



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

FY 21

Complete this form electronically! Be clear and concise!

Department: Finance Committee Submitted by: Jen Audley

1. Please describe and provide the rationale for any substantial changes in your FY21 line item budget submission.

5305 Printing/Bookbinding - We have increased this line by 50% (from \$280 to \$420 to more closely reflect the actual cost of printing our most recent annual report to Town Meeting in FY19.

5314 Seminars – In FY20, the registration fee for the annual meeting of the Association of Town Finance Committees (ATFC) was \$50 per person, and we sent 3 people. Four had expressed interest, but there was a last minute change of plans. We are budgeting \$200 for FY21.

5710 Travel – Mileage reimbursement for just one vehicle traveling round trip from Montague to Bridgewater for the ATFC meeting exceeded our budget for this line for FY20. We have increased the amount to a more realistic amount.

2. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY20? What is the status of those expenditures/investments?

No funding was received.

3. Did you receive funding for a discretionary account in FY20? What have you purchased to date, at what cost? Looking forward in FY21, what do you expect to purchase at what cost?

No funding was received.

4. To-date in FY20, has your department experienced any notable successes, such as improving or providing new programs or services, or implementing new technologies? If so, please describe.

During the FY20 budget development process in FY19, we revised the format of our annual report to Town Meeting in an effort to make it more user-friendly and tried an approach to writing it that increased the amount of involvement the whole committee had with the final product. These efforts were quite time-consuming, but the resulting report was generally well received.

We added two new members to our committee in FY20, and they attended the annual meeting of the ATFC along with me in October at Bridgewater State College. This one-day event is the MA Municipal Association’s primary offering for Finance Committee members. We felt it was a valuable learning experience and hope that several committee members will be able to attend in FY21.

5. Are there challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and objectives that are due to its FY20 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation(s) for improving the situation.

After many years of taking the minutes for Finance Committee meetings, at the beginning of FY20, the Town Accountant shed that responsibility. To date, none of the committee members have volunteered to serve as clerk, so members have been taking turns producing meeting minutes. As a result our minutes in FY20 have varied in style and sometimes been delayed. Some of our members are devoting considerable time outside of meetings to preparing minutes. We have concerns about how we're going to manage this responsibility once we shift to a weekly meeting schedule during the FY21 budget development season.

For the time being, we have managed by operating under the understanding that legally, minutes do not have to include much detail. This more minimalistic approach feels acceptable to us because our meetings are recorded and archived by Montague Community Television. We considered hiring a recording secretary, as the Selectboard and School Committee do, but the estimated cost for this service would have added thousands of dollars to our FY20 expenses, and we are sensitive to the fact that many other volunteer boards and committees produce their own minutes. We have not budgeted for a recording secretary in FY21.