

SECTION 2
TOWN GOALS AND THE FY 2016 BUDGET

Town Goals and the FY 2016 Budget

The following is a discussion of how the proposed spending plan relates to town goals that have been described. Many of the programs and services that our departments offer, and have offered for many years, already meet specific town goals and objectives and these “maintenance goals” continue to guide the allocation of the majority of financial resources that the town appropriates. There are other instances, however, where departments are proposing “new initiative goals” which address previously unmet community needs and concerns. Some of these initiatives require the creation of a new program or activity and the allocation of financial resources for the funding of expenses and/or additional staff. Others are able to provide a higher level of services for the same or less resources through greater efficiency. The following is a discussion of some of the more significant staff initiatives, the goals that the departments hope to achieve and the accomplishments to which they can already point.

(1) Support a Safe and Harmonious Community for All Residents

- Police Department has hired and trained a police officer who now serves as the School Resource Officer at the Franklin County Technical School
- The Planning Department succeeded in winning a CDBG grant that will be used to upgrade lighting in Downtown Turners Falls and to implement some of the more critical objectives outlined in the HUD Downtown Livability Study. These projects will be implemented during the summer of 2015.
- The Health Department has implemented the first phase of the Attorney General’s Receivership Program for the most dilapidated rental properties. The department has used this program with great success to bring about the removal of some of housing code violations from some of the town’s worst properties; and is planning to expand the program to include other properties in FY 2016.
- The Department of Public Works is working with the state on the implementation of key transportation projects including Greenfield Road, Hatchery Road and Montague City Road. Construction of the Greenfield Road improvements is expected to commence during the 2015 construction season. Bids for Hatchery Road are due in during the late Spring, 2015.
- The Water Pollution Control department will implement the replacement of the First Street and Poplar Street pumping stations during the summer of 2015. This \$3 million project will be partially funded by the State Revolving Loan Program.
- The feasibility of developing a new DPW Garage, Senior Center and Library is currently being studied. The Capital Improvements Committee is expected to hear recommendations on the three projects during FY 2016.

(2) Guide Appropriate Use of Regionally Significant Resources of our Town

- The Board of Selectmen is currently working with local residents to identify ways to increase participation by the town in the long term transportation planning efforts of the FRTA and to improve overall quality of public transportation.
- The Police Department is currently entering the third year of a shared Animal Control Officer position with the towns of Greenfield and Deerfield.
- The Police Department is also working with the Franklin County Sheriffs Department to identify a permanent home for a regional dog kennel in the Town of Montague.
- The Town of Montague has joined with other Franklin County towns in the newly created Franklin County Veteran's District. This district was created in response to recently passed state legislation which mandates new requirements and potentially significant new costs related to staffing.
- The River Culture Program is currently cooperating with the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce and other regional entities on the efficient and effective delivery of cultural programs and activities.
- The Board of Selectmen has published a request for proposals soliciting a vendor to operate the Shea Theater. The Board expects to sign a lease for the facility during the 2015 calendar year.
- The town continues to support the efforts of several regional entities that are able to offer the same or better level of services through the economic of scale that they realize. These include the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, which provide a high level of transportation and other planning, the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District, and the newly created Veteran's District. The town's membership in the Hampshire County Health Group also has enabled the town to realize significant savings in its health insurance costs through the power of joint purchasing. The Town also purchases energy from the HCOG under its wholesale energy cooperative.

(3) Guide Appropriate Use of Our Open Space and Sensitive Natural Resources

- The Conservation Commission, through the implementation of the wetlands protection act and town Open Space Plan has been an effective custodian of the town's open spaces and sensitive natural resources.
- The Town Planner and Conservation Commission have also been strong advocates for the preservation of prime agricultural lands and have facilitated this process by soliciting town meeting appropriations into the Conservation Fund.

(4) Support Quality Educational Opportunities for All Our Residents

- The Selectmen and Finance Committee will continue to work with its counterparts in the Town of Gill to support the development of quality, affordable education in the town's public school system. This would include development of assessments in accordance with the principles established by the Tech Committee and formalized in "Table B", and any revisions that are made thereto. The towns are currently working to update Table "B"
- The Selectmen will support the continued development of programs and activities of the River Culture which enhance the cultural awareness of town residents including those related to the historical development of the town.
- The Library is currently offering a wide array of educational programs for the town's youth, and it recently expanded this programming to adults.

(5) Preserve and Enhance the Historical, Architectural and Cultural Character of our Town

- Through the River Culture Program the town has sponsored programs designed to celebrate the history and culture of the town. In 2011 River Culture was the recipient of one of the State's most prestigious awards – the Commonwealth Award as a creative community.
- The Town has pledged to respect the historic, architectural and cultural character of the community when it implements projects involving the adaptive reuse of town-owned properties. Montague has made a strong commitment to historical preservation in all of its villages and at the Historic Canal Industrial Area. The strength of the town commitment is also apparent in the requirements of requests for proposals that the town has published for its commercial homesteading program.

(6) Ensure the Quality of Our Residential Neighborhoods and Our Residential Growth

- One of the primary objectives of the town is to protect the quality of our residential neighborhoods through the removal of eyesores. The Health Director, working in concert with the Building Inspector and other code officials, is currently implementing the Attorney General's Receivership Program – a program that involves six of the most derelict private properties. The goal of this program is to stimulate rehabilitation of these properties, and transfer ownership to responsible owners if necessary.
- The town has successfully transferred tax title properties in Millers Falls under its Commercial Homesteading Program. The developer is expected to begin construction of improvements to these buildings during the spring/summer of 2015.
- This year the Planning Department will begin implementing the Turners Falls HUD Livability Plan. This will include the construction of pedestrian improvements on Avenue A and the replacement of the pedestrian lighting with LED fixtures.

(7) Improve our climate for quality commerce and industry, including agricultural/forestry businesses

- The town is currently completing the pre-development planning and design for a new industrial park to be located at the former landfill site on Turnpike Road. The goal is to work with the FRCOG to prepare state and federal grant application to secure funds for one hundred percent of the cost of the park. Although the Planning Department applied for but was not successful in receiving a state grant, this application will be resubmitted in the next grant round.
- The Planning Department is currently renewing its efforts to market the adaptive reuse of the Strathmore Mill Complex for light industrial use through a Request for Proposals process.
- The Town recently took a major step in the revitalization of downtown Millers Falls through the conveyance of former tax title properties on East Main Street to Robert Obear. The properties will be redeveloped under the Commercial Homesteading Program for Retail and Mixed Use. The project is expected to general 48 jobs and several new businesses. Construction will be ongoing during FY 2016.

(8) Improve our active and passive recreational opportunities

- This year the Parks and Recreation Department will begin construction of a new Skate Park at Unity Park. The town was successful in winning \$225,000 in grant funds for the project. The town also appropriated \$100,000, which with funding raised in the community, will be used as a match for the project grant.
- The DPW and Town Planner are currently working with the Mass DOT on cross walk enhancements in Montague City that will make it much safer for bicyclists suing the Canal Bike Trail to cross Montague City Road. These improvements will be constructed during the 2015 construction season.
- This year the town plans to make a major investment in the protection of improvements that have been made at Unity Park the past few years. These include the appropriation of funds for on-going maintenance of the Unity Park facility and the continued involvement of the Groundskeeper Position that was created last year.

(9) Create a Financial Framework in which Long Term Planning is an integral component of the budgeting process; where financial matters are subject to explicit (and written) policies; where all departments are provided with adequate resources (public and private) to do their job in a way that maximizes financial benefit to the town; and where services are provided by town departments in the most efficient and effective manner.

- The FY 2016 budget is being developed in a manner that is consistent with the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) model as it was in FY 2015. The budget will include a long term financial plan.

- In FY 2015 the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee adopted written financial policies and procedures that will include the provisions for the building of the town's reserves. The FY 2016 budget includes an appropriation to continue this process.
- Technology upgrades are planned in the Assessing and Treasurer/Collector Departments in FY 2016 that will streamline the flow of financial data.
- The Water Pollution Control Facility has created a model for efficient and effective operation of its department. Through major changes in the way its processes waste it has not only significantly reduced the cost of treating sewage but possibly avoid future costs to meet Federal Wastewater standards. The department has also initiated innovative and creative relationships with other communities in the region which are generating significant new revenues for the Sewer Enterprise. These new revenues could help to mitigate the impact of major capital needs in the future if the town can successfully establish a capital stabilization fund that allocates these revenues for future capital growth and is not simply used as a means to avoid increases in the sewer user fees.

(10) Create a Work Environment in which the Town is able to attract and retain the most qualified employees; where the town staff receives the most appropriate level of training and professional development to do their job efficiently and effectively, to meet statutory requirements and to avoid law suits; and where employees are fully aware of their duties, responsibilities and town expectations.

- With the recent approval of the U.E. collective bargaining agreement, the town has now implemented the full pay and classification study that was performed in 2013. This study was meant to make Montague competitive with other communities the municipal labor market. The study found that Town employees had been paid wages that were, on average, 7.5% below the average of comparable communities.

(11) Create an environment in which good customer relations exist (between departments, with the public and taxpayers, town meeting members, state and federal agencies) are primary; where customers are always treated with courtesy and sensitivity; where accessibility to town staff and its programs/services is facilitated; and where good communication with all customers is valued.

- Town departments employ a team approach to the delivery of programs/services and problem solving. This includes teams that specifically deal with financial management (i.e. development of financial policies and procedures), planning (commercial homesteading), code enforcement (attorney general's receivership program), and recreation (Unity Park, Skate Park)

- The Town Administrator is also committed to enter the budget on the town web site again this year as it did for FY 2015, and to provide new “Budget Support” information to aid in the public’s understanding.