



Artwork by [Dave Russo](#)

Call for Temporary Public Art: Lighted Boat Parade on Ashfield Lake



Town of Ashfield, Massachusetts
January 5, 2026

Welcome!

The Town of Ashfield, Massachusetts is excited to put out this Call For Temporary Public Art. We are accepting applications to create lighted art installations built onto small boats that will participate in a Lighted Boat Parade on Ashfield Lake the evening of September 12, 2026.

A Selection Committee will award \$1,000 each to 12 selected individuals or teams/groups.

The Lighted Boat Parade is a celebration of art, culture, and our local landscape meant to connect people at Ashfield Lake. The site is a picturesque rural lake adjacent to Belding Memorial Park in Ashfield — both the lake and the park are centerpieces of this small Western Massachusetts town. The Lighted Boat Parade will offer a unique and magical way to experience the charm of Ashfield. The parade will be free for spectators and all are welcome.

We are looking for innovative floating artworks that transform Ashfield Lake into a festive, visually striking performance at dusk. Lighting that is bright enough to see from the shore must be a key element of each piece. During the parade there will be time for each artwork to be seen and featured individually by an emcee. The effect of having twelve lighted artworks on the lake together will be an artwork itself.

This call is open to everyone, novice or seasoned, with experience in visual arts, sculpture, design, creative technology, public art, performing, and other related fields. Individuals or teams may apply. The person creating the art does not have to be the person appearing in the parade. You do not need to own your own boat.

Thinking of applying for a \$1,000 grant to participate in Ashfield's Lighted Boat Parade? This document will guide you through the criteria and application process for this competitive opportunity.

Lighted Art Boats in Ashfield's Lighted Boat Parade

Proposals are due: March 31, 2026

proposals that will be selected: **12 Individuals/teams**

Total award per grantee: **\$1,000**

All art boats will be eligible for additional **prizes** on parade night

All art boats will be introduced by an emcee and **featured** individually

Parade date: the evening of **September 12, 2026** (rain date 9/13/2026)

Eligibility

Open to any residents of the United States.

Open to individuals and teams. It's possible that one person could do the entire project on their own, or a team could include one or more people developing the concept, making the artwork and/or appearing in the parade to pilot the boat and/or perform. Artistic teams of all ages are welcome to apply, the main contact for the team must be age 18 or older.

Applicants living or working in Ashfield are encouraged to apply.

One application per individual or team, please.

How to Apply

It's free to apply, use the Application Form available at Ashfield.org/publicart.

Applications are due by March 31, 2026 (5pm).

Artwork Scope & Materials

Selected participants will receive \$1,000 to create lighted art boats and present their boats in the September 12, 2026 Lighted Boat Parade on Ashfield Lake (rain date September 13, 2026).

We are looking for artworks that use or alter boats in ways that are creative and engaging. Your art boat could be abstract, it could have a theme, might incorporate kinetics, or performance, or could also involve sound. It does not need to include all of the above, we are looking to include a range of selected works in a variety of styles and with different approaches.

The base of your art installation can be a canoe, kayak, rowboat, or other similar paddled watercraft. No paddle boards. Electric trolling motors (Max 5 HP) are allowed. Multiple watercrafts can be used in a single proposal if desired. Each boat used in an artwork must have a throwable rescue rope fully attached and ready for crew deployment.

Key design concepts for participating artworks are: **Light It Up**, **Make It Special**, and **Keep It Safe**, and they align with the Evaluation Criteria that will be used by the Selection Committee to choose participating artists/teams (see page 6).

Key Design Concepts		
Light It Up	Make it Special	Keep it Safe
Alignment with Evaluation Criteria		
Visual Impact	Creativity Transformation	Safety
Qualifications		

Light it Up: The boat parade will be at dusk and after dark. Boats should be well-lit for visual appeal and safety, and the main features of your artwork should involve lighting so that it shows well at night for spectators on the shore. Keep in mind:

- No fire or fireworks.
- Lighting and power sources should be able to safely come into contact with water.
- Lines, light strings, and bunting shall be fully secured every 4" or taut or of a breakaway material as much as possible to prevent entanglement during windy or other adverse conditions.

Make it Special: Your boat should be creatively transformed. Think “wow” factor and integrate visual, sculptural, aesthetic, and/or performance elements. We are not looking for just a string of lights around your boat. We are looking for creative concepts that will appeal to a broad audience in a festive, all-ages celebration of art, culture, and nature. Keep in mind:

- Large flat surfaces can act as a “sail” even in light wind.
- Materials to avoid: anything that could easily fall off, leak, or contaminate the water such as glitter or interior based paints. Paint must be fully cured before the start of the parade.
- We encourage the use of recycled or repurposed material where appropriate.

Keep it Safe: Art boats should be safe to be piloted and maneuvered through the entire parade course without pieces falling off or risk of capsizing into the lake. ****See the Safety section below for an overview of safety guidelines and the requirements for selected artists.**** Keep in mind:

- On parade night, everyone in a watercraft is required to comply with all safety protocols including wearing a Coast Guard Approved Personal Floatation Device (lifejacket).
- People of all ages can be members of the artistic team but there are age requirements for those piloting the boat.
- Materials should not pose a hazard to you or others on the water.

The Town of Ashfield will check in with each selected Artist during the month of July to identify any support needed and to ensure that work is progressing within scope.

Location & Parade Route

Belding Memorial Park is a 13-acre public park adjacent to Ashfield Lake. This land now called Ashfield is the traditional homeland of the Nipmuc Tribal Nation and other indigenous communities whose stewardship we now benefit from. The lake and park are used by residents and visitors for recreation and relaxation in all seasons – in the warmer months the lake draws swimmers, boaters, anglers, walkers, and picknickers, and in the winter months the lake invites many other activities including ice fishing, skating, and even cold water swimming.

The parade route occurs entirely on the water. A single lap around the route is approximately 0.4 miles (720 yds) long, and time-permitting boats will go around more than once. Boats will stay on the water until prizes have been announced, and we anticipate the parade to last about an hour.

The parade begins at the Belding Memorial Park boat ramp located off Main Street, then proceeds as follows:

- across the lake towards the Ashfield Lake House beach,
- by the Ashfield Lake House beach and restaurant,
- by the Town Beach where anyone can sit or stand,
- past the dam where spectators can also stand.

The parade route will be approximately 60-100 feet from shore where it follows the lake edge, and approximately 400-500 feet from shore when crossing the lake. See images including a sketch of the route in *Supplemental Materials* (pages 9-11). The parade will be visible from other places around the lake at a greater distance.

Safety

The Lighted Boat Parade is meant to be a fun and entertaining public art event but safety is our main priority. To ensure a smooth and enjoyable evening and the safety of all participants, spectators, and emergency personnel, safety protocols are in place. The Town of **Ashfield Public Safety Team** will prepare an emergency response plan and will be onsite at the event for traffic control, crowd management, and emergency rescue/response should it be required.

This Call for Art outlines boat types that can/cannot be used, and requirements and limitations for fabrication (see *Artwork Scope & Materials*, above). This includes no fire. *Safety* will be considered by judges when reviewing proposals (see *Evaluation Criteria*, page 6).

The following will be required:

- Selected artists will sign a **Grant Agreement** in May 2026. The Grant Agreement includes all terms and elaborates on the safety protocols summarized in this section; it is viewable on [Ashfield.org/publicart](https://www.ashfield.org/publicart).
- **Each boat will have one Captain in charge of the boat, and anyone else who will be on the boat during the event will be Crew,**
 - Participating artists will identify Captains and Crew by July 31, 2026.
 - Captains must be age 15 or older.
 - Crew may include younger children if accompanied by an adult age 18 or older with a ratio of one (1) adult to no more than two (2) children.
 - All Captains and Crew are required to provide their own and wear a Coast Guard Approved Personal Flotation Device (lifejacket) while in the Lighted Boat Parade.

We will provide boaters with a submersible safety whistle and LED/Glow Stick light to attach to their lifejacket.

- Captains and Crew should be comfortable and familiar with their vessels and should be able to maneuver their boats safely and confidently during the parade in dark conditions.
- Artists, Captains, and Crew (or their parent/guardian) must complete Liability Waivers and Safety & Conduct Agreements by August 31, 2026.
- Participating artists will complete an **Artwork Safety Checklist** by August 31, 2026 affirming that the completed or near-completed artwork complies with requirements and is viable on water.
- Captains and Crew must attend a **required briefing** the afternoon of the Lighted Boat Parade and the Town of Ashfield will conduct a **safety check** on each boat used in the artwork.

Weather Considerations

The boat parade will go on as planned if there is drizzle/light rain. In case of heavy rain, lightning, high winds, or other unsafe weather conditions for boating on Saturday, September 12, 2026, the parade will be rescheduled to the following day Sunday, September 13, 2026. The weather date will be called by 11:00 a.m. on the morning of September 12, 2026.

Grant Budget

The grant award is inclusive of all project costs including, but not limited to, materials and fabrication, lighting components, artist's fee, transportation. First payment is made to all artists after signing the Grant Agreement. Final payment is made after the artwork's participation in the Lighted Boat Parade. Participation in the parade is required.

Payment Breakdown		
May 2026	\$500	First payment
September 2026	\$500	Final payment
	\$1,000	Total Award

Selection Process

Applications will be reviewed for completeness by staff. Complete applications will be evaluated by a 5-person Selection Committee of local and regional experts with a variety of backgrounds in visual arts and boatbuilding. Input may be requested from advisors or Town departments.

The Selection Committee will review proposals in April 2026 and will select participants based on the Evaluation Criteria (page 6).

Evaluation Criteria

Successful proposals must demonstrate:

- **Visual Impact:** The proposed lighting elements will be sufficiently bright and visible for onlookers to enjoy from the shore in the dark. (1-4 points)
- **Creativity:** The proposed artwork incorporates original creative ideas that are likely to engage or appeal to audiences of all ages at this public art event. The Lighted Boat Parade is a celebration of art, culture, and our local landscape meant to connect people at Ashfield Lake. (1-4 points)
- **Transformation:** The proposed artwork utilizes or alters the boat(s) in ways that are innovative and engaging. (1-4 points)
- **Qualifications:** The applicant/team has relevant creative experience and practical skills to accomplish the proposed project. (1-4 points)
- **Safety:** The proposed materials are safe and appropriate for the water and the proposed design is likely to remain upright and afloat. (1-4 points)

Optional:

- **Local Participation Incentive:** Applicants who live or work in Ashfield will be awarded 1 extra point as an incentive to apply.

Key Dates

2026	
January 5	Request for proposals open
March 31 (5pm)	Deadline to submit proposals
April	Selection of proposals
May	All applicants notified of status. Grant Agreements signed, first payment, artmaking begins!
June to August in July by July 31 by August 31	Creation of lighted art boats Ashfield check-ins with Artists Artists identify who will be on the boat during the parade Artists, Captains, and Crew complete safety requirements
September 12	Lighted Boat Parade! Rain date: September 13 <i>Pre-parade in-person Captain's meeting, safety briefing & inspection</i>
After the event	Final payment 2-3 weeks after event

Boat Ramp & Lake Access

All watercrafts must enter and leave the lake via the boat ramp area. Volunteers will be available to help with this process. The boat ramp is not a concrete boat ramp but rather just a shallow sandy area to load and offload boats. The dirt road to the access area is about 300 feet down a sloping hill with a gradual turn. There is limited room to turn a trailer around so trailers should be backed down. Smaller, lighter boats may be unloaded in the parking lot and carried down a footpath to the access area if desired. See images in Supplemental Materials.

Don't Own A Boat?

We suggest looking at local sources for used boats or finding someone in your network who can donate or loan a boat to you. We have received offers from private individuals to loan boats to participants on a first come first serve basis, with a signed waiver. This would be arranged between artist and boat owner and will not involve the Town of Ashfield as an intermediary except to put you and them in touch.

Parade-Night Prizes

In addition to the funding provided through this call, and the prestige and goodwill of being in the Lighted Art Boat Parade, an awards ceremony will take place at the end of the evening while the art boats are still in the water. Parade-night prizes are separate from and in addition to the grants offered through this Call for Art.

A jury will select their personal favorites and will award Ashfield Lake House gift certificates and cash prizes for First, Second, and Third place. The Mill at Shelburne Falls will award local gift cards to their three favorite boats in categories of their choosing, and selected artists will be offered an incentive to participate in the Moonlight Magic *Lighted Boat Parade* in Shelburne Falls in November 2026.

More Than Boats

While art boats are the main attraction, we are working on several creative collaborations to help make the evening special.

Other Ways to Help

We need event volunteers for several roles on land, [use this link to express interest](#) or visit Ashfield.org/publicart.

Contact

Email questions to publicart@ashfield.org or call the Town Clerk at (413) 628-4441 x5.

Ownership

All ownership and copyright of the work created is retained by the artists. All boats must be removed after completion of the Lighted Boat Parade unless prior permission is given. The artist grants the Town an irrevocable license to make reproductions of the artwork for non-commercial purposes.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Town of Ashfield is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity provider and employer. The Town does not discriminate regarding programs or employment based on race, gender, color, gender identity, gender re-assignment, pregnancy, disability, religion, national origin, national ancestry, sexual orientation, genetics, military background, or age.

Thanks

This project (including the grants to artists) is made possible by a grant from the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) *Making It Public for Massachusetts Municipalities* program.

Thanks also to Principal Sponsor Greenfield Savings Bank, and to Ashfield Trails, Inc., The Mill at Shelburne Falls, and Ashfield Lake House.

We have applied for funding (awaiting award notification) from the Ashfield Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

Lighted Boat Parade artwork by Dave Russo. Poster Design by Nan Parati.

Supplemental Materials

Town Beach



At Town Beach, looking across at the Ashfield Lakehouse

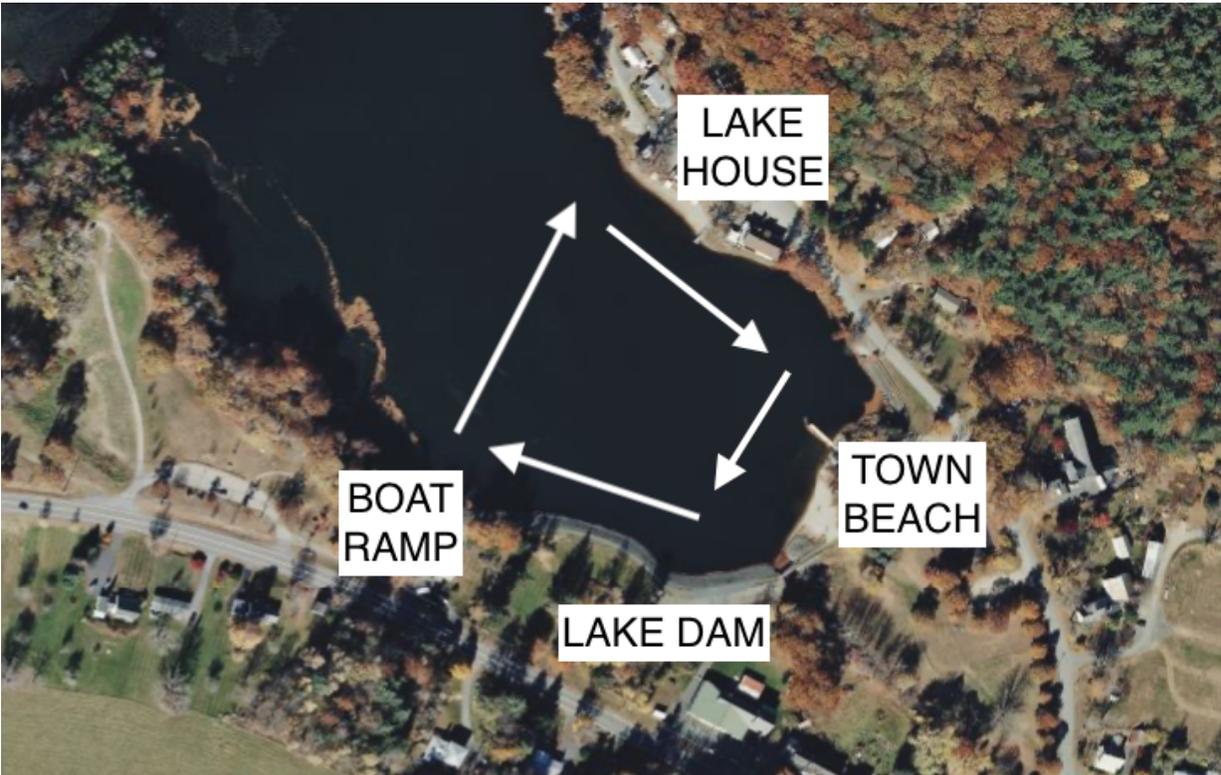


Town Beach in the foreground, the Lake Dam in the background/ left side

Parade Route



Aerial image of Ashfield Lake



Parade route on Ashfield Lake

Boat Ramp



boat ramp area at lakeside



boat ramp area, looking up the hill from water's edge