

**SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
FEBRUARY 28, 2013
BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- ARTICLE 1. Replace Drive and Control System of Activated Sludge Pump.** This article would appropriate the sum of \$7,000 from Sewer Retained Earnings for the purpose of replacing the drive and control system of the #1 return activated sludge pump at the Water Pollution Control Facility. The controls of the pump have failed. This pump is the backup pump for the return sludge system which is a critical component of the Secondary treatment system.
- ARTICLE 2. Appropriate Funds to Pay Prior Year Unpaid Bills of the WPCF.** Article 2 would appropriate the sum of \$3,621.80 from Sewer Retained Earnings for the purpose of paying unpaid bills incurred in FY 2012. These bills include: \$872 – Slack Chemical Company for polymer and \$2,750 for a water bill from Turners Falls Water Department.
- ARTICLE 3. Pay Off Outstanding Balance on John Deere Loader.** This article would appropriate \$17,200 from Sewer Retained Earnings for the purpose of purchasing the John Deere 84 Loader that the WPCF has been leasing from Sirum Equipment. This equipment is used at WPCF for lifting and conveying heavy equipment, drums of chemicals, snow removal, grounds work etc.
- ARTICLE 4. Funds to Prepare NPDES Permit.** Article 4 would appropriate the sum of \$9,600 from Sewer Retained Earnings for the purpose of hiring a consultant to assist in the preparation of the town’s National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for the Water Pollution Control Facility. This permit, which establishes the parameters under which the WPCF operates, must be renewed every five years. The preparation of this permit involves a considerable commitment of staff time in data gathering and analysis that could otherwise be invested in other pressing matters. The Superintendent has requested that some of this workload be performed by our engineering consultant.
- ARTICLE 5. Improve Access to Town Hall by Handicapped Individuals.** Article 5 would appropriate the sum of \$11,000 from free cash for the purpose of improving handicap access to the Town Hall. The elevator/renovation project made the rear door to the Town Hall a “handicapped accessible” entry, but it did not include buttons to allow the opening of the doors from a wheelchair. The work to be funded with this appropriation would rectify this situation.

ARTICLE 6. Appropriation to Pay Town Bills Incurred in a Prior Year. This article would appropriate the sum of \$4,239.46 from Free Cash for the purpose of paying unpaid town bills incurred in a prior year. It was recently discovered that some prior year electricity accounts had not been properly billed through the Hampshire Council of Governments – our electricity provider. They were finally able to resolve the issue, but the billings go back to 3/10/12 and must now be paid as a prior year bill. There is also an unpaid bill in the amount of \$599.00 to Arctic Refrigeration Co., LLC for repairs to the Shea Theater air conditioner.

ARTICLE 7. Appropriation of Funds into the Town Stabilization Fund. Article 7 would appropriate the sum of \$100,000 into the Town Stabilization Fund from Free Cash. The purpose of augmenting the stabilization fund is to exercise discipline in maintaining our reserve balances at a level (around 5% of our operating budget) that is considered prudent by our bond underwriters and others evaluating the town’s fiscal health.

ARTICLE 8. Accept Provisions of MGL Chapter 32, Section 20(6). Acceptance of this provision would provide a stipend for retirement board members who are not only responsible for the oversight of a \$27 million pension fund and pensions for 230 active members and 111 retirees, but who are now required to complete annual continuing education requirements to maintain their position on the board. The cost would be \$12,000 annually and would be funded from the pension system.

ARTICLE 9. Accept Provisions of Section 23 of Chapter 176 of the Acts of 2011. Acceptance of this provision increases the allowance that can be paid to the surviving spouse of a retirement system member who died before retirement. The surviving spouse receives a retirement allowance equal to what he/she would have received if the member had retired on the date of death, or \$250 per month, whichever is higher. This article increases the minimum monthly allowance to \$500. Acceptance of this article would cost approximately \$2,800 per year and would be funded from the pension system.

ARTICLE 10. Accept Provisions of Section 65 of Chapter 139 of the Acts of 2012. Acceptance of this provision increases the allowance that can be paid to the surviving spouse of an accidental disability retiree who retired prior to November 7, 1996. Prior to November 7, 1996, accidental disability retirees were unable to choose Option C, which provides a reduced allowance for surviving spouse. The only retirement benefit available to a surviving spouse of those retirees is a flat annual amount as determined by Section 101 of Chapter 32. That amount was originally \$6,000 and was increased to \$9,000 by Town Meeting on May 7, 2011. Acceptance of the new provisions/paragraph increases the amount to \$12,000 per year. There are no surviving spouses currently receiving benefits under Section 101 of Chapter 32, but there is one retiree whose surviving spouse would be eligible for this benefit. The potential cost of this article is \$3,000, to be funded from the pension system.

- ARTICLE 11. Accept Provisions of MGL Chapter 32, Section 9 (2) (d) (ii).**
Acceptance of this provision provides for a cost of living adjustment to the allowance paid to the surviving child of a retirement system member who died as a result of the performance of his/her duties. Acceptance of this section would have no immediate cost and any future costs would be funded by the pension system.
- ARTICLE 12. Amend Town Bylaws Affecting Structure of Finance Committee.**
Article 11 would amend Article II, Section 2 of the Town Bylaws by replacing “consisting of 9 residents” with “consisting of not less than 3 but not more than 7 residents “in the first sentence. This change would allow the Finance Committee to function with fewer than 5 members having to be present for a quorum.
- ARTICLE 13. Appropriate Funds for Salary of Backup Accountant.** Article 13 would appropriate the sum of \$1,400 from Free Cash for the purpose of increasing the Town Accountant’s FY 2013 budget. These funds will be used to fund the compensation of the employee acting as accountant backup for bills and payroll in the Town Accountant. This function will be performed by an existing part-time employee who will work additional hours.
- ARTICLE 14. Supplemental FY 2013 Appropriation for Dispatch Budget.** This article would appropriate the sum of \$11,000 from Free Cash for the purpose of supplementing the FY 2013 budget of the Dispatch Department. The Dispatch Budget suffered significantly this year due to the resignation of a full time dispatcher, the cost of hiring and training a new replacement dispatcher, the covering of unfilled shifts, and new mandated training requirements. As a result of these requirements it is anticipated that the Dispatch Budget will be short by at least \$11,000.
- ARTICLE 15. Supplemental FY 2013 Appropriation for Police Budget.**
Article 16 would appropriate the sum of \$24,500 from free cash for the purpose of increasing the FY 2013 budget of the Police Department. Since the original FY 2013 budget was prepared, many changes and unexpected costs have incurred within the Police Department. These have had a significant impact upon the Police Department. The changes and unexpected costs resulted from filling the shifts of a police supervisor who is out of work due to on-duty injury, new mandated training requirements, two officers who are or will be attending the Police Academy, two new officers becoming eligible for incentive pay, some time consuming investigations, and the appointment of a new Police Chief.

ARTICLE 16. Supplemental FY 2013 Appropriation for Assessors Budget.
Article 15 would appropriate the sum of \$5,500 from free cash for the purpose of increasing the FY 2013 budget of the Assessing Department. An unexpected retirement in the department resulted in a payout of \$2,500 for unused sick leave and \$3,000 for unused vacation.

ARTICLE 17. Supplemental FY 2013 Appropriation for Veterans Budget
Article 17 would appropriate the sum of \$30,000 from free cash for the purpose of increasing the FY 2013 budget of the Veterans Benefits Department. The number of veterans receiving benefits has increased since the budget was approved. The amount requested was confirmed by the acting Veterans Agent, Mark Fitzpatrick. There is still the change of additional veterans being added to the rolls, but potential cost will most likely be addressed through a reserve fund transfer.

ARTICLE 18. Appropriation for Purchase of Flags and Accessories. This article would appropriate the sum of \$2,500 for the purpose of purchasing flags and accessories to be displayed along the streets of Montague Center and Lake Pleasant. The existing flags and accessories are in poor condition and need to be replaced. The town recently appropriated funding for new flags and accessories currently being used in Turners Falls.

ARTICLE 19. Supplemental FY 2013 Appropriation for the Legal Budget.
Article 18 would appropriate the sum of \$17,500 from free cash for the purpose of increasing the FY 2013 budget of the Legal Department. The town continues to deal with the costs of litigating Millers Falls property disputes. Although the town anticipates wrapping up the latter case soon, there are new cases on the horizon which will demand continuing legal expenditures. These include a suit filed against the Town zoning board relating to the Montague Center School Project, and an upcoming arbitration hearing with one of the town's unions. There are no guarantees that the town will not have to appropriate additional funds for the legal budget later this year.