NEW HAMPSHIRE MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

Your Town Meeting, Your Voice

Understanding What Local Government Does For You

Every year, New Hampshire residents gather for town meetings and elections to vote on budgets, elect officials, and decide what kind of community they want to live in. But before you cast your vote, it's worth knowing what role local government plays in supporting you, your community and the success of our region.

Closer Than You Think

Your local government isn't in some distant office building. Your select board or council members, planning board volunteers, and town clerk are your neighbors: they shop at the same stores, send their kids to the same schools, and drive the same roads you do. That closeness is exactly what makes local government work; your local officials are not just representing the community--they are part of it.

When the state passes a law in Concord, it's your local elected officials and municipal staff who figure out what that actually means for Main Street. They're the ones translating big-picture policy into something that works for your community, whether you live in a small rural town of 800 or a city of 45,000.

Local government gives residents direct access to decision-makers, real say how their community is run, and someone who will actually pick up the phone. In turn, local government can be the voice of its residents in Concord or Washington.

What Your Local Government Does for You

Here are some tangible examples of what your municipal leaders manage every day on your behalf:

- **Your Roads**: When potholes appear after a brutal New Hampshire winter, it's your town that fills them. Local officials plan road maintenance years in advance using capital improvement plans to spread out costs and avoid sudden tax spikes.
- **Your Water**: Clean drinking water and working sewer systems are an often invisible, but vital, service. Local governments maintain this infrastructure and are responsible for funding costly upgrades when state or federal standards change, often without state dollars allocated to support municipalities in the transition.

- **Your Safety**: Police, fire, and emergency services are locally funded and managed. When you call 911, the people who show up work for your town, and their staffing levels are decided at town meetings.

The Cause and Effect You Need to Know

Here's something many residents don't consciously realize: decisions made in the State House can directly affect your property tax bill.

When the state shifts costs to municipalities without providing any funding for operational needs like road maintenance or one-size-fits-all housing mandates, your town has limited options. It can cut services or raise property taxes. Although that is a direct consequence of state policy, it must be managed and paid for at the local level.

Leaning Into Local Government

At the state level, your senator or representative makes decisions for thousands of people. At the local level, your governing body members make decisions for your neighborhood, and you'll see them around your community.

Local officials are required by law to hold public hearings, post meeting minutes, and open their budgets to public scrutiny. You can attend a select board meeting or council meeting and ask questions directly.

At Town Meeting, you can: Vote on your municipal budget; approve or reject warrant articles; elect your local officials; and, at the deliberative session or business session, ask tough questions about where your tax dollars go. Every vote is your direct say in how your community is run.

New Hampshire's 234 cities and towns are not just places on a map. They are the foundation of how this state works.

The New Hampshire Municipal Association (NHMA) represents all 234 of New Hampshire's cities and towns, providing resources, training, and a collective voice at the State House to make sure local priorities are heard. Learn more at www.nhmunicipal.org.