



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

**FY 26**

*Complete this form electronically! Be clear and concise!*

Department: Selectboard Submitted by: Walter R

- 1. To this point in FY26, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Are there any other highlights you would like us to know about? Please describe.**

The Selectboard is fully staffed and operating at full steam. FY26 has been notably busy with new hires for leadership positions and winding down the contract negotiations. With adequate resources, the office has been able to strategically focus on improving processes around licensing, onboarding, payroll administration, and IT- I feel that the SB office and the Town in general has really levelled up its professionalism and our accountability to the public. Excellent and adequate staffing has freed up time for the ATA to focus on capital and special project administration, and for the TA to focus on leadership, strategic partnerships, and improving personnel practices.

- 2. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY26 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation for improving the situation in FY27.**

No

- 3. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY27 level service budget request.**

**SELECTBOARD-** Budget is up 7.7% due to personnel cost increases (\$+25,000). Department is fully staffed. No changes needed to expenses.

**LEGAL-** Can reduce labor negotiations line because all CBA are set for FY27. Can zero out the FERC legal expenses because the town will not pursue further appeals of the license. Overall reduction of \$10,000 (12%)

**SHARED SERVICES-** Payroll software scales up from 6 months to a full year budget for FY27.

**BENEFITS-** Health Insurance is carrying an additional 18% in case another rate hike comes our way. The Town will hopefully be able to reduce this in January when the rate is typically set.

**INTERGOVT-** We can expect increases from these agencies to cover their increased health insurance costs

- 4. Please describe and provide the rationale for your alternative (2% reduction) budget. Please also describe the anticipated impacts of each reduction in terms of departmental operations and delivery of services. These impacts could be benefits or drawbacks or they may be neutral.**

SELECTBOARD- We identified several areas where the Selectboard Office budget can be reduced without substantially impacting level of service that we provide. We are reducing our budget flexibility around things like advertising, office supplies, and trainings. Travel budget can be reduced substantially since so many trainings and regional meeting are now held via ZOOM. Our office currently adequately furnished, equipped and stocked so we can reasonably reduce spending on those items in FY27.

SHARED SERVICES- We can reduce the Shared paper expense to better reflect actual expenses. This expense is typically supplanted by recycling dividends.

- 5. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY25 or FY26? If so, please list share the current status of each of those expenditures/projects.**

Unexpected engineering sits at 22,200  
Bid/project overrun sits at \$36,025

Selectboard office is working with the accountant to identify special articles that can be closed out.



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Department: Accounting Submitted by: Angelica Desroches

- 1. To this point in FY26, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Are there any other highlights you would like us to know about? Please describe.**

*On July 1<sup>st</sup> implemented new software in the accounting office that is now cloud based and is integrated with the Treasurer/Collector/Assessor offices. Now all financial offices are in the same financial software. Starting January 1<sup>st</sup> will be implementing new payroll software for the Town. This will allow the employees to have portal access to their payroll and should streamline the state/federal mandated reporting.*

- 2. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY26 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation for improving the situation in FY27.**

*None noted at this time.*

- 3. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY27 level service budget request.**

*Reduced the software maintenance line because we are past the implementation year costs for the rollout.*

- 4. Please describe and provide the rationale for your alternative (2% reduction) budget. Please also describe the anticipated impacts of each reduction in terms of departmental operations and delivery of services. These impacts could be benefits or drawbacks or they may be neutral.**

*5247- Reduced by an additional user in the system. In FY27 I was going to pay for a Selectboard office user to help with maintaining grants. This reduction would not hinder operations of the accounting office.*

*5420- Reduced office supplies by \$1,000. While there has been less printing in the accounting office over the past year I feel this reduction might put the office at risk if the toner prices change significantly next year.*

- 5. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY25 or FY26? If so, please list share the current status of each of those expenditures/projects.**

*N/A*



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Department: Assessing Department Submitted by: Adam Tocci

- 1. To this point in FY26, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Are there any other highlights you would like us to know about? Please describe.**

This year, we have added an MLSPin subscription in order to access sales information located on the multiple listing service database. This will improve our ability to identify trends in the housing market as well as enhance our ability to defend valuations during abatement season.

- 2. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY26 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation for improving the situation in FY27.**

The department's resource allocation presented a challenge toward the latter end of fiscal year 2027 following the change in Director. The former Director, Karen Tonelli, required less consultation. As such, the line item for consulting was exceeded during the FY26 year. We have re-allocated money initially meant for litigation to the consulting budget in order to more accurately reflect anticipated expenses moving forward into the FY27 budget season.

- 3. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY27 level service budget request.**

As previously mentioned, the former Director had more experience in the field and required less consulting services to perform the duties of the Director of Assessing. It is anticipated that the new Director will require additional funds for consultation services during the first two years of his tenure. To that end, money designated for classes, conferences, travel, and legal fees have all been re-allocated to consulting services.

- 4. Please describe and provide the rationale for your alternative (2% reduction) budget. Please also describe the anticipated impacts of each reduction in terms of departmental operations and delivery of services. These impacts could be benefits or drawbacks or they may be neutral.**

There are small programs such as our book binding program that were cut entirely in the 2% reduced budget. Additionally, office supplies and material were cut as more efficient means of acquisition were found for materials.



such as envelopes and printer ink/toner. Additionally, seminar and travel expenses were cut from the reduced budget as they were not mission critical to the Department's goals.

- 5. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY25 or FY26? If so, please list share the current status of each of those expenditures/projects.**

N/A



**Town of Montague**  
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Department: Treasurer/Collector Submitted by: Eileen M. Seymour

- 1. To this point in FY26, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Are there any other highlights you would like us to know about? Please describe.**

*Successful changeover to quarterly billing resulting in better cash flow, however, this has increased our workload in the tax collector's office as many times there are billing crossovers (i.e., we could count on a reduced workload on the real estate side with semi-annual bills that would be filled with sewer billing, excise tax billing, etc. and now we don't see that slowdown in real estate payments) which has at times been challenging.*

*We are also switching to annual barrel sticker sales starting in January of 2026 to reduce some of the traffic in early July when new tax bills go out and it is peak vacation time.*

- 2. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY26 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation for improving the situation in FY27.**

*No*

- 3. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY27 level service budget request.**

*There are some line items that I feel I can reduce due to changes in operations including the Tax Billing Service line as that was a new service for us and we weren't completely sure of the cost implications. I also reduced our Financial Advisor Services line as we are doing less short-term borrowing currently. I have reduced the Tax Title line as well due to the changes in the laws resulting in less foreclosure activity.*

- 4. Please describe and provide the rationale for your alternative (2% reduction) budget. Please also describe the anticipated impacts of each reduction in terms of departmental operations and delivery of services. These impacts could be benefits or drawbacks or they may be neutral.**

*The biggest concerns I would have with my budget reductions would only be in the postage line and the tax title line items. If we see that we may exceed our budget in the Tax Billing Service line, we will have to print and prepare the bills as we did previously, which may cause some issues due to staffing capacity. Those are the three line items that were cut the most other than Financial Advisor Services, which is place for our Financial Advisors to prepare short-term notes for us, which have not been applicable in the past few fiscal years.*

- 5. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY25 or FY26? If so, please list share the status of each of those expenditures/projects.**

*N/A*



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Department: Information Technology – 155 Submitted by: Fern Smith

- 1. To this point in FY26, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Are there any other highlights you would like us to know about? Please describe.**

Since taking on the role of IT Coordinator, I have been working with Suzor IT to fully understand the Town's hardware and software inventory and our existing contractual obligations. Together, we developed a cybersecurity plan and prepared the Town's application for the Massachusetts Cybersecurity Grant Program. This foundational work in FY26 has strengthened our security posture and improved our ability to plan and budget for future IT needs.

- 2. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY26 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation for improving the situation in FY27.**

Because I am new to the IT Coordinator role, I am still evaluating the department's needs and how well the FY26 budget supports them.

- 3. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY27 level service budget request.**

Our current IT consultant contract is on a scheduled escalator, with the final increase occurring in FY27, resulting in a \$7,500 rise over FY26. At the same time, several services are either not currently under contract or are contracted at levels that may be reduced. We have already begun reviewing these areas and have been able to lower some software costs. These adjustments help offset rising contractual obligations while ensuring we maintain essential IT services.

- 4. Please describe and provide the rationale for your alternative (2% reduction) budget. Please also describe the anticipated impacts of each reduction in terms of departmental operations and delivery of services. These impacts could be benefits or drawbacks or they may be neutral.**

A 2% reduction to the IT operating budget would most likely come from delaying or scaling back planned equipment replacements or discretionary software and service costs. Because many IT expenses are fixed contractual obligations, there are limited areas where reductions can be made without affecting service levels.

The anticipated impact of this reduction would be a slower timeline for replacing aging equipment or upgrading certain systems. While this may be manageable in the short term, it increases the risk of unexpected failures, higher support costs, and potential security vulnerabilities over time. Reducing software or service levels could also limit our ability to standardize systems or implement best-practice cybersecurity measures.

Overall, while a 2% reduction is feasible, it would reduce our flexibility to address emerging needs and may delay incremental improvements that support long-term system reliability and security.

5. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY25 or FY26? If so, please list share the current status of each of those expenditures/projects.

No



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**Department, Board, Committee, Commission**  
**BUDGET NARRATIVE**

**FY 27**

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Department: TOWN CLERK Submitted by: Wendy Bogusz

- 1. To this point in FY26, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Are there any other highlights you would like us to know about? Please describe.**

The Town Clerk's office moved into our new space for July 1, 2025. Having this new area has allowed us to spread out and not be so crowded. We are now storing some of our election materials and have an extra computer in our back office where the registrars will be able work during the election. We also have a folding table in the back area where we can spread out and look in our large records books when we receive birth, marriage or death record requests. We will now be able to test our election machines in the office rather than in the hallway.

- 2. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY26 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation for improving the situation in FY27.**

There are no challenges currently in the FY26 operating budget unless additional elections are scheduled.

- 3. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY27 level service budget request.**

The FY26 budget had one (1) election and there will be three (3) scheduled elections which is causing such a large increase in our budget.

- 4. Please describe and provide the rationale for your alternative (2% reduction) budget. Please also describe the anticipated impacts of each reduction in terms of departmental operations and delivery of services. These impacts could be benefits or drawbacks or they may be neutral.**

**5248 Office Equipment R & M** – Removed \$500: If our printer breaks, we will not be able to fix it  
**5305 Printing/Bookbinding** – Removed \$2000: We will not be able to send out any records for permanent binding and will have to try and make this up in a future year.  
**5346 Election Postage** – Removed \$2000: If grant money is available for early/extended voting, we will use that, if not we will have to take money from our regular mailing account and not mail out the dog licensing letters.  
**5420 Office Supplies** – Removed \$1,000: I have not been here a full year so I'm not quite sure how this will impact our office.

- 5. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY25 or FY26? If so, please list share the current status of each of those expenditures/projects.**

N/A



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Department: **Planning & Conservation Department**

Submitted by: **Maureen Pollock, Planning Director**

- 1. To this point in FY26, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Are there any other highlights you would like us to know about? Please describe.**

No.

- 2. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY26 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation for improving the situation in FY27.**

As part of the planning process, the Planning Department, including the RiverCulture Program, provides enhanced community engagement and public outreach in soliciting feedback from our most vulnerable residents (including Environmental Justice populations and other priority populations) to help guide short and long term planning projects. Through grant funding, the Planning Department has successfully "baked" these efforts in as part of the overall project budget. The Planning Department will continue to secure grant funding for these efforts in future projects, as they become available. No funding is requested at this time.

Examples of enhanced community engagement and public outreach include but are not limited to:

- distribute surveys, in English/Spanish (fees apply)
- hold focus groups, interviews, and public forums, in English/Spanish
  - hold events in-person and via Zoom
  - hold smaller events at Town facilities
  - hold bigger events in Great Hall at DCR Discovery Center, with a capacity of 85 people (fees apply)
- provide food/beverages (fees apply)
- provide childcare services (fees apply)
- provide language translation services (fees apply)
- provide raffle prizes (fees apply)
- advertisement in local newspapers (fees apply)

- 3. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY27 level service budget request.**

N/A

- 4. Please describe and provide the rationale for your alternative (2% reduction) budget. Please also describe the anticipated impacts of each reduction in terms of departmental operations and delivery of services. These impacts could be benefits or drawbacks or they may be neutral.**

To accommodate a 2% reduction for the Department of Planning & Conservation, significant expenses were decreased, including travel, seminars, office supplies, and other services.

The Planning Director represents the Town at planning and economic development conferences and seminars, often in person within the state, and occasionally in Connecticut or Rhode Island. Increasingly, the Planning Director is asked to serve as a panelist or speaker at these events, which benefits the Town by providing exposure to grant

fundings, state agencies, and potential investors or developers. While the Planning Department was able to reduce costs in areas such as office supplies and other services, cuts to travel and seminar budgets may limit Montague's visibility and could negatively impact strategic outreach and partnership opportunities.

Further, the Planning Department, Assessor's Office, Building Department, Health Department, and Selectboard's Office each hold an annual Citizen Service License(s) allocated from each department budget. However, the Planning Department has never utilized this license or its associated services. The Town may wish to explore this arrangement with the provider. If the license paid for by the Planning Department is deemed unnecessary, it is recommended that this license be closed out. Closing the license would result in an \$1,800 reduction to the Planning Department's FY 27 annual budget.

**5. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY25 or FY26? If so, please list share the current status of each of those expenditures/projects.**

In FY 2026, the Conservation Commission received \$10,000 from Town Meeting Approval to supplement the Waidlich Memorial Conservation Fund. The fund was drawn down significantly in 2020 due to the purchase of a 36-acre Agriculture Preservation Restriction. The current balance of \$ 48,730.34 is likely not enough for another similar scale preservation project. The Conservation Commission's strategy is to build the fund back up to a target goal of \$50,000 through annual appropriations from Town Meeting and/or private donations. The Conservation Commission requests \$1,269.66 for the FY2027 Special Article Request to fulfill this targeted goal of \$50,000.



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Department: Zoning Board of Appeals Submitted by: William Ketchen

- 1. To this point in FY26, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Are there any other highlights you would like us to know about? Please describe.**

The ZBA hasn't implemented any new tools or technology, but they continue to work to improve the quality of our meetings.

- 2. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY26 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation for improving the situation in FY27.**

There are currently no challenges for the ZBA with the FY26 operating budget.

- 3. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY27 level service budget request.**

There are no notable changes in the budget for FY27.

- 4. Please describe and provide the rationale for your alternative (2% reduction) budget. Please also describe the anticipated impacts of each reduction in terms of departmental operations and delivery of services. These impacts could be benefits or drawbacks or they may be neutral.**

The 2% reduction in the ZBA's budget shouldn't have any impact on the ZBA's service.

- 5. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY25 or FY26? If so, please list share the current status of each of those expenditures/projects.**

The ZBA did not receive any special articles for FY25 or FY26.







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Department: Police Submitted by: Chief Jason Haskins

- 1. To this point in FY26, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Are there any other highlights you would like us to know about? Please describe.**

The internal IT program needed to be strengthened therefor, a third-party IT company was hired to ensure professional level IT security within the Police Department.

I have expanded PoliceDTS to include scheduling and payroll. This did not have any financial impact on the department, just increased efficiency.

- 2. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY26 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation for improving the situation in FY27.**

Cruisers are getting old and the repairs are getting more frequent and expensive. We run the risk of not having enough operational cruisers with replacing only one.

The reliance on online training have shown to be detrimental to the overall quality of the training and retention. Moving back to some in person training would enhance police knowledge and skills.

We are currently down three (3) officers and are most likely going to need to send them to the Police Academy due to the lack of certified officers looking for work. This line item is only partially funded as there was an increase in academy costs and the difficulty in training three people at the same time.

- 3. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY27 level service budget request.**

The largest notable change is in contractual wages and its derivatives. Salaries and longevity were the two categories that seen a significant increase.

The lease/support/control line is due to the addition of outside IT needs.

Insurance has increased do to a significant IOD incident.

- 4. Please describe and provide the rationale for your alternative (2% reduction) budget. Please also describe the anticipated impacts of each reduction in terms of departmental operations and delivery of services. These impacts could be benefits or drawbacks or they may be neutral.**

In an attempt to minimize negative impact on any one line minor cuts were made to numerous lines.

P/T wages: -\$5,000 – more shifts will have to run a minimum manning and OT cost could increase or cause a delay in services and less community policing initiatives.

F/T wages OT: -\$5,000 – More shifts will have to run at minimum manning. Could cause a delay in services and less community policing initiatives.

Court: -\$1,000 – line is unpredictable as it is based on crime rates, arrests, and court appearances. Neutral impact on services

PD Holidays: - \$3,000 – Based on prior usage, should be enough to cover wage increases – Neutral impact on services

Fitness Stipend: -\$2,000 has not been utilized by all department members – anticipation that it will remain the same. Neutral impact on services

Training: -\$2,000 could impact the quality of services as the online training checks a box but is not adequate for our standards

Lease/Support/Contracts: - \$2,000 based on estimated IT cost increase. The department needs some additional software services that are not currently available to run more efficiently and consistent with today's professional standards. Neutral impact on services however, these services should be provided at a more professional level.

Equipment R&M: -\$2,000 This can be very unpredictable. Some IT significant IT upgrades occurred this year and will help with reducing this expense. Neutral impact on services

Police Academy Expenses: -\$2,000 This will ensure that we would not be able to send all three needed officers to the academy. We are working towards obtaining at least one certified officer.

Vehicle Supplies & Maintenance: - \$2,000 – One cruiser has already been taken off line to reduce maintenance expense. The purchase of a new cruiser will help reduce some expense however many vehicles are 2017's nearing 100,000 miles. Maintenance could increase causing a delay in services.

Gasoline: -2,000 Gas prices have been steady and lower than last year.

Other supplies: -\$2,000 based on previous years this may be okay to reduce

Insurance: - \$2,000 this is based on an estimate.

Cruiser: - \$10,000 this would require more fund raising for a new K9 cruiser

**5. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY25 or FY26? If so, please list share the current status of each of those expenditures/projects.**

I do not believe so.



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Department: Building Department Submitted by: William Ketchen

- 1. To this point in FY26, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Are there any other highlights you would like us to know about? Please describe.**

The Building Department hasn't implemented any new tools or technology, but we continue to work to improve our customer service.

- 2. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY26 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation for improving the situation in FY27.**

There are currently no challenges for the Building Department with the FY26 operating budget.

- 3. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY27 level service budget request.**

There are no notable changes in the budget for FY27 other than the increase from implementing the pay equity study.

- 4. Please describe and provide the rationale for your alternative (2% reduction) budget. Please also describe the anticipated impacts of each reduction in terms of departmental operations and delivery of services. These impacts could be benefits or drawbacks or they may be neutral.**

The Building Department has a small operating budget. The only place to reduce our budget is from travel and subscriptions, which is used for additional training for the Inspectors. The reduction should not have any impact on the department's operations or delivery of services. There's only so much that can be reduced from training, the Building Inspectors are required to maintain 45 hours of continuing education credits in a 3-year cycle in order to maintain our credentials. A drawback would be a lack of additional training beyond what is necessary.

- 5. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY25 or FY26? If so, please list share the current status of each of those expenditures/projects.**

The Building Department did not receive any special articles for FY25 or FY26.



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**FY 26**

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Department: DPW Submitted by: Sam Urkiel

- 1. To this point in FY26, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Are there any other highlights you would like us to know about? Please describe.**

A GPS unit was purchased to assist in the mapping of the drainage network. Catch Basins, culverts and manholes will be inspected and asset tables will be developed to manage the drainage system better.

- 2. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY26 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation for improving the situation in FY27.**

Cost of replacement parts and goods have increased significantly. Older equipment is becoming more expensive to maintain and repair. Most electronic components have been remanufactured and at times unreliable.

- 3. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY27 level service budget request.**

All contracted trash and recycling disposal with Casella is increasing by 5%. Tighe & Bond well monitoring is also increasing. There are few other services in the solid waste budget to adjust for these increases without cutting services at the transfer station. Transfer Station rates increased earlier this year to cover the costs of disposals.

- 4. Please describe and provide the rationale for your alternative (2% reduction) budget. Please also describe the anticipated impacts of each reduction in terms of departmental operations and delivery of services. These impacts could be benefits or drawbacks or they may be neutral.**

Changes were dispersed over various line items, operation and services will remain as planned. Gasoline was the largest adjustment as we've been lucky to see reduced fuel costs.

- 5. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY25 or FY26? If so, please list share the current status of each of those expenditures/projects.**

DPW Discretionary – Engine Replacement in Truck 42 was 8K

Meadow Rd Guardrail – Complete

F150 Pickup Truck – Purchased and delivered

Camera Van - Purchased and delivered

10 Wheel Dump Truck – Order placed

6 Wheel Dump Truck – Order placed

Paving allies – 1<sup>st</sup> St completed, more work to be completed spring 2026

Oakman St Slope Stabilization - Ongoing



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Department: Cemetery Commission Submitted by: Judith Lorei, Chair

**1. To this point in FY26, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Are there any other highlights you would like us to know about? Please describe.**

- The Cemetery Commission continues to see robust sales of burial plots at Highland Woods, the green burial section of Highland Cemetery.
- The Commission has a full slate of 5 commissioners, in addition to volunteers who work on cemetery clean-up, beautification and programming.
- The Commission is actively researching the creation of a "Friends of the Montague Cemeteries" 501(c) 3 to supplement the town budget and provide more flexibility for cemetery upkeep (headstone repair) and programming.

**2. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY26 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation for improving the situation in FY27.**

No.

**3. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY27 level service budget request.**

For several years, Commission members have advocated for the transfer of the cemetery maintenance budget (\$30,000) and responsibility for cemetery maintenance to the Montague DPW. In November, the Chair met with the Town Administrator and DPW Director to discuss this change and all agreed that it would be in the best interest of the town. The Administrator brought the proposal to the Selectboard's December 1<sup>st</sup> meeting where it was approved unanimously. The DPW will manage the contract with the current cemetery maintenance vendor (Yellowstone). The Chair will be the liaison to DPW Director to inform him of any issues that need to be addressed in the town cemeteries.

The cemetery commission's FY'27 budget will reflect the Sexton stipend and the annual dues for the Mass Cemetery Association only.

**4. Please describe and provide the rationale for your alternative (2% reduction) budget. Please also describe the anticipated impacts of each reduction in terms of departmental operations and delivery of services. These impacts could be benefits or drawbacks or they may be neutral.**

N/A

**5. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY25 or FY26? If so, please list share the current status of each of those expenditures/projects.**

No.







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**Department, Board, Committee, Commission**  
**BUDGET NARRATIVE**

**FY 26**

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Department: Board of Health Submitted by: Ryan Paxton

- 1. To this point in FY26, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Are there any other highlights you would like us to know about? Please describe.**

We have officially joined the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District, a regional coalition that provides surveillance and prevention services related to mosquito borne illnesses.

- 2. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY26 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation for improving the situation in FY27.**

No, my recommendation would be to fund a level service budget to ensure the delivery of foundational public health services in the future. Following FY27 there is a likelihood that the public health excellence grant is not funded and therefore our shared service arrangement would not be funded. The Town should begin to consider whether it would be willing to fund the continuation of the shared service arrangement through tax revenue to continue to deliver foundational public health services to our community. It is my opinion that this is not currently possible without the shared service arrangement.

- 3. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY27 level service budget request.**

There are not any notable changes.

- 4. Please describe and provide the rationale for your alternative (2% reduction) budget. Please also describe the anticipated impacts of each reduction in terms of departmental operations and delivery of services. These impacts could be benefits or drawbacks or they may be neutral.**

To reach the target reduction, funds were removed from miscellaneous spending, medical services, and nursing services. The medical services line was reduced by the amount that was previously used for medical director services. We are not contracting those services for FY27 due to the lack of a need for an MD to provide standing orders (for flu clinics, now using private vendors). The nurse line item was cut as we have had a surplus for the past several years while still having adequate nursing services.

- 5. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY25 or FY26? If so, please list share the current status of each of those expenditures/projects.**

No.



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

**FY 26**

*Complete this form electronically! Be clear and concise!*

Department: Council on Aging Submitted by: Roberta Potter

1. To this point in FY26, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Are there any other highlights you would like us to know about? Please describe.
  - a. Significant energy conservation improvements were made to the Senior Center which should have a positive impact on our utility expense. I am assuming no increase in our natural gas consumption line from FY26 budget (heat and hot water) and a modest decrease in our electricity expense (air conditioning). These improvements were funded through a state earmark and accomplished primarily by town staff
  - b. We have purchased a data collection and sign-in system to better track our programming and usage. The software, hardware, and annual expense were covered by our Executive Office of Elder Affairs formula grant. This will maintain lists and contact information for older adults who register with the Senior Center and will allow us to better track participation rates by program.
  - c. With Town Meeting approval, we hired a part-time administrative assistant. Filling this position will allow us to better manage the Senior Center administration and ultimately enhance our programming and the services we can offer to our older adults
  - d. Using various grant funds (FRCOG and MBI Digital Equity) we have continued to provide devices and training to older adults in our community and have offered weekly drop-in tech help sessions which in the last 12 months have served close to 350 community members
  - e. Programs added this year were: Spanish lessons, Beginning Yoga, Chair Dance, and Special Interest Tech Forums,
  - f. Special events were funded by the Gill and Montague Cultural Councils and the Massachusetts Cultural Council
  - g. In addition to the building improvements above, we were able to use Franklin County House of Correction no-cost labor to paint the exterior of the building after the siding was replaced on the south side of the building.
2. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY26 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation for improving the situation in FY27.

In early December, the Senior Center heating system had a major failure which caused a radiator to fail and flood the Senior Center office. There was water damage to the computer equipment, and office materials. It is unclear at this point whether pipes and radiators can be repaired and, if so, what the estimated cost would be. Our FY26 budget currently has a Building and Repair line item of only \$4000, none of which has been spent.

3. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY27 level service budget request.
  - a. Increases in our level services budget are personnel costs only reflecting mandated increases and the new position funded in FY26
  - b. I have increased our very minor expense for water and decreased our very minor expense for sewer to reflect current usage and rates
  - c. I have decreased our electricity expense and held our gas expense constant to reflect anticipated energy conservation improvements made in FY25, keeping in mind that rate increases are not yet determined
4. Please describe and provide the rationale for your alternative (2% reduction) budget. Please also describe the anticipated impacts of each reduction in terms of departmental operations and delivery of services. These impacts could be benefits or drawbacks or they may be neutral.
  - a. There really is nowhere to go with this budget. The only way to reduce our expenses would be to cut employee hours or reduce the number of operating hours / days for the Senior Center. A reduction in hours or days would produce a modest savings in gas and electricity. Both changes would have a negative impact on our services and a loud impact in the community. I would also remind you that neither of the two part-time employees participates in the Town's health insurance plan and are hence less expensive that they would be otherwise.
  - b. In my FY26 budget, I cut all discretionary expenses except a very small cleaning supply expense in order to offset the additional personnel costs of hiring an administrative assistant.
  - c. The only other line item available for adjustment is the Building R & M line to which we've had no expenses year-to-date. In previous years, this fund has been used to purchase materials for work done by the DPW and contracted work on our fire alarm system. I have kept this budget line at this level annually because we are in an old building with old systems. We did, however, make significant improvements to our wiring and electrical panel in FY25 using earmark funds which may reduce our potential repair costs. However, please see item two above. It appears that we will need replacement or major repair to our heating system. This problem occurred only several days ago so there is no definitive information available yet regarding the extent of the problem. I am unclear whether this scope of building repair would fall under the COA budget or be funded otherwise.
5. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY25 or FY26? If so, please list share the current status of each of those expenditures/projects.
  - a. We did not. However, town funds were used to re-side the south side of the Senior Center



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

**FY 26**

*Complete this form electronically! Be clear and concise!*

Department: AIRPORT Submitted by: Bryan Camden for Airport Commission

- 1. To this point in FY26, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Are there any other highlights you would like us to know about? Please describe.**

In FY26 the airport increased traffic and fuel sales by a significant amount by selling fuel at a reduced but still profitable retail price that has increased airport traffic by 29% and fuel sales by 48%. In addition to these increases, revenue has increased 6.14%. The purchase of two E-Bikes has allowed for airport user to make the trip into town and spend additional money, primarily in restaurants.

- 2. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY26 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation for improving the situation in FY27.**

The airport continues to operate on a lower budget than what is needed to accomplish all of the needed upkeep and maintenance that the facility requires. As in the past the airport has successfully applied for and received grants specifically awarded for building and grounds repairs, maintenance, and upgrades. While the airport has recently seen budget increases, the bottom line is there needs to be contingency line items and increased line items that will allow for large projects (\$10,000 to \$30,000) to be covered by the operational budget and not rely on grant funding of additional revenue from the town mid year. A sufficient number for this type of line item would be \$15,000 annually.

- 3. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY27 level service budget request.**

In the FY27 budget the airport is requesting an increase in funding for the following line items:

Full Time Wages: This includes increases to the Operations Manager position in line with a single step in the current rate class. An additional increase for the Airport Manager in the amount of \$6,618.96. The Airport Manager position was noted as the largest compensation discrepancy in the most recent wage and classification study, and was noted to be under-compensated by nearly \$15 an hour. While this increase does bring the position closer to reported fair compensation level, it is still under-compensated by an additional \$6,000 annually. The position requires no less than 60 hours / week of work both on site and remote. The current budget does not allow for overtime compensation of adequate levels to cover all of the overtime the position requires, including during snow removal and emergencies. This increase will allow the positions to remain somewhat competitive with similar jobs in surrounding area.

Seminars / Training: An increase of \$3,000 in this line items will be used to compensate employees that are looking to grow within their existing role by obtaining professional licensing such as a Commercial Driver License, Applicators License, Hoister License, or other similar certifications. Ideally this line item should be funded to \$6,000 however with the slow growth in revenue a gradual increase over several years will still achieve the same goals.

- 4. Please describe and provide the rationale for your alternative (2% reduction) budget. Please also describe the anticipated impacts of each reduction in terms of departmental operations and delivery of services. These impacts could be benefits or drawbacks or they may be neutral.**

The airport has increased revenue by roughly 11% from FY24 to FY26, and while some line items were reduced to meet the specifications of the 2% reduction, the larger impact was a reduction of funding from taxation. In the level service budget the total requested from taxation is \$123,633, while in the 2% reduction budget the total request from taxation is \$118,618, or a difference of \$5,015 which is a “reduction” of funding from taxation of over 4%, despite an overall budget increase. The reduction of 2% from the level service budget will have a minimal impact on the airport since the increase in revenue will partially offset the reduction from taxation funding.

- 5. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY25 or FY26? If so, please list share the current status of each of those expenditures/projects.**

Currently the airport has one ongoing project, the Pioneer Aviation ramp replacement. This is an ongoing project that will conclude in the spring of 2027. The project includes the removal and replacement of 125,000 sq-ft of pavement, lighting, and security fencing. This project is in the design phase, and will be going out to bid in the spring of 2026. Funding for this project includes 5% local, 5% state, and 90% FAA.



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

**FY 27**

*Complete this form electronically! Be clear and concise!*

Department: Libraries Submitted by: Caitlin Kelley

- 1. To this point in FY26, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Are there any other highlights you would like us to know about? Please describe.**

At the turn of the fiscal year, the libraries' modified an existing staff stipend to further support adult programming and information literacy instruction. Elena, who receives the stipend, has facilitated a series of tech drop-in sessions, highlighting library resources, collaborated with the Senior Center, held programs using items in the Library of Things collection, and put together an adult scavenger hunt, showcasing local history sites across town as well as the treasures in the Carnegie's history room. These programs have largely been low or no cost and demystify library resources that tech-shy patrons might not try on their own. Next, she'll hold a program on Biblio, a new library streaming service that allows patrons to watch BBC documentaries, shows, and films on their television or devices.

Thanks to our Youth Services Librarian, Angela, Montague was chosen to participate in a program run by educators and researchers from the Smithsonian Institution and Harvard University at the Center for Astrophysics. The project empowers youth in grades 5-9 to explore the universe using remotely controlled robotic telescopes and easy-to-use image-processing software tools to enhance their own (and NASA's) astronomical images

The Millers Falls Branch Library Food Pantry, as a member of the Montague Food and Sustainability Coalition, has provided several bushels of free, fresh produce to pantry users each week since June. This program, sponsored by the United Way and local non-profits, will continue through the end of the year. The number of pantry users has increased by 45% in the last six months, even before SNAP benefits were temporarily discontinued.

At the Montague Center Branch Library, Kate and a small group of residents saw their oral history project bear fruit. After training residents in oral history best practices, more than a dozen stories have been collected from Montague Center elders, half of which have been edited and uploaded to an online repository on the library website:

<https://montaguepubliclibraries.org/collections/oral-history-collection>

Kate received a \$5,000 Mass Cultural Council grant to continue the work and has organized supporting events that bring the community together and allow people to share stories that are important to them.

Finally, since July, the Library Building Steering Committee, Library Trustees, and the Library Director have worked with Schwartz/Silver Architects, Downes Construction to develop plans for a new main library to be located at 38 Avenue A. These plans will be submitted to the state for review and approval before the new year.

- 2. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY26 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation for improving the situation in FY27.**

The substitute line has been stressed this year due to several factors: We hired and trained three new substitutes, which takes time; staff have been calling out sick with more frequency, due to both illnesses and injuries; on a few occasions, substitutes were allowed to assist with programs; and the staff member who is newly in charge of scheduling subs was

overscheduling them. Controlling for the hours that one of our substitute staff members covers Saturdays for another part-time staff member every other week, we still have spent 23% more of this line than we should have at this time. Having made clear to staff that substitutes can no longer assist with programs and that they will be called to cover only when necessary (aka when there isn't another person in the building to help), I'm hoping that we'll be able to limp along for the rest of the FY. If things get dire, then we'll staff the Carnegie circ desk with just one person, which is less than ideal and would affect staff morale. I regret that I didn't catch on to this problem earlier—it has never been an issue before, so I didn't scrutinize the numbers each month as I should have.

**3. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY27 level service budget request.**

This year, I cut our heating oil line, computer equipment line, and the line that pays for our CW/MARS consortium membership, all of which have seen a decrease in use. I subsequently had enough extra to increase our Community Relations Coordinator's hours from 13.5 per week with an additional 15 hours per year to 16 hours per week with an additional 35 hours per year without adding to the budget. With the additional hours, Kimber will be able to better promote library programs and resources to the community, do outreach at local organizations and schools, and support larger library programs.

**4. Please describe and provide the rationale for your alternative (2% reduction) budget. Please also describe the anticipated impacts of each reduction in terms of departmental operations and delivery of services. These impacts could be benefits or drawbacks or they may be neutral.**

In the reduced budget, Kimber will not receive any additional hours and I've made the following cuts:

- \$2,000 reduction in heating oil, which should be fine, based on recent use, provided we don't have an overly frigid winter.
- \$2,000 reduction in building repairs and maintenance. This means we won't be able to wash the Carnegie windows and we will only have \$1,500 to address unexpected building repairs that fall outside the scope of the DPW's work.
- \$3,000 reduction in library programs. This is the cost of leasing a tent outside of the Carnegie during the summer months. This would be a drawback as the tent allows the libraries to facilitate large children's programs that a lack of space indoors prohibits.
- \$250 decrease in "other supplies" or children's supplies. This is a neutral one, since Angela didn't spend the entire line last year.

These items were all cut because they can be. Materials lines cannot be cut, as the state requires municipalities to spend a certain percentage of their budget on materials in order to receive state funding and certification.

**5. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY25 or FY26? If so, please list share the current status of each of those expenditures/projects.**

The Millers Falls Storefront Project has been put on hold until January, as the Main Library Building Project has demanded the bulk of the Library Building Committee's attention.



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

**FY 26**

***Complete this form electronically! Be clear and concise!***

Department: Parks & Recreation Submitted by: Jon Dobosz, Director

- 1. To this point in FY26, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Are there any other highlights you would like us to know about? Please describe.**
  - **Facilities** - While project completion occurred at the tail end of FY25 (June), improvements to the Montague Center Park were unveiled to the community. These enhancements included a new playground, pollinator area, rain garden and a defined parking area.
  - **Programs** - Participation continues to be very strong throughout our program spectrum. Summer Camp attendance was close to 90% capacity, and we are in the process of bringing back the Soap Box Races in September of 2026.
- 2. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY26 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation for improving the situation in FY27.**
  - Staying within the budget parameters of our *Facilities/Grounds R&M* line-item continues to be a challenge. Not only do operating costs continue to rise, but also the cost of the goods needed for replacement. Throughout the summer we wrestled with technical and mechanical issues that were plaguing The Whale Sprinkler unit at Unity Park. We also needed to completely replace a spinning unit in the playground and will be purchasing a new canopy at the park's sun shelter, which collapsed last winter. We have requested Reserve Fund Transfers the last two fiscal years to accommodate overages in this line-item, and we anticipate doing so again this spring.
- 3. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY27 level service budget request.**
  - There are no notable changes in our FY27 budget request
- 4. Please describe and provide the rationale for your alternative (2% reduction) budget. Please also describe the anticipated impacts of each reduction in terms of departmental operations and delivery of services. These impacts could be benefits or drawbacks or they may be neutral.**
  - If faced with a 2% reduction, we would eliminate the *Travel* and *Seminars* line-item, and cut 15% from the *Facilities & Grounds R&M*. Some items may qualify to be paid for through our Revolving Account, or repair/replacement either not being an option or at least delayed significantly.



5. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY25 or FY26? If so, please list share the current status of each of those expenditures/projects.
- **Unity Park Improvements** – We are in the process of submitting a revised IFB for this project and anticipate completion by late spring of 2026.



# Town of Montague Clean Water Facility/Sewer Commission BUDGET NARRATIVE

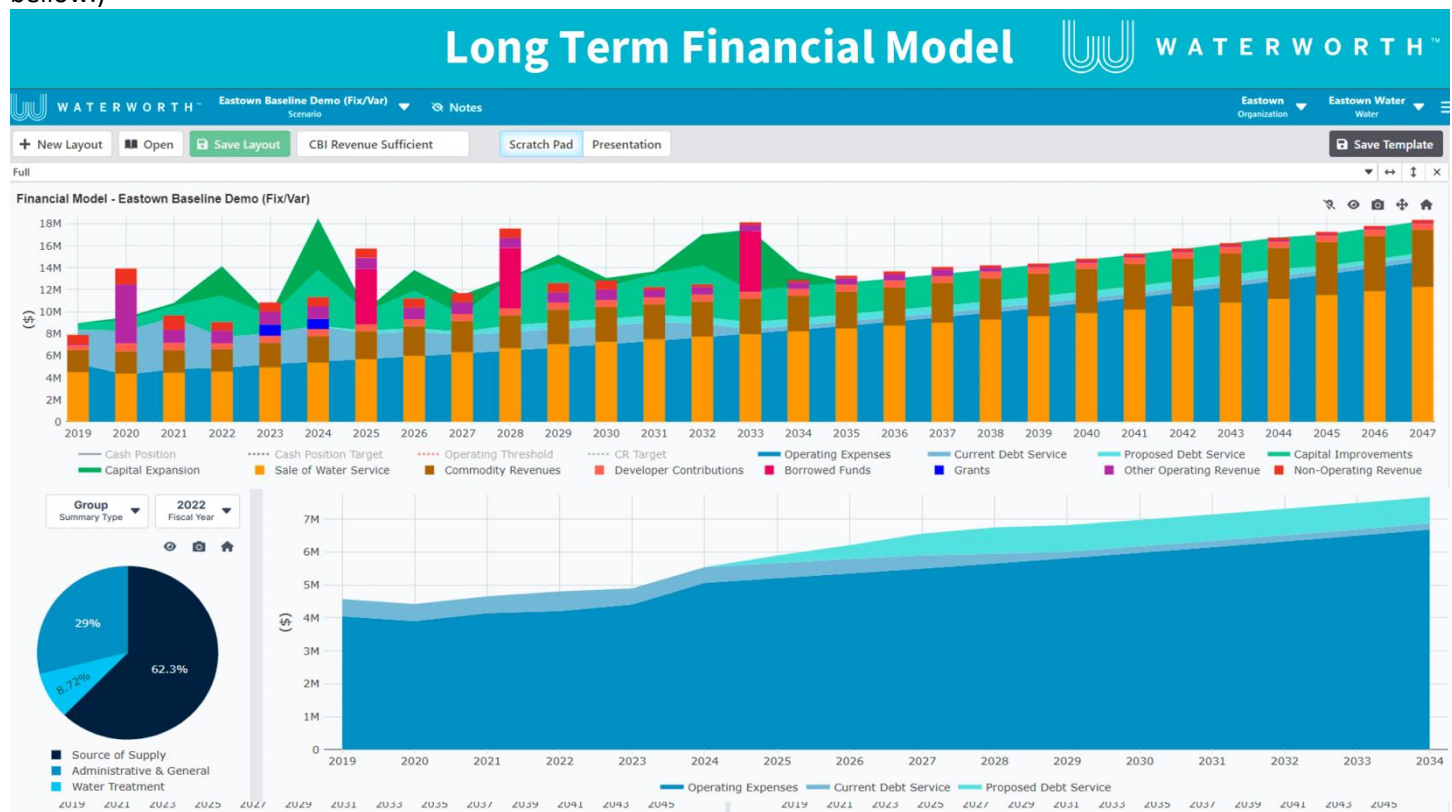
FY 27

*Complete this form electronically! Be clear and concise!*

Department: CWF Submitted by: Chelsey Little, Superintendent

1. To this point in FY26, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Are there any other highlights you would like us to know about? Please describe.

Sewer Rate/Capital/Financial Software: The Selectboard/Sewer Commission recently approved the use of Waterworth, a third party who specializes in continuous utility rate management, which incorporates long term financial models, asset replacement schedules, rate designs, and scenario exploration. The CWF looks forward to sharing the program analytics with the Finance Committee, CIC, and Selectboard/Sewer Commission to guide better decision making and ensure long-term financial sustainability for the Enterprise Fund. (Example of the software below.)



Expanded Solids Processing for Revenue: The facility has recently expanded its contracts with trucked in solids from outside municipalities, charging a fee to dewater and process their sludge. The projected increase will bring in an additional ~\$200,000 annually in revenue.

**2. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY26 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation for improving the situation in FY27.**

No major challenges to report. The operating budget can meet all goals and requirements, especially as it pertains to making sure there is enough funding to keep up with the maintenance demands of the facility as the infrastructure continues to age.

The need for an additional mechanic position was presented to the Selectboard/Sewer Commission at their Dec 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025, meeting and was positively received, especially as the staffing increase would keep the budget at around - 1.59%. Before the additional staffing request, the budget was -4.04%.

The budgeted surplus and extra revenue have positively impacted the ability to perform anticipated capital replacements annually with the use of retained earnings, which in turn help to stabilize the rates for rate payers.

**3. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY27 level service budget request.**

Key to excel budget file:

**Increase**

**Decrease**

**Internal Shift/Net 0**

Regular Wages/Staffing Increase: The CWF is looking to add an additional full-time Mechanic position to staffing (Grade F, \$25.92-\$33.83/hour) who will work exclusively under the Lead Mechanic, and whose time would be dedicated to maintenance tasks, including but not limited to:

- Performing preventative maintenance daily rounds
- Diagnosing mechanical problems; offering recommendations on repair/replacement
- Repairing equipment generated from work requests
- Responding to emergencies/mechanical troubleshooting
- Preparing seasonal equipment for use
- Assisting with equipment rebuilds

Despite the staffing budget increase, the facility foresees several cost savings and cost avoidances with having a dedicated position working closely with the Lead Mechanic. Two major examples include preventing unplanned downtime on equipment, and expanding the ability to rebuild equipment in-house, which saves tens of thousands annually as compared to sending equipment out to be refurbished via a third party.

Overtime Increase: Overtime increased to account for the new wage and pay scales for staff that were implemented last year.

Contracted Lab Increase: The new permit through both EPA and DEP require additional sampling and testing for PFAS four times per year. These tests cannot be conducted in-house and must be sent to a nationally certified lab who can perform the required analysis using standard methods approved through EPA. These tests have become quite costly as compared to other testing requirements we conduct.

Water Decrease: As we have changed the way we use potable water in the treatment process, we anticipate utilizing less water in the future.

Odor Control Decrease: We have changed over to a different deodorizer, which ultimately costs less than previous deodorizers.

Millers Falls Overage Decrease: Repairs to the Millers Falls collection system were conducted in the Spring of 2024 and have significantly improved the infiltration issues causing overage charges with The Town of Erving over the last several years. To date, calendar year 2025 looks like it will stay within the contracted gallonage; however, as not to cause any unanticipated issues in the budget, the overage line item was reduced to \$50,000 to account for the potential of a wetter stormier year, and the possibility of another source of infiltration in the aging system.

Screw Press Lease Decrease: FY26 is the last year of lease payments for the Screw Press (sludge dewatering equipment.) This frees up \$58,500/year.

Overall Internal/Net 0 Changes: Some line items were updated based off usage history using money from other line items that may be underutilized and/or that were split into multiple different new line items. These changes are noted in blue on the spreadsheet, and do not impact the bottom line of the budget.

- 4. Please describe and provide the rationale for your alternative (2% reduction) budget. Please also describe the anticipated impacts of each reduction in terms of departmental operations and delivery of services. These impacts could be benefits or drawbacks or they may be neutral.**

The proposed budget is currently at a -4% reduction, no further reduction necessary.

- 5. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY25 or FY26? If so, please list share the current status of each of those expenditures/projects.**

FY26 Mini Excavator: Used 2021 Hyundai Mini-Excavator procured on 5/09/2025 for \$45,000. Closed within budget.

FY26 Pump Station Generator Replacements x2: The portable generator (used as a back-up for the pump stations) was procured on 5/16/2025 and is expected to be delivered in February 2026. The new generator for the Lake Pleasant Pump Station has been procured and delivered on-site 11/11/2025. Installation will likely occur in the Springtime, after the ground has thawed to conduct site work prior to installation. Anticipated to close within budget.

FY26 Conference Room/Breakroom Renovations: Renovations are currently underway. Staff have removed the old main generator from the generator room, completed demolition including the concrete pad, repaired cinderblock wall openings, installed new exterior double doors, replaced the breaker for electrical, painted the interior walls, and had a plumber in to install the new drain line from the kitchenette. Staff plan on finishing the flooring, drop ceiling, lighting, cabinetry and appliances during Dec/Jan. Work anticipated to be completed in both the old breakroom and new breakrooms by Feb 2026. Currently within budget.

FY25 Montague Center Pump Station: All exterior site work has been completed. New electrical conduit has been run to the new external generator location, concrete pad poured, new generator installed and commissioned, old generator in the brick building has been demoed, newly built air relief valves ready for installation, new pumps were procured and awaiting installation, newly installed bypass pumping piping and access installed, and controls/control panel have been ordered. The remainder of the work will be conducted while the station goes under bypass, which may have to wait until Springtime to complete. Project currently under budget, and barring any potential contingencies, is anticipated to close under budget when completed.