



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

**FY 19**

*Please complete this form electronically in its entirety!*

Department: 122 – Board of Selectmen Submitted by: Steven Ellis

Please describe and provide the rationale for any substantial changes in your FY19 line item budget submission.

The BOS budget is proposed to increase by 3.5% in FY19. Substantial increases include:

1. We propose increasing the advertising line from \$500 to \$750 to support required postings for procurement and account for the possibility of any hiring process the BOS needs to oversee. Expenses for the Building Inspector totaled close to \$500 and we used only the most limited means to advertise.
2. Travel increases by \$872 in FY19 due because the state is no longer holding required procurement training in western or central MA. As a result, I will not attend this required training in FY18. This will necessitate hotel stay and per diems that comprise most of the FY19 increase. 8am start times in Boston traffic make commuting impractical.

Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY18? What is the status of those expenditures/investments?

- The Board was a stakeholder to the special article appropriating \$5,000 to develop a new Town Web Site. Working in collaboration with the Town Accountant, Town Clerk, and other staff, BOS staff were able to successfully oversee the complete redesign and implementation of the Town's web site, launch in November 2017.
- The Board received \$100,000 to support required debris removal, boarding, roof repair, sprinkler work, and other securing of the Strathmore Mill. The project has been a major undertaking and initial plans would have led to excessive cost. Better approaches were developed and the building is clear of combustible debris and fully boarded. Sprinklers in key sections of the building were repaired but all town maintained sprinklers are now limited to non-winter use due to unreliability and freezing issues. Some roof work has been done, but substantial leaks remain. Additionally, vandals broke over 100 upper floor windows that must now be covered with specially designed plastic, which is being planned now.

To-date in FY18, has your department experienced any notable successes, such as improving or providing new programs or services, or implementing new technologies? If so, please describe.

The Board somehow managed to break in a new Town administrator in FY17 and has continued to provide him with outstanding support in FY18. Major accomplishments include completion of all agreements with Kearsarge Energy in the leasing of a 6MW solar installation, as well as new power purchasing agreements for electricity and gas. The Board is gratified to have played a role in these successes.

Likewise, the Board continued to support tax title and receivership processes associated with distressed and neglected buildings in Montague, working to ensure better outcomes for those buildings and the neighborhoods in which they are located. Success was realized in particular at the Powers Block in Millers Falls. Other important long term projects came to fruition, such as completion and occupancy of the former Montague Center School. The Board is working very aggressively to court further develop in our

existing industrial park and to support the Town Planner's efforts to further the vision of the Sandy Lane industrial park.

The Board can share part of the credit for implementation of the new Town web site, adoption of previously funded online board software, and moving Town staff toward better utilization of Outlook Calendar, as well as successful upgrade of Town Hall telecom systems. To emphasize – we can only share in the credit. Many others played critical roles, including but not limited to the IT Coordinator and the Town Clerk. The Board has also sought to support move the process of developing the online permitting software, CitizenServe forward; though it remains partially implemented at present (it will get done).

Are there challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and objectives that are due to its FY18 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation(s) for improving the situation.

The biggest challenge we face is staff capacity. Innumerable opportunities exist to realize operational and program improvements, as well as pursue new sources of revenue to support infrastructure improvements. We have the capacity to make lots of progress and seize many opportunities, but I've quickly realized that we must be selective in what we pursue. I am trying to leverage grant programs to bring support for a variety of efforts, including personnel policy development and ADA transition planning, as we did with capital budget planning last summer.

Are there other areas of your budget where you wish advocate for change, such as stipends, materials, etcetera?

No, but there may be submissions from other departments that would enhance our overall capacity to continue to enhance our community.