

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING  
TOWN OF MONTAGUE  
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
February 12, 2025

**MOTIONS WITH BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**ARTICLE 1: MOVED:** That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$36,000 for the purpose of supplementing the FY25 Reserve Fund Budget, said sum to be raised from Free Cash.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0

Finance Committee Recommends 4-0

**Background**

At the Annual Town Meeting on May 4, 2024, the Town appropriated \$50,000 for the Finance Committee's FY25 Reserve Fund. The Reserve Fund has been requested and approved two times this fiscal year. The first request was for \$23,500 to cover the retirement costs of the previous Town Accountant, and the second request was for \$12,500 to cover tuition and transportation costs for the Smith Vocational special article short fall, leaving a balance of \$14,000. The Finance Committee requests that the Reserve Fund be replenished to cover unexpected costs to come for the remainder of the fiscal year.

**ARTICLE 2. MOVED:** That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$12,500 for the purpose of purchasing and installing cable-related equipment for MCTV and anything incidental or related thereto, said sum to be raised from PEG Access Funds.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0

Finance Committee Recommends 4-0

**Background**

This is an annual article to appropriate the PEG (Public-Education-Government) access funds provided to the Town by Comcast under the terms of its cable franchisee license for use by the town's PEG access provider, Montague Community Television.

**ARTICLE 3: MOVED:** That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$20,547 for the purpose of increasing the amount appropriated pursuant to Article #13 of the May 4, 2024, Annual Town Meeting, which provided funding for the tuition and transportation for a Montague student to attend Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School , said sum to be raised from Free Cash.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0

Finance Committee Recommends 4-0

### **Background**

At the Annual Town Meeting on May 4, 2024, the Town voted to appropriate the sum of \$36,000 for the purpose of providing tuition and transportation for a Montague resident attending Smith Vocational School. The Smith Vocational special article was budgeted with an estimate for \$75 a day for transportation costs. The September and October transportation costs were \$400 a day. When this was discovered by the Town Administrator the transportation costs were renegotiated to \$200 a day. The overall short fall for this special article is \$33,047. The Finance Committee has voted to cover \$12,500 of the shortfall out of the Reserve Fund. This leaves a remainder of \$20,547 to cover the remainder of the tuition and transportation costs of the one Montague student currently enrolled in the school.

**ARTICLE 4. MOVED:** That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$24,751.20 for the purpose of increasing the amount appropriated pursuant to Article #18C of the May 22, 2021, Annual Town Meeting, which provided funds for bid and project overruns, said sum to be raised from Free Cash.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0  
Finance Committee Recommends 4-0

### **Background**

The Bid and Project Overrun special article enables the Selectboard to supplement the budgets for capital projects so that they may be fully and satisfactorily executed. The fund began the fiscal year with a balance of \$26,223.31. In October, \$14,949 was voted by the Selectboard to cover the CWF generator project bid overage. In December, the Selectboard voted \$11,025.51 to cover the bid overage for the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Repairs. This leaves the bid overrun special article with \$248.80 remaining. The Town Administrator requests to replenish this fund to \$25,000 to face the rising costs and the possibility of running into bid overages in the fiscal year.

**ARTICLE 5: MOVED:** That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$48,500 for the purpose of designing, constructing and equipping a conference room and breakroom renovation in the Clean Water Facility, including any and all incidental and related costs, with \$20,000 to be raised from the unexpended balance of Article #7 of the October 29, 2014 Special Town Meeting, that \$1,218.40 to be raised from the unexpended balance of Article #15 of the March 2, 2023 Special Town Meeting and \$27,281.60 to be raised from CWF Retained Earnings.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0  
Finance Committee Recommends 4-0  
Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

### **Background**

This project is considered phase two of the Main Generator replacement project at the CWF, where after the main generator has been removed from the room in the Administration Building, the room will be converted into a usable space for staff. Converting the old generator room would alleviate two issues by:

- Creating a larger updated staff breakroom space
- Provide a much-needed conference/meeting room for the facility (Staff currently shares the breakroom as an impromptu meeting room space)

As the old generator room has a larger footprint than the current breakroom, it will be turned into the new staff breakroom. The old staff breakroom will be converted into a conference/meeting room space with additional file storage. As partial funding for this Article, the Motion will repurpose \$20,000 that was appropriated in 2014 for purchase of CWF lab software and \$1,218.40 that was appropriated in 2023 for purchase of a CWF transit van. Both of these projects were completed under budget and these funds are available for other purposes.

**ARTICLE 6: MOVED:** That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$24,000 for the purpose of supplementing the FY25 Airport operating budget, with \$7,000 going to the Airport PT Intern, \$13,000 to the Airport Building and Grounds, and \$4,000 to the Airport Equipment Repair and Maintenance accounts, said sum to be raised from Airport Retained Earnings.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0

Finance Committee Recommends 4-0

### **Background**

The FY25 airport operating budget was trimmed to reduce impact on taxation which left little flexibility in the budget. These FY25 expenses were not anticipated and were approved and deemed necessary by the Airport Commission for the safe operation of the Airport.

\$7,000 to 600-5-482-5124 (PT Intern)- Due to no qualified individuals this year in the student hiring pool an employee from the summer was retained at a slightly higher rate to work for the winter and spring season. Additional work is also being completed in-house, where in the past it would have been outsourced to a contractor, increasing the internal labor hours. Both require additional funding for the position to keep it viable until the end of June. This will not increase the hours or related cost, it will allow us to maintain the current staffing levels.

\$13,000 to 600-5-482-5241 (Building & Grounds)- Many large expenses over the summer and fall have depleted this line item and additional funds are needed to operate until June. A significant amount of funding was put into preventative maintenance of the 6 buildings covered under this line item, including some preemptive repairs. To bring the facility closer to meeting the Department of Public Safety standards additional costs such as emergency lighting, fire

extinguishers, first aid stations, and signage, were also expended. Despite the majority of repairs being done by airport staff, items that are electrical, plumbing, and propane related must be sourced out to licensed and insured professionals.

\$4,000 to 600-5-482-5244 (Equipment Repair & Maintenance)- Several smaller but unexpected expenses have depleted this line item. A gearbox on the large flail mower (DOP: 2011) had to be replaced costing over \$2,200. The airport operations truck, purchased with a 100% grant in 2019, required preventative and reactive maintenance repairs exceeding \$6,000 to ensure continued safe operation. In addition, the backup generator for the administration offices required \$2,000 in repairs to meet new safety code and emission requirements.

**ARTICLE 7: MOVED:** That the Town will vote pursuant to General Laws Chapter 41, Sections 1 and 106 to change the office of Tree Warden from an elected office to an appointed office.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0  
Planning Board Recommends 4-0

### **Background**

The Tree Warden is currently an elected position pursuant to Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 41, Section 106. The Tree Warden is responsible for the care, control, and management of all public trees, shrubs and growth within the Town. This is done through enforcement and execution of duties described in the Town's public shade tree bylaw. The position is responsible for administering a \$30,000 budget which includes administering tree trimming and removal contracts and directing DPW grounds staff to execute work. The position receives a stipend of \$1,764 annually. It is common for the Tree Warden to be an appointed position that is held by a municipal employee. The position requires expertise in arboriculture, administrative processes, emergency response, and interdepartmental coordination. The Selectboard, in consultation with the Tree Committee, has found that it is difficult to find a qualified town resident to fill this position. There is an opportunity for existing, qualified paid staff on DPW to take on the duties, however the residency requirement of the elected position currently disallows them from the position.

**ARTICLE 8: MOVED:** That the Town will vote to accept as a public way the roadway known as Sandy Lane, as heretofore laid out by the Selectboard and shown on a plan of land entitled “Proposed Street Acceptance Plan ‘Sandy Lane’ Plan of Land in Montague, Massachusetts,” dated January 18, 2024, prepared by Harold L. Eaton and Associates, Inc., on file with the Town Clerk, and authorize the Selectboard to acquire, by gift, purchase, and/or eminent domain, the fee to and/or easements in Sandy Lane for all purposes for which public ways are used in the Town of Montague and any drainage, utility and/or other easements related thereto.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0  
Planning Board Recommends 3-0

**Background**

Sandy Lane is located off Turnpike Road and provides access to the Transfer Station, Regional Dog Shelter, Franklin Regional Transit Authority Bus Garage, and Judd Wire, Inc. In 2023, the 723 foot long road was reconstructed by FRTA to the Town’s subdivision standards as a condition of FRTA’s development plan for a new maintenance facility. While the land under Sandy Lane itself is owned in fee-simple by the Town, Sandy Lane has never been accepted as a public way. By accepting Sandy Lane as a public way, the town will be able to receive Chapter 90 reimbursement from the state to help support ongoing maintenance of the roadway. This petition was initiated by the Selectboard and a public hearing was held by the Planning Board per state stature. Following the Feb 27, 2024 hearing, the Planning Board voted unanimously to support the acceptance of Sandy Lane as public way. There was one condition that involved a minor sidewalk patch which was addressed by Montague DPW this past summer.