



UNH Students Join NHPR Town Meeting Initiative

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DURHAM, N.H. – University of New Hampshire graduate students have teamed up with New Hampshire Public Radio to get the word out to residents about what they will be voting on at their town meetings this March.

As official town warrants become available in the coming weeks, a team of UNH students in the graduate public administration and political science programs will create the Warrant Wizard, a unique tool that will give Granite Staters a view of town activity that they have never had before. They will be able to see all the articles related to certain types of spending, such as police, fire, land conservation or taxes. They also will be able to see the dollars that come along with those articles.

“The Warrant Wizard and Town Meeting 2009 Initiative provide a great service to New Hampshire towns because it allows residents to see what their town, as well as what other towns, are doing. It’s a great tool for people who want to look at what’s going on statewide and also provides the raw material for our students and others to do additional research,” said Jim Varn, director of UNH’s Master of Public Administration program.

UNH and NHPR anticipate that the Warrant Wizard will become active soon after towns post their warrants at the end of February. The Warrant Wizard is available at <http://www.nhpr.org/node/20971>.

In addition to the Warrant Wizard, a collaborative of groups has created an interactive map and database of information about town meetings throughout the state. NHPR’s Town Meeting 2009 Initiative includes the following features:

- Map: Community-level information about the municipal budget, items up for consideration at town meeting and other data.
- Town Meeting 101: A tutorial on the ins and outs of town meeting.
- Citizen Media: Stories submitted by citizens about their town meetings.
- Audio: Clips of all NHPR reports and programs on town meetings over the years.
- Historic Spending: Information on how individual town’s patterns of spending and raising revenue have changed over the past six years. The data was provided by the NH Center for Public Policy Studies.
- Warrant Wizard: UNH effort that allows residents to view town meeting warrants.

“The financial situation for towns is tough, and it’s going to get worse. Everyone is going to need to look at old circumstances in new ways. We hope we’re creating the tools for people to do that,” said Jon Greenberg, executive editor of NH Public Radio.

The Town Meeting 2009 Initiative is made possible by NH Public Radio, the University of New Hampshire, the NH Local Government Center, NH School Boards Association, NH Center for Public Policy Studies, NH Association of Regional Planning Commissions, the NH School Administrators Association and the NH Department of Education. For more information on the Town Meeting 2009 Initiative, visit

<http://www.nhpr.org/townmeeting/2009>.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 11,800 undergraduate and 2,400 graduate students.

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