

**Town of Bridgewater**  
**Spring Newsletter**  
**Town Meeting and Other Updates**

March 11, 2025 Bridgewater Annual Town Meeting  
March 25, 2025 Pasquaney School District (SAU108) Annual Meeting  
April 8, 2025 BHVD Annual Meeting

The town meeting form is used principally in New England, where it has been the primary form of town government since the 17<sup>th</sup> century! Town meetings are historically significant as examples of direct democracy. This form of government allows the citizens of a community to participate directly in decision-making processes rather than through elected representatives.

**Town of Bridgewater's 2025** calendar year budget was presented with no significant increases from the prior year. There were three warrant articles recommended by the selectboard. Road paving, a new police cruiser, and repairs/upgrades to the town hall building were explained. Those recommended projects would be underwritten from surplus. If insufficient funds are determined by the annual audit, those items will be postponed.

Because of the startup costs of the new Pasquaney School District, and the economic mayhem in Washington, this was determined as a prudent course of action. The budget and warrant articles were voted in the affirmative.

[Bridgewater Annual Meeting minutes](#)

**Pasquaney School District 2025-2026:** The first annual meeting of **SAU108** was held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of March (3/25/25) at the Bridgewater-Hebron Village School. It was well attended by the voters of Bridgewater, Hebron, and Groton. There were a number of questions about the voting process as we transitioned to the new school district. Before we add the results of the meeting, it's prudent to review those concerns.

The SAU108 meeting format is the same as a typical town meeting. It differs from the SB2 form of voting which was instituted as an alternative form of

meeting by the state legislature in 1995. SB2 currently is the method of voting used by the Newfound Area School District from which we have withdrawn.

SB2 was an attempt based on the concern that modern lifestyles had made it difficult for people to attend traditional town meetings. Under SB2, a **first session**, called a “Deliberative Session,” is held about a month (late January or early February) prior to the election/voting. This first session is similar in many ways to a traditional town meeting. However, unlike a town meeting, while the wording and dollar amounts of proposed ballot measures may be amended at this deliberative session, no actual voting on the merits of those proposals occurs. The **second session**, held on a set election day (2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of March), is when issues such as the school budget and other measures, known as warrant articles, are finally voted upon. When adopting SB2, towns or school districts hold elections/voting on the second Tuesday in March to vote on electing officials, various budget items, and other matters presented on a paper ballot **as put forth from the prior deliberative session**. (Both SB2 and traditional “town meeting” formats allow for absentee ballots at their March elections.) At that time in March, under SB2 there are no discussions. Just pick up your ballot, enter the voting booth, and decide. For example, one town had 41% of the voters vote on the budget, but only 7% attended the deliberative session! A low turnout at the deliberative session can result in a less-informed voter base, and a particularly low turnout could mean a small voter base could amend and drastically impact the warrant articles the larger voting base sees at the polls.

The attempt to improve participation via SB2 is problematic at best. The reality in a sample of registered voter counts of 700, is that about only 13% attended the deliberative session. It gets worse as the number of registered voters increases. In a larger town of 6,500 registered voters, only 1% attended the deliberative session.

While both approaches have “pros and cons,” the promises of improving participation and decision making by SB2 has not come true. SB2 has been amended six times by the legislature and, in spite of the amendments, SB2 has a system that allows for a higher default budget if the current budget proposal is defeated!

**We believe in a meeting where you deliberate and vote at the same assembly in a participatory format. It is very important to attend your school and town annual meetings to have your voice heard.**

**SAU108 Outcomes:**

- Article 1: Election of officers (See the meeting minutes link below for results.)
- Article 2: Modified the SAU108 School Board from 3 to 5 members. (Ballot voted and passed in each town on March 11.) This will take effect March 2026.
- Article 3: Modified the minimum amount that a town must pay to support school funding from a complex formula in the original Articles of Agreement to 15 students. (Ballot voted and passed in each town on March 11.) For example, if a town student enrollment drops to 3, that town's share would be based on 15.
- Article 4: SAU108 Budget (Passed)
- Article 5: Teacher Contract (Passed)
- Article 6-15: Those articles were "placeholders" to allow, for example, to accept grants, establish trust funds, etc. (All passed.)

For more information see: [Draft SAU108 Annual meeting minutes](#)

**Bridgewater-Hebron Village District:** April 8 - Bridgewater Town Hall, Ballot Voting 5-7 p.m., Village District Meeting 7 p.m.

The Bridgewater-Hebron Village District owns and maintains the existing elementary school in Bridgewater. BHVD is a municipality that consists of the towns of Bridgewater and Hebron. It will lease the building to SAU108 on similar terms as was done with SAU4 for one dollar a year. As the school transitions to a K-8 model, more room is desirable for the upper grades. To that end, we have received a challenge grant of \$500,000, but only if we proceed with the addition of two classrooms this year. The estimated cost of the addition is \$1.2 million dollars. The bond issue proposed is for five years. The current 2024-25 budget has sufficient funds to amortize the note with **NO INCREASE IN THE BHVD TAX RATE** to either town in 2025-26. This will most likely be the case during the

period of the loan, as we strive to keep the BHVD rate stable. We paid off the original cost to construct the building in five years using the same approach.

**This is the warrant article to approve the two-room expansion:**

To see if the Village District will vote to appropriate the sum of \$1,750,000 for a two-classroom expansion, furniture and paving upgrades and to authorize the issuance of a bond for that purpose in that amount not to exceed six years in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Finance Act (RSA 33) and to authorize the Commissioners to issue and negotiate such bonds or notes to determine the interest rate thereon. Further, to raise and appropriate \$ 241,524 for the first year's payment on the bond. This appropriation is wholly contingent the district receiving a \$500,000 contribution from a private foundation for the above expansion. (Note: This appropriation is in addition to warrant Article #3, the operational budget.) Recommended by the Commissioners.

Let's be clear. If the BHVD voters decline the warrant, the \$500K will be awarded to another philanthropy group, not BHVD.

The additional classroom space expansion was pre-planned in the original building design, and the electrical, HVAC, and other systems were designed to accommodate this. Changes in curriculum now encourage more intensive activities in the upper grades. This expansion will allow for better integration for STEM: science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; project-based activities; languages; the arts; and other clubs. The new addition will free up space for multipurpose uses in the upper grade wing classrooms. More creative utilization will evolve when based on the ideas and collaboration between the superintendent, principal, teachers, parents, and community.

Finally, moving forward with this matter may open doors for other future philanthropic grants when they see the commitment of our small towns towards the continued support of educational opportunities for children and young adults.

The Bridgewater Selectboard\*\*

Terry Murphy, Maurice Jenness, Wes Morrill

\*\*In collaboration with:

The BHVD Board of Commissioners

Derry Riddle; Hebron, William White; Hebron, Terry Murphy, Bridgewater