

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
TOWN OF MONTAGUE
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
OCTOBER 28, 2026
MOTIONS & BACKGROUND

ARTICLE 1. Prior Year Bills

Accountant Request

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$1,643.02 for the purpose of paying prior year unpaid bills of the Police and Shared Services Departments, with said sum to be raised from Free Cash.

Background: Two invoices for goods and services provided in prior fiscal years remain unpaid and must now be paid in FY27. The outstanding bills resulted from invoices that were not received or processed before the close of the applicable fiscal year, including during a period of staff turnover.

- Shared Services: \$58.02 Verizon bill dated June 17, 2026
- Police Department: \$1,585 Signet security system bill dated February 24, 2025

This article appropriates \$1,643.02 from Free Cash to pay these outstanding obligations

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends X-X

ARTICLE 2. Airport FY26 Operating Deficit

Accountant Request

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$38,550.27 for the purpose of funding the Airport FY26 operating deficit, with said sum to be raised from Free Cash.

Background: The Airport Enterprise Fund ended FY26 with an operating deficit of \$38,550.27, which the Town is required to fund. This article proposes using Free Cash to cover the deficit rather than adding the amount directly to taxation.

The deficit has two primary causes. First, Airport revenues fell \$18,671.57 below budget after the loss of a tenant in January 2026. The vacant space was not re-leased before the end of the fiscal year.

Second, Airport expenditures exceeded the FY26 budget by \$19,878.52. These additional costs were primarily associated with repairing and preparing the vacant space for future leasing.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends X-X

ARTICLE 3. Airport FY27 Revenue Deficit

Accountant Request

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$15,000 for the purpose of funding the operations of the Airport, including the payment of wages and benefits for airport employees, maintenance of property and equipment, the purchase of supplies, debt service, and anything incidental or related thereto, with \$10,000 to be used to fund the expected Fiscal Year 2027 revenue shortfall in the Airport Enterprise Fund and \$5,000 to increase Airport Overtime, with said sum to be raised from Free Cash.

Background: Based on current lease arrangements and revenue projections, the Airport Enterprise Fund is expected to fall approximately \$10,000 short of its FY27 budgeted revenues. This article would provide an additional \$10,000 from Free Cash so the Airport budget is fully funded and the Town can complete the fall tax-rate-setting process without delay. The Town Accountant has reviewed this issue with the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, which has recommended that the Town provide additional funding at this time.

The article also provides \$5,000 for additional Airport overtime. Current staffing projections indicate that additional overtime will be needed during FY27 to maintain required staffing coverage.

The total requested appropriation is therefore \$15,000 from Free Cash.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends X-X

ARTICLE 4. Grant Deficit Cleanup

Accountant Request

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$61,502.31 for the purpose of funding structural grant deficits for grants outlined below, with said sum to be raised from Free Cash.

- Airport FY23 Wildlife Management (-\$5,525)
- Airport FY23 Retrofit Approach Lighting (-\$714.30)
- Airport FY23 Approach Safety Equipment (-\$11,418.99)
- Airport ASMP 2024-OB5-38 Airport Life Safety Systems (-\$656.55)
- Airport ASMP 2021-OB5-33 Generator (-\$5,013.42)
- Airport ASMP 2022-OB5-38 Beacon (-\$6,858.37)
- Airport ASMP 2022-OB5-40 Building Safety (-\$22,893.35)
- Selectboard Green Communities (-\$8,422.33)

Background: The Town Accountant has identified several closed or substantially completed grant accounts with permanent, or “structural,” deficits totaling \$61,502.31. A structural deficit occurs when expenditures charged to a grant exceed the amount the Town is eligible to receive in reimbursement, with no remaining grant revenue available to cover the difference.

These deficits cannot be corrected through an accounting entry alone because the unreimbursed expenditures still require an authorized funding source. In these cases, the Town did not receive reimbursement for various administrative reasons, including missed reimbursement deadlines and local matching costs that were not separately funded at the time the grants were administered.

This article appropriates Free Cash to cover these historical funding gaps, eliminate the negative account balances, and allow the affected grants to be formally closed.

For context, the Town is currently administering more than \$29 million across more than 20 active grants. The deficits addressed by this article represent approximately 0.2% of that amount. As the Town's grant portfolio has grown, staff are also strengthening procedures for identifying local matching requirements, tracking reimbursement requests, and closing grant accounts in a timely manner.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends X-X

ARTICLE 5. Cemetery Maintenance/Sexton Stipend

Cemetery Commission Request

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$12,032 for the purpose of purchasing goods and services related to the maintenance of the cemeteries and providing funds for the FY27 cemetery sexton stipend, with said sum to be raised from Sale of Highland Cemetery Lots.

Background: This article would establish funding for cemetery operational and maintenance needs beyond the routine landscaping provided through the Town's operating budget. These expenses may include grounds improvements, grave marking, and other work associated with the continued development and upkeep of Highland Cemetery.

Of the \$12,032 requested, \$2,032 would fund one-half of the FY27 Cemetery Sexton stipend. The remaining half of the stipend, approximately \$2,000, is funded through the Town's operating budget.

The appropriation would come from the Sale of Highland Cemetery Lots account. This fund includes money transferred to the Town when it accepted ownership of the original Highland Cemetery, along with subsequent revenue from the sale of cemetery lots and burial-related fees. The current balance of the fund is \$126,352.62.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends X-X

ARTICLE 6. Non-Capital Equipment and projects

Police/Parks and Recreation Request

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$16,300 for the following departmental purchases and projects, with said sum to be raised from Free Cash.

- A. \$5,600 for the purchase of a walk-behind automatic floor scrubber
- B. \$7,700 for the purchase of an infield groomer
- C. \$3,000 for resurfacing Unity Park playground walkway and whale unit area

Background:

Walk-Behind Floor Scrubber

A walk-behind automatic floor scrubber is essentially a commercial machine for washing hard floors. This would replace a failed unit that was purchased when the Police Station opened in 2009. The replacement unit would be smaller than the current unit to meet the actual needs. The unit would be housed at the police department but would be available for less frequent use across other municipal facilities.

Infield Groomer

The infield groomer is a a tow behind unit that supports maintenance of the town's public baseball and softball fields. Over the years, MPRD and DPW have tried various methods in which to manage grass and weed growth on ballfield infields. Such efforts proved overly time-consuming and resulted in only temporary improvement. A professional-grade infield groomer would provide greater efficiency in managing these areas, and keeping the fields in optimum playing condition. The request is timely because the equipment is needed for the upcoming spring season.

Resurfacing Unity Park Playground walkway and splash pad

The work for the resurfacing of the Unity Park walkways and splash pad area will include crack filling on the asphalt walkways, in addition to two coats of sport court grade paint. Paint will also be applied to the surface of the whale spray feature. This necessary maintenance compliments other upgrades currently underway at Unity Park playground.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends X-X

ARTICLE 7. Consolidated Elementary School Feasibility Study

Gill-Montague Regional School District Request

MOVED: That the Town appropriate the sum of one million seven hundred and fifty thousand (\$1,750,000) Dollars for a feasibility study and schematic design for necessary improvements at the Sheffield Elementary School, 43 Crocker Avenue, and the Hillcrest Elementary School, 30 Griswold Street, including the payment of costs incidental or related thereto, and for which the Town may be

eligible for a grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (“MSBA”), said sum to be expended under the direction of the School Building Committee, and to meet said appropriation the Town will appropriate \$500,000 from Capital Stabilization and the Treasurer with the approval of the Selectboard is authorized to borrow \$1,250,000 under M.G.L. Chapter 44, or any other enabling authority; that the Town acknowledges that the Massachusetts School Building Authority’s (“MSBA”) grant program is a non-entitlement, discretionary program based on need, as determined by the MSBA, and any project costs the Town incurs in excess of any grant approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the Town; and that the amount of borrowing authorized pursuant to this vote shall be reduced by any grant amount set forth in the Feasibility Study Agreement that may be executed between the Gill-Montague School District and the MSBA.

Background: This article would authorize \$1,750,000 for an MSBA-required Feasibility Study and Schematic Design process addressing the long-term needs of Sheffield and Hillcrest Elementary Schools. The study is the next major step in the Massachusetts School Building Authority process and will evaluate options for providing a consolidated PreK–5 elementary school serving Montague.

The Gill-Montague Regional School District's 2025 Statement of Interest identifies significant space constraints at both schools. At Sheffield, instructional and support spaces have been subdivided or converted to accommodate music, special education, English learner services, counseling, intervention, and other required programs, with some services provided in shared or non-traditional spaces. At Hillcrest, the Statement of Interest similarly identifies shortages of dedicated space for physical education, library, music, special education, related services, and preschool programming.

The schools also have significant building-system needs, including aging roofs, windows and heating systems, accessibility limitations, and other deferred capital needs. Addressing these systems individually would require substantial future investment but would not, by itself, resolve the space constraints created by modern educational requirements.

The MSBA has invited Sheffield Elementary School into its Eligibility Period and has authorized the feasibility process to examine the potential consolidation of Sheffield, which currently serves grades 2–5, and Hillcrest, which currently serves PreK–1, into a single PreK–5 elementary school.

Authorization of the Feasibility Study does **not** commit the Town to a particular construction project. The study will evaluate alternatives that may include renovation, additions, new construction, consolidation, or combinations of these approaches. A preferred option would be

selected later and would require additional MSBA and local approvals before construction could proceed.

The \$1.75 million study budget was developed by the Elementary School Building Committee after reviewing recent MSBA feasibility studies of comparable scope and scale. It includes the cost of hiring an Owner's Project Manager, design professionals, and other services required during the feasibility and schematic design phases.

Earlier project planning assumed an estimated MSBA reimbursement rate of approximately 76% for eligible costs. The actual reimbursement rate and eligible project costs will be determined by the MSBA. Under this article, the Town would appropriate \$500,000 from Capital Stabilization and authorize borrowing of up to \$1.25 million. The authorized borrowing would be reduced by the amount of any MSBA grant provided through the Feasibility Study Agreement.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends X-X
Capital Improvement Committee X-X

ARTICLE 8. Authorize Senior Tax Work Off Program

Selectboard Request

MOVED: That the Town vote to accept the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 59, Section 5K, authorizing the Selectboard to establish a program whereby persons over the age of sixty may volunteer to provide services to the Town in exchange for a reduction in their real property tax obligations, beginning in Fiscal Year 2028.

Background: This article would accept G.L. c. 59, § 5K, allowing the Town to establish a Senior Property Tax Work-Off Program for eligible residents age 60 and older. Under the program, participating seniors could perform approved volunteer service for the Town in exchange for a reduction in their property tax bill.

Acceptance of the statute would authorize the program but would not establish all of its final rules. Following Town Meeting approval, the Selectboard would adopt program guidelines addressing matters such as participant eligibility and preferences, the number of available positions, work assignments, the amount of the tax credit, and administrative procedures.

The program is intended to provide modest property tax relief while creating opportunities for residents to provide useful services to municipal departments. The program would be administered by the Council on Aging Director with support from Town Hall.

For the first year, the Town anticipates offering approximately 10 positions with a total tax-credit value of up to \$15,000. Initial work opportunities are expected to be available through the Senior Center and Libraries, with the potential to expand the program to other municipal departments in future years.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends X-X

ARTICLE 9. 34 Central Street Lease

Selectboard Request

MOVED: That the Town vote to authorize the Selectboard, pursuant to G.L. c. 40, §3 and subject to the applicable requirements of G.L. c. 30B, to lease the Town-owned property and improvements known as the former Central Street School, located at 34 Central Street in Turners Falls, for a term not to exceed thirty (30) years, for educational, child development, community service, or other related purposes determined by the Selectboard to serve the public interest, upon such terms and conditions as the Selectboard determines to be in the best interests of the Town, and to execute any agreements and take any other actions necessary or appropriate to carry out the purposes of this vote.

Background: The Town owns the former Central Street School at 34 Central Street in Turners Falls. The property is currently leased to the Franklin Community Action Corporation (FCAC), which operates an Early Head Start program serving children from six weeks to three years of age. The current 30-year lease expires on August 1, 2027.

FCAC has informed the Town that it intends to seek a new lease. Having a long-term lease in place would also assist FCAC in pursuing grant funding for future programming and capital improvements at the property.

This article would authorize the Selectboard to conduct the required competitive procurement process and enter into a new lease for a term of up to 30 years. Consistent with the property's existing and historical public-serving use, the authorization would limit future uses to educational, child development, community service, or other related purposes determined by the Selectboard to serve the public interest.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0