



Chapter Governance

Introduction

Dedham has a rich history, and its governance system has been rooted in civic engagement and participation since its inception. First incorporated in 1636, Dedham established the Town Meeting form of government early, with the first Town Meeting held in August of 1636. Throughout Dedham's history the system of local government and the process of making public decisions has remained fairly consistent. Throughout this history, Dedham has taken many steps to formalize and professionalize its public services. In the early years of the Town, Dedham residents created a Board of Selectmen, now the Select Board, to carry out the general business of the Town. The first Town Manager was appointed in 2014. The Town currently employs roughly 325 employees across 22 departments and their work is complemented through dedicated resident volunteers on local boards, committees, and commissions.

The Governance topic of the Master Plan aims to outline the ways in which Dedham's local decision-making systems, citizen volunteers, and professional staff can be more effective, transparent, and accountable in the services they provide, and ensure that information and civic engagement is accessible to all of Dedham's residents. The chapter also provides an overview of the Town's financial health and position to meet upcoming needs. In many ways, the topic of governance sets the foundation for the implementation activities of the Master Plan which are the topic of the next chapter.

 **Summary**

To improve Dedham’s municipal connection with its residents and to improve the resident experience with municipal services.

 **Themes Highlights**

- The Town of Dedham is managed well with strong financial health and an engaged citizenry.
- Dedham’s residents are seeking improved communication, transparent processes, and more resident-focused services from the Town government.
- The strong record of engagement has many benefits, such as proactive review of the Town’s Charter, and proactive planning through the local bylaw requiring an update to the Town’s Master Plan every 10 years, but it also has created a hierarchy of boards, committees, and commissions that can be difficult to navigate and coordinate.

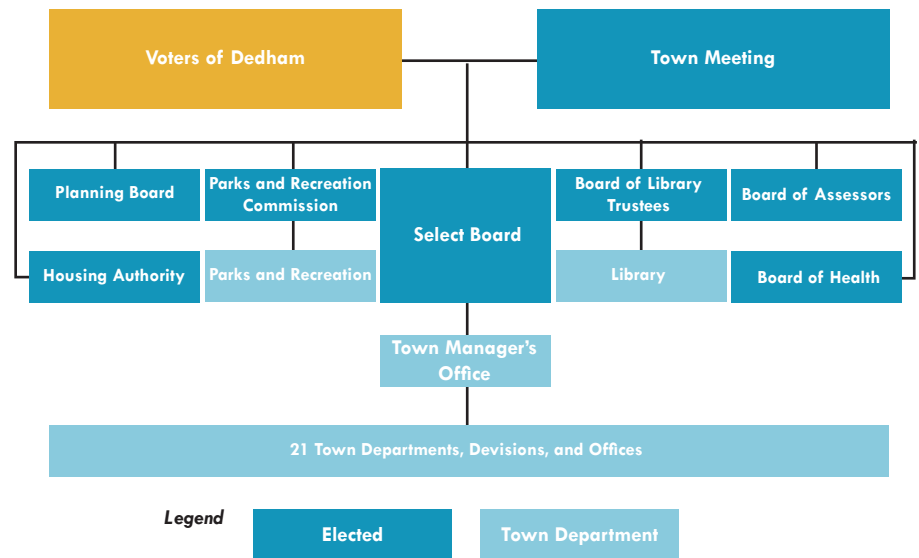
34 Active Boards, Committees, and Commissions



 **Goal/Strategy Highlights**

- Center residents in the delivery of Town services and provide the support and technology to keep services up-to-date.
- Proactively support and pursue more equitable representation for all decision-making and leadership roles in local government including Town and school staff, as well as boards, committees, and commissions.
- Advance Town workforce planning to cultivate and attract talented staff that can provide services that are responsive to shifting needs.

Simplified hierarchy of Dedham’s Boards and Departments



Companion and related plans and studies

- Town Charter Review Committee Report (2021)
- The Diversity Deficit: Municipal Employees in Metro Boston (2020)



Defining governance terms

Annual Budget

A comprehensive summary of expected expenses for all Town Departments and efforts in the upcoming or ongoing 'Fiscal Year'. The Annual Budget is approved by Town Meeting in the Spring and can be amended at Town Meeting in the Fall. Local Tax Rates are calculated and set so all Town financial obligations outlined in the Annual Budget are met. The Town of Dedham operates using a fiscal year that starts on July 1st and ends on June 30th.

Home Rule

Effective in 1967, Article 89 of the Massachusetts Constitution, also known as the Home Rule Amendment and a state statute known as the Home Rule Procedures Act enabled self governance for Massachusetts municipalities. The Home Rule Procedures Act states its purpose as to "grant and confirm to the people of every city and town the right of self-governance in local matters." The right of self-governance is classified in three ways:

- **Home Rule Charter Authority** - the authority of a municipality to adopt a charter without obtaining state legislative approval. Some municipalities do operate with non-home rule charters, such as special act charters.
- **General Home Rule Authority** - the authority of a municipality to exercise power locally with exceptions such as regulating elections, levying, assessing and collecting taxes, borrowing money or pledging credit, disposing of park land, governing civil relationships, and defining and providing punishment of a felony.
- **Home Rule Petition Authority** - the authority of the municipality to petition the state for legislation affecting only their locality. This is designed to empower the state legislature to authorize a municipality to act, but puts the decision-making power in the hands of the state. The municipality must file a home rule petition asking for the special legislation from the state. It is special because legislation cannot otherwise apply to only one municipality. It is a common practice.

Source: Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston

Town Board/Town Committee

A Town Board or Committee is a public body comprised of elected, appointed, or volunteer residents who have authority to create Town policy or conduct regular Town business for the specific task in which they oversee. Many Town Board and Committees derive their authority from the Town Charter and Massachusetts General Laws, while others are delegated authority from an existing Board or Committee.

Town Code

The main document that founded and governs the operations of the Town, and consists of the founding Town Charter and Zoning Bylaw. New policies that amend the Code are passed at Town Meeting.

- **Town Charter** - a legal document that establishes a municipality and the framework for local government setting forth the guiding principles for governance.
- **Zoning Bylaws** - the laws and regulations that oversee the use of property in the Town of Dedham.

Town Meeting

Town meeting is a form of direct democracy in which residents come together to legislate policy and budgets for a local government of a municipality. Town Meeting can be representative or open. Representative Town Meeting involves voting by residents to select town meeting members, whereas Open Town Meeting is open to all residents. Dedham has a Representative Town Meeting. The event of Town Meeting brings together the eligible voting members to make decisions to direct the local government.



Governance In Dedham Today

Governance themes

G1 Strong financial health

Dedham has one of the strongest financial positions of municipalities within the Greater Boston region. The strength remains despite the many recent stressors caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has caused major stress on state and municipal finances throughout Massachusetts. The Town's financial health provides the ability to borrow money at a low interest rate, a strong financial tax base, and an untapped property tax levy. In Massachusetts through Proposition 2 ½, local governments are restricted from raising taxes more than 2.5% of total taxable property and assets in the municipality. While some municipalities are up against this cap, restricting their ability to account for rapidly rising expenses, Dedham consistently taxes below its levy capacity. Another positive attribute of Dedham is its large commercial base, which shifts over 30% of the local tax burden away from its residents.

This financial health has reduced the number of financial stressors that some neighboring municipalities may be experiencing. Dedham does not rely heavily on State Aid to finance its infrastructure or services. State Aid accounts for only 8.7% of all revenues from the most recently audited fiscal year. This low percentage insulates the Town from the uncertainty of State revenues, budgeting, and aid allocations. Dedham's ability to

tax below its levy capacity, large commercial tax base, and low reliance on State Aid positions the Town with a very strong foundation for any unexpected financial challenges.

Another key indicator of a Town's fiscal health is the independent Credit Rating given to the Town by credit rating agencies. Both Standard and Poor's and Moody's evaluate private companies, securities, and government entities on their fiscal strength to predict their ability to pay their debt obligations, to signal how risky it is to loan money to that entity. While Dedham was not ranked by Moody's, it received the strongest possible score (AAA) by Standard and Poor's. This strong rating instills confidence for investors to purchase the Town's capital bonds at a very low rate. Thus, Dedham is in a strong position to meet upcoming capital needs as it can reasonably borrow funds without a high burden on taxpayers. Even with the availability of low interest bonds, Dedham has been able to use free cash for many of its recent capital projects. Dedham also has a history of fully funded pension and benefits contributions for its municipal workforce.

G2 Improving communication with residents

Improving communications with residents has been a priority for the Town of Dedham for over a decade. In Dedham's previous Master Plan process conducted in 2009, two of the five governance recommendations were intended to improve the Town's communication with residents. Since that time, Dedham has



taken creative strides to effectively communicate with residents. Dedham departments manage multiple Facebook and Twitter accounts, Board and Commission meetings are broadcast on DedhamTV, and the central Town social media accounts are active daily. As of this current fiscal year, the Town has hired a full-time Public Information Officer, who is responsible for keeping residents informed and keeping posted information fresh. This is a major step to identify the right tools to improve communication with residents.

The Town has also adopted a few tech tools to improve the way in which information is collected and displayed to residents. Dedham currently posts all its line-item budgets to OpenFinance, which is an interactive software that allows residents to explore salaries, purchases, capital, and other expenses for all Town departments. Dedham residents also have access to CGIS Citizen request, which is a system where users can report issues with Town properties and roads. If used properly, this ticketing system and work order system would provide a high level of service to residents. However, there is room for improvement as these tools are not widely known and are underutilized by residents. Additional resident engagement and technology tools should be explored and implemented to effectively communicate with residents in intuitive and convenient ways.

G3 High participation rates in Town Meeting

Dedham is one of 33 Massachusetts municipalities that use a Representative Town Meeting as its primary legislative body. Town Meeting members are elected through local elections to represent one of seven precincts across Dedham to terms that are between 1 and 3 years. Town Meeting typically occurs in the Spring and Fall, and as needed for Special Town Meetings. A good indicator of local government's functionality, is the attendance and participation of its legislative body. Dedham's requires a quorum of 170 voting Town Meeting members out of a total of 273 in order to conduct business. In recent history, Town Meetings have been very well attended and Dedham has not





needed to reschedule Town Meeting due to a lack of quorum. This enables Town business to be carried out and services to continue as expected.

G4 Proactive charter revisitation

The Town of Dedham's governing document is its Charter, first established in 1974 through the Home Rule Procedures Act outlined in Massachusetts General Law (MGL) Chapter 43B. Often in local government, the Town Charter is rarely revisited and outdated process or procedures can become an impediment to new practices or efficiencies. In Dedham the Town Charter and Town Bylaws are proactively revisited. Defined in the Charter, the Select Board possess the authority to appoint a committee to revisit the Town Charter (in years ending in '0') and the Town Bylaws (in years ending in '5').

Based on this appointment, Dedham's Charter Advisory Committee reviews the Town Charter as appointed, about every five years to ensure that local offices are effectively positioned to be successful and that residents are governed in their preferred system. The periodic assessment of the municipality's structure and charter is important to adapt with changing times and needs. Dedham's Charter is a foundational governing document that impacts all residents. A proactive approach to re-examine how it functions helps Dedham prepare for the future.

The most recent revision of the Charter began with the first Charter Advisory Committee meeting on October 30th, 2019. The Committee conducted a survey and held several rounds of deliberation which culminated in a list of recommended changes outlined in the Preliminary Charter Report. This Committee is typically given 10 months to gather information from residents, collect data, and complete a report on the actions deemed in the Town's best interest. However, due to the unforeseen circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee developed alternative methods to solicit feedback and gather the proper information. For the recommendations to be implemented, the report will need to be reviewed and approved by the Town Select Board, Town Meeting, and the Massachusetts Legislature.

These regular deliberations and recommendations are essential for good governance. Too often local government operates with an antiquated process or procedure because the Town Charter is outdated and out of touch with current needs and practices. Town Charters can also be difficult to revise. Having an established body periodically revisit and recommend Charter changes provides the Town a pathway to progress and enables residents to evaluate the status quo.



G5 Many layers of Boards, Committees, and Commissions

Dedham relies heavily on the input from its elected, appointed, and volunteer Boards and Committees. The Boards and Committees are staffed by residents of Dedham. There are currently 32 active Boards and Committees, each with their own mission and goals, and many coordinate with professional staff to assist carrying out directives. This, combined with Town Meeting, provides many opportunities for Dedham residents to become involved in the governance of the Town and contribute to the community.

Each Board and Committee plays a role in defining the overall direction of policies and practices shaping Dedham. But with this number of decision-making bodies, it can be difficult for the typical resident to understand how to get involved, or where to direct specific issues or feedback. The Boards and Committees are often overlooked when residents need assistance or need to voice their concerns or experiences. And many residents voiced their frustration with how these Boards and Committees operate, and how difficult it is to find information about their recent efforts.

Dedham government services benefit greatly from this relationship with Board and Committee representatives. With how essential Boards and Committees are for the operation and direction of the Town, residents should be able to participate and access information freely. Based on responses received through the Master Plan community surveys, many residents feel that the



demographics of residents serving on Dedham's Boards and Committees do not reflect the overall population of the Town. All of this points to the importance of providing the Board and Committee members with the framework and support needed to be as effective as possible in their roles.

On the following page is a diagram showing the Boards and Committees organized by the general area of responsibility. The areas of responsibility are Town Management, Health and Human Services, Finance, Land Use and Zoning, Community, Education, Open Space and Recreation, and Town Properties. The Boards and Committees in the diagram are also color coded to indicate whether the members are elected, appointed, or volunteer. The page that follows the diagram list the number of seats and the means of appointment for each Board, Committee, or Commission.



Dedham's Boards, Committees, and Commissions

Town Management	Health and Human Services	Finance	Land Use and Zoning	Community	Education
Select Board	Board of Health	Finance and Warrant Committee	Planning Board	Cultural Council	School Committee
	Housing Authority	Board of Assessors	Conservation Commission	Civic Pride Committee	
Bylaw Review Committee	Coalition for Alcohol and Drug Awareness	Commissioners of Trust Funds	Design Review Advisory Board	East Dedham Revitalization Committee	Board of Library Trustees
Sustainability Advisory Committee	Commission on Disability	Capital Expenditures Committee	Historic Districts Commission	Public Service Recognition Committee	Youth Commission
Charter Review Committee	Council on Aging Board		Zoning Board of Appeals	Open Space and Recreation	Town Properties
Transportation Advisory Committee	Human Rights Commission			Parks and Recreation Commission	Building, Planning, and Construction Committee
Active Transportation Work Group				Open Space and Recreation Committee	Endicott Estate Commission
					School Building Rehabilitation Committee

Legend

Elected
Appointed
Volunteer



Boards, Committees, Commissions	Seats	Means of Appointment
Active Transportation Work Group	5 members 3 Ad Hoc	Appointed
Board Of Assessors	3	Elected
Board of Health	3	Elected
Board of Library Trustees	5	Elected
Building, Planning & Construction Committee	7	Appointed
Bylaw Review Committee	5	Appointed
Capital Expenditures Committee	5	Appointed
Cable Advisory Committee	5	Appointed
Charter Advisory Committee	7	Appointed
Civic Pride Committee	More than 7 (Currently 20)	Appointed
Coalition for Drug & Alcohol Awareness	9	Volunteer
Commission on Disability	9	Appointed
Commissioners of Trust Funds	5	Elected
Conservation Commission	7	Appointed
Council on Aging Board	7 to 15 (Currently 9)	Appointed
Cultural Council	Up to 22 (Currently 18)	Appointed
Design Review Advisory Board	5	Appointed

Boards, Committees, Commissions	Seats	Means of Appointment
Endicott Estate Commission	5	Appointed
Finance & Warrant Committee	9	Appointed
Historic Districts Commission / Historical Commission	7	Appointed
Housing Authority	5	Elected
Human Rights Commission	13	Appointed
Open Space & Recreation Committee	7	Appointed
Parks & Recreation Commission	5	Elected
Planning Board	5	Elected
Public Service Recognition Committee	7	Appointed
School Building Rehabilitation Committee	7	Appointed
School Committee	7	Elected
Select Board	5	Elected
Sustainability Advisory Committee	7	Appointed
Town Meeting	273	Elected
Transportation Advisory Committee	9	Appointed
Youth Commission	5	Appointed
Zoning Board of Appeals	5	Appointed



Governance In Dedham today

Additional context and data

Town Charter and Bylaws

The Town Charter is a legal document that establishes a municipality and the framework for local government setting forth the guiding principles for governance. The charter defines the municipality's organization, the responsibilities of its officials, many of its powers, and its relationship to its constituents. The charter typically establishes whether a municipality is a city or a town, a classification that defines the organization of local governance and the relationship between the municipality and the state. Town by-laws, for example, require the approval of the state Attorney General, whereas city ordinances do not. (Source: *Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston*)

The Charter and Bylaws define Dedham's form of government as a Town and delegate authority and power to all of Dedham's institutions, departments, entities, boards, and commissions. Through a Home Rule Petition, outlined in the Home Rule Procedures Act (MGL Chapter 43B), Dedham's first Charter was adopted in 1974. The Town's Charter Review Committee assesses the Town Charter every five years.

Town Meeting

Dedham has a rich history, and its governance system has been rooted in civic engagement and participation since its inception. First incorporated in 1636, Dedham established the Town Meeting

form of government early, with the first Town Meeting held in August of 1636. Throughout Dedham's history the system of local government and the process of making public decisions has remained fairly consistent. Town Meeting is a form of direct democracy in which residents come together to legislate policy and budgets for a local government of a municipality.

Dedham is one of 33 Massachusetts municipalities that have a Representative Town Meeting form of government, which means each participant in Town Meeting is elected and serves a 3-year term. The Town is comprised of seven districts (also known as 'precincts') and 39 representatives are elected from each, totaling 273 representatives. The event of Town Meeting brings together the eligible voting members to make decisions to direct the local government. Town Meeting meets twice a year (and under special circumstances) to deliberate and decide on many important Town issues, many of which have direct budgetary implications. The Town Meeting agenda, known as the Warrant, is prepared and supported by the Town Manager and approved by the Finance and Warrant Committee before individual items are presented to Town Meeting.

Select Board

The Select Board is the head of the Town's executive branch. In the early years of the Town, Dedham residents created a Board of Selectmen, now the Select Board, to carry out the general business of the Town. The Select Board is an elected body responsible for policy directives and establishing guidelines for



Town departments and professional staff. The Select Board acts as the Licensing Authority of the Town and all local licensing laws and regulations fall under their purview. The Select Board appoints individuals to regional representative posts and many of the Town's Boards and Commissions, including the Zoning Board of Appeals, Charter Advisory Committee, Conservation Commission, Cultural Council, Historical District Commission. The Select Board is also responsible for appointing the Town Manager.

Town Manager

Throughout its history, Dedham has taken many steps to formalize and professionalize its public services. The first Town Manager was appointed in 2014. The Town Manager is the Chief Administrative Officer for the Town of Dedham and is responsible for the day-to-day oversight and operations of almost all of Dedham's government offices and departments (excluding Education, Parks and Recreation, and the Library). The Town Manager is responsible for all facilities maintenance, collective bargaining agreements, insurance, and carrying out all Town appropriations. The Town Manager is also responsible for preparing the Select Board and Town Meeting Agenda.

Town Boards and Committees

Dedham relies heavily on volunteer Boards and Committees. These are unpaid posts comprised of Dedham residents who work to solve Town's issues. Town Boards and Committees are filled by either election, appointment, or are purely voluntary and the term of each representative varies depending on the position.

Each Board and Committee fulfills a specific role, and many Town departments collaborate closely with a Board or Committee.

Town Departments and Staff

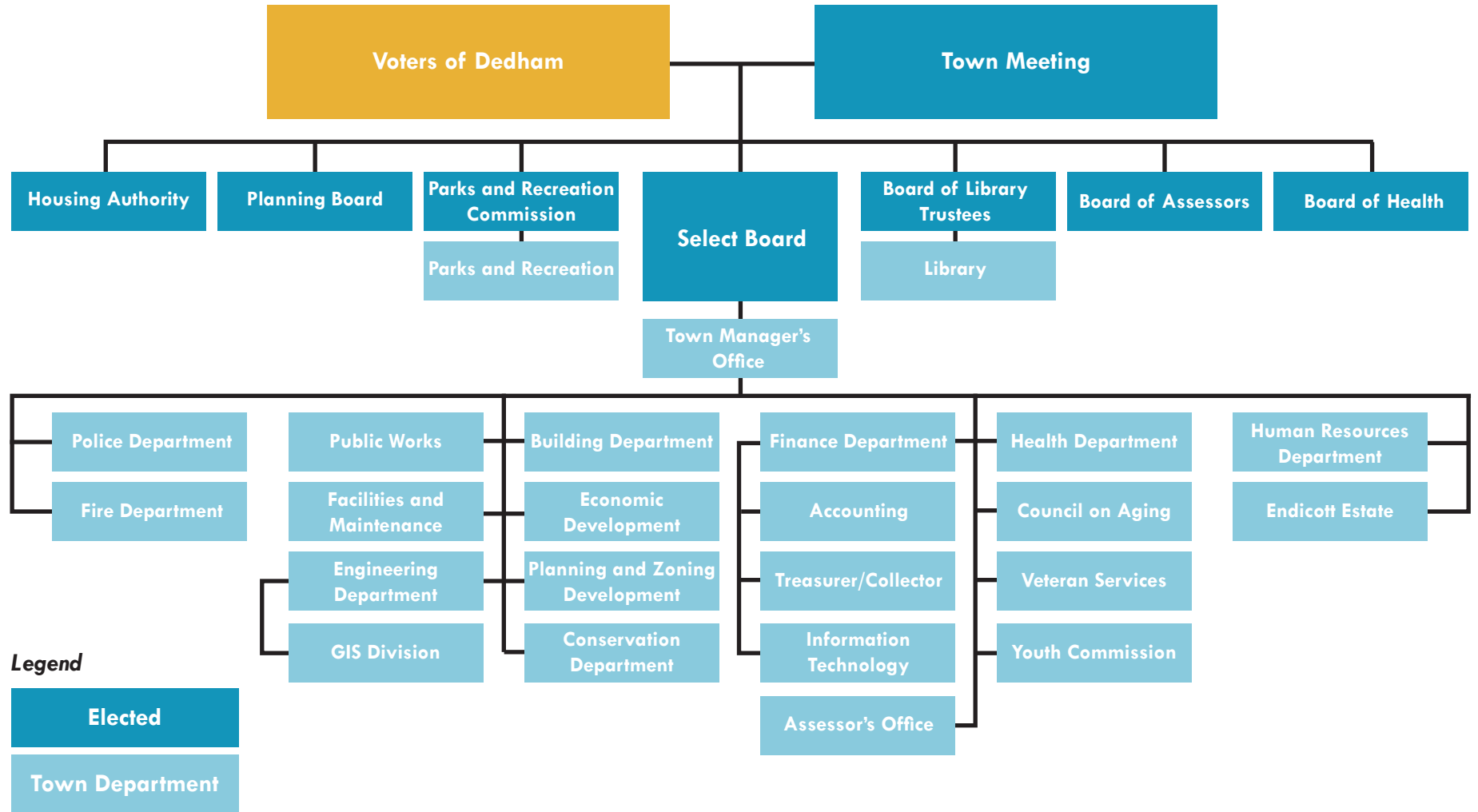
The Town's staff are organized in Departments. Several of the Town Departments are organized under Town Meeting and include the Select Board, Housing Authority, Planning Board, Parks and Recreation Commission, Board of Library Trustees, Board of Assessors, and Board of Health. The majority of the Town Departments are organized under the Town Manager's office. The organization of Town Departments is shown in the diagram on the following page. The Town currently employs roughly 325 employees across 22 departments.

Town Workforce Demographics

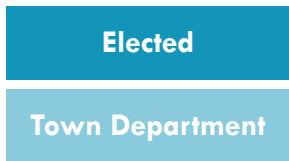
In 2020, MAPC completed a workforce demographic study in the Greater Boston Region titled "The Diversity Deficit: Municipal Employees in Metro Boston." The study found that city and Town employees are, as a whole, both older and Whiter than the region's labor force, as well as its population. It found that while Black workers are relatively well-represented among the municipal workforce overall, workers of Latinx or Asian backgrounds – the region's fastest-growing racial and ethnic groups – are frequently underrepresented across occupations. While the study did not provide data specific to Dedham, the overall conclusions are relevant based upon local observations. The study may also provide insights into the type of data that should be collected locally to assess workforce demographics.



Hierarchy of Dedham's Boards and Departments



Legend





Governance Community Priorities

As part of the Master Plan process, through the extensive community engagement process detailed in Chapter 1 including community surveys, community open houses, and other opportunities for community conversation, themes and priorities heard from the community were identified related to governance and are summarized here. While the themes and priorities heard from the community are reflected in the governance themes earlier in this chapter, these items deserve additional recognition and in some cases repetition due to the frequency these themes and priorities were mentioned by the community.

G1 Local tax rate concerns

Local tax rates and municipal finance ranked among the most critical challenges for Dedham residents. Of those surveyed, two-thirds ranked local tax rates and municipal finance in their top 3 challenges facing Dedham. Overall one of the top three goals expressed by residents is for the Town to be “fiscally responsible.”

Despite the overall health of Dedham’s finances, 2/3rds of survey takers ranked ‘local tax rates’ and ‘municipal finance’ among the top 3 challenges facing Dedham. 93% of survey takers listed ‘efficient public services and facilities’ as important or most important. This signals that the Town needs to do a better job informing residents of their successes. The average resident isn’t aware of the strong financial position, and the Town needs to improve how this information is presented to residents.

G2 Diversity of staff and representatives

The population of Dedham is more diverse than the composition and representation of its boards, commissions and staff. Residents surveyed voiced concerns about the demographics of Town staff and representatives on local Boards and Commissions and how they aren’t reflective of the diversity of Dedham.

One of most prominent themes of Dedham residents throughout all outlets of engagement was the concern of diversity in Town representatives and staff. While the data to evaluate this diversity is not readily available, many residents are concerned that the Town’s minority populations are underrepresented. Many residents are open to creative ideas to bring a broader resident base in Town decision making.

G3 Dated and infrequent communication

Many residents shared their frustrations with finding updated information on current local issues. Many residents want to stay informed, but don’t feel that they are able to access information in convenient or familiar ways or that the information they do find is outdated.

Despite the progress recently made in Town communications, there is room for improvement. Many residents have expressed



frustration with the current Town website. Despite going through a revision within the last 5 years, the Dedham Town website can be difficult to navigate and information isn't easy to find. The search function does not provide much assistance. Many pages have stale information and much of the information isn't manageable.

Residents also reported trouble understanding how Town government works and this information gap makes it challenging to understand Town decisions. The government documents that are available, don't provide adequate context or explain Town business in ways that simple

G4 Siloed boards and commissions

Residents were very vocal that the Town's Boards and Commissions operate in their own silos and could operate more effectively with greater collaboration. Boards and Commissions should work together to collectively plan and address Dedham's largest challenges.

One of Dedham's biggest assets is its Boards and Committees. When these decision-making bodies are effective, Dedham has many residents involved in addressing a whole range of community issues. However, through this process residents have voiced many concerns on the efficacy and accountability of the Board and Committees. Some Dedham residents feel that Boards and Committees are siloed and operate in their own space, without knowledge of the others that may be working on similar

topics. Residents would also like to see annual summaries of goals and activities to keep Boards and Committees accountable. Residents also want an easier way to keep tabs on what is happening, without having to pore through minutes that are inconsistently posted. If there are interesting projects or issues, residents should be aware, and the current system doesn't allow residents to stay engaged in an easy and convenient way.





Governance Goals and Strategies

Summary: To improve Dedham's municipal connection with its residents and to improve the resident experience with municipal services.

G1 Goal 1: Establish a comprehensive approach to centering residents in services and communications to improve transparency and effectiveness of Town government.

Strategy 1.1: Rebuild Dedham-ma.gov to be more useful for residents and become a more central resource for all Town Departments. Ensure the website has a useful search function, intuitive navigation, a comprehensive meeting calendar, is maintained effectively (internally), and is accessible in various languages and on multiple devices. Establish consistent standards and expectations for posting department materials and information

Strategy 1.2: Create a 'Dedham 211' phone line and email that can act as a central intake for all questions or municipal business. Create a system that prioritizes solving issues or directing residents to the right resource in the least number of steps. Appoint an ombudsman or create a mechanism for residents to give feedback when they have suggestions or receive inadequate service

Strategy 1.3: Set annual, monthly, and weekly Departmental Standards for resident outreach and contact. Ensure that each department is accessible and in touch with the public and their needs, while ensuring residents can stay informed on recent

projects without barriers. Train for effective resident engagement

Strategy 1.4: Undergo an external audit of documents, communication systems, programs and policies to identify opportunities to improve communication and resident-friendly services. Revise all resident-facing municipal documents, like the annual budget, to be resident-friendly and to better explain the services available to residents

Strategy 1.5: Engage staff to create an annual Citizens Academy, akin to the Dedham Police Academy, to give residents an opportunity to learn about each municipal department. Use this training program to help get more residents involved

Strategy 1.6: Use existing communication channels, such as the Town Talk newsletter, to highlight a department or Board each month to help educate the public and invite involvement

Strategy 1.7: Keep online participation options and hybrid board and committee meetings available to encourage more public participation



G2 Goal 2: Support investment in information technology to modernize the municipal workplace and resident experiences with municipal services.

Technology plays an integral role in our daily lives, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, many local governments, including Dedham, have been among the last to adopt new technology. There are many municipally focused tech tools that can improve the level of service that Dedham is able to provide to residents. Funding to improve Information Technology (IT) staff and Fiber infrastructure would support expansion of these tech tools to remain up-to-date, cost effective, and competitive with municipal service offerings.

Strategy 2.1: Separate the Information Technology function from the Finance Department and elevate into a separate department. Pull all IT department needs into a central IT budget. Separate IT capital investment into a separate Capital Improvement Plan that focuses on Dedham's future IT needs

Strategy 2.2: Continue to hire full-time IT Department staff to manage all day-to day municipal IT tasks and management of long-term needs and assets. Utilize IT staff to support website management, data collection, communications, cyber security and defense against ransomware, and other enhanced offerings and functions

Strategy 2.3: Focus on modernizing key municipal functions with tighter interdepartmental communication and processes, online intake and initiation, full-service municipal software, and up-to-date cyber security practices

Strategy 2.4: Adequately train Town Staff on implemented technology and offerings to ensure it is used properly. Offer training to residents on all tech tools and offerings

Strategy 2.5: Identify and address local equity issues for access to technology and internet services, the so-called digital divide





G3 Goal 3: Align Dedham’s representation among boards, committees, and Town Meeting members to reflect the social and racial demographics of the Town.

The perception that the composition of boards, committees, and Town Meeting members does not represent Dedham’s population is a barrier to participation for many of Dedham’s residents. By analyzing local workforce and representative demographics, Dedham can be transparent in identifying this gap. And by using an annual yield ratio study to monitor the election and appointment processes, Dedham would be able to see exactly where additional resources are needed to attract diverse applicants. This would allow the Town to set deliberate diversity goals, review progress annually, and identify specific policies or practices that may be obstacles to meeting the goals.

Strategy 3.1: Keep online participation options and hybrid board and committee meetings available to encourage more public participation. If possible (past April 2022), allow voting members of certain boards and committees to participate remotely. Ensure residents can easily access all hybrid meetings and a single protocol is followed when facilitating meetings. Schedule meetings at days and times accessible to the greatest number of residents

Strategy 3.2: Create and implement a process to gather data on the demographics of boards, committees, and Town Meeting representatives including gender, race, age, and other information

Strategy 3.3: Summarize this data in an annual Town Representation Report (Boards and Committees) that compares demographics to Dedham’s population. Assign this responsibility to the Town Manager’s office to clearly identify areas for improvement, set goals annually, and review progress

Strategy 3.4: Establish training, recruitment, and engagement practices to increase the diversity of Board and Committee representation (when appropriate) based on the findings of the data gathered on the social and racial demographics of the Town Representation Report including cultivating a culture of inclusion to retain racially diverse talent, and efforts to identify and reduce barriers for non-White residents to participate in local government



G4 Goal 4: Advance workforce planning, talent management, and align representation for Town employees.

The average age of the municipal public sector workforce is closer to retirement as compared to the general private sector workforce. Without active recruitment and career planning, municipal government may not have the human capital needed to fulfill its obligations to the community. Over the next ten years, Dedham has an opportunity to reinvent the way it does business and the level of service it provides. It will need a renewed supply of competent employees engaged through active workforce planning, ongoing talent development, and mentorship programs to meet projected workforce challenges, and to attract outstanding candidates that reflect the demographics of the community when positions turn over.

Strategy 4.1: Create and implement a process to gather data on the social and racial demographics of Town employees

Strategy 4.2: Summarize this data in an annual Workforce Demographic Report (Town Hall, Police, Fire) that compares demographics to Dedham's population. Assign this responsibility to the Town Manager's office to clearly identify areas for improvement, set goals annually, and review progress

Strategy 4.3: Streamline and refine hiring processes and improve outreach to find a broader audience of job seekers. Seek to diversify hires to align staff demographics with the Town based on the Workforce Demographic Report. Integrate best practices such as blinded review of resumes and initial candidates. Reevaluate job requirements and create more internship opportunities at the associate, undergraduate, and graduate level. Evaluate impact of hiring systems in place such as the Civil Service procedures for the Police Department.

Strategy 4.4: Embrace change and foster a culture of learning and continuous improvement. Enable staff to put together service improvement recommendations and the cost/benefits for each department. Support staff training opportunities aligned with service improvement recommendations

Strategy 4.5: Create an extended leadership team that meets monthly and includes professional development opportunities for department heads and junior staff. Implement standard talent development practices including performance reviews, continuing education, etc.



G5 Goal 5: Define expectations, goals, and development opportunities for boards and committees, and encourage increased collaboration and coordination between boards.

Deliberately defined expectations, communication and coordination processes, and required annual goals would enable Dedham's Boards and Commissions to more effectively operate and track accomplishments. A defined hierarchy and relationship to other Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Groups would improve effectiveness, communication, and transparency, while reducing redundancy. Residents may also be able to better direct feedback and participate in decision-making processes with these clear definitions.

Strategy 5.1: Create a formal hierarchy for all Boards and Committees. Group each Board/Committee by function and structure them with direct oversight from other Boards/Committees, centered on the Dedham Select Board

Strategy 5.2: Require each Board/Committee to draft an annual report that outlines the previous Fiscal Year's efforts, evaluates, establishes clear goals and steps to achieve. Conduct annual reviews of each board while updating annual goals. Require each Board/Committee to have an annual reorganization of officers

Strategy 5.3: Establish board and committee collaboration goals for those that may benefit from regularly scheduled joint meetings or other means of communication and coordination, return to goals annually and check for compliance and accountability

Strategy 5.4: Establish a formal system to encourage and support training for board and committee members through resources such as the Citizen Planner Training Collaborative

Strategy 5.5: Provide annual/bi-annual training to support Board members on such topics as Roberts Rules of Order, creating efficient agendas, and meeting facilitation



G6 Goal 6: Improve monitoring of residents' economic, social, and health needs to define and respond with appropriate social services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for municipal and social services that respond to the economic, social, and health needs of the Town's residents. The framework, tools, and coordination required to provide responsive services to meet resident needs should be built upon to better prepare for the future.

Strategy 6.1: Create a structure or department to oversee all Dedham Social Services. Create a relationship with existing services including the Council on Aging, Veterans' Services, Housing Authority, Libraries, and Dedham Youth Commission. Add capacity for broader Community Health work as discussed in the Public Health Chapter

Strategy 6.2: Build a strong relationship with the Public Health Department to collaborate on intergenerational programming, address economic contributors to resident health and improve civic engagement





Governance Implementation

Critical next steps

In the Implementation Chapter of the Master Plan, a more detailed level of actions is added under each goal and strategy. The actions are associated with responsible parties, a suggested timeframe, and potential external funding or resources that may be helpful, if available. The following critical next steps highlight several of these actions that would provide tangible steps toward progress on the top priorities that have been identified for governance.

G1 Conduct a Communications Audit

To understand exactly how to improve communications with residents, Dedham must conduct a thorough communications audit. Once all communications channels are accounted for, Dedham should evaluate the effectiveness of each of these channels and how they can be improved. For communication resources that can track usage, like the Town website or social media platforms, staff should evaluate how often these channels are utilized and organize a plan to improve access to all residents. Residents should play a large role in this audit and subsequent improvement plan. Dedham staff should create a targeted community survey and smaller focus groups to understand how residents prefer to be reached. The lead responsibility would be the Town Manager's Office in close coordination with the Select Board. The timeframe for this action would be near-term, to occur within 1 to 3 years of the conclusion of the Master Plan process.

G2 Centralize the Information Technology Budget

One of the first steps to creating a professional Information Technology (IT) Department is to understand what Dedham currently spends on IT. Many departments have internal IT costs or hire independent contractors for services that can be shifted under the authority of the new IT Department. Once all IT expenses are centralized, Dedham can evaluate its current IT assets, operations, and security. Then, incoming IT staff can begin to develop strategic short and long term recommendations to improve Dedham's IT capacity. The lead responsibility would be the Information Technology staff in close coordination with the Town Manager's Office. The timeframe for this action would be near-term, to occur within 1 to 3 years of the conclusion of the Master Plan process.

G3 Draft the first Town Representation Report and Workforce Demographic Report

In order to make progress on Dedham's diversity and inclusion goals, the Town Manager's Office should begin the process of drafting the Town Representation Report and Workforce Demographic Report. The first step is to set up a system to gather the necessary data in a way that is anonymous and can be efficiently replicated and repeated annually. Once demographic data is collected, the representation of Town Meeting, Town



boards and committees, and workforce can be compared to the population of the Town. After that, deliberate goals and efforts can be established as necessary. The lead responsibility would be the Town Manager's Office in partnership with the Town Clerk's Office. The timeframe for this action would be near-term, to occur within 1 to 3 years of the conclusion of the Master Plan process. Potential resources include racial equity programs, such as the Racial Equity Municipal Action Plan (REMAP) Program piloted in 2020.

The REMAP program is a partnership between the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston (FRBB), Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), and Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE)/Race Forward with local municipalities. The program is designed to help municipalities tackle structural and institutional racism transparently and effectively through municipal hiring, decision-making, and funding allocation. The pilot year of the program included Bedford, Framingham, Lynn, Natick, Revere, and Stoughton. The year-long effort will result in racial equity action plans for each municipality. The REMAP team plans to report on learnings and progress at the end of the pilot to inform others working to advance racial equity through municipal action.

