

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
MAY 5, 2012
BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**ARTICLES
1-3**

Consent Agenda for More Routine Articles

This year the Town Moderator is continuing a practice introduced a couple of years ago, in which articles that have traditionally evoked little discussion or debate on town meeting floor will be voted as a block, without a full reading by the Town Moderator. Town meeting members will, however, be permitted to put a hold on any or all of these consent articles, in which case the article subject to the hold will be subject to a full reading and debate. The purpose of the consent agenda is to expedite consideration of routine town meeting articles. The first three articles fall into this category.

Consent agenda articles include:

- Receipt of annual reports
- Authority to apply for, receive and expend grants
- Annual authorization of hazmat revolving funds

ARTICLE 4

Fix the Salaries of Elected Officials. This article appears regularly on the annual warrant. It includes the proposed salaries for FY 2013 as well as the salary for the prior two years. The only changes proposed are for the Treasurer/Collector and the Town Clerk, for which the town has historically attempted to maintain salary parity with comparable appointed officials.

ARTICLE 5

Fix the Salaries of Appointed Officials. This article appears regularly on the annual warrant. Recommended salary ranges for full-time appointed officials reflect the implementation of existing collective bargaining agreements, individual employment contracts, authorized by law (i.e. Town Administrator, Police Chief), stipends and wage/salary ranges established by the Personnel Board for various part-time employees.

ARTICLE 6

Departmental Appropriation Article. This article includes the FY 2013 operating budget for the town departments, except for the Water Pollution Control Facility, the Airport (both of which are enterprise funds) and the Colle Building, which is funded through receipts reserved for appropriation. Budgets for these items are shown in Articles 7, 9 and 8 respectively. It also does not include funds required to meet the town's assessments to the Gill-

Montague Regional School District and Franklin County Technical School District which are addressed in Articles 10 and 9.

Conservative revenue assumptions continued to drive the budget preparation process this year, although the health of the state economy is certainly trending in a positive direction. The FY 2013 budget was prepared with the expectation that state aid will be level funded with the FY 2012 number. There is a possibility that the town could see a modest increase in state aid in FY 2013 if state receipts continue to grow at higher than anticipated rates. It is certainly encouraging to note that the health of the economy is finally improving after four years of deep recession that saw Montague losing nearly \$600,000 or one third of its state aid through budget cuts. These were in addition to those cuts experienced by the Gill-Montague and Franklin County Technical School District

The amount requested under the Selectmen's budget in Article 6 (\$7,488,471) represents a \$174,679 or 2.42% increase over FY 2012. Increases in **Personnel Costs** account for \$67,840 or 38.8% of these costs. It should be pointed out that the increase in personnel costs includes the addition of salaries/wages for two new employees, a full-time mechanic in the DPW and a part-time health agent. **Step Increases**, for those employees who are eligible, account for the balance of increase personnel costs. It should be pointed out that two out of the three collective bargaining units (TOMEA and the IBPO) have settled for FY 2013, while the third unit (UE) is still without a contract. No cost of living increases are assumed or included.

Notable changes in the FY 2013 budget include increases in **Public Works** (+\$95,689 or 6.2%) driven largely by the addition of a new position (Mechanic), an increase of \$29,875 or 7.7% in Solid Waste Disposal Account and an increase of \$14,000 or 7.0% in Snow and Ice removal; **Retirement Assessment** (+\$53,504 or 7.3%); **General Government** (+\$42,530 or 4.3%) including increases of \$13,400 or 32.2% in the Legal budget and \$10,445 or 24.6% in the Tax Title Foreclosure accounts, budgets that have been historically underfunded. Other notable increases in general government include a \$9,235 or 21.7% increased in Shared Costs reflecting a newly funded \$2,000 stipend for the I.T Administrator and a \$6,000 cost for GASB45 compliance, an expense that is incurred every three years and a \$6,100 or 14.3% increase in the Town Clerk's budget reflecting the additional part-time staffing (poll workers) required for the National Election in November.

Other significant changes in the FY 2013 operating budget include a \$24,691 or 37.1% reduction in the Workers Compensation budget. This, in combination with an extremely modest \$9,000 or 1.0% increase in Health Insurance, resulted in a \$39,813 or 2.2% overall increase in **Employee Benefits**. This is the fifth year in succession that our health provider - Hampshire Health Insurance Group has delivered premium increases that are well below the State average.

ARTICLE 7

Enterprise Fund Operating Budget of Montague Water Pollution Control Facility. This article contains the FY 2013 budget for the Montague Wastewater Treatment Plant. 90.4% of which is funded out of sewer user fees. The balance (\$174,502 or 9.6%) is funded out of taxation, and reflects the cost of treating infiltration and inflow at both the Montague WPCF and Town of Erving WWTP. The amount requested in the Selectmen's Budget (\$1,808,367) represents a \$47,609 or 2.7% increase over FY 2012.

The amount requested by the WPCF represents a \$47,609 or 2.7% increase over FY 2012. The **Operations and Maintenance** budget for the WPCF will increase by \$69,402 or 6.1% in FY 2012. This budget is driven by the same personnel assumptions described with regard to the Town Operating Budget in Article 6 above. Notable changes in this budget include an \$11,347 or 70.1% reduction in General Insurances, a \$16,760 or 10% increase in the Millers Falls Assessment, a \$10,000 or 10% decrease in the cost of Electricity and \$5,000 or 25% decrease in the cost of Heating Oil, both at the Treatment Plant. **WPCF Debt** costs would decline by \$25,816 or 6.5% in FY 2013. Finally, **Employee Benefits** will increase by \$4,022 or 2.5%. The modest increase required by the WPCF reflects the same increase in Retirement Costs, modest increase in Health Insurance and reductions in Workers Compensation

ARTICLE 8

Colle Receipts Reserved for Appropriation. Article 8 appropriates \$89,400 for the operation and maintenance of the Colle Building, a town owned facility. The Colle is a discrete cost center that is currently funded from receipts reserved for appropriation, without a subsidy from taxpayers. Although not actually referred to as such, this type of account is very similar to an enterprise fund, meaning that the operation is self-funded. Colle receipts are earned from lease payments that are made by tenants of the building, which is currently 100% leased up. The FY 2013 budget for the Colle is slightly lower than that of FY 2012, reflecting a modest decline in the annual debt service requirement.

ARTICLE 9

Airport Enterprise Fund Operating Budget. The Airport operating budget is financed through a combination of airport user fees and taxation. Under the proposed FY 2013 budget, user fees will comprise 83.7% (\$31,461) of the total airport operating budget. The remainder (\$6,164) is funded out of taxation. The ultimate goal of the Airport Commission is to make the airport a fully self supporting operation. User fees are generated through PILOT fees and leasing of airport property, including a residence that is located on the corner of Millers Falls Road and West Mineral Road.

ARTICLE 10

Franklin County Technical School District Assessment. This article funds Montague's share of the cost of operating the Franklin County Technical School (FCTS). It also includes Montague's capital assessment. The amount requested (\$737,865) represents a \$59,563 or 8.8% increase over FY 2012. Montague's assessment rose because there were three additional Montague students attending FCTS this year. This caused Montague's share of district spending to rise from 15.44% to 15.99%. The Finance Committee is proposing to use \$24,000 from the FCTS Stabilization Fund towards the funding of this assessment.

ARTICLE 11

Gill-Montague Regional School District Assessment. Article 11 funds Montague's share of the cost of operating the Gill Montague Regional School District (GMRSD). The District has requested an assessment of \$7,850,604, which represents an increase of \$274,421 or 3.6% from FY 2012. The Finance Committee is recommending this assessment even though it exceeds the town's affordable assessment by \$154,182. The latter amount is being recommended for funding out of stabilization.

ARTICLE 12

Fourth Dewatering Zone for Fournier Press. This article would appropriate \$60,000 out of sewer borrowing to fund the purchase and installation of a fourth dewatering zone for the Fournier Press at the Water Pollution Control Facility. The town recently installed three dewatering zones using a State Tribal Assistance Grant (STAG) from the Environmental Protection Agency. The introduction of this technology at the plant has already enabled the WPCF to save a significant amount of money that formerly was expended hauling sludge with a high-water content. Essentially, the town was paying for the cost of water that can now be filtered out by the Fournier Press, resulting in a much drier and lighter "sludge cake" for transport. The fourth dewatering zone will enable the plant to achieve even greater savings and efficiencies as well as make it possible for the WPCF to accept sludge from other communities and create a new revenue stream for the department.

- ARTICLE 13** **Perform Infiltration and Inflow Study.** Article 13 would appropriate \$35,000 for the purpose of funding an infiltration and inflow study for the sewer system. They study would measure the infiltration and inflow from sources other than the direct intended sewer flows, including leaky manhole covers, ground water and roof drains that may be illegally connected to the sewer system. Tax payers currently pay a significant annual surcharge penalty (\$174,502) to the WPCF for Infiltration and Inflow. The study will assist in locating the largest sources of Infiltration and Inflow, so it can be mitigated and potentially lead to significant savings to the town.
- ARTICLE 14** **Funding for Information Technology, Equipment, Parts, Accessories etc.** Article 14 would appropriate the sum of \$8,200 to fund information technology equipment, parts, accessories, software and installation.
- ARTICLE 15** **Funding for Purchase of Police Equipment.** Article 15 would appropriate \$20,000 to purchase police equipment such as bullet-proof vests, tasers, computers, firearms, radios or similar items.
- ARTICLE 16** **Install New Flooring in Town Hall Offices.** This article would fund the purchase and installation of new flooring in four offices at the Town Hall and to cover up old asbestos flooring.
- ARTICLE 17** **DPW Discretionary Account Appropriation.** Article 17 would appropriate \$75,000 for the purpose of funding the DPW Discretionary Account. The purpose of this account is to enable the DPW Superintendent to fund purchases of and/or major repairs to DPW vehicles and equipment. This account addresses unforeseen expenditures where timeliness is important, it is not possible to secure town meeting appropriation, and the magnitude of such expenditures would quickly exhaust the Finance Committee reserve fund. \$100,000 was requested by the DPW but the Capital Improvements Committee is recommending only \$75,000.
- ARTICLE 18** **Lease Payments for Two DPW Dump Trucks.** Article 18 would appropriate \$54,055 to fund the fourth year of a five year lease on two dump trucks. The two trucks are both six wheel dumps with plow. One of the vehicles is equipped with a sander. The Capital Improvements Committee recommends funding of this article.
- ARTICLE 19** **Lease Payments for a New Six Wheel Dump Truck.** Article 19 would appropriate \$44,000 for the purpose of funding the first year

of a five year lease of a six wheel dump truck. The cost of the truck is \$200,000. The Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen and Capital Improvements Committee have all recommended that the equipment be lease-purchased rather than purchased outright.

ARTICLE 20

Appropriation for Children’s Programming at the Library.

Article 20 would appropriate \$4,000 for the purpose of funding children’s programming at the libraries. This funding will be used to fund the Music and Movement Program – a weekly children’s program for infants, toddlers, young children, and their parents and caregivers. The program has been in existence for 11 years, but is in jeopardy of losing state grant funds. It is an extremely popular program that served over 3000 children and family members in 2010.

ARTICLE 21

21st Century Library Technology. Article 21 would appropriate \$8,000 for the purpose of providing technology at the libraries. The objective of this program is to keep library current with emerging technology while doing business in “ancient” facilities. The technology plan includes the acquisition of four laptop computers for in-house use. It also includes the purchase of 4 Kindles/Nooks to be loaned out to library patrons.

The current 4 work stations at the Carnegie are in constant use. The Montague Center Library is not eligible for the Broadband Initiative Work currently planned and will need to provide wireless service with its own equipment and connections. The Millers Falls Library will be able to take advantage of the wireless service soon to be provided by the MBI.

ARTICLE 22

Montague Center School Operating Costs. This article would appropriate \$15,000 for the purpose of funding operation and maintenance of the Montague Center School building. The appropriation may turn out to be unnecessary if the town is successful in transferring ownership of the building to a developer who is currently exploring the possibility of developing housing at the school. If the project proves to be unfeasible, and the town continues to own the building, the funds will be used to fund utility costs, security and repairs and maintenance. Otherwise the funds appropriated will not be used, and will flow back into free cash.

ARTICLE 23

Pave Parking Lot at Sheffield School. Article 23 would authorize the borrowing of \$85,000 for the purpose of paving the parking lot at the Sheffield School. The lot has become a safety hazard with pot holes and ruts. Additionally, plowing of the lot has been difficult especially when not frozen.

ARTICLE 24 **ADA Projects at the Hillcrest and Sheffield Schools.** This article would appropriate \$15,000 for the purpose of upgrading bathrooms and entrances at Hillcrest and Sheffield Schools to bring the buildings into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These were items identified in an accessibility study performed in 2001 and contained in the town’s ADA transition plan. The town has attempted to chip away at the list of projects identified in the transition plan, and to implement some every year.

ARTICLE 25 **Authorize Selectmen to Enter into A Memorandum of Understanding with the Mass. Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Regarding Maintenance of a Walking Bridge in the Sawmill River Conservation Land.** This article would authorize the Board of Selectmen to enter into a MOU with the State F&WL regarding the future maintenance of a walking bridge that is being constructed over the Sawmill River in the Sawmill River Conservation Area in Montague Center.

ARTICLE 26 **Inoperable or Unregistered Motor Vehicle By-Law.** Article 26 would amend Article VI of the By-Laws of the Town by striking the entire section entitled “Unregistered Motor Vehicles” and replacing it with new language related to the adoption of a new by-law entitled “Inoperable or Unregistered Motor Vehicle By-Law”. The purpose of this new by-law is to provide a mechanism for regulating, subject to reasonable and appropriate controls, the storage of Inoperable and/or Unregistered Motor Vehicles within the Town of Montague. It establishes a framework for public hearings, a mechanism for enforcement and a description of penalties for violations of the by-law including enforcement through both non-criminal disposition and criminal complaints. A copy of the proposed by-law is attached.

ARTICLE 27 **Right to Farm By-Law.** Article 27 would add a new section at the end of the By-Laws of the Town of Montague entitled “Right to Farm By-Law.” The purpose of this by-law is to encourage the pursuit of agriculture and agricultural-based economic activities and employment and protect farmland by allowing agricultural practices to function in harmony with the community, town agencies and others. A copy of the proposed by-law is attached.

ARTICLE 28 **Creation of Committee to Investigate Potential Revisions to the Regional Agreement between the Member Towns of the Gill-Montague Regional School District which Would Facilitate Changes the Composition and Method of Selecting the School**

Committee. This is a petitioned article, a copy of which is attached.

ARTICLE 29

Support of an Amendment to the Constitution to Clarify that Corporations Do Not Have the Same Rights as People and That Money is Not Speech for the Purposes of Election-Related Spending. This is a petitioned article, a copy of which is attached.