

MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE
Wednesday, October 11, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.
This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded:
<https://vimeo.com/864229360>

Finance Committee Chair Francia Wisnewski called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Finance Committee members present: Chair Francia Wisnewski, Vice Chair Dorinda Bell-Upp, Clerk Fred Bowman and member John Hanold

Finance Committee members absent: Greg Garrison, Chris Menegoni, and Jennifer Waryas

Others present: Town Administrator Steven Ellis and Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen

The meeting was recorded by MCTV as well as by Carolyn Olsen.

Meeting minutes:

Mr. Hanold moved to approve the minutes of September 13, 2023. Seconded by Mr. Bowman and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman- Aye, Hanold – Aye, and Wisnewski – Aye

Special Town Meeting Debrief

The consensus was that the meeting went well. Ms. Wisnewski expressed that she had concerns about some background information not being available sooner. Mr. Ellis stated that he had passed along information as soon as it was available.

It was noted that the results of the articles for the collection system will likely impact future budgets, either within the operating budgets or as ongoing special articles.

Affordable Assessment Calculation Review

Mr. Ellis provided some historical information on the calculation:

1. The original “agreement” and calculation were made when the town always taxed to the levy limit.
2. In the last few years, we’ve been able to achieve significant amounts of excess levy capacity. This excess capacity keeps the tax rates suppressed, but also impacts the affordable assessment calculation since the available taxation revenue has been reduced by the excess capacity and is not available for allocation to the GMRSD.
3. The affordable assessment calculation for FY25 will be partially determined by the amount of excess capacity the Selectboard decides to keep for the FY25 budget. This amount will likely be determined by the end of November.

Mr. Hanold stated that he had no interest in pursuing a change in the percentage of the allocation at this time. He also expressed concern that the end of the ESSR grants will have a negative impact on the GMRSD’s budget if they try to move those expenses into their operating budget.

Ms. Bell-Upp is concerned that the affordable assessment calculation will no longer adequately address the needs of the GMRSD.

Review Financial Policies

This agenda item was postponed from the September 13, 2023 meeting. The Town’s Financial Policies include a provision that the Finance Committee have an annual review of these policies prior to October 1st of each year. The Finance Committees were provided with the current version of the policies prior to this meeting.

There were no major changes suggested. Members should e-mail any questions or suggested changes to Ms. Olsen by October 26th.

Updates from Town Administrator

- Mr. Ellis noted that the Classification and Compensation Study is beginning but that any financial changes resulting from the results will likely not be addressed until at least next fall.
- Mr. Ellis plans to bring financial projections to the Selectboard on October 23rd, which will impact the budget message.

Future meetings:

- The next Finance Committee meeting will be on November 8, 2023. Ms. Olsen will be absent.

Future meeting topics –

- FY25 Budget Schedule
- FY25 Budget Projections
- Review of monthly reports

Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting:

Ms. Wisnewski reminded committee members that the Association of Town Finance Committees is having their annual meeting in Sharon and asked that anyone wishing to attend contact her.

The Six Town Regional Planning Board is having a meeting in Gill, possibly on November 14, 2023. Members are encouraged to attend.

Finance Committee Adjournment

Mr. Bowman makes the motion to adjourn at 7:02 PM. Seconded by Mr. Hanold and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Hanold – Aye, and Wisnewski – Aye

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Olsen

Documents and exhibits:

Minutes of September 13, 2023