



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

FY 19

Please complete this form electronically in its entirety!

Department: Planning and Conservation Submitted by: Walter Ramsey

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

The services delivered by Turners Falls RiverCulture have been primarily funded by grants over the last 11 years. The services include coordination of cultural, business, and community development projects in Turners Falls. If not for a special article, the RiverCulture Program would have been sunsetted in FY18 subsequent to the loss of Mass Cultural Council Funding. Starting in FY19 the position will no longer be able to be funded as a contract position. In order to continue to provide level services, The Planning Department requests that the Cultural Coordinator be a part-time town position (Grade B- 25 hours) in the Planning Department. Programming funds would be fundraised by the RiverCulture Program. The position will increase the planning staff budget by \$25,181. To mitigate the cost impacts of the position I propose removing the graduate planning assistant line item (\$4,000), thus the net impact to the Department budget is an increase of \$21,181.

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

In October 2017 the town made an appropriation of \$20,000 to the RiverCulture Program for FY18. As of 12/19/2017, Those funds have not yet been tapped.

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 Sandy Lane Solar Project (phase I) will be completed in FY18. The Planning Department initiated the project 7 years ago starting with a master plan and zoning change and has been engaged with this particular developer for over 2 years. The project will net the town almost \$200,000 in annual revenues through a land lease and PILOT agreement in addition to savings from the purchase of net metering credits at a below market rate.

Powers Block and Montague Center School were renovated and received certificates of occupancy in FY18. These projects took 7 years of effort with strong technical support from the Planning Department (zone changes, site pre-development, commercial homesteading, permitting, etc). These culturally important buildings will generate around \$90,000 tax revenue in FY19 while contributing toward economic revitalization.

The support of the Planning Department into these public-private partnerships has enabled the town to add almost \$300,000 in revenues starting FY19 while adding over 30 market rate dwelling units, and handful for new businesses in Millers Falls, a dramatic expansion of renewable energy, and many jobs to construct these three projects.

Two years after completing the Avenue A Streetscape Phase I project- the two commercial buildings in the targeted improvement area have been fully rehabilitated and are at 100% commercial occupancy across all 5 storefronts. The 2013 Downtown Turners Falls Livability Plan recommended targeting public investment into this block that was vastly underutilized and blighted at the time. The block is now the center of economic activity that the Plan had envisioned because of the Planning Department's ability to effectively target CDBG resources and develop outstanding public works projects. Phase III of the streetscape improvement program is in the design phase. My main point is that many of the projects that the planning department works on have a 5 to 10 year timeframe from concept to implementation, but results are definitively coming through. Some of the projects like Strathmore/Canal District redevelopment , Sandy Lane industrial area, and Native American Cultural Park planning are on a longer trajectory but are also meeting important progress milestone in their own right- as capacity and funding, economic climate allows.

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 only way for the Town to retain the RiverCulture program is to establish the cultural coordinator as a town position.

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

No