



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

FY 23

Complete this form electronically! Be clear and concise!

Department: **Planning** Submitted by: Walter Ramsey

1. Please describe and provide the rationale for any substantial changes in your FY23 line-item budget submission.

Seminars (#5314) The Planning Department is requesting a one-time budget increase to allow the Town Planner to participate in the MMA/Suffolk Certificate Program in Local Government Leadership and Management. The Planner has applied to and has been accepted into the CY22/23 program that runs on Fridays from September 2022 to May 2023. Planner will attend program training on personal time, but is requesting town support for tuition/participation fee. Training will enhance the Planner’s ability to effectively manage not only within the Planning Department but importantly in coordination with other departments and governmental agencies.

“Other Services” (#5380) The Planning Department is requesting an increase of \$700 for the purpose of supplementing the Department’s ability to engage the public through the two important planning initiatives scheduled for FY23: Comprehensive Plan Phase I and the Canal District Master Plan. While these plans are primarily grant funded, there are always in-kind intangibles that are needed to ensure the public is well informed and engaged. The extra \$700 will be used to for uses such as the printing of maps+ reports, developing graphics, and engaging the public through surveys and social media that require fee for use services.

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.

FY22 has been about managing myriad grant and project funding opportunities that have emerged out of post-Covid relief programs and directly supporting local economic recovery through efforts identified in, but not limited to, the Turners Falls Rapid Recovery Plan. More now than ever, the Department is spending significant time administering millions of dollars of grant funded physical infrastructure projects (bridges, sidewalks, parks, landfills). This is important work, but I do acknowledge that it limits the Department’s ability to focus on site redevelopment planning, strategic planning, and development/administration of land use regulations. In my opinion, the Planning + Conservation Department has transitioned fully to a Community Development Department that is operating both at maximum efficiency and maximum capacity. This is great for the town, but when the inevitable new needs emerge (Like Farren for example), admittedly, either another project/need gets sidelined or the department gets stretched too thin. Being at maximum capacity means being very limited in the new projects that the Department can onboard and we will need to be sensitive to this as new programs and needs emerge in the coming year. Otherwise, the Planning Department looks forward to another exciting year of progress with major development projects planned in the Canal District, Downtown, and Sandy Lane.

Administration of Physical Projects completed in FY22: Montague St and Turnpike Rd Sidewalks (.8 miles), Chestnut Hill Loop Bridge, Unity Park 2nd Street Gateway enhancement, Burn Dump Cap

Numerous physical projects are in in various stages of development or implementation: Montague City Rd Flooding Relief, 5th Street Pedestrian Bridge, Ferry Rd Culvert Design, Ave A Streetscape, Hillcrest neighborhood playground design, Millers Falls River trail phase II

Plans completed/drafted so far in FY22: Local Rapid Recovery Plan, Montague EDIC Economic Development Plan

Ongoing and emergent redevelopment focus areas: Sandy Lane, Canal District, Farren Care Center, 500 Avenue A, Town Hall Annex/First Street area, 38 Avenue A.

Grants have been recently announce/awarded for Canal District Master Plan, Strathmore Mill Assessment, Town-wide Master Plan Phase I, and a Downtown Parking Management Plan, Ferry Rd Culvert Design. These are all intended to be implemented over the next 12-18 months.

3. Are there presently 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.

Assistant Town Admin position to oversee procurement and administration of physical infrastructure projects so the planner can focus on strategic and long term planning and administration of land use regulations.

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?

ATM 6/13/20 Article #15 Fix Walking paths. Appropriation: \$37,260. Spent to date: \$18,200. Balance: \$19,060. The Stairs at Millers Falls have been repaired as of October 2020. Planning Department Lacked capacity to oversee implementation of Turners Falls Walking Path repair. Project could potentially advance in FY22 or the spending authority could be rescinded if needed elsewhere.

STM 10/16/21 Article#7- Montague City Road Flooding Relief. \$0 out of \$130,000 expended. Went under contract for bidding on 12/6/21. To be Bid February for Summer 2022 Construction. \$0 out of \$130,000 expended. Drawdown expected to start in June 2022.

STM 10/16/21 Article#8- 5th Street Pedestrian Bridge Project. \$0 out of \$200,000 expended. Construction went under contract in November 2021. Funds will not be drawn down until Mass Works funds are expended. Drawdown expected starting in April-June 2022.