

TOWN OF MONTAGUE FY2022 ANNUAL BUDGET



FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT TO
TOWN MEETING

MONTAGUE, MASSACHUSETTS

May 22, 2021, 9:00AM

FRANKLIN COUNTY TECHNICAL SCHOOL



TOWN OF MONTAGUE
Finance Committee
One Avenue A
Turners Falls, Massachusetts 01376
413 863-3200 ext. 121

April 28, 2021

Dear Town Meeting Members:

One of the Finance Committee's responsibilities is to report to Town Meeting about the annual budget being proposed for the upcoming fiscal year, which begins on July 1, 2021. We hope this report will provide helpful context and answer many of the questions you may have as you prepare to vote at this year's Annual Town Meeting. This year our report is divided into two sections: the first part is a review of major elements of the proposed budget and the second part is background on each Motion you'll be voting on. If you would like even more information, you can find many documents related to this year's budget development process in the "[Annual Budget Information](#)" page on www.montague-ma.gov, and of course if you have questions, any of us would be happy to speak with you.

The budget we are presenting to you is the result of a collaborative process that started at the end of the 2020 calendar year, when the Town Administrator instructed department heads to prepare their requests and the Town Accountant and Town Administrator presented the Selectboard and Finance Committee with a progress report on the current year (FY21) and revenue projections for FY22. Department heads that were considering making significant changes to their staffing, operations, services, or programming were asked to meet with us before the end of December, and several did.

All of the Town's departments submitted their budget and special article requests in December 2020, and then the Finance Committee and Selectboard met together throughout January, February, and March to review and discuss them. During those three months, we reviewed and discussed about 50 separate budget requests. We gathered additional information through written correspondence with department heads and committee chairs and spoke with many of them at public meetings.

While this was happening, the Capital Improvements Committee evaluated most of the special article requests. They presented their report and recommendations to the Finance Committee and Selectboard on March 17, 2021, and with that information, we settled on a final budget on March 31, with last votes on new special articles taking place on April 28th. We look forward to discussing it with you in May!

Respectfully, Your Finance Committee:

Jennifer Audley, Frederic Bowman, Gregory Garrison, John Hanold, Christopher Menegoni,
Jennifer Waryas, and Francia Wisnewski

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT TO TOWN MEETING

Fiscal Year 2022

In accordance with the bylaws of the Town, the Montague Finance Committee has investigated the cost of maintenance and expenditures of the different departments of the Town and here recommend in detail the amounts to be appropriated for each department for the ensuing year. We have also considered articles in Town warrants requiring the appropriation of money. We propose a balanced budget of \$27,115,146 to provide municipal services during Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22).

Further detail on the development of the FY22 budget is available on the Town's website at www.montague-ma.gov. The "[Annual Budget Information](#)" section includes a [glossary](#) of the terms that are bold-faced in this report, revenue estimates for FY22, [Montague's Financial Management Policies](#), line item budget requests for all town departments, FY22 budget presentations from the [Franklin County Technical School District](#) and the [Gill-Montague Regional School District](#), our [Capital Improvements Committee's annual report](#), and other resources.

INTRODUCTION

This budget strives to provide effective municipal programs and services to Montague's residents, while assuring a financially sustainable future. Our **Revenue** estimates reflect our expectations for tax collections, local receipts, and state aid in various forms.

As has been the case in recent years, town departments were asked to submit "level services" budgets, and for the most part they succeeded in finding ways to do so while containing costs. Montague's financial situation has stabilized in recent years, but realistic revenue estimates, payments on debt, the cost of maintaining assets and infrastructure, and negotiated personnel costs continue to constrain the Town's ability to fund innovations. This year we have supported proposals to improve the delivery of services and programs where possible, and we feel encouraged by efforts on several fronts to engage in longer term planning that should ultimately help us make more strategic financial decisions.

This willingness to dig deep and find energy for future-oriented planning is particularly laudable during a year that has placed extraordinary demands on the time, talents, and goodwill of town staff and civic leaders alike. We are grateful to everyone who has worked with us throughout this annual budget season.

FUNDING GOALS

The Finance Committee pursued several goals while developing this budget:

1. To fund annual needs (both departmental operating budgets and *recurring* Special

Articles) from recurring non-Reserve sources, and to avoid using **Reserves** for *nonrecurring* projects estimated to cost less than \$25,000. We accomplished this goal this year, using a combination of **Taxation** and **Free Cash**. We have avoided use of Free Cash for the Town's departmental operating budget *and* the GMRSD assessment. Our ability to meet this goal is a sign of our improved fiscal health.

2. To fund the assessment of the Gill-Montague Regional School District (GMRSD) according to the method described in the [Compact for Funding Education](#), which was ratified in 2009, reaffirmed in 2019, and reviewed in a meeting with the district's new superintendent at the beginning of the budget development process. The agreement was based on a model where Montague allocates 48.5% of defined revenues as the "Affordable Assessment," and that percentage has been used ever since. The district's FY22 request matches that figure, and we recommend funding it.
3. To follow the Town's Financial Management Policies, adopted by the Selectboard in 2014, which provide guidelines for capital spending, debt financing, and appropriations to various stabilization accounts. Bond rating agencies encourage towns to establish and follow such guidelines, and the Town's commitment to doing so has resulted in favorable interest rates on debt.

We followed these policies this year. However, while the policies we have been using have served us well to date, Montague's financial circumstances have changed significantly since 2014. This year we began work on revising our Financial Management Policies and developing some additions, as well as a multi-year financial forecast. That effort will continue in FY22, and we look forward to involving Town Meeting Members and the public.

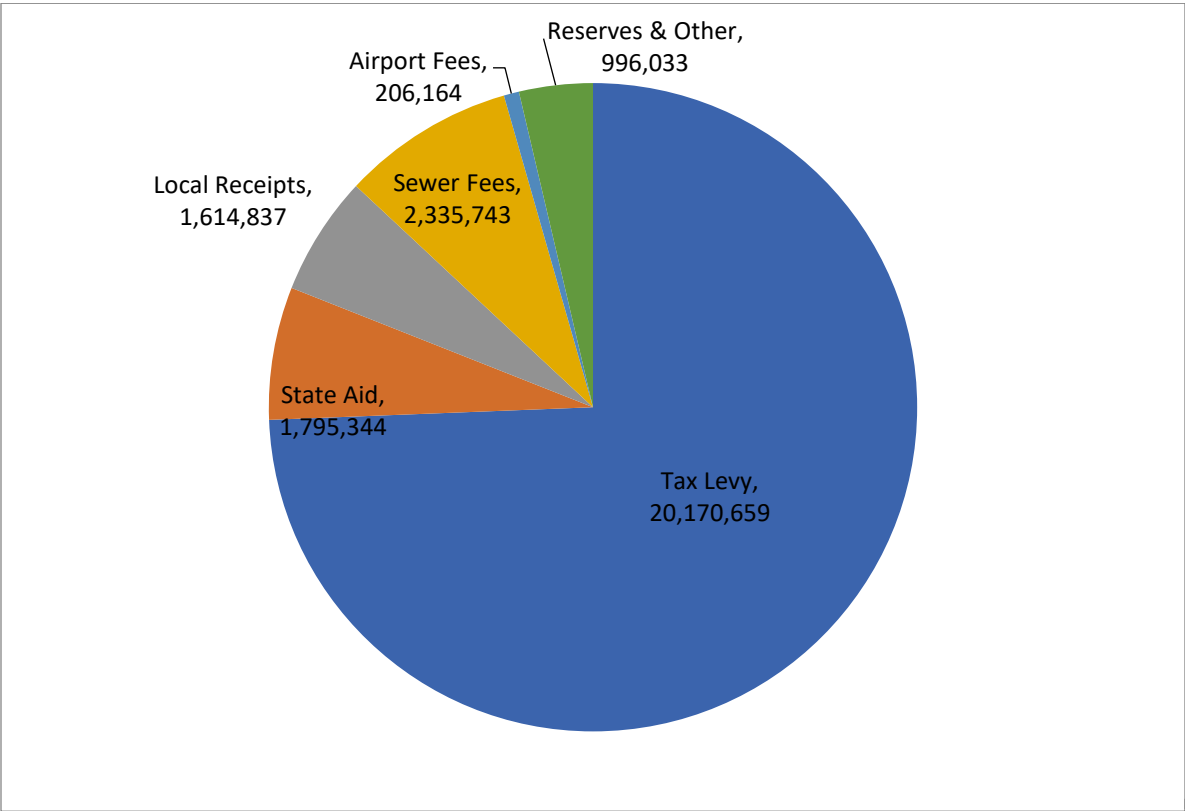
Some other notable accomplishments from this year:

- The FY21 tax rate, set in November 2020, preserved \$500,000 in **Excess Capacity** for Montague, and the Revenue estimate for FY22 assumes Excess Capacity will be held at the same level. Montague's ability to raise revenue sufficient for its needs without taxing to the annual levy limit is an indicator of fiscal health.
- Tangible progress has been made toward the goal of a developing a comprehensive inventory of the Town's capital assets and their maintenance needs and a capital spending plan. Several special article requests you are being asked to consider at Annual Town Meeting are intended to help support this effort.
- The Town General Stabilization Fund is now adequate to meet three years of reduced State Aid. After years of contributions to this Fund, we believe it is safe and appropriate to reallocate these contributions for FY22.

Revenues

Massachusetts General Law requires municipalities to prepare an annual budget that balances revenues with expenditures. The revenue side of our budget is derived primarily from five sources: Property Taxes, State Aid, Local Receipts, Enterprise Fund (WPCF and Airport) revenues, and Reserves (principally Free Cash or Stabilization Funds). A summary table with revenue and expense comparisons to FY20 and FY21 is on page 10 of this report.

The following chart illustrates the proportion of revenues expected from each source. (Please note that later on, in the Motions, when “**Taxation**” is named as a funding source, **it includes the combination of property taxes, state aid, and local receipts.**)



REVENUE HIGHLIGHTS

Property Taxes Net levy revenue is estimated 3.2% higher than FY21. The proposed budget assumes that property will be taxed to a level \$500,000 below the **Levy Limit**, and it includes \$474,653 in excluded debt service from bonding issued for the Department of Public Works building. The Tax Levy includes revenue from local taxes on residential, commercial, industrial, and personal property.

The Tax Levy also includes **New Growth**, which is estimated at \$150,000 based on the best information available to the Assessors several months prior to the close of the fiscal year. While

in recent years Montague has benefitted several times from unanticipated New Growth, we have been advised to expect a return to more historically normal levels.

State Aid We used the Governor’s budget (also called “House 1”) for estimates for State Aid, as those were the best figures available to us. These predicted an increase of 1.9% over FY21. The State’s final FY22 budget is still taking shape, but reputable forecasts now project a flattening of overall revenues for the State next year and a recovery timeline that will extend beyond FY22. State Aid comprises less than 8% of our planned revenue, so Montague should be able to adapt to any changes that occur.

Pandemic Relief Funds While not part of the operating budget, Montague was allocated \$733,203 from the state’s portion of federal relief for pandemic-related expenses not covered by federal grants. Montague was able to use some of these funds to renovate part of the Town Hall Annex to a usable function room, specifically designed to allow for use as a vaccination site. Other funds were used to add public Wi-Fi access, improve IT and telework capacity, and make HVAC improvements as well as paying for PPE and social distancing expenses. Additionally, \$175,000 was able to be transferred to the GMRSD for HVAC improvements.

Local Receipts We have projected Local Receipts at 1.4% below FY21. The categories of Local Receipts are shown below. (Please note that this category includes a mix of revenue types.) Our practice has been to estimate local receipts conservatively, which should help buffer potential shortfalls in this area. Sources that were heavily impacted by COVID-19 in FY21 (e.g. retail cannabis excise tax, lodging, meals tax, gambling) play a minimal role in this revenue source for our town.

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	% of Total
<u>Local Receipts</u>	<u>Actuals</u>	<u>Estimated</u>	<u>Estimated</u>	
Excise/Meal Taxes	815,678	706,000	688,500	42.7%
Penalties and Fines	155,104	134,000	129,000	8.0%
Charges for Trash Disposal	276,907	238,000	238,000	14.7%
Rental - 50% of Kearsarge	79,364	80,793	82,247	5.1%
Reimbursement for SROs	144,485	124,207	127,415	7.9%
All Other	<u>419,872</u>	<u>354,121</u>	<u>349,675</u>	21.7%
	1,891,410	1,637,121	1,614,837	

Reserves include **Free Cash, Stabilization Funds**, and other miscellaneous funds. The proposed budget for FY22 uses \$283,200 of Free Cash for Special Articles, and leaves a balance of \$195,773 to be carried over as seed funding for next year.

We are recommending the use of \$426,561 from a variety of Stabilization Funds for Special Articles this year. The background on the Motions includes an explanation of the funding source

recommendations for particular articles. Most of this year’s appropriations from Stabilization Funds are offset by allocations that will partially replenish them.

Airport and Sewer User Fees Unlike most Town services, the Airport and the Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF) are **Enterprise Funds**. These operations collect fees from those who use their services, and those fees are dedicated to funding their operations.

Airport user fees in FY22 will include Payments in Lieu of Taxes and rentals/leases of hangars and other newly acquired property. Borrowing approved by Town Meeting in February 2021 led to acquisition of property that will enable the facility to expand its operations and regain control of its fuel supply. State and Federal grants are expected to cover most debt service costs, and increased operating revenues will allow the Airport to function without Town subsidy for the first time.

At the WPCF, sewer user fees include residential and industrial sewer bills and septage fees. The revenue proportion has moved toward residential users following the closure of the last paper mill in Montague. The Town also pays a user fee to the WPCF to cover the cost of treating Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) in the system.

Education Revenue

Although it does not directly affect the Town’s budget, Chapter 70 and Chapter 71 State Aid to local school districts is an important element of their funding, distinct from the Town’s assessment contributions. Passage of the Student Opportunity Act in FY20 and changes to the school aid formula for FY21 resulted in a significant increase for GMRSD and FCTS. Since then, the outlook for school aid in FY22 has been complicated by the coronavirus pandemic. Nevertheless, use of the Franklin County Tech School Stabilization fund has eased the impact on the town, and the Gill-Montague District has met the Affordable Assessment target.

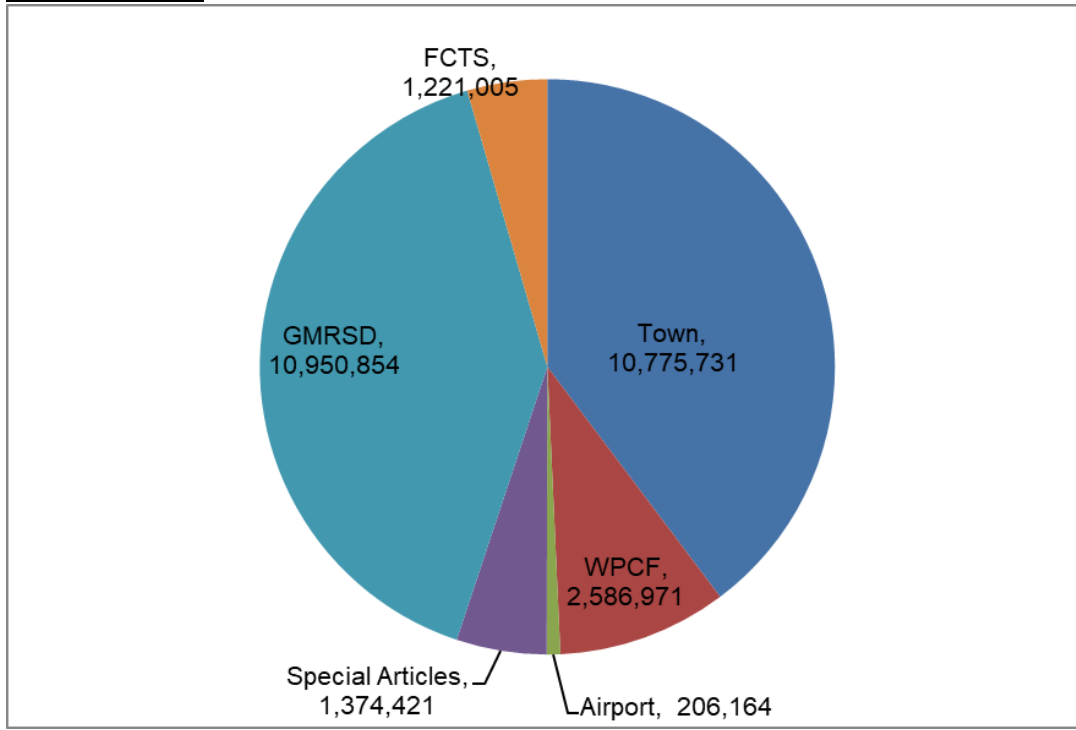
Cannabis Excise Tax Revenue

Revenue from cannabis sales is included in the “Reserves” category on the pie chart on page 3. At its March 5, 2020 Special Town Meeting, the Town decided to allocate excise tax revenue from retail cannabis sales to the Town Capital Stabilization Fund for the foreseeable future, or until the cannabis market stabilizes. At the time of this writing, retail cannabis excise tax revenue collected in FY21 (representing 3 quarters) had added \$125,491 to the Town Capital Stabilization Fund.

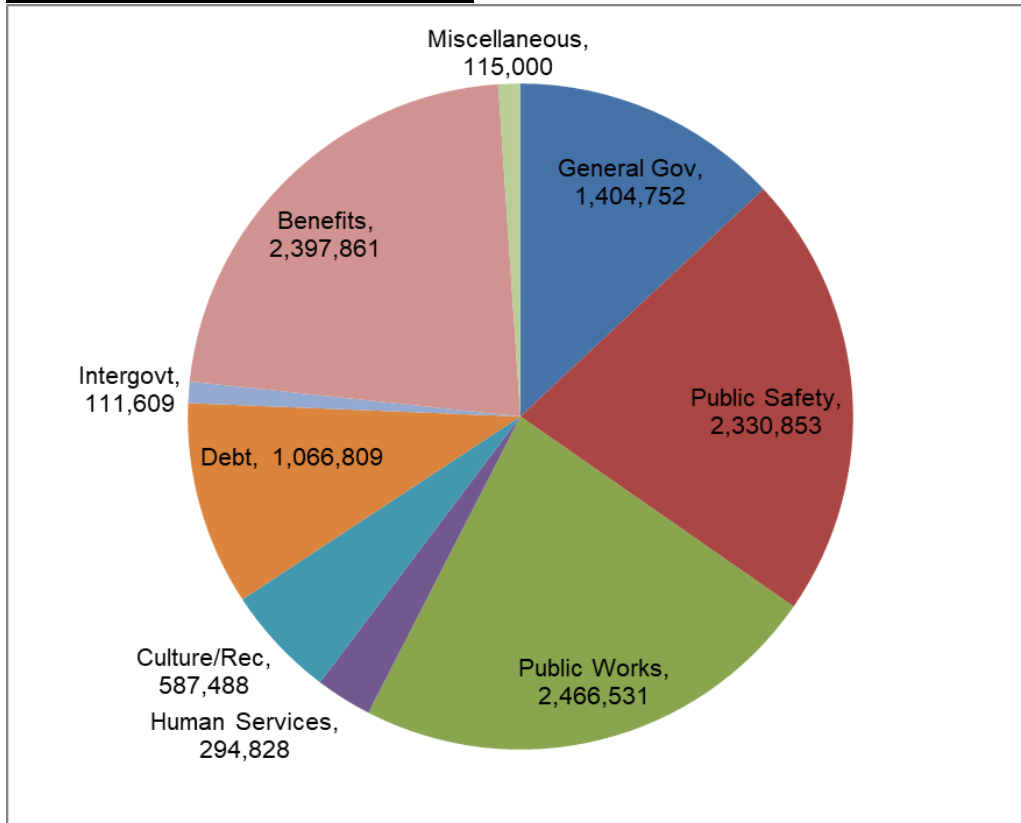
Expenditures

Expenditures are grouped into four basic categories: Town Operating, Education, Enterprise Funds, and Special Articles. Education (GMRSD + FCTS) takes the largest share, at 45%, followed by Town Operating at 40%, Enterprise Funds at 10%, and Special Articles at 5%. A summary table with revenue and expense comparisons to FY20 and FY21 is on page 10 of this report.

Total Expenses



Town Operating Budget Allocation:



The categories on the bottom pie chart on the previous page correspond to lines on Schedule III, which is addressed in Article 7.

In the **General Government category**, retirements in two offices led to strategic adjustments for FY22 that were approved by the Selectboard (acting as the Personnel Board), supported by the unions, and recommended by the Finance Committee. The Assessors replaced a full time position with a part-time seasonal independent contractor, and the Treasurer/Collector revived the Assistant Treasurer/Tax Collector position and offset the additional cost with a reduction in part-time staff hours.

The contractor who has served as the Town's IT consultant will be moving out-of-state shortly before Town Meeting but will continue to provide services remotely, with assistance from a subcontractor to handle hands-on aspects of the work. After evaluating a range of options for FY22, the IT Administrator and Town Administrator concluded that continuing this arrangement for the coming year would best serve the Town's needs, and we support their request with the understanding that it buys us more time for developing an alternate, more sustainable plan for the future.

In the **Public Safety** category, the Police Department absorbed FY21 reductions to its budget through reductions to lines for part-time hours, overtime hours, and training, and the FY22 request, which we support, restores those lines.

In **Human Services**, the Board of Health is requesting an increase in the number of weekly hours funded for the Town Nurse, a consultant, from four in FY21 to ten in FY22.

Wages & Benefits – Collective bargaining agreements are in place with all unions and those dictate wages and benefits for most town employees. These three-year agreements are due to expire in FY22.

Airport

February's Special Town Meeting approved borrowing of \$1.45 million for the purchase of the Pioneer Aviation properties as well as an appropriation for repairs to the fuel depot and an increase to the Airport's FY21 budget to cover increased costs through June 30th. The sale of the property was completed on April 15th 2021. The Airport's budget is significantly increased for FY22 due to expenses associated with operating the expanded facility, but the expense side of the Airport budget is balanced by anticipated revenue discussed on page 5, providing the long-awaited elimination of tax dollars to support the airport.

Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF)

The WPCF's new superintendent has been in place for about a year, during which the facility attended to several matters required by the Department of Environmental Protection and made other cost-neutral adjustments that support its operation using conventional waste

water treatment processes and a mix of solids that does not include paper pulp. There are no Special Articles for WPCF capital improvements on this year's annual warrant, but during FY21 Town Meeting approved a total of \$476,000 for much-needed equipment and improvements to the facility, and we anticipate that the burden of maintaining and upgrading our aging WPCF infrastructure will continue to be a challenge. WPCF Debt remains stable from FY21; the FY22 WPCF Debt budget of \$514,047 reflects a modest decrease of \$6,000.

Franklin County Technical School (FCTS)

The assessment from FCTS is based on the number of Montague resident students who attend the school. Enrollment of Montague students had been sharply increasing in recent years but looks like it will begin to level off or decrease soon. See the background information under the motion for Article 11 for details.

Gill-Montague Regional School District (GMRSD)

The assessment from GMRSD is based on an agreement (the "Compact for Funding Education") to keep the local assessment "affordable," which was forged between the district and its two sending towns a decade ago. The local assessments comprise more than 50% of the district's overall annual operating budget, which funds the operation of five schools serving students from pre-school to 12th grade, as well as tuition, special education services, and school choice payments for some of the Montague resident students who are not enrolled at GMRSD schools.

The persistent trend of declining enrollment at Turners Falls High School was confounded this year by a sharp drop in enrollment districtwide, which mirrors the experience of most other public schools in the Commonwealth during the pandemic. Declining enrollment typically limits state aid, a key component of the district's revenue, but in districts like GMRSD, where there are a variety of fixed and negotiated costs that are unresponsive to enrollment numbers, it may not reduce expenses in a corresponding manner. Efforts to investigate these issues collaboratively were put on hold by the pandemic and a change in superintendents last year, but the new administration has expressed an interest in resuming that initiative in the coming year.

For additional information about the Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF), Turners Falls Airport, Gill Montague Regional School District, and Franklin County Technical School, see the background on the Motion for the Articles that correspond to their requests and the information they provided to support their requests for this year.

For additional information about the Town's General Operating Budget (also called Schedule III) requests for FY22, see the background information that accompanies Article 7, later in this report.

CONCLUSION

There continues to be a great deal of uncertainty about the economic outlook for

Massachusetts, the United States, and the world right now. Many people, businesses, schools, and communities have been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and while the full scope and nature of the impacts are not yet clear, there will undoubtedly be consequences for the Town of Montague.

The age and condition of town-owned buildings and equipment continues to be a concern. While we have seen some expansion of revenue sources for the Town Capital Stabilization Fund such as the Kearsarge property lease and retail cannabis sales tax, they do not come close to addressing the scope of our infrastructure needs.

However, for now the Town's fiscal condition is relatively healthy, and the Reserve funds we have funded diligently over the years are now a resource we can draw on. Recent news of increased investment in infrastructure by the federal and state governments is timely and encouraging. The commitment and resourcefulness of our Town employees also continues to be a source of strength, and we urge you to support their efforts to ensure that the Town's operations and programs will continue to meet our needs.

We will continue to work in collaboration with the Selectboard and Capital Improvements Committee to formulate and follow a clear plan to manage the Town's assets in a responsible manner. As always, we invite both general comments and specific questions from residents and Town Meeting members.

Respectfully submitted:

Jennifer Audley	Frederic Bowman	Gregory Garrison	John Hanold
Christopher Menegoni	Jennifer Waryas	Francia Wisnewski	

HISTORICAL BUDGET SUMMARY				% Incr
	FY20	FY21	FY22	
REVENUES				
Net Tax Levy	18,306,119	19,598,503	20,170,659	2.9%
State Aid	1,715,218	1,795,836	1,795,344	0.0%
Local Receipts	1,636,076	1,718,900	1,614,837	-6.1%
Other Available	0	16,307	633,883	
Reserved Receipts	95,400	79,750	78,950	-1.0%
Free Cash	470,044	471,792	283,200	-40.0%
Borrowing	0	0	0	
Airport Fees	46,984	59,089	206,164	248.9%
Sewer User Fees	2,230,727	2,404,070	2,335,743	-2.8%
Total Revenues	24,500,568	26,144,247	27,118,780	2.7%
EXPENSES				
General Government	1,340,872	1,428,587	1,404,752	-1.7%
Public Safety	2,168,381	2,255,071	2,330,853	-2.5%
Public Works	2,172,707	2,356,434	2,466,531	4.7%
Human Services	289,017	281,328	294,828	102.8%
Culture & Recreation	542,795	572,289	587,488	2.7%
Debt Service	888,793	1,128,500	1,066,809	-5.5%
Intergovernmental	104,608	111,179	111,609	0.4%
Employee Benefits	2,227,951	2,298,057	2,397,861	4.3%
General Insurance	93,275	96,000	115,000	19.8%
WPCF	2,295,227	2,449,068	2,586,971	5.6%
AIRPORT	53,078	55,694	206,164	270.2%
FCTS Assessment	1,085,007	1,255,456	1,221,005	-2.7%
GMRSD Assessment	10,229,737	10,732,268	10,950,854	2.0%
Special Articles	1,009,120	1,118,985	1,374,421	22.8%
Total Expenses	24,500,568	26,138,916	27,115,146	3.7%

SUMMARY OF ARTICLES

#	TOPIC	AMOUNT <u>REQUESTED</u>	% OF <u>TOTAL</u>	<u>FUNDING SOURCE</u>
1.	Annual Reports			
2.	Accept Grants			
3.	Airport Fuel Revolving Fund			
4.	Elected Wages			
5.	Appointed Wages			
6.	Accept Hillside Cemetery			
7.	Town Operating Budget	10,775,731	39.7	Taxation
8.	WPCF Operating Budget	2,586,971	9.5	Taxation/SUF*
9.	Colle Operating Budget	78,950	0.3	Colle RRA**
10.	Airport Operating Budget	206,164	0.8	Airport Rev
11.	FCTS Assessment	1,221,005	4.5	Taxation/FCTS Stab***
12.	GMRSD Assessment	10,950,854	40.4	Taxation
13.	Utility Valuation	13,130	0.0	Taxation
14.	<u>GMRSD Articles</u>			
	Hillcrest Façade	55,000	0.2	Free Cash
	Sheffield Façade	45,000	0.2	Free Cash
	Sheffield Fire Alarm	90,000	0.3	Free Cash
15.	TFHS Tennis Courts	56,511	0.2	GMRSD Stabilization
16.	DPW Equipment	100,000	0.4	Taxation
17.	6 Wheel Dump/Plow/Sander	250,000	0.9	Town Cap Stabilization
18.	<u>Town Articles</u>			
	Unsafe/Unhealthy Bldgs	25,000	0.1	Taxation
	Unexpected Engineering	25,000	0.1	Taxation
	Bid/Project Overrun	25,000	0.1	Taxation
19.	Bldg Assess/Capital Plan	50,000	0.2	Free Cash
20.	Phase II Environmental Study	32,500	0.1	Free Cash
21.	<u>Cannabis Impact Fee Stab</u>			
	Town Expenses	14,012	0.1	Cannabis Impact Fee****
	TFFD Expenses	5,538	0.0	Cannabis Impact Fee****
	Police Training	7,000	0.0	Cannabis Impact Fee****
	Prevention Programming	8,500	0.0	Cannabis Impact Fee****
	School Substance Abuse Couns.	85,000	0.3	Cannabis Impact Fee****
22.	<u>Financial Policy Articles</u>			
	Town Capital Stabilization Fund	127,690	0.5	Taxation
	OPEB Trust Fund	50,000	0.2	Taxation
	GMRSD Stabilization Fund	39,890	0.1	Taxation
23.	WPCF Capital Stabilization	180,000	0.7	WPCF Retained Earnings

#	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>AMOUNT REQUESTED</u>	<u>% OF TOTAL</u>	<u>FUNDING SOURCE</u>
24.	5 th St Bridge Easement	700	0.0	Free Cash
25.	Join PV Mosquito District			
26.	Mosquito Control	10,000	0.0	Free Cash
27.	Petitioned Article			
28.	Montague Tree Bylaw			
29.	Montague Tree Revolving Fund			
Total		27,115,146	99.9	

*Sewer User Fees **Colle Receipts Reserved for Appropriation

***FCTS Stabilization

****Cannabis Impact Fee Stabilization Fund

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
TOWN OF MONTAGUE
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MAY 22, 2021**

MOTIONS
with background and comments

ARTICLE 1. Annual Reports (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to receive and act upon the reports of the Officers of the Town and to receive the report of any committees and act thereon.

Background: This article appears regularly on the annual warrant and allows the receipt of reports.

ARTICLE 2. Accept Grants (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to authorize the Selectboard, or other Town departments with the approval of the Selectboard, to apply for and accept grants from the Federal Government, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, or any other source, and to expend the same for purposes received without further appropriation.

Background: This article appears regularly on the annual warrant and allows the acceptance of grants.

ARTICLE 3. Airport Fuel Revolving Fund (Airport Commission Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to amend Section 7 of Article II of the Town of Montague General Bylaws, pursuant to the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 53E½, by creating a new Airport Fuel Revolving Fund for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2021 as shown in Article 3 of the Annual Town Meeting Warrant and to establish an annual spending limit of \$160,000 for said Airport Fuel revolving fund, and which funds may be expended without further appropriation for the purposes defined therein, with such expenditure limits to be applicable for each fiscal year until such time as Town Meeting votes, prior to July 1 for the ensuing fiscal year, to increase the same; provided, however, that in accordance with state law, the Selectboard, with the approval of the Finance Committee, may increase the limit for that fiscal year only.

Section 7: Revolving Funds

- (a) There are hereby established in the Town of Montague pursuant to the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 53E½, the following revolving funds:

<u>Revolving Fund</u>	<u>Spending Authority</u>	<u>Revenue Source</u>	<u>Allowed Expenses</u>
Hazardous Materials Response Planning Committee (a.k.a. SARA Title III Committee)	SARA Title III Comm	Fees collected from individuals responsible for oil and hazardous material spills	For the purpose of cleaning up oil and hazardous material spills

Airport Fuel	Airport Manager	Fees from sale of Airport fuel	Purchase of Airport fuel to be sold and used at the Airport
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(b) Expenditures from each revolving fund shall be subject to the limitations established by Town Meeting, and to any additional limitations as otherwise set forth in Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 53E½.

Background: Use of airport fuel tends to fluctuate, and the fuel tank is replenished as needed rather than on a certain schedule. If the expense is left in the operating budget, extra funds would need to be appropriated annually “just in case.” Having a revolving fund for this purpose takes the fluctuating expense out of the operating budget. Funds are deposited as aviation fuel is purchased by airport users, and tank refills are paid for directly from those revenues. This is a typical practice in municipal airports.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
 Selectboard Recommends 2-0

ARTICLE 4. Elected Official Wages (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to fix the salaries of all elected officials as required by law for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2021, as set forth in Schedule I, Elected Officials.

**SCHEDULE I
 Elected Officials**

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>FY21 BUDGET</u>	<u>FY22 REQUEST</u>	<u>FY22 RECOMMEND</u>
MODERATOR	370	370	370
SELECTBOARD			
Chairman	2,355	2,355	2,355
Second/Third Members	2,140	2,140	2,140

**SCHEDULE I
Elected Officials**

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>FY21 BUDGET</u>	<u>FY22 REQUEST</u>	<u>FY22 RECOMMEND</u>
BOARD OF ASSESSORS			
Chairman	1,765	1,765	1,765
Second/Third Members	1,605	1,605	1,605
TREASURER/COLLECTOR			
	68,963*	71,396**	71,396
*G-7			
**G-8			
TOWN CLERK			
G-11	75,014	76,139	76,139
BOARD OF REGISTRARS			
Town Clerk	840	840	840
TREE WARDEN			
	1,575	1,575	1,575
BOARD OF HEALTH			
Chairman	1,765	1,765	1,765
Second/Third Members	1,605	1,605	1,605

Background: This article appears regularly on the annual warrant. While the Town Clerk and Treasurer/Collector are elected officials, their proposed salaries are aligned with the pay scales of full-time appointed officials. The Treasurer/Tax Collector and Town Clerk FY22 wages include a 1.5% increase in alignment with the NAGE union increases negotiated in FY20. The remaining stipends reflect FY20's comprehensive review and are not expected to increase again until FY25.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 2-0

ARTICLE 5. MOVED: That the Town vote to fix the salaries of all appointed officials as required by law for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2021, as set forth in Schedule II, Appointed Officials.

**SCHEDULE II
Appointed Officials**

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>FY21 BUDGET</u>	<u>FY22 REQUEST</u>	<u>FY22 RECOMMEND</u>
<u>ANNUAL STIPENDS</u>			
BOARD OF REGISTRARS (3)	525	525	525
EMERGENCY MGMT DIRECTOR	5,765	5,765	5,765
ANIMAL INSPECTOR	1,575	1,575	1,575
BARN INSPECTOR	1,050	1,050	1,050
IT COORDINATOR	2,100	2,100	2,100
MEDIC COORDINATOR	4,000	4,000	4,000
POLICE IT ADMINISTRATOR	3,000	3,000	3,000
FOREST WARDEN	1,710	1,710	1,710
<u>RATES PER INSPECTION</u>			
ASST. BUILDING INSPECTOR	35.00	35.00	35.00
GAS INSPECTOR	35.00	35.00	35.00
PLUMBING INSPECTOR	35.00	35.00	35.00
ELECTRICAL INSPECTOR	35.00	35.00	35.00
<u>HOURLY RATES</u>			
EXTRA CLERICAL	<u>Ranges/hr.</u> 12.75-14.50	<u>Ranges/hr.</u> 13.50-15.25	<u>Ranges/hr.</u> 13.50-15.25
ELECTION WORKERS	12.75-15.50	13.50-16.25	13.50-16.25
SUMMER HIGHWAY	12.75-14.75	13.50-15.25	13.50-15.25
SNOW PLOW DRIVERS	15.00-25.00	15.00-25.00	15.00-25.00
PART TIME POLICE OFFICERS	17.00-21.00	17.00-21.00	17.00-21.00
PART TIME DISPATCHERS	17.00-21.00	17.00-21.00	17.00-21.00
PARKS & RECREATION	12.75-20.00	13.25-20.75	13.25-20.75
AIRPORT INTERN	12.75-15.00	13.50-15.20	13.50-15.50

Note: Minimum Wage is \$13.50 as of 1/1/21 and goes to \$14.25/hr 1/1/2022

**SCHEDULE II, continued
Appointed Officials**

NON-UNION EMPLOYEES NOT SHOWN ABOVE

	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Range FY2021</u>		<u>Range FY2022</u>	
		Start	End	Start	End
<u>SALARIED</u>					
TOWN ADMINISTRATOR	J	94,203	115,934	95,616	117,673
TOWN ACCOUNTANT	G	61,251	75,014	62,170	76,139
CHIEF OF POLICE	I	85,639	105,395	86,924	106,976
DPW SUPERINTENDENT	H	77,854	95,813	79,022	97,250
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH	G	61,251	75,014	62,170	76,139
LIBRARY DIRECTOR	G	61,251	75,014	62,170	76,139
WPCF SUPERINTENDENT	H	77,854	95,813	79,022	97,250
<u>HOURLY</u>					
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT	E	22.77	28.02	23.11	28.44
POLICE LIEUTENANT	G+8.5%	37.29	41.37	37.85	41.99
POLICE CUSTODIAN	A	15.26	18.78	15.49	19.06

Informational Only: Fiscal Year 2022 budgeted wages –

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR	117,673	DPW SUPERINTENDENT	97,250
TOWN ACCOUNTANT	76,139	DIRECTOR OF HEALTH	69,997
LIBRARY DIRECTOR	74,282	WPCF SUPERINTENDENT	87,227
CHIEF OF POLICE*	118,014	POLICE LIEUTENANT	41.99
POLICE CUSTODIAN	17.86	EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT	28.44

*includes 20% educational incentive pay

Background: This article appears regularly on the annual warrant. These Annual Stipends and Rates per Inspection were included in FY20’s comprehensive review and are not expected to increase until FY25. Hourly rates reflect planned increases in the state minimum wage. Wages for “Non-Union Employees Not Shown Above” reflect a 1.5% increase in alignment with the NAGE union and eligible step increases.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 2-0

ARTICLE 6. Acquire Highland Cemetery (Cemetery Commission Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to acquire and accept, by donation, from Millers River Cemetery Corporation, or the current owner, all of the real property known as the Highland Cemetery, containing 7.393 acres, more or less, located at Millers Falls Road, Montague, and shown as Parcel 28-0-13; and further, to acquire and accept, by donation, all of the personal property, funds and accounts of said Millers River Cemetery Corporation owned, maintained and used in connection with the ownership and operation of the Highland Cemetery; and to authorize the

Selectboard to take all actions and execute all documents necessary and appropriate for said acquisition and acceptance.

Background: There are currently 14 cemeteries in Montague. Seven are town-owned cemeteries and seven are owned by non-profit cemetery associations. The existing town-owned cemeteries are historic rather than active cemeteries; the majority of burials took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The last plot was sold in Old South Cemetery in 2016. A small number of burials will take place in Old South for those who purchased their plots before 2016. Currently, a Montague resident cannot be buried in a town-owned cemetery.

The Montague Cemetery Commission (MCC) has been interested in establishing a new town cemetery since the 1970s. The current MCC has been actively working with the town to locate a suitable parcel for the past two years with no success. A board member of the Highland Cemetery on Millers Falls Road (one of the 7 private cemeteries) approached the MCC in July, 2020 to inquire if the town would be interested in taking ownership of their cemetery. While the cemetery is well maintained and managed, the board is no longer able to care for it. The cemetery board would like to gift the cemetery and its modest endowment to the town.

The MCC believes it is in the strategic interest of the town to assume ownership. The Highland Cemetery is considerably larger than the other town-owned cemeteries and is not full. The Cemetery is located on a 7.4 acre parcel and includes ample open lawn space for new plots and 2.5 wooded acres that could be used as a section for green burial. The acquisition of Highland Cemetery would:

- allow town residents to be buried in a town cemetery;
- offer a green burial alternative which does not exist in any Montague cemetery;
- provide a source of steady revenue for the cemetery through plot sales.

The MCC would oversee the maintenance as it does for the existing town cemeteries. The main change is that the Commission's work would expand from passive maintenance of largely-full cemeteries to active maintenance and sales, including green burials. The MCC would coordinate burials by working with funeral directors, grave diggers, and other contractors to ensure the remains are interred with respect and dignity.

The MCC intends to use part of this property to provide a green burial section. A green burial (also known as natural burial) is one in which all of the materials going into the grave are biodegradable. Montague residents are interested in this option, and neighboring towns such as Gill and Shutesbury now offer green burial in their municipal cemeteries. Much work is needed to assess the area's habitat, trees, and soil; to survey

and map grave sites; and to create trails and space for quiet reflection. We envision that this work would be conducted in phases once the cemetery is acquired.

Forecasted revenue from plot sales would be identified separately from general funds and are expected to be adequate to match forecasted fixed expenses.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 2-0

ARTICLE 7. Town Operating Budget (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$10,775,731 for the maintenance of the several departments of the Town, said sums to be allocated in accordance with Schedule III, Budget, and for any other necessary changes with \$59.80 to be raised from Transportation Infrastructure Fund Receipts Reserved for Appropriation and \$10,775,671.20 to be raised from Taxation.

**SCHEDULE III
Town Operating Budget**

DEPT NO.	BUDGET FY21	REQUEST FY22	SELECTBOARD FIN COMM RECOMMEND FY22	\$ Increase	% Increase
GENERAL GOVERNMENT					
113 TOWN MEETING	2,090	2,140	2,140	50	2.39%
122 SELECT BOARD	192,014	194,971	194,971	2,957	1.54%
131 FINANCE COMMITTEE	1,000	700	700	(300)	-30.00%
132 RESERVE FUND	60,000	60,000	60,000	-	0.00%
135 TOWN ACCOUNTANT	81,934	83,400	83,400	1,466	1.79%
141 ASSESSORS	195,422	179,952	179,952	(15,470)	-7.92%
145 TREASURER/COLLECTOR	239,560	229,164	229,164	(10,396)	-4.34%
151 TOWN COUNSEL	80,000	85,000	85,000	5,000	6.25%
INFORMATION					
155 TECHNOLOGY	74,100	97,800	97,800	23,700	31.98%
159 SHARED COSTS	74,759	77,579	77,579	2,820	3.77%
161 TOWN CLERK	167,001	155,379	155,379	(11,622)	-6.96%
175 PLANNING	121,187	123,121	123,121	1,934	1.60%
176 ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS	1,200	700	700	(500)	-41.67%
182 MEDIC	5,000	5,000	5,000	-	0.00%
190 PUBLIC BLDG UTILITIES	106,320	109,846	109,846	3,526	3.32%
TOTAL GENERAL GOVT	1,401,587	1,404,752	1,404,752	3,165	0.23%

DEPT NO.	BUDGET FY21	REQUEST FY22	SELECTBOARD	\$ Increase	% Increase
			FIN COMM RECOMMEND FY22		
PUBLIC SAFETY					
211	1,652,537	1,761,945	1,761,945	109,408	6.62%
211	53,000	53,000	53,000	-	0.00%
212	311,584	310,291	310,291	(1,293)	-0.41%
241	141,444	143,080	143,080	1,636	1.16%
244	2,750	2,750	2,750	-	0.00%
EMERGENCY					
291	5,765	6,265	6,265	500	8.67%
292	20,414	21,527	21,527	1,113	5.45%
294	1,710	1,710	1,710	-	0.00%
299	20,285	30,285	30,285	10,000	49.30%
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TOTAL PUBLIC SAFETY	2,209,489	2,330,853	2,330,853	121,364	5.49%
PUBLIC WORKS					
420	1,441,408	1,522,924	1,522,924	81,516	5.66%
420	24,090	21,321	21,321	(2,769)	-11.49%
423	278,050	278,050	278,050	-	0.00%
433	598,886	624,796	624,796	25,910	4.33%
480	7,000	6,000	6,000	(1,000)	-14.29%
491	7,000	13,440	13,440	6,440	92.00%
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TOTAL PUBLIC WORKS	2,356,434	2,466,531	2,466,531	110,097	4.67%
HUMAN SERVICES					
511	135,948	160,507	160,507	24,559	18.06%
541	46,980	46,521	46,521	(459)	-0.98%
543	88,400	87,800	87,800	(600)	-0.68%
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TOTAL HUMAN SERVICES	271,328	294,828	294,828	23,500	8.66%
CULTURE & RECREATION					
610	426,950	437,744	437,744	10,794	2.53%
630	143,539	147,944	147,944	4,405	3.07%
691	500	500	500	-	0.00%
693	1,300	1,300	1,300	-	0.00%
<hr/>					
TOTAL CULTURE/RECREATION	572,289	587,488	587,488	15,199	2.66%

DEPT NO.		BUDGET FY21	REQUEST FY22	SELECTBOARD FIN COMM RECOMMEND FY22	\$ Increase	% Increase
	DEBT SERVICE					
700	DEBT SERVICE	1,128,500	1,066,809	1,066,809	(61,691)	-5.47%
	INTERGOVERNMENTAL					
840	INTERGOVERNMENTAL	111,179	111,609	111,609	430	0.39%
	MISCELLANEOUS					
910	EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	2,238,057	2,397,861	2,397,861	159,804	7.14%
946	GENERAL INSURANCE	96,000	115,000	115,000	19,000	19.79%
	TOTAL MISCELLANEOUS	2,334,057	2,512,861	2,512,861	178,804	7.66%
	TOTAL TOWN BUDGET	10,384,863	10,775,731	10,775,731	390,868	3.76%

Background: Schedule III includes the FY22 requests from all Town departments. In the course of reviewing this year's requests, the Selectboard and Finance Committee suggested some adjustments or reworked estimates, which were incorporated into Schedule III before recommendations were voted. Therefore, the amounts requested match the recommended amounts.

The Town Operating Budget request for FY22 is 3.8% higher than the previous year. While there were several areas of increase, it should also be noted that several departments were able to reduce their budgets for FY22.

The budget increases that are greater than \$15,000 or 10%, and their causes are:

1. Information Technology increased by \$23,700 or 32.0%. The increase in this budget is two-fold. The first is due to an anticipated increase of \$17,000 (32.1%) in the consulting costs, which results from the increase in the amount of technology owned and used by the Town. During FY21, COVID funding was used to provide multiple remote workstations, provide webcams or otherwise provide access to virtual meetings, install fiber optics to allow WPCF employees network access across buildings (allowing staff to socially distance), and provide IT infrastructure in the renovation to the Town Hall Annex, among other tasks. The second increase is \$4,500 (60.00%) in computer equipment replacements in accordance with an established plan.

At February's STM, there was interest in how the town procures IT services. While there is staff support for a full-time staff position, there are also areas of concern, including how to ensure availability to Mon-Fri departments, finding someone experienced in the wide varieties of required IT specialties, and the reality that IT specialists are likely to command a wage outside our current compensation plan. Having a part-time IT staff position has the same issues, plus balancing scheduled reduced work hours with the needs of employees.

The other option is to use a consultant, be it an individual or company. We will continue with this until we are able to justify and afford IT staff. While the increase in information technology costs may seem high, these services are needed to enable our departments to function properly in the increasingly technologically complex environment of today's workplace.

2. The Police Department request increased by \$109,408 or 6.6%. The bulk of this, about \$87,000, is due to contractual wage increases, including the corresponding increases in overtime and educational incentive costs. The only other notable increase was \$11,200 in training costs which were part of last year's cuts to comply with Town Meeting's reduction of the police budget.

A replacement patrol vehicle is included in this budget; the expense is based on the cost of adding a 3rd hybrid cruiser to the fleet and retiring a 13 year old vehicle that has over 120,000 miles on it.

3. The Tree Warden budget was increased by \$10,000 or 49.30%. This increase was balanced by a reduction in the DPW budget. This increase will allow for outside companies to do additional tree work. Originally the DPW requested two new full-time employees but the cost of this increase could not be supported within the FY22 budget, so this is a compromise that will allow more tree work to be done without committing the town to a staff increase.
4. DPW budget increased by \$81,516 or 5.7%. About \$60,000 of this is wage-related, with, \$15,500 due to buyouts of leave time by two retiring employees, and the balance for contractual wage increases. The remaining \$20,000 of increases is made up of small increases in several line items, none of which are individually significant.
5. The Solid Waste budget increased by \$25,910 or 4.3%. This is due to contractual cost increases for both removal and tipping fees, and was partially offset by a significant reduction in the Recyclables Removal line item, which had been previously increased in anticipation of projected costs that did not occur.

6. The Cemeteries budget increased by \$6,440 or 92.0%. The Cemetery Commission is requesting a \$5,000 yearly increase to cover the costs of managing the Highland Cemetery and to provide improved maintenance of the town's seven historic cemeteries. Aspects of the cemeteries that need attention include care for the headstones, stone walls and fences that surround the cemeteries, and the trees and plant life within them. Additionally \$1,440 is requested this year as a one-time expense to begin clean-up of the Highland Cemetery wooded section, which will allow for green burials, as green burial options in the area are quite limited.
7. The Board of Health budget increased \$24,559 or 18.06%. The primary driver of the increase (\$18,800) is the increase in hours for the Public Health Nurse (an independent contractor) from 4 hours a week (\$9,800) to 10 hours a week. The scope of her work is being expanded from compliance and reporting requirements related to infectious disease surveillance, to work with school nurses (pertussis, lice, food-borne illness tracking, etc.), blood pressure clinic, travel vaccination clinic, and community vaccination clinics, which address underserved populations

The COVID-19 Pandemic has required a significant increase in the nurse's weekly hours during FY21, but those costs are being paid for through state and federal grants.

8. The Employee Benefits budget increased \$159,804 or 7.1%. The annual assessment to the Montague Retirement System increased about \$93,000 while the health insurance budget increased about \$68,000. While the town expects a 2% rate reduction for health insurance in FY22, some new retirees will have coverage as well as their replacements, and a modest buffer is included to accommodate plan changes by employees throughout the year.
9. General Insurance increased \$19,000 or 19.8%. This increase is addition of the newly completed DPW facility, and also continues to cover the old DPW facility at 500 Avenue A until its disposition.
10. The most significant budget reduction was in Debt Service, which dropped \$61,691 or 5.4%. Approximately \$42,000 was a reduction in short-term interest for the new DPW Facility until completion of permanent borrowing. The remaining savings reflects the payoff of debt for the Sheffield Roof and Sheffield Parking Lot loans.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0

ARTICLE 8. WPCF Budget (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$2,586,971 for the purpose of operating the Water Pollution Control Facility and associated pumping stations, said sums to be allocated in accordance with Schedule IV, WPCF Budget, with \$251,228 to be raised from Taxation and \$2,335,743 to be raised from Sewer User Fees.

**Schedule IV
WPCF Budget**

DEPT NO.	BUDGET FY21	REQUEST FY22	SELECTBOARD	\$ Increase	% Incr	
			FIN COMM RECOMMEND FY22			
WATER POLLUTION CONTROL						
440	Wages & Expenses	1,585,763	1,693,291	1,693,291	107,528	6.78%
440	Capital Outlay		58,500	58,500	58,500	
700	Debt Service	520,551	514,047	514,047	(6,504)	-1.25%
910	Employee Benefits	291,954	270,333	270,333	(21,621)	-7.41%
	SUBTOTAL WPCF	2,398,268	2,536,171	2,536,171	137,903	
449	DPW SUBSIDIARY					
	Wages & Expenses	42,800	42,800	42,800	-	0.0%
	Capital Outlay	8,000	8,000	8,000	-	0.0%
	SUBTOTAL DPW SUBSIDIARY	50,800	50,800	50,800	-	
	TOTAL WPCF	2,449,068	2,586,971	2,586,971	137,903	5.6%

Background: The WCPF’s FY22 budget request (which includes no Special Articles this year) is \$2,586,971, of which about 90.3% is funded by user fees (residential and industrial sewer bills and septage fees) and 9.7% from Taxation (which represents the approximate cost of treating inflow and infiltration [I&I] into the system from non-metered sources). Almost half of the total \$137,903 increase is due to the addition of the annual lease payment for the new screw pump. This budget also reflects an increase in the Administrative Assistant’s hours from 20 hours per week to 40, bringing staffing levels up to 8 full time employees.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0

ARTICLE 9. Colle Budget (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$78,950 for the purpose of funding the operations, maintenance, and debt service of the Colle Building, said sum to be raised from Colle Receipts Reserved for Appropriation.

Background: This budget is wholly funded by building lease fees, which are dedicated to the building. This appropriation pays for all of the normal building maintenance including utilities, general repairs, and the debt service from the renovation.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0

Selectboard Recommends 3-0

ARTICLE 10. Airport Budget (Airport Commission Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$206,164 for the purpose of operating the Turners Falls Airport, said sum to be raised from Airport User Fees.

DEPT NO.		BUDGET FY21	REQUEST FY22	SELECTBOARD FIN COMM RECOMMEND FY22	\$ Increase	% Increase
	AIRPORT					
482	Wages & Expenses	95,494	156,483	156,483	60,989	63.87%
700	Debt Service		37,789	37,789	37,789	100.00%
910	Employee Benefits		11,892	11,892	11,892	100.00%
	TOTAL AIRPORT	95,494	206,164	206,164	110,670	

Background: This budget pays for the operating costs of the Turners Falls Airport, which is overseen by the Airport Commission. Since much of the general information regarding the airport changes has already been discussed, this will focus on the budgetary changes for FY22.

Staff changes: The Airport was previously staffed with a 19 hour per week Manager and two part-time interns from the FCTS. Staffing for FY22 will include increasing the Manager’s hours to 40 per week (fully benefited), adding a permanent part-time (unbenefited) employee, and keeping the two interns. This accounts for about \$40,000 of the budget increase.

Expense changes: Aside from the Debt Service and Employee Benefit costs, added as new Airport departments, the purchase of the Pioneer Aviation property also added about \$12,000 in operating costs such as utilities, maintenance, and insurance. As was discussed in depth during February’s Special Town Meeting, the new revenue sources

will completely pay for these additional costs. Additionally, the Airport will now pay a modest (\$6,000) overhead payment to the Town to cover administrative costs, as the WPCF does.

At the end of October 2020 the new 25,000 watt solar parking canopy was completed and began to generate electricity. This is expected to offset 95% of the total electrical consumption for the Airport saving over \$6,000 from the operational budget. The completion of the energy efficiency project should also reduce overall maintenance and electrical consumption around the airport.

The staffing change for the Airport Manager means that the Airport, as an Enterprise Fund, must now separately budget for all employee benefits. These paid benefits include Medicare for all employees (previously absorbed by the Town as insignificant) as well as workers' compensation and health and life insurance for benefitted employees. Future years will also have a retirement assessment; since the Manager wasn't a member of the Montague Retirement System on 9/30/20, there will be no assessment until FY22.

The Airport must now also separately budget for the debt service resulting from the property purchase. Future aviation grants are expected to cover the bulk of these costs, with airport operating revenues making up the difference.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0

ARTICLE 11. Franklin County Technical School Assessment (FCTS Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$1,221,005 for the purpose of paying the Franklin County Technical School District for Montague's share of the assessment for the yearly operation of the Franklin County Technical School, with \$27,262 to be raised from the Franklin County Technical School Stabilization Fund and \$1,193,743 to be raised from Taxation.

Background: Montague is one of 19 member towns in the Franklin County Technical School District, which operates a grade 9-12 school in the Montague Industrial Park. Total enrollment at the school rose to 532 in FY21 from 485 in FY20, and is expected to rise again to about 570 in FY23 and beyond. For Montague, the turnover of incoming and graduating students will result in approximately 95 from Montague (down from 107) for FY23. Applications continue to be steady, and the school is not yet at capacity of 642.

The Operating budget is estimated to rise about 6.9%, though total assessments to member towns will rise only about 2.5%; a strong increase in state aid and non-member tuition is responsible for the difference. Capital assessments (included in the assessment) are down about 2.6%, in the third year of a fifteen-year bonding.

Superintendent Martin said that the provision of \$300,000 in each of its budgets for FY21 and FY22 is an early step toward funding future capital needs from savings rather than from fluctuating annual assessments.

The total assessment is \$1,221,005 down 2.74% from \$1,255,456. The assessment is based on the number of Montague resident students who attend the school; Montague students now occupy 20.1% of the available seats at FCTS. The changes in total enrollment, each town's enrollment, and shifts in calculation of Chapter 70 state aid partially explain the year-to-year differences.

Comment: The Finance Committee has an internal policy to cushion sharp changes to this assessment. It provides additions or reductions to the FCTS Stabilization Fund to stabilize the assessment's impact on the budget. It appears Montague's share of enrollment may have peaked, so the Finance Committee decided to use some of the FCTS Stabilization Fund (\$27,262 per our policy) to offset the FY22 assessment.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0

ARTICLE 12. Gill-Montague Regional School District Assessment (GMRSD Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$10,950,854 for the purpose of paying the Gill-Montague Regional School District for Montague's share of the assessment for the yearly operation of the Gill-Montague Regional Schools, said sum to be raised from Taxation.

Background: The GMRSD has provided additional information in a separate document in the mailing. Montague's assessment increased by \$218,586 or 2.04% which matches the Affordable Assessment amount provided to them by Montague. This amount is calculated as 48.5% of Montague's available operating revenues, plus excluded debt for GMRSD capital projects. The total FY22 operating budget for the GMRSD is \$24,123,185, an increase of \$577,114 or 2.45%. The combined assessments from Montague and Gill comprise (\$12,675,489) 52.54% of the district's total operating revenue. The remainder comes from state aid and reimbursements, grants, school choice payments from sending districts, etc.

The GMRSD is also requesting appropriations for four capital improvement projects.

Comment: The GMRSD has again managed to build a budget around an "affordable" figure provided to them by Montague, in part due to the increased amount of available grants. By approving this request, Town Meeting upholds its commitment to offer the district a significant, predetermined portion of its revenue, while reserving the rest for other uses.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0

ARTICLE 13. Utility Valuations (Board of Assessors Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$13,130 for the purpose of utility valuation appraisal services, said sum to be raised from Taxation.

Background: Funds are needed for the purpose of hiring an appraiser to provide valuation services relating to the natural gas and electric transmission/distribution utility assets located in Town. This may be considered for inclusion in the operating budget in future years.

Comment: Since this is not for a capital expense and the amount is less than \$25,000, Free Cash was chosen as the funding source.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0

ARTICLE 14. GMRSD Projects (GMRSD Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$190,000 for the following school building related projects and any and all incidental and related costs, said sum to be raised from Free Cash.

- A. \$55,000 to repair the Hillcrest Façade
- B. \$45,000 to repair the Sheffield Façade
- C. \$90,000 to update the Sheffield fire alarm system

Hillcrest Façade Background: The exterior of the Hillcrest Elementary School building – a Town property - has significant issues that need to be corrected for the continued use of the building and safety of the occupants. Among capital project requests, this was the district’s top priority. The brick façade is crumbling in several areas near windows and outside corners. The bricks that comprise the facade are becoming loose and will pose a threat to public safety if left unrepaired. All compromised brick needs to be re-secured to the building and pointed. This priority was identified and repair requested in last year’s budget cycle. (See Capital Improvements Committee report)

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

Sheffield Façade Background: This was priority number two among the district’s requests for FY22 and was also requested in last year’s budget cycle. The Sheffield/Administration building – a Town property - has masonry issues that need to

be corrected. The repair is essential to the continued viability of the building. Earlier concerns about the methodology and materials presented in the request have been eased as key details of the installation procedure have been clarified.

Comment: Pieces of masonry are breaking away from the building and have already been found in small chunks on the ground. By acting now the Town can slow or stop the deterioration of the antique masonry and avoid a very expensive restoration project in the future. This was identified last year. (See Capital Improvements Committee report)

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

Sheffield/Administration Building Fire Alarm Upgrade Background: This was the third priority among the GMRSD request. This project will include a new fire alarm panel, full replacement of antiquated existing call devices throughout the two sides of the building, and expansion of call devices throughout the Sheffield Elementary School to enhance the ability to identify the location of alarm incidents. (See Capital Improvements Committee report)

Comment: These three requests are capital items for town-owned buildings, so funding from the Town Capital Stabilization Fund could have been recommended, but since there is Free Cash available, it was decided to use that instead.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 15. Resurface TFHS Tennis Courts (GMRSD Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$56,511 for the purpose of resurfacing the tennis courts at the Turners Falls High School, including any and all incidental and related costs, said sum to be raised from the Gill-Montague Regional School District Stabilization Fund.

Background: Approximately 400 feet of cracks will be repaired followed by the application of three coats of filler/primer and a final surface coat. New posts are to be installed on the doubles court.

Although it is the fourth priority on the GMRSD list, it is considered an essential repair as the MIAA has given notice to the TFHS that the courts will soon no longer be able to be played upon competitively at the high school level, as injuries may occur as a result of the uneven surface. The approach to this project would repair, but also ensure against long-term issues. Montague would bear an 89.7% share of this project, with Gill to pay the balance of the total anticipated project cost of \$63,000.

This was identified and recommended last year. (See Capital Improvements Committee report)

Comment: Because this is a capital request, stabilization funds are an appropriate funding source. The GMRSD Stabilization Fund was chosen to fund this because the high school is owned by the GMRSD rather than the Town.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 16. DPW Equipment (Department of Public Works Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$100,000 for the purpose of purchasing, equipping, and making major repairs to DPW vehicles and equipment, including any and all incidental and related costs, said sum to be raised from Taxation.

Background: This account is well-established and is governed by policy. It provides flexibility for the DPW Superintendent in making purchasing and repairs decisions for major equipment. It also allows him to take advantage of time-sensitive opportunities when appropriate, rather than waiting for the next Town Meeting. Purchases from this fund are reviewed by the Town Administrator and the Selectboard. The practice has been to start each fiscal year with a balance of \$100,000 in the account. By the end of June 2021, the balance in the account is expected to be about \$10,000. Expenditures are reviewed periodically throughout the year by the CIC and Finance Committee. (See Capital Improvements Committee report)

Comment: Since this is a recurring article, funding from Taxation is recommended.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 17. 6 Wheel Dump Truck with Plow and Sander (Department of Public Works Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$250,000 for the purpose of purchasing and equipping a six wheel dump truck with plow and sander, including any and all incidental and related costs, said sum to be raised from the Town Capital Stabilization Fund.

Background: This request would fund the purchase of a new six-wheeled dump truck equipped with a plow and sander that would replace a 1997 model at the end of its serviceable life. Plow package comes with additional wing blade, which more efficiently plows the larger roads in town. An option to lease is available with a five-year term at

\$54,892/year at present interest rates (3.19%), but Finance Committee recommends making the purchase outright because we have available reserves and this avoids paying about \$25,000 in interest costs. (See Capital Improvements Committee report)

Comment: Since this is a large capital expense for a Town purpose, funding from the Town Capital Stabilization Fund is recommended.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 18. Town Articles (Town Administrator and CIC Requests)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$75,000 for the following Town projects and any and all incidental and related costs, said sum to be raised from Taxation.

- A. \$25,000 Unsafe/Unhealthy Buildings
- B. \$25,000 for Unexpected Engineering Services
- C. \$25,000 for Bid/Project Overrun

Unsafe/Unhealthy Buildings Background: The Town has maintained a “community development/unhealthy buildings” account and historically placed funds returned to the Town through payback of CDBG loans to that account. This has allowed the Selectboard to make strategic investments in response to public safety or other concerns relative to unoccupied properties. These resources most typically are focused on property that is owned by the Town or that has been abandoned by negligent owners. While this account is seldom used, it is of great importance in the event a crisis develops or might occur if immediate action is not taken. The balance of the Unsafe Unhealthy Buildings account is currently \$10,753. This article will improve the Town’s capacity to respond to emergency conditions that develop in a building or site that meet the criteria of unsafe or unhealthy as determined by the Selectboard. Money in this fund can only be accessed with Selectboard approval. (See Capital Improvements Committee report)

Comment: Recommended funding for these three items is from Taxation because they are not capital expenses. These would be typically funded from Taxation or Free Cash. Taxation was chosen as these accounts are intended to be replenished, so it is more appropriate to fund them from a recurring source.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

Survey and Engineering Fund Background: The Town does not employ an engineer and does not have a discretionary engineering and survey services budget. In most cases, the cost of hiring for those services can be planned for and included as part of a project's budget, but there are times when, for example, a grant opportunity emerges that requires the Town to conduct an engineering design or survey plan on short notice in order to develop and submit required plans. There also are times when a concern emerges relative to a structure, road, or bridge that would benefit from survey or engineering, but may not be allowable or accounted for in planned Chapter 90 spending.

Comment: As described above, this account would allow for rapid action to respond to opportunities or problems that may develop, allowing the Town to work more efficiently and productively. (See Capital Improvements Committee report)

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

Project and Bid Costs Overruns Background: This article will create a fund that the Selectboard could deploy in a time efficient fashion to ensure that a project previously approved by Town Meeting can be satisfactorily completed. The CIC recommends that this fund be limited to provide no more than 10% of the value of the original appropriation to support any given project, but in no case to exceed the lesser of either the resources available in the fund or \$25,000. Larger requests would need to be presented to Town Meeting.

Capital and other project requests are typically based on cost estimates provided by vendors. While great effort is made to get reliable estimates, they are not always available. Quotes may also overlook or not anticipate problems that become evident over the course of implementation. This may in some cases exceed the contingency included in the project budget.

Comment: In the event of a project overrun, the alternative to using this account is that the work must be halted or completed in a less than adequate fashion. (See Capital Improvements Committee report)

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 19. Building Assessment and Capital Plan Study (CIC Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$50,000 for the purpose of a Building Assessment and Capital Plan Study, including any and all incidental and related costs, said sum to be raised from Free Cash.

Background: This request is for \$50,000 to fund an independent assessment of all currently occupied Town buildings to identify capital project needs and projected costs as a basis for capital expense forecasting. The funding will also provide technical assistance to development of the resulting capital plan document. It is expected that the study will include assessment of the following buildings: Town Hall, Public Safety Complex, WPCF, Council on Aging, Colle Opera House, Shea Theater, Airport, Unity Park Fieldhouse and the Central Street School (34 Central Street – leased by Community Action of the Pioneer Valley). The DPW building is new and will not require an assessment. Assessments for the three libraries have already been completed, as have the assessments of the Sheffield and Hillcrest school buildings. Expense is anticipated to be in the range of \$4,000-\$5,000 per building, based on previously completed/contracted building assessments. This plan does not include other infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, sewers, or the WPCF treatment system. It is expected that as much as \$10,000 may remain after building assessments are complete, which would be used to acquire outside support for development of a fully integrated capital plan for the Town.

Comment: Without a comprehensive understanding of the needs of each of the Town buildings it will be nearly impossible for Town bodies to make informed decisions regarding the future of each. Knowing the long term needs and associated cost of improving and maintaining each building is essential in creating a capital plan. (See Capital Improvements Committee report) As assessments are not technically capital in nature, funding would usually come from Taxation or Free Cash if either was available. In this case, there is no Taxation available so funding from Free Cash is recommended.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0

Selectboard Recommends 3-0

Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 20. Phase II Environmental Study for 500 Avenue A (Town Planner Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$32,500 for the purpose of a Phase II Environmental Study for 500 Avenue A, including any and all incidental and related costs, said sum to be raised from Free Cash.

Background: The Town seeks to dispose of the former DPW building and grounds at 500 Avenue A as surplus property. Although the bid conference attracted numerous interested parties, no bids were received. It is understood that the findings of a previous

Phase I Environmental Study left too much uncertainty as to the possible liability of environmental issues. The Phase 2 study would resolve uncertainty as to the need for future remediation of the property; having the Phase II Environmental Study performed will enable the town to attract better quality bidders and facilitate the development of a tax-paying business that is compatible with Town goals for the property. (See Capital Improvements Committee report)

Comment: Funding from Free Cash is recommended for the same reasons as for the previous article.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0

Selectboard Recommends 3-0

Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 21. Use of Cannabis Impact Fee Stabilization Fund (Town Administrator Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$120,050 for the costs associated with the establishment and operation of a marijuana establishment known as 253 Farmacy, said sum to be raised from the Cannabis Impact Fee Stabilization fund.

- A. \$14,012 for costs incurred by Town departments in connection with the establishment and operation of 253 Farmacy
- B. \$5,538 for costs incurred by the Turners Falls Fire District in connection with the establishment and operation of 253 Farmacy
- C. \$7,000 for police training relative to identification of cannabis intoxication
- D. \$8,500 for prevention programming development and monitoring
- E. \$85,000 for school-based substance abuse counseling resources

Background: Cannabis Impact Fees are derived through a Host Community Agreement with a licensed cannabis establishment. To date, such fees have generated revenue from one business, 253 Farmacy. These funds can only be used for specific purposes, focused on mitigating costs and the effects of having a cannabis facility in a town. Permissible expenses include things like the administrative costs incurred by a municipality for the approval of a marijuana establishment, additional public safety costs, and additional substance abuse prevention programming during the early years of an establishment's operation.

This article makes five individual appropriations. Two of those reimburse the Town and the TFFD for past administrative, legal, and public safety costs incurred in establishing the facility and responding to fire alarms. Additionally, looking forward, the Police Department has

requested \$7,000 to provide training for all officers on how to identify impairment from cannabis. \$8,500 is proposed for support from the Communities that Care Coalition to: help us assess implementation of new prevention resources in our schools (GFMS, TFHS, FCTS); assess gaps in prevention and intervention services through data analysis; and facilitate selection and implementation of prevention related programming in the schools and community. Lacking both the capacity and expertise in prevention with Town government, we feel it is important that we have well qualified assistance available to consider our programs.

The largest share of the funds, \$85,000, will be used to secure the services of a full-time, licensed drug and alcohol abuse counselor to work with students who attend school at FCTS and GMRSD. This is in response to survey data indicating a rising trend in self-reported teen cannabis use in our community over a three year period. These service will be shared and implemented jointly by those institutions.

These expenditures would leave a balance of \$114,670 in the stabilization account, which is currently projected to receive an annual payment in excess of \$200,000 in January 2022. Through January 2021, total payments of \$234,720 have been received, representing the first 1.25 years of a five-year Host Community Agreement with 253 Farmacy.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0

ARTICLE 22. Annual Appropriations to Reserves (Finance Committee Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the following sums for the purpose of increasing the special purpose funds set forth below, said sums to be raised from Taxation.

Fund	Amount (\$)
Town Capital Stabilization Fund	127,690
OPEB Trust Fund	50,000
GMRSD Stabilization Fund	39,890
Total:	217,580

Town Capital Stabilization Fund Background: The Town’s Financial Management Policies and Objectives direct that an annual appropriation of 0.2% of prior year general operating revenue (PYGOR) be made to this fund. For FY22 that amount is \$42,976.

Additionally, the Selectboard and Finance Committee have recommended setting aside 51.5% of the annual Kearsarge lease payments for future capital needs. For FY22 that amount is \$84,714. The total requirement is \$127,690. The balance in this fund prior to Town Meeting was \$1,380,380.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0

OPEB Trust Fund Background: Montague currently pays for its other post-retirement benefits (OPEB), primarily retiree health insurance, on a pay-as-you-go basis. This means we simply pay the bills as they occur, but make no provision to fund the post-employment costs of current employees. This appropriation of funds into the OPEB Trust is viewed both as a practical and a symbolic gesture showing that Montague recognizes its obligation and is beginning to address it. This year's appropriation includes the customary contribution of \$50,000.

The Town's long term plan is to address the OPEB unfunded liability more aggressively after the Town's unfunded pension liability has been "fully funded" (currently expected to occur in FY33). At that time the money currently appropriated to fund the unfunded pension liability will be available for use, on an annual basis, to more rigorously fund the unfunded OPEB liability, although there may not be a formal funding schedule in place. The balance in this fund prior to Town Meeting was \$773,287.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0

GMRSD Stabilization Fund Background: This represents the agreement to direct a specific percentage of the annual Kearsarge lease payment towards the GMRSD Stabilization Fund.

The FY22 Kearsarge lease payment of \$164,494 to Montague is allocated as follows:

- *50% for operating expenses.* This is included in calculated available revenues for the Affordable Assessment. These revenues are allocated 51.5 % to the town and 48.5% to the GMRSD. The share for GMRSD is included in the Affordable Assessment, and the Town share is appropriated to the Town Capital Stabilization Fund as part of the \$127,690 shown above.
- *50% for capital expenses.* 48.5 % of this amount is this appropriation to the GMRSD Stabilization Fund., which amounts to \$39,890. The Town's 51.5% share is appropriated to the Town Capital Stabilization Fund as part of the \$127,690 shown above.

The balance in this fund prior to Town Meeting was \$117,507.

Comment: The established policy of using Taxation to fund certain reserves is based on the belief that directing a portion of the town's "earnings" to savings is a financially prudent approach.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0

ARTICLE 23. Move WPCF Retained Earnings to WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund (Finance Committee Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$180,000 for the purpose of increasing the WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund, said sum to be raised from WPCF Retained Earnings.

Background: This article has no effect on Town operations or financing sources. The purpose is to earmark a portion of the Retained Earnings of this Enterprise Fund for future capital improvements.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0

ARTICLE 24. 5th Street Bridge Easement (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to authorize the Selectboard to acquire by gift, purchase and/or eminent domain, an easement across the FirstLight Canal for the placement of a new 5th Street pedestrian bridge, southerly of the existing 5th Street vehicular bridge and the 1880 County Layout, and permanent and temporary construction easements at the western and eastern termini of the new pedestrian bridge as may be needed for support, access, bridge appurtenances, and for the purpose of constructing the bridge, and for all purposes incidental and related thereto, all as shown on a plan entitled "Easement Plan Canal Street & Fifth Street Bridge," dated April 5, 2021, prepared by Sherman & Frydryk, as said plan may be amended, a copy of which plan is on file with the Town Clerk, and such other permanent and temporary easements adjacent to and within 500 feet of said easements, and further that the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$700 to fund such acquisitions, said sum to be raised from Free Cash.

Background: At the October 2020 Special Town Meeting voters granted the Selectboard authority to enter into an easement agreement with FirstLight Power that would allow the Town to replace a condemned pedestrian bridge on the north side of the 5th Street "Green Bridge" with a new bridge immediately to its south. MassDOT subsequently indicated that it would not allow the bridge to be placed in this exact location, requiring it be set 30' to the south (downstream) of the Green Bridge. The final design requires temporary construction easements from the two abutters on either side of the canal, in addition to Firstlight Power. This article updates the referenced easement location,

provides the Selectboard with the authority to acquire additional easements, and provides funds to compensate private property owners for the acquisition of temporary construction easements through eminent domain, if deemed necessary by the Selectboard.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0

ARTICLE 25. Join the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to authorize the Selectboard to file a petition to join the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District, if the Selectboard determines that joining said District is in the best interests of the Town, and to authorize the Selectboard to execute any and all documents and to take such actions as may be necessary to effectuate the purposes of this article.

Background: On July 20, 2020, the Governor signed an establishing the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board, which is authorized to undertake preventative, management and eradication methods anywhere in the State upon a determination of an elevated risk of arbovirus (EEE, West Nile). The Act includes an opt-out provision relative to mosquito spraying, which the Selectboard exercised prior to a May 15 deadline, following input from the public and the Board of Health (BOH).

The BOH must now file and receive state approval for a local mosquito control plan, which will not include spraying. The Town may benefit from surveillance or other support from a newly established Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District (or other contracted pest management resources), but limited information regarding services and costs are presently available. Articles 25 and 26 represent contingency plans in the event the Town determines it is in the public interest to join the PVMCD or to make other investments in mosquito surveillance or control. As worded, Article 25 will not obligate the Town to join the PVMCD, but would allow the Selectboard to do so if it is found to be necessary.

ARTICLE 26. Fund Mosquito Control (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$10,000 for the purpose of mosquito control, and anything incidental or related thereto, which may include but not be limited to paying an assessment for the Town's membership in the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District, said sum to be raised from Free Cash.

Background: As per Article 25, providing mosquito control services may require some investment on the part of the Town. It is understood that membership in the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District will cost \$5,000, annually, with a menu of services to be offered at as-yet unknown costs. Understanding that state and regional actors are behind in planning, this appropriation request is intended to provide the Town with

some flexibility to purchase services as may be required to implement an effective local mosquito control plan.

ARTICLE 27. MOVED:

**A Resolution in Opposition to State Subsidies and Incentives
for Biomass Plants**

WHEREAS, the Town Meeting of Montague is committed to ensuring and safeguarding the health, safety, and environment of the residents in our community, and

WHEREAS, wood-burning biomass plants are a highly polluting form of energy generation, known to release pollutants including fine particulate matter, volatile organic compounds, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, and carbon dioxide, and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth adopted science-driven Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) regulations in 2012 recognizing that wood-burning power plants emit more carbon dioxide than fossil fuel power plants per unit of energy generated, and

WHEREAS, if the weakened RPS regulations proposed in December 2020 by the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) go into effect, Massachusetts subsidies and incentives would be available for inefficient large-scale biomass power plants, and

WHEREAS, the proposed RPS regulations would wrongly incentivize and directly subsidize the construction of a large-scale wood-burning biomass plant proposed by Palmer Renewable Energy in Springfield, an Environmental Justice community already heavily burdened by industrial air pollution and by record-setting rates of asthma and other respiratory illnesses, and

WHEREAS, our Town Meeting stands in solidarity with the residents of the City of Springfield, and the Springfield City Council, which passed a resolution on December 21, 2020, opposing Massachusetts state subsidies and incentives for wood-burning biomass plants,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Montague Town Meeting opposes any state subsidies or incentives for commercial wood-burning biomass plants in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Montague Town Meeting calls upon the Massachusetts DOER to revise the proposed RPS regulations by returning the woody biomass provisions to their previous, science-based language, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Montague Town Meeting urges its State Legislative Delegation to support legislation in the forthcoming session of the Massachusetts General Court to remove and bar taxpayer and ratepayer incentives for commercial biomass power plants in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to our municipality's State Legislators, as well as Governor Charles Baker, DOER Commissioner Patrick Woodcock, and the Co-Chairs of the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy Committee, Senator Mike Barrett and Representative Jeff Roy.

(Petitioned Article)

ARTICLE 28. Montague Public Tree Protection Bylaw (Montague Tree Advisory Committee Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to amend the General Bylaws of the Town of Montague, by adding a new section titled "Montague Public Tree Protection Bylaw", as set forth in Article 28 of the Annual Town Meeting Warrant, and authorize the Town Clerk to assign such numbering as is appropriate to bring said bylaw into conformance with the existing codification.

Montague Public Tree Protection Bylaw

1. Preamble:

The Town of Montague recognizes that trees are an asset to the community and provide a healthier and more beautiful environment in which to live. Trees improve air quality and provide shade, wildlife habitat, and beauty. Trees give protection from wind, glare and noise, and act as barriers and water quality protection. Public trees and landscaping are economically beneficial in attracting new residents, shoppers, visitors and industry. When properly chosen varieties are planted in appropriate settings, trees enhance property values, promote the economic viability of commercial districts, and enhance the desirability and sustainability of residential neighborhoods.

2. Intent and Purpose:

This by-law is enacted for the purpose of preserving and protecting public shade trees pursuant to Massachusetts General Law Chapter 87. It is also enacted to encourage the planting of more public shade trees than are removed to compensate for tree losses and the time it takes for trees to mature.

3. Definitions:

Critical Root Zone (CRZ): Defined by measuring outwards from the trunk a minimum of 1.25 feet for every inch diameter of tree trunk four feet above the ground. For any tree, a minimum of six feet must be protected around trees regardless of the trunk diameter.

Public Tree: Any tree within public right-of-way, in a municipal park, or adjacent to public buildings.

Right-of-Way: All land within the boundaries of the public right-of-way as set forth by an order of the town laying out a public way. The public right-of-way may include not only the traveled surface of the public way but lands adjacent thereto, including sidewalks and the tree belt.

Drip Line: Drip line of a tree is the area defined by the outermost circumference of a tree's canopy, where water drips from and onto the ground.

4. Tree Warden:

The Tree Warden is an elected position pursuant to Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 41, Section 106.

The duties and responsibilities of the Tree Warden shall conform to the Massachusetts General Law Chapter 87 and shall include, but not be limited to the following:

- Care, control, and management of all trees within public rights-of-way, adjacent to public buildings on public land, and on public commons; and the care, control, and management of trees within parks if so requested by the Director of Parks and Recreation;
- Expenditure of funds for public tree planting and maintenance consistent with this bylaw and Massachusetts General Law Chapter 87;
- Enforcement of the provisions of this bylaw and Massachusetts General Law Chapter 87;
- Preparation and maintenance of a current Public Tree Management Plan;
- Coordination with the Highway Department, Planning Department, Parks and Recreation, Planning Board, and the Montague Tree Advisory Committee on matters related to urban forestry and public tree management, and;
- Develop regulations for the care and preservation of public trees and establish fines and forfeitures for violation thereof.
- Other responsibilities consistent with this bylaw and Massachusetts General Laws.

5. Cutting of Public Trees:

Consistent with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 87, no person except the Tree Warden, may cut, trim, prune, damage, or remove any part of a public tree, including the roots within the drip line of the tree, without written permission as described in Section 7.

The Tree Warden may not remove, permit the removal of, or cause to be destroyed any tree greater than 1.5 inches in caliper without a duly advertised public hearing as specified in Massachusetts General Law Chapter 87, or if objection is given at or prior to the hearing in writing, without the additional approval of the Selectboard, unless that tree is determined to be an imminent hazard tree, as described in Section 8.

Utilities may, or at the request of the Tree Warden must, file an annual vegetation management plan and/or a hazard tree removal plan.

In all cases, pruning and removal of public trees shall be done in accordance with the current ANSI pruning standards.

6. Planting of Public Trees:

No person except the Tree Warden may plant a tree on public property without written permission as described in Section 7.

No trees, except those smaller species appropriate for planting under utilities, shall be planted within 10 lateral feet of an overhead electric utility wire.

Consistent with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 87, the Tree Warden may plant trees within 20 feet of the public right-of-way with the written consent of the adjoining land owner. The Property owner will own the tree immediately after planting and is responsible for the maintenance for the lifetime of the tree. The Tree Warden may require a one-time cost share for the expense of the tree.

7. Permission for Planting, Cutting, Pruning or Removal of Non-Hazardous Public Trees:

No person other than the Tree Warden shall plant, prune, trim, cut above the ground, remove, or conduct any excavation within the drip line of, a public tree without first filing an application and procuring written permission from the Tree Warden. The Tree Warden may grant permission, may deny permission or may issue permission with conditions.

Permission must be granted by the Tree Warden not less than three business days in advance of the time the work is to commence with the exception that, if the work consists of cutting down or removal of a public tree, the application shall be made no less than thirty days in advance. At the time that the application is submitted, applicants shall pay a non-refundable fee of five dollars per tree to the Montague Tree Fund. In cases of emergency, an applicant may seek and receive oral permission from the Tree Warden to trim or excavate within the drip line of a public shade tree without first requesting permission in writing. An emergency is defined as an unforeseen occurrence, which requires immediate action to avoid or reduce significant injury or damage to persons or property. Within three business days after oral permission is granted, the applicant must submit a written request to the Tree Warden who shall grant pre-approval due to emergency.

Removal:

An applicant who wishes to remove a non-hazardous public shade tree is responsible for the following expenses:

- Cost of advertising a hearing as specified in Massachusetts General Law Chapter 87;
- Cost of removal of tree and stump, including hauling away of all debris, and proper filling of stump hole;
- Planting of sufficient replacement trees as described below;
- Cost of police traffic details, repair of street surface and road shoulder, protection and restoration of utility structures; and
- All other costs related to the removal and replanting.

Public trees shall not be removed for a private purpose without suitable compensation to the Town for replacements. The value of existing shade trees is to be calculated on an inch-by-inch replacement basis. Replacements shall be at least two-inch trunk diameter, nursery grown stock. The Tree Warden may, at their discretion, require larger replacements. For example, if an 18-inch diameter tree, measured four feet above grade is to be removed, the applicant must sufficiently reimburse the Town to provide for the purchase and planting of nine, two-inch diameter replacements. At the discretion of the Tree Warden, the applicant shall either:

A. Arrange to plant suitable replacements using his/her own contractor, working to the Town's specifications, or

B. Make a cash contribution to the Montague Tree Fund to be used exclusively for the purchase and planting of replacements, and related expenses.

If the applicant proposes to trim or prune a public tree, and if, in the opinion of the Tree Warden, the proposed work will drastically affect the health, beauty, structural stability, or safety of the tree, the Tree Warden may consider the proposed work to have the same effect as the removal of the tree. In these cases, the Tree Warden may either order the removal of the tree, or allow the tree to remain, provided that it does not present an imminent hazard. In either case, appropriate replacement plantings must be provided by the applicant.

Nothing contained in this bylaw shall prohibit the Tree Warden from refusing to permit the cutting, trimming or removal of non-hazardous trees.

All trees or tree parts (i.e. wood) removed from the town trees are owned by the Town of Montague, with the exception of fallen leaves.

8. Removal of Hazard Trees:

The Tree Warden may remove, without a public hearing, a tree that is determined by the Tree Warden, to be an imminent hazard to persons or property.

The hazard determination shall be made based on an objective risk tree rating system such as the USDA Forest Service 12-point Risk Tree Rating system or the International Society of Arboriculture Hazard Tree Evaluation system. Hazard trees shall be prioritized for pruning, removal, or otherwise minimizing the risk based on hazard trees objectively presenting the most risk.

9. Fines:

Any person who removes, or causes to be destroyed, a non-hazardous public tree without a duly advertised hearing, permission from the Tree Warden, and the approval of the Selectboard if an objection is made to the removal, shall pay a fine of up to \$500 or the appraised value of the tree, whichever is greater, to the Montague Tree Fund.

Any person who cuts, trims, prunes, damages or removes any part of a public tree, including the roots within the drip line of the tree, without written permission, or who fails to comply with the conditions of their permission, shall pay a fine of up to \$100 per tree to the Montague Tree Fund.

This provision is inclusive, but not limited to the following prohibited acts:

- Mutilating (e.g. driving in nails or screws), girdling, carving into, or topping a tree;
- Damage to the root system by trenching, digging, or other excavation;
- Tapping a publicly owned sugar maple;
- Removing any tree guard, tree stake, watering bag, or other device or material intended for the protection or to support the health of a public tree;
- Covering or obstructing any open land at the base of a public tree designed to permit access of air, water and fertilizer to the root system;
- Applying or sweeping road salt onto the CRZ of a public tree;
- Securing, fastening or running any rope, wire, holiday lighting, unprotected electrical installation, or other device or material to, around or through a public tree, or attaching any sign, poster, notice or other object to any public tree, except that the Tree Warden may authorize tying temporary signs to such trees as necessary;
- Causing or encouraging any fire or burning within the drip line of any public tree. This includes the grilling of food below a public tree, within the drip line, unless the grill is provided in a public park and is permanently installed under the tree;
- Paving over the tree belt and/or over the CRZ on public land;
- Parking a vehicle on the CRZ of a public tree;
- The application of chemicals including, but not limited to, pesticides and herbicides on public land.

10. Public Hazard and Abatement:

Upon a determination by the Tree Warden that a private tree constitutes a public hazard, they shall give written notice to the owner of the property upon which said hazard exists to remove, or otherwise mitigate the hazard posed by such tree as to cause the hazard to the public to be abated. Failure to comply with such written notice within fifteen days thereafter is a violation of this section, and the Tree Warden or coworkers may then remove or trim such tree and assess the cost thereof against the property.

11. Severability:

Should any part or provision of this bylaw be declared by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, the same shall not affect the validity of the bylaw as a whole or any part thereof other than the part held to be invalid.

Appendix A. Suitable Trees for the Town of Montague (May 2019)

Note: A more extensive discussion of tree tolerances and preferences can be obtained from the MTC in an expanded treatment of this list. **NOTE:** specific cultivar (“variety”) names are listed intentionally. Many species are not suitable for various reasons but the specific cultivars may have special traits that make them much more desirable (e.g. no seed production, narrow outline, shorter stature, etc.). Measurements are mature HEIGHT X WIDTH. Ultimate size is influenced by growing conditions and regional climate. All trees are cold hardy to at least Zone 5 (all of the town of Montague).

Shade trees and ornamental flowering trees

Acer campestre (Hedge Maple) +* (A, B, C) – preferred cultivars are Metro Gold® (aka ‘Panacek’) and Streetwise™ (aka ‘Stwizam’) 30’x30’. Obtain trees trained to **one** leader.

Acer ginnala (Amur Maple) +* (A, B, C) Obtain trees trained to **one** leader. 20’ x 25’

Acer miyabei (Miyabei Maple) * (E) – preferred cultivar is State Street™ (aka ‘Morton’) 35’ x 35’.

Acer rubrum* (D, E) (Red or Swamp Maple) Male cultivars are preferred to avoid seed.

Acer tataricum (Tatarian Maple) +* (A, B, C) – best cultivar is Rugged Charm®, aka ‘JFS-KW2’, and HotWings® (aka ‘GarAnn’) 20’ x 20’.

Catalpa speciosa* (Northern Catalpa) (E). 45’x 35’

Celtis occidentalis (Common Hackberry) * (A – if lines are not droopy, B, C) – Better cultivars include ‘Chicagoland’ and Prairie Sentinel™ (extremely narrow)

Cercis canadensis (Eastern Redbud) + (A – see conditions) – 20’x20’

Cornus mas (Cornelian Cherry Dogwood) +* (A, B, C) 20 to 25 feet Buy only those trained into a tree form.

Cotinus x ‘Grace’+* (Grace Cotinus) (A, B, C) 20’x15’

Use only specimens trained to a single stem.

Crataegus viridis ‘Winter King’ (Winter King Hawthorn) +* (A, B, C)– 30’ x 30’

Eucommia ulmoides (E) (Hardy Rubber Tree) – 45’ x 45’ after 30 years. Use any but Emerald Pointe™ is an upright column only 5 feet wide

Ginkgo biloba* (E) (Ginkgo or Maidenhair tree) Huge but very slow. Use only male clones like ‘Autumn Gold’, ‘Princeton Upright’

Gleditsia triacanthos var. ***inermis**** (C) (Thornless Honeylocust)

(preferably ‘Skyline’, ‘Shademaster’ or the narrower ‘Draves’ aka Street Keeper® Honeylocust). 40-50’ x 40-50’

Heptacodium miconioides (Seven Son Flower) +* (A, B, C) Only use single trunk specimens 15-20’ at maturity with a 10’ spread.

Liquidambar styraciflua ‘Ward’ (Cherokee™ Sweetgum) * (E) 60’x70’ ***Maackia amurensis*** (Amur Maackia) +* (A) 25’-30’ ‘

***Maclura pomifera* 'White Shield'** (White Shield Osage Orange) +* (A, B, C)
30' x 30'.

***Magnolia* 'Galaxy'** (Galaxy Magnolia) * (E) 30' x 20'.

Magnolia x soulangeana (Saucer Magnolia) + (E) generally 25'x 25'

***Malus* 'Adirondack'** (Adirondack Crabapple) +* (A, B, C). 18'x14'.

***Malus* 'Sugar Tyme'** (Sugar Tyme Crabapple) +* (A, B, C). 18'x16'

***Malus* 'Donald Wyman'** (Donal Wyman Crabapple) +* (B, C). 15' to 20' x 20 to 25'

Platanus x acerifolia (Planetree) * (E). 80' x 80' is possible. Use only disease-resistant cultivars like 'Morton Circle' aka Exclamation!® or 'Bloodgood'.

Prunus sargentii +* (Sargent Cherry) (A, B) 30'x30' The cultivar 'Columaris' is a narrow (to 20') vase shaped tree useful when width is an issue.

***Prunus serrulata* 'Kwanzan'** (Kwanzan cherry) +* (A, B) 25'x25'

***Prunus virginiana* 'Canada Red'** (Canada Red Choke Cherry) * (A, B, C). Purple leaves. 25-35'x18'

Prunus x yedoensis (Yoshino Flowering Cherry) (A, B) 25' x 25'

Quercus Oaks produce acorns, which can litter streets and if planted near fast traffic roads hit moving cars at high speed. Oaks also extend cleanup season as many leaves are retained until spring.

Quercus bicolor * (Swamp White Oak) (E) About 50'x 50'

Quercus palustris * (Pin Oak) (C, E) – 60'x40'

Quercus rubra * (Red Oak) (E) 70'x60'

Sophora japonica, now Styphnolobium japonicum (Scholar Tree) * (E). '60'x 60' at maturity. Regent' is the best cultivar as it grows fast enough to be useful.

Syringa reticulata*? (Japanese Tree Lilac) (A, B). 20'x20' 'Ivory Silk', 'Summer Snow', and 'Regent' will perform best but mixed results under city conditions .

Taxodium distichum (Bald Cypress) * (D, E) Preferred cultivars are 'Mickelson' aka Shawnee Brave® (50'x20') or 'Skyward' (20'x6')

***Tilia americana* 'Redmond'** (Redmond Linden) * (E).

***Tilia cordata x mongolica* 'Harvest Gold'** (Harvest Gold Linden) * (E)
40'x 30'.

Tilia cordata (Littleleaf Linden) * (E) Greenspire® or 'Norlin' are good culitvars but there are many good selections. 60'x35'

***Ulmus davidiana var. japonica* 'Discovery'** (Discovery Elm)* (C, E). 40'x35'

***Ulmus* 'Frontier'** (Frontier Elm) * (A, C, E). (35'x20')

***Ulmus wilsoniana* 'Prospector'** (Prospector Elm) * (E) 40'x25'

***Ulmus* 'Morton Glossy'** (Triumph™ Elm) * (E) 50'x40'

Zelkova serrata (Japanese Zelkova) * (A, B for 'Musashino', C, E for the rest)
Dwarf 'JFS-KW1' aka City Sprite® (24'x18'), Wireless® aka 'Schmidtlow' flat top that avoids power lines (24'x35') or use 'Musashino' tight upright column (45'x15') or 'Village Green' when space permits as it provides more shade (50'x50').

KEY:

Trees with no asterisk or plus sign are suitable for parks and open spaces and may not tolerate street conditions (drought, salt, compaction, limited root zone).

* Trees that can tolerate street conditions (size, width, shade vs. sun, etc. still need to be considered). The width of the tree belt or size of a tree pit will greatly influence success on some if not all of these.

+ Trees suitable for use under power lines.

Mapping codes below established by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG)

- A. Under utility lines
- B. In otherwise constrained canopy area (but not under utility line)
- C. In constrained root area
- D. In wetland or river area
- E. No constraints (park, front yard, wide tree belt (8 feet or greater))

Fruit trees

The planting of edible fruit or nut bearing trees on municipal tree belts is prohibited in Montague, except by the permission of the Tree Warden. Fruit and nut trees can cause damage to personal property (e.g. automobiles) and their low-lying limbs can provide obstruction to easy passage of pedestrians on sidewalks. They are generally considered shorter lived and more pest prone than urban shade trees.

Acknowledging the important resource (nutritious fresh food) and positive community associations and harvesting traditions that develop around fruit and nut trees, the use of edible fruit and nut bearing species at community gardens and certain parklands is acceptable, with the permission of the Tree Warden.

If fruit trees are to be planted the following should be used because they require less intensive pest control:

Apple varieties ('Baldwin', 'Raritan', 'Northern Spy', 'Fuji', 'Liberty', 'Honeycrisp', 'Red Delicious', and 'Gold Delicious')

Peach varieties ('Harcot')

Pear varieties ('Seckel')

Background: The Montague Tree Advisory is proposing a general bylaw for the purpose of protecting existing public trees and to develop and maintain an appropriate inventory of public trees for enjoyment by future generations. The bylaw supplements existing state laws to further define the role of the Tree Warden and the process and manner by which the town will allow for the planting, cutting and removal of public trees. The

bylaw provides the Tree Warden with a mechanism for responding to unauthorized removal or damage to public trees.

The Tree Advisory Committee and Public Works Department have planted over 200 new street trees in the last couple of years with at least 300 more planned over the next two years with support from two grants. The bylaw will protect this ‘next generation’ of public shade trees as well the mature stock of public trees throughout town. The stated intent of the bylaw is to “encourage planting of more public shade trees than are removed.”

ARTICLE 29. Montague Tree Revolving Fund (Montague Tree Advisory Committee Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to amend Section 7 of Article II of the Town of Montague General Bylaws, pursuant to the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 53E½, by creating a new Montague Tree Fund for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2021, as shown in Article 29 of the Annual Town Meeting Warrant and to establish an annual spending limit of \$5,000 for said Montague Tree Fund revolving fund, and which funds may be expended without further appropriation for the purposes defined therein, with such expenditure limits to be applicable for each fiscal year until such time as Town Meeting votes, prior to July 1 for the ensuing fiscal year, to increase the same; provided, however, that in accordance with state law, the Selectboard, with the approval of the Finance Committee, may increase the limit for that fiscal year only.

Section 7: Revolving Funds

(a) There are hereby established in the Town of Montague pursuant to the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 53E½, the following revolving funds:

<u>Revolving Fund</u>	<u>Spending Authority</u>	<u>Revenue Source</u>	<u>Allowed Expenses</u>
Hazardous Materials Response Planning Committee	SARA Title III Comm	Fees collected from individuals responsible for oil and hazardous material spills	For the purpose of cleaning up oil and hazardous material spills
Montague Tree Fund	Tree Warden	Fees received under the Public Tree Protection Bylaw	Tree planting and maintenance consistent with the Public Tree Protection Bylaw

(b) Expenditures from each revolving fund shall be subject to the limitations established by Town Meeting, and to any additional limitations as otherwise set forth in Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 53E½.

Background: This revolving fund would allow the fees and contributions generated by the proposed Montague Tree Protection Bylaw to be segregated and used without further appropriation for expenditure of funds, under the authority of the Tree Warden, for the purpose of planting and maintaining public trees in a manner that is consistent with the Public Tree Protection Bylaw and MGL Chapter 87.

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0