



Winchester
News

A trusted and reliable source of local news

Business Plan
Winchester News Group
109 Wendell St.
Winchester, MA 01890

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Executive Summary

Winchester News Group (referred to from hereon in as the "Company") is a Non-profit Corporation at 109 Wendell St., Winchester, Massachusetts 01890 with the mission of providing trusted and reliable local news through a digital news site located at www.winchesternews.org.

Winchester News is a nonprofit, digital news site reporting local government and community news. With the loss of the Winchester Star and only one reporter occasionally covering Winchester news for the Daily Times Chronicle, Winchester lacked comprehensive, local news coverage. Winchester News fills the information gap with a trusted and reliable source of local news, helping prevent the spread of misinformation. It will be a community asset.

Bringing back a source of local news will also help increase civic participation and civil discourse. An educated electorate is key in a successful democracy. Recent examples of insufficient coverage of important news that led to misinformation and/or poor civic participation:

- Waterfield development. Misinformation was plentiful and a special election was held with no reliable source of information to educate voters. Voter turnout was 32%.
- Lynch override vote. Turnout for this special election was just under 25%. And as the Spring Town Meeting proved, there was some confusion among residents regarding ballot question 2 due to a lack of reporting.

The need for greater communication of town issues and trusted reporting resulted in the creation of a Town Meeting-appointed Communications Study Committee (added to the warrant due to a resident's petition). While this committee's focus was on how town government could improve communications, committee members realized an underlying cause was the loss of reliable and comprehensive local news source.

After completing their task, some former members began meeting to address the underlying cause. We have heard via email, social media and in person how much Winchester needs a community news source. These residents and now Board Members formed a nonprofit corporation, Winchester News Group, which has a fiscal sponsorship with the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN) while they prepare their own 501(c)(3) application. The nonprofit is also a member of INN and Lion Publishing.

For community outreach, the Board held a community meeting at the library in May 2023, had a table at 2023 Town Day, presented at the June 2023 Annual Meeting for the League of Women Voters, and presented at a Planning Board meeting in the summer of 2023. Since then,

Winchester News has held house parties, listening sessions (in person and via Zoom), coffee meetings, hung fliers in local businesses and public buildings, sent out a postcard and is finalizing a community survey to launch soon.

In addition Winchester News was accepted into INN's NewsMatch program and conducted a community appeal campaign from November 1 to December 31, 2023 raising \$18,000. Winchester News has also applied for and will continue to apply for local and National grants.

Goals

1. Be a trusted and reliable source of local news by reporting pertinent facts in an unbiased manner. Increase civic participation and civil discourse.
2. Raise enough local funding to hire professional staff at market rate wages to run the news site. Funding will also cover all expenses of the business, including insurance, legal and accounting.
3. Seek support through grants, philanthropy, advertising, subscriptions, and community donations, using a proactive, flexible and creative approach to meet our goal of building a sustainable business model.

Content

During its initial phase, content on Winchester News' digital site will likely include:

- Coverage of major issues facing the Winchester community
- Summary coverage of town departments, boards, and governance committees, from Assessors to the Zoning Board of Appeals
- Listing of community events
- Community generated content
- Featured local personalities, businesses and photographs

Soon, the site will expand to include:

- Calendar of community and government events or links to established calendars
- Emergency response logs (police, fire, etc.)
- Expanded coverage of local cultural, environmental, and historical events; and actions of town departments, committees, and boards
- Local sports and recreational coverage
- Letters to the Editor
- A column written by high school students in Winchester
- Advertising/sponsorship

Budget

The Board of Winchester News has a current yearly operating budget, including technology costs, staffing, insurance and legal and accounting costs, of about \$88,000. The budget will increase with additional staffing hires.

We expect to explore many different funding options, including advertising, sponsorships, grants, philanthropy and community donations, to help underwrite operating costs. Within a couple of years, we aim to make Winchester News self-sustaining through a combination of annual donations and other funding options.

Next Steps

The Board

The board is assembling a Fundraising Committee to expand our fundraising effort. The Committee will focus on larger donors, while also seeking grants and sponsorships. The Committee will also assist with the community-wide NewsMatch campaign for 2024. Our fundraising goal and ask from potential donors is to raise enough funding to hire a full time editor and some additional freelance writers. This could cost an additional \$60,000 or more. We would also like to hire a business development (or fundraising) professional at least part time (or on a contractual basis) and purchase donor management software. Our longer term financing goal is to raise enough funding to have 2-3 years operating expenses.

Company & Business Description

Company Purpose

Winchester News is a nonprofit, digital news site for Winchester, Massachusetts. It provides hyper-local, trusted and reliable community and government news for Winchester residents and businesses. The news is mostly provided by professionals paid market rate wages, along with community contributions. It will be a community asset mostly funded by the donations of its readers.

The vision is to increase civic participation and civil discourse locally by providing an unbiased, factual news source to educate all of Winchester about what is happening in the community. Such a service is necessary since Winchester is almost a news desert, where it is difficult to access comprehensive and reliable local community news.

The loss of the Winchester Star and the lack of timely, comprehensive coverage by the Daily Times Chronicle has created such a news desert. Winchester News will have little competition and will need to focus on providing trusted news and raising enough funding from multiple sources to be sustainable.

Mission/Vision Statement

The mission of Winchester News is to be a trusted and reliable source of local news. Our vision is to fill the information gap to increase civic participation and improve civil discourse.

Core Values

To provide free, factual, unbiased, trusted and reliable local government and community news supported by the businesses and residents of Winchester, MA through a nonprofit organization structure.

Team & Org Structure

The Company is a non-profit corporation under Massachusetts state laws and headed by a Board of Directors (Board) which includes Tara Hughes (President), Peter Casey, Emily Costello, Allison Swallow (Treasurer) and Joyce Westner (Clerk). The Winchester News Group Board members are Winchester residents, some of whom were members of the Communications Study Committee. We have varying backgrounds, but all of us wish to establish a sustainable, nonprofit community news source for Winchester.

Board of Directors

Peter Casey

Peter Casey is the former director of news and programming at WBZ News Radio, the founder of Peter Casey Communications, and a senior strategic communications advisor with significant experience in media, management, and multi-platform communications. He advises senior corporate leaders on communications strategies, branding, storytelling and content creation, social media, crisis communications, and media training.

Emily Costello

Emily Costello is the Director of Collaborations + Local News at The Conversation, a mission-driven newsroom that partners with academic experts to explain the news. Beginning in the summer of 2023, Emily is working on an initiative to regionalize The Conversation's model to better support local news organizations. She formerly served as the editor of the Winchester Star and the Newton TAB. Emily is a graduate of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

Tara Hughes, President and Founder

Tara Hughes is a former practicing attorney and Town Meeting Member. She was appointed to the Communications Study Committee created by Town Meeting in 2021. Previously Tara was an active volunteer in the Winchester school system. She is interested in supporting a vibrant democracy through an informed citizenry.

Alison Swallow, Treasurer

Alison Swallow is a current Town Meeting member. With a background in the financial services industry, she has served on the Winchester Finance and Capital Planning Committees, and as

treasurer of Family Action Network of Winchester (FAN) and various Winchester town election campaigns. She has two children in the Winchester school system.

Joyce Westner, Clerk and Founder

Joyce Westner spent her professional career writing materials, both for newspapers as a stringer, and as a technical training materials developer and project manager. She was the corporate clerk for Brattle Systems, Inc., and held offices in various non-profits, including the Winchester Historical Society. With a Northeastern University degree in journalism, she specializes in publicizing the activities of local community groups.

Advisory Board

Casey Bauer

Casey Bauer is a Town Meeting Member, and 2021-22 Town Meeting Communications Study Committee member. She lives and works in Winchester, and has two children in Winchester Public Schools. Previously a non-profit development director and project manager at Harvard, and now at a local non-profit, Kids' Corner, she is also an active volunteer, including as a board member for the Town Common Task Force.

Sally Dale

Sally Dale is a 30-year resident of Winchester. She and her landscape architect husband Dennis moved to Winchester in 1994 when their daughter Chris was two. Sally is a Town Meeting member and served as vice-chair of the Winchester Planning Board from 2021 to 2024. She has over 20 years' experience in fundraising operations and stewardship, including 16 years in major gifts stewardship and board relations for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, as part of a 40-year career with for-profit and nonprofit organizations.

Connor Graham

Connor recently moved to Winchester with his wife and son and is a member of the Winchester Family Action Network (FAN). With over a decade of experience in the tech industry, Connor brings valuable expertise to the community. He has also written for hobbyist publications and student newspapers. As an avid rower at Community Rowing Inc. and a passionate hiker, backpacker, and camper, Connor is a strong advocate for the outdoors.

Shukong Ou

Shukong Ou is a Town Meeting Member for Precinct 2 in Winchester, and participated in the Winchester Communications Study Committee. He helps out with local organizations such as the Farmers Market, Winchester Community Music School, Winchester Cultural Council, and Winchester Cultural District. Shukong provides tech support for local organizations and is an advocate for the privacy of personal information.

Product and Services Line

Product and Service Offering(s)

The Company is prepared to introduce the following product and service to the market: Digital news reporting: providing trusted and reliable, independent, hyper-local news via a website at www.winchesternews.org.

Pricing Model

The Company has completed a thorough analysis of other hyper local nonprofit news providers. Keeping in mind their models and the costs of customer acquisition, we have decided on the following pricing strategy:

Winchester News aims to be a free digital news source, relying on donors, grants, sponsorships and philanthropy. However, if that proves to be unsustainable, we would likely have to switch to a subscription model with the most critical news being free of charge and extra coverage and events/programs for subscribers.

Market Analysis

Target Market

The Company's major target market is Winchester residents and businesses. However, our smaller target market is likely engaged residents looking for information and families with school age children.

Winchester News would likely be a digital only, local news source for Winchester, Massachusetts. We would hope to reach as many residents and local business owners as possible.

Winchester has a residential population of 22,875 based on projections from the 2023 census, with a .51% growth rate. The average household income in Winchester is \$227,899, with about 45% having a graduate degree. 95.4% of households have a computer and 93.5% have a broadband internet subscription (as of 2021). Our largest minority community is the Asian community with over 15% of the population.

Location Analysis

Winchester residents have few options for local news. The Winchester Star merged with the Arlington Advocate to become the Advocate and Star, which has little to no Winchester coverage. The Advocate and Star has been sold again with little likelihood for improvement.

The Daily Times Chronicle, a privately owned daily (5 days a week) out of Woburn, has one reporter covering Winchester. Winchester, however, receives limited coverage and some stories are not always timely. Therefore, Winchester residents are in need of comprehensive, local news coverage. Many residents turn to the town's website or more likely Facebook.

Winchester News would have minimal competition in hyper local news.

Marketing Plan

Positioning Strategy

Since Winchester has limited comprehensive local news, Winchester News will have little competition. Our target audience is the residents and businesses in Winchester. Therefore, marketing will consist of the use of an email newsletter to notify our audience about new articles on the site, social media posts, flyers posted in businesses and public buildings, mailers sent to all residents, cross collaboration with other groups in town, word of mouth and events (Town Day, Farmer's Market, etc.).

Legal Notes

Legal Structure

Winchester News Group is a nonprofit corporation organized under Massachusetts law. There is a Board of Directors. It will be doing business as Winchester News. Winchester News Group has a fiscal sponsor, the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN), and plans on working towards obtaining its own 501(c)(3) IRS determination.

Legal Considerations

The Company will soon apply to obtain its own 501(c)(3) status. The organization has applied to register with the Attorney General's office and is awaiting a response. It must maintain at all times, even under fiscal sponsorship, its status as a nonprofit corporation. The Company must file all state and federal tax forms and an annual report.

The Company also plans to obtain and maintain a portfolio of insurance policies, including directors and officers and media liability. We are in the process of obtaining insurance.

Financial Considerations

Startup Costs

The initial startup costs goal to raise enough funding to hire an editor part time, freelance writers, purchase insurance and pay some minor operational costs has been met. Now, the Company is

looking to raise additional funding to add a Business Development or Fundraising professional, full time editor and additional freelance writers and pay all additional operating costs on an ongoing basis. The initial goal would be to raise approximately \$150K.

Funding

The Company is looking to obtain funding through donations, sponsorships, advertising, grants and philanthropy. If needed, the company may have a subscription structure. The Company hopes, however, to keep crucial news free of charge and to provide additional news coverage (articles and/or videos) and events and/or business discounts to subscribers.

Appendix

- *2024 Budget*