

Town of Bridgewater
Winter Newsletter
Town Meeting and Other Updates

March 10, 2026 Bridgewater Town Meeting

March 17, 2026 SAU108 School Meeting

April 14 2026 BHVD Meeting

Bridgewater 2025: The year ended with a small surplus. Specifically, the warrant items (paving, cruiser replacement and building upgrades) all were completed within budget. We are currently in the process of preparing the proposed 2026 budget and will send you a preliminary review in a few weeks. All divisions, (Town, Refuse District and Village District) ended with small surpluses.

As we enter **2026**, there are “headwinds” that continue to constrain our fiscal outlook. Building permits that were robust for the last five to eight years is no longer the case. Costs on energy and food are concerning as well. In fact, cost projections for **2026** indicate significant increases in healthcare, with costs expected to rise by approximately 9.6%. The Affordable Care Act marketplace premiums are potentially seeing a median hike of 18%. Social Security benefits are projected to have a 2.7%–2.8% cost-of-living adjustment, while home price growth is expected to remain muted, growing only about 1%–1.2%.

State School Funding Issue adds to the uncertainty. In a major 2025 ruling, the New Hampshire Supreme Court upheld that the state’s education funding model is unconstitutional, finding the base adequacy aid (previously ~\$4,100 per pupil) too low. The court mandated a minimum of over \$7,356 per pupil, upholding a lower court's decision in the, ConVal School District (Contoocook Valley) v. State lawsuit. This year the state education property tax in Bridgewater will raise \$ 842,714. Those funds plus the local school tax represents our portion to support local school education. Some legislators have proposed all cities and towns send those funds to the state educational trust fund to be redistributed with other funds equalizing cost per student. There are at least 50 bills addressing this issue. Most of the legislative bills will be labeled “Inexpedient to Legislate” and be defeated. What is concerning is how adequacy will be solved in a state that is solely dependent on property taxes and promotes local control. Hence, our need is to proceed carefully.

We are optimistic that we can manage a town budget proposal that will average a 2.5% increase or less. The town currently has no short or long-term debt.

Pasquaney School District SAU108 2025: The transition to a pre-school through eighth grade is well underway. The anticipated school district budget increase will be around 2%. The two-classroom addition is just about completed and is expected to be within the projected BHVD budget. (see below)

Bridgewater-Hebron Village School (BHVS) has earned national distinction this year as an official National Blue Ribbon School, recognized for exceptional academic excellence and a strong, supportive school culture. Presented annually by the US. Department of Education, the award honors schools that demonstrate outstanding student achievement and exemplary learning environments. BHVS also ranked 16th out of 443 New Hampshire elementary schools, according to US. News & World Report, further confirming its position as one of the state's highest-performing schools.

Our collective congratulations to the teachers, staff and administrators for their hard work and dedication to the children of the district.

Bridgewater-Hebron Village District 2025: As most know, the school building and grounds are owned by the towns of Bridgewater and Hebron. As such, the Village District is responsible for the new two-classroom addition and upgrades to critical systems in the building. This is in addition to the regular maintenance expenses. The proposed 2026 BHVD budget will remain at the current level. No tax increase for this item on your tax bill. The bond issue is short term and for 5 years.

HB Refuse District 2025: HBRD also had a small surplus this year as well. Two 30-year-old processing machines were replaced to improve productivity. The current recycling percentage is about 20% of volume.

The Department of Environmental Services has instituted a new fee of \$3.50/ton on waste that is shipped to a NH landfill or incinerator. That fee will be reimbursed to NH cities and towns. The goal is to reduce the out of state volume and extend the life of the few landfills in NH. The remaining monies will support the DES. This strategy is the result of the NH Legislature financial shifts. We shall see!!!

We encourage you all to attend the upcoming meetings as posted above.

Thank you for your continued support

Terry Murphy, Skip Jenness, Wes Morrill
The Bridgewater Board of Selectmen