms on how to do 40B processes; they have had multiple attorneys from their team look at what is going on here.

Mr. Magnani thanked Ms. Gonfrade and Ms. Mannell for their persistence; and appreciated all the work they have put into this.

### (3. Scheduled Appointments)

a. Tax Classification Hearing – Vote to Close the Tax Classification Hearing.

**Motion:** Ms. Greaves voted to close the tax classification hearing; the motion was seconded by Ms. Kinsman.

**Vote:** 5-0-0. Motion approved.

**4. Old/New Business**

- a. Certification of the vote that took place at the November 19, 2025 Ashland Special Town Meeting accepting the donation of land located at 0 Oregon Road consisting of 14.26 acres.

**Motion:** Ms. Greaves motioned that pursuant to Article 1 of the November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Ashland Special Town Meeting, that the Select Board accept a donation of land located at 0 Oregon Road, Ashland, Massachusetts, further described in deeds recorded in Middlesex Registry of Deeds Books 20737, Page 75, and as shown on a plan recorded as Plan 1158 of 1961, and as shown on the Town of Ashland Assessor's Map 05 Lot 0005 including 14.26 acres more or less, for the purpose of expanding the Town Forest, meaning and intending to dedicate this land as Article 97 Land so called under the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and further authorize the Chair, Joseph J. Magnani, Jr., on behalf of the Select Board, to execute any and all documents necessary to effectuate the acquisition of said property. Ms. Kinsman seconded the motion.

Ms. Greaves noted that because it is being added to Article 97 Land, it gives more flexibility when it comes to other properties to look at.

**Vote:** 5-0-0. Motion approved.

- b. Discuss Hunting on Public Land.

Mr. Magnani explained that a letter was received from someone from Tewksbury requesting to bow hunt on a specific piece of property. Mr. Magnani noted that per the Bylaw, Ashland does not allow hunting on Town Forest property.

- a. (See discussion above)

- a. Discuss the Joseph P. Keefe Technical High School Building Committee.

Mr. Herbert explained that with the proposed addition of a new facility at Keefe Technical High School, the process is to form a School Building Committee. Ed Burman, who is Chair of the Keefe Tech School Committee, is on the Building Committee, so Ashland will certainly have a voice in the process. Mr. Herbert discussed Keefe Tech's responsible funding plan for the Feasibility Study, Framingham is pushing back on the methodology.

Ms. Bennett inquired as to how the Town chooses which technical school to associate with, and whether the Town is allowed to choose another technical school to connect with if they so choose. How students are chosen has changed as well; Mr. Herbert explained they are now looking at apportionment; he noted that leaders at Keefe Tech are concerned about this due to the influence it would give Framingham in those decisions.

- b. Request Funding from the Select Board Gift Account for the Employee Recognition Event.

Ms. Robie confirmed the date and time of the event, and noted the amount requested is for \$1,500, which pays for the event and longevity gifts. Ms. Robie will send a calendar invite to the Board Members.

**Motion:** Ms. Greaves motioned to approve funding not to exceed \$1,500 for the Employee Recognition Event happening on December 19<sup>th</sup>, coming from the Select Board Gift Account. The motion was seconded by Ms. Bennett.

**Vote:** 5-0-0. Motion approved.

**c. Discuss Setting up a joint meeting with the Board of Health to discuss "Nicotine Free Generation."**

Board Members agreed to invite the Board of Health to the Select Board meeting on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2026 to discuss Nicotine-Free Generation.

**d. Vote on Annual License Renewals.**

**Motion:** Ms. Greaves motioned to approve the list of Annual License Renewals; the motion was seconded by Ms. Kinsman.

**Vote:** 5-0-0. Motion approved.

**5. Town Manager Report**

**a. Update on Town Meeting.**

Mr. Herbert reported having a pretty good turnout for a Special Town Meeting; there were many nearly unanimous votes; many were real estate driven with the Town picking up some land donations. Mr. Herbert explained that the Town is understandably concerned about development; we are taking these opportunities to preserve some of this property as open space. Mr. Herbert thanked everyone for attending and participating.

There is a Tri-Board meeting next Wednesday; Mr. Herbert will provide the Board with some information on Friday prior to the meeting, including some different options for Board Members to consider; he noted he will be available for any discussions with Board Members prior to the Tri-Board meeting.

Mr. Herbert reminded all about the Holiday Stroll coming up on Saturday.

Ms. Greaves discussed setting up an Implementation Committee after the passing of the Comprehensive Plan; they will need to get together with the Planning Board to have that discussion, and then determine who from the Select Board is going to be representing the Board on that. Mr. Herbert will check to see if it has been sent to the State.

Ms. Bird discussed the Holiday Program; the first part is the Thanksgiving meal distribution which went very well thanks to our many partners, including Ashland Emergency Fund, Restaurant Depot, Market Basket, Doragon Eatery and all the volunteers. The gift-giving program is starting this week; all of our sponsors were dropping off gifts for our applicants. Next week we will be handing out all of the gifts. Ms. Bird thanked all of the sponsors, volunteers and dedicated staff for putting this together. Ms. Bird also thanked Ms. Bennett for matching up the

sponsors and families; Ms. Bennett noted there were 101 families, and 178 sponsors; it was very powerful and special.

## **6. Board Reports**

**Yolanda Greaves:** Ms. Greaves discussed attending an MMA Policy Meeting where they discussed the Financial Cliff Report that MMA put out; she attended a Legislative Gubernatorial Advisory Committee Meeting at the State House, which was pretty interesting. There was a MetroWest Regional Collaborative Meeting. Tomorrow is the Senior Breakfast starting at 9:30 AM. Tomorrow night is the YMCA's Dream Big Auction at the Sheraton, it is one of their biggest fundraisers. The YMCA has been in front of the Planning Board and are waiting for final approvals; they are looking at a potential phased approach for construction. The Holiday Stroll on Saturday will have some great performances; she noted the upcoming Nutcracker performances at the Hopkinton Center for the Arts.

**Makeda Keegan:** Ms. Keegan thanked Board Members for signing up for liaison committee assignments; there is only one left, that is for the Council on Aging. Mr. Magnani offered to take that assignment. Ms. Keegan enjoyed the Thanksgiving Farmers Market; it was good to see everyone out supporting that. Ms. Keegan thanked Mr. Herbert and Ms. Kinsman for their words at the Veteran's Day Event; coming from a military family it was especially meaningful; Ms. Keegan thanked all of our Veterans.

**Claudia Bennett:** Ms. Bennett stated that the Honorable Michael Fabry was the speaker at the Veteran's Day Event, he was wonderful and so is his wife who is a teacher in Ashland. Ms. Bennett reported that 172 children were serviced by the Holiday Gift-Giving Program; it is very special to be a part of. Ms. Bennett thanked DPW, Public Safety, and Fire during the recent inclement weather.

**Brandi Kinsman:** Ms. Kinsman noted that they recently met their legislative delegation and had a lengthy discussion about 40B; they were asked about supporting communities with operating budgets and discussed the challenges Ashland is facing. They did inquire about the alcohol nips, and the Tobacco-Free Generation, there was no update on either at the State-level. Ms. Kinsman stated that Representative Lewis noted that in regards to our alcohol licenses, the Home Rule Petition pending needs to be tied to Economic Development Zones. In addition to the Holiday Stroll and Tree Lighting this weekend, next weekend is Illuminate Ashland, which is always a great event. Being the last meeting of the year, Ms. Kinsman recited her annual end-of-the-year poem, Ode to Ashland 2025.

**Joseph Magnani:** Mr. Magnani stated it was an incredible year; he noted the Town has gotten through tough times before. Mr. Magnani expressed feeling disappointed by the meeting with the legislative delegation. Mr. Magnani is looking forward to the Tree Lighting Ceremony. Mr. Magnani thanked everyone for their work this year, including Katherine Bird and Beth Reynolds, and wished all Happy Holidays.

## **7. Next Select Board Meeting – January 7, 2026.**

## **8. Adjournment.**

**Motion:** Ms. Greaves motioned to adjourn; the motion was seconded by Ms. Kinsman.

**Vote:** 5-0-0. Motion approved.

The motion adjourned at 8:45 PM.

**Documents Reviewed during the December 3, 2025 meeting:**

- Request/Letter – Hunting on Public Land.
- One Day Liquor License Application Iemello Winery.
- School Building Committee Form.
- Draft Meeting Minutes from October 23, 2025, November 5, 2025, and November 6, 2025.



# Town of Ashland

## MASSACHUSETTS

### SELECT BOARD AGENDA

January 7, 2026 – 7:00 PM  
Town Hall - Hybrid Meeting  
101 Main Street, Ashland MA 01721

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85482751264?pwd=jJDHMNt2KaBj4KUAEPLk40WECrJCzn.1>

Call the January 7, 2026 Select Board Meeting to order at 7:00 PM; This meeting is being recorded and broadcast live by WACA TV and livestreamed on Facebook. Remote participation is available using the Zoom Video Conferencing platform. Any disruption with the Video Conferencing Platform will result in the platform being shut down. In the event of a disruption, broadcasting will continue on WACA TV and livestreamed on Facebook.

1. ***Call Meeting to Order***
2. ***Citizen's Participation***
3. ***Scheduled Appointments (60 minutes)***
  - a. 7:10 pm - Rajit Gupta, Public Health Director and Dr. Zachary - Discuss Nicotine-Free Generation Proposal Jointly with the Board of Health.
  - b. 7:40 pm - Rob Scherer – Discuss creation of a sub-committee to craft a resolution regarding Elon Musk Companies.
4. ***Old/New Business (60 minutes)***
  - a. Vote to Open the Annual Town Meeting Warrant.
  - b. Discuss the Project Matrix.
  - c. Wednesday February 4, 2026 - Open Meeting Law Training from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm.
  - d. Update on 40B Projects.
5. ***Consent Agenda***
  - a. Accept the Regular Session Minutes from December 7, 2025.
  - b. Notification of the Town Managers Appointment of Jeffrey Tucci, Local Building Inspector in the Department of Inspectional Services with a request to waive the 15-day waiting period.
  - c. Notification of the Town Managers Appointment of Hannah Bowlby, Recreation Administrative Assistant with a request to waive the 15-day waiting period.
  - d. Appoint Elizabeth Byrnes to the Stormwater Advisory Committee with a term that will expire on August 31, 2026.
  - e. Approve the Parade Permit Request from the Boston Athletic Association for the 130<sup>th</sup> Boston Marathon to be held on Monday April 20, 2026.
  - f. Accept the Donation from GreenUp Ashland to the Sustainability Department in the amount of 466.00 to purchase holiday light recycling bins.
  - g. Accept the Emergency Medical Dispatch Grant in the amount of \$22,107.40 for training.

- h. Accept the Emergency Medical Dispatch Grant in the amount of \$55,758.00 for cost associated with 911 dispatching.
  - i. Accept the Emergency Medical Dispatch Grant in the amount of \$25,000.00 for cost associated with Certified EMD Resources.
  - j. Accepted the revised BAA Grant and Select Board Community Grant Policy to include a 12-Month Sunsetting Clause.
  - k. Release \$4,041.70 in Ashland Day Funds to the Ashland Day Committee.
- 6. *Town Manager Report (30 minutes)***
- a. Budget Update - Discuss Next TriBoard Meeting.
  - b. Update on State Aide.
  - c. MMA Conference
- 7. *Board Reports (20 minutes)***
- 8. *Next Select Board Meeting – January 21, 2026.***
- 9. *Adjournment***

This agenda is subject to change and includes those items reasonably anticipated by the Chair to be discussed at the meeting. Not all agenda items may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.