



**TOWN OF
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August 21, 2025. For Immediate Release:

Art Afloat – Lighted Boat Parade Coming to Ashfield Lake

(Ashfield, MA.) As the days get shorter and darker, festivals of light are common across the world. In September of next year – that’s 2026, the Town of Ashfield is thrilled to be organizing and hosting a Lighted Boat Parade and Competition on Ashfield Lake. After dusk, boats will complete a circuit on the water as the audience looks on. We’ll have an emcee, food vendors, and cash prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners.

This is a public art festival funded by a grant from the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) *Making It Public for Massachusetts Municipalities* program. Applications are competitive: 12 selected projects will receive \$1,000 each to create fantastic, illuminated art installations for the parade.

“Art is for everyone,” said Town Librarian Sarah Hertel-Fernandez, “and everyone can make art. We’re so excited to have this opportunity to pay artists for their experience and time.”

Applicants can be single artists, or a team working together. The base of your installation can be a canoe, kayak, rowboat, or similar paddle watercraft. Small electric trolling motors are allowed. As long as there is a team member over 18 who is the main contact for the crew, children and teens are welcome too! The goal is to transform your boat: the main feature of your artwork should be lit-up, and it should be visible and dazzling to folks along the shore.

“Gathering to see floating artworks seems so well-suited to Ashfield and our town’s history of unique events,” said Town Clerk Alexis Fedorjaczenko. “Our team is conceiving the Lighted Boat Parade as an inclusive and whimsical way to connect people in a celebration of light.”

Anyone residing in the United States may apply, but Ashfield residents will be awarded a bonus point when our jury assesses applications. Ashfield and the surrounding hilltowns are home to a fabulous number of creative people working across various mediums. Do you work in set-building for theater? Do you create puppets? Are you a sculptor? Are you a fabricator, a maker of any kind? This is for you. Start dreaming, start planning. Applications go live in January 2026; proposals are due on March 31, 2026.

A lot will go into realizing this event, and in addition to artists who apply for grants we’re looking for volunteers to fill a variety of roles leading up to and at the event. You can find the volunteer interest form at ashfield.org/publicart, where we’ll also be releasing more information later this fall and winter. Sincere thanks to the Parks Commission, Fire Department, and Police Department for their support in developing this event and ensuring it will be safe for everyone.

Mark your calendars for the Ashfield Lighted Boat Parade on September 12, 2026, and stay tuned for more information!