



**Town of Montague**  
**Department, Board, Committee, Commission**  
**BUDGET NARRATIVE**

**FY 23**

*Complete this form electronically! Be clear and concise!*

Department: Selectboard (122) Submitted by: Steven Ellis

**1. Please describe and provide the rationale for any substantial changes in your FY22 line-item budget submission.**

Please see the attached document titled "Recommended Selectboard's Office Budget Priority for FY23: Increase Selectboard Office Capacity to Enhance Government Performance." As outlined in that proposal, the Selectboard's budget reflects the need to better align executive and clerical staffing with the demands of operating our municipality efficiently while also maximizing our ability to plan, attract funding, and execute projects that will enhance the community and provide greater prosperity to its residents.

As that proposal focuses on the rationale and responsibilities of the positions that are proposed to be created – a full-time assistant Town Administrator (ATA) and a 20 hour/week clerical assistant – this narrative will now highlight the coinciding line item increases that these additional positions would require. These include increases in longevity (in the event an incumbent member of staff is selected for the ATA position), an increase in cell phone stipend, seminar attendance and travel, additional office supplies, and some new office equipment. All of these figures represent what we believe to be reasonable estimates of budget needs. As is noted in the proposal, establishment of new positions would also carry health insurance and pension costs, which can be estimated, but are not known.

**2. To this point in FY22, has your department experienced any notable successes, such as improving or providing new programs or services, or implementing new technologies? If so, please describe.**

The Selectboard Office continues to provide substantial support to other departments in many aspects of their operations and to maintain core administrative functions under its purview. Thus far we've navigated real estate sales and acquisitions, closed out the Town's CARES project portfolio (kudos to Carolyn on the accounting side), launched cannabis impact fee funded programming, carried forward FERC settlement negotiations with FirstLight, actively pursued a variety of targeted grants, helped finalize financial projections and policies, supported COVID planning and response, facilitated use of online meeting platforms, supported department hiring, and begun planning for numerous capital projects and ARPA spending, and engaged intensively with state and regional officials to advocate on behalf of the community. It has been a very gratifying start to the year.

**3. Are there challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and objectives that are due to its FY22 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation(s) for improving the situation.**

Last year I wrote this...

"As Town Administrator I am not prepared to advance major staffing proposals that might further accelerate needed progress in the improvement of human resources, procurement, and facilities/capital assets management due to the cost of such proposals and the challenges of the present budget cycle. I do believe we need additional expertise and capacity, as has been acknowledged by the Selectboard, and look forward to conversations regarding how best to balance available resources and progress in these regards."

As referenced in response to question 1, I have offered a specific proposal that I believe will better position the Town to accomplish needed work in a timely and efficient manner, while also better situating the Town from a succession planning standpoint as we view retirements of several key staff on the immediate horizon. Through its design, this proposal will provide more appropriate support for core business functions and, because it is centered in the Town Administrator's Office, it will ensure that this new capacity brings a system-level perspective and is supportive of the success of all departments, particularly those with capital planning and project requirements.

**4. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY22? What is the status of those expenditures/investments? Does your department have any older special article appropriations that remain unspent?**

Yes, the Selectboard's office received several appropriations in FY22:

- **Council on Aging Roof Replacement.** \$50,000 was appropriated for this project, which was completed successfully in summer 2021. We have a remaining balance of just over \$23,000 that can be used for other exterior improvements – specifically, replacement/painting of siding on the building. After initially high estimates, alternate quotes suggest that we will be able to replace the siding on the rear of the building within the remaining appropriation.
- **Building Assessment and Capital Planning.** \$50,000 was secured to allow for additional capital building assessments in conformance with previously completed assessments to allow easy integration. Procurement is to be undertaken at start of FY22. The Town was awarded funds to pay for in-depth roof maintenance and repair assessments, which has been procured and is expected to be complete this winter.
- **Special Purpose Accounts.** Three \$25,000 funds were created for overages in bidding, unexpected engineering and survey costs, and emergency repair of unsafe or unhealthy buildings.
  - Unexpected engineering and survey funds have been allocated to pay for a PERC test (\$400) of Town property that will be auctioned this winter and for a survey of the Sandy Lane parking area as a prelude to the sale of that property to Judd Wire (\$1,000) later this winter.
  - Establishing the bid and project overage account looks prescient as the bidding environment has changed this past year. We have thus far avoided tapping these funds, but see a possibility that they will be spent in the current FY. In the meantime, I am lobbying the state to provide gap funds for our much greater bid cost overrun for the 5<sup>th</sup> Street Pedestrian Bridge.
  - The Unsafe/Unhealthy buildings fund has yet to be tapped, but with grant funded assessments of the Strathmore about to begin, it is quite possible that immediate requirements may surface.