

MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE/SELECTBOARD MEETING
Final Minutes
Wednesday, September 22, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded: <https://vimeo.com/612670342>

PRESENT FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE: **Jennifer Audley, Chair; Frederic Bowman, John Hanold, Francia Wisnewski, Jennifer Waryas and Greg Garrison, members.**

PRESENT FOR SELECTBOARD: **Rich Kuklewicz, Chair; Chris Boutwell, Vice-Chair and Matt Lord (new member), Clerk**

OTHERS PRESENT: **Carolyn Olsen, Town Accountant, Steve Ellis, Town Administrator, Tom Bergeron, DPW Superintendent; Ariel Elan, resident; Jeff Singleton, Montague Reporter; BettyLou Mallet, Scribe.**

ABSENT: **Chris Menegoni**

1. Chair, Jennifer Audley (JA) called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. and announced that the meeting is live on MCTV as well as being recorded by Carolyn Olsen. **FinCom roll call Fred Bowman, aye; Jennifer Waryas, aye; Francia Wisnewski, aye; Greg Garrison, aye; John Hanold, aye; Jennifer Audley, aye.**

Selectboard Chair, Rich Kuklewicz called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. and a **roll call of Chris Boutwell, aye, Matt Lord, aye and Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**

2. **Approval of the meeting minutes: August 11, 2021, September 8 and September 15, 2021 and check in with scribe about process.** JA stated that the approval of the minutes is first on the agenda. There were no discussions. **GG moved to approve the minutes of August 11, September 8 and 15, 2021 as written. Seconded by Fred Bowman. Roll call vote: FB aye; JW aye; FW aye; GG aye; JH aye; JA aye.** JA also stated she'd like to take a minute to check in with the Scribe to see how the process was working. BettyLou Mallet spoke to the Committee stating she is able to stay within the time frame of approximately 3 hours (1 ½ hours meeting time and 1 ½ hours prep time). The committee did not have any questions for the Scribe and the minute-taking process.
3. **Preparation for Fall 2021 Special Town Meeting (STM)**
 - a) **Updates on changes made to October 2021 meeting date, location, requests received and requests deferred to future meetings.** Steve Ellis as well as Rich Kuklewicz stated that it is still planned to hold the STM at the Turners Falls High School Auditorium on Thursday, October 14, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. Ventilation has been upgraded in the auditorium with filtration and other devices which improve air exchange and cleanliness, introducing outside air for re-circulation.
 - b) **Review and discussion of process and timeline for Special Town Meetings.** JA mention the process of the Fall 2021 STM and that the FinCom has limited time to prepare. Steve Ellis noted the difficulties in receiving information on a timely basis as well as Carolyn Olsen

mentioned the DOR requirements for the purposes of setting the tax rate but other items do not need to be completed right now however it does make sense to have a town meeting involving time sensitive items and some that are not. The Selectboard sets the STM warrant so there is time to make adjustments which allows more time for discussion.

Rich Kuklewicz stated the Selectboard can vote on the items at their Monday night meeting and just hear the FinCom's thoughts tonight.

c) Discussion and votes on articles expected to appear on the October 2021 STM warrant

JA proceeded to discuss **Article 7** as the DPW Superintendent Tom Bergeron was present. JH read the article and the background information that was given. Tom Bergeron spoke of the need for the robotic sewer camera and understands the committee's concern regarding the cost of this article however this item is not only used as a camera but also runs up above the sewer line flow, comes in its own travel container and can pick up with a forklift, it has a computer, television and robotic controls as well as a cleaning tank all in one unit. There will be extensive training for this item. The Superintendent also gave examples where the Town had certain situations in sewer repairs where this camera would have come in handy and saved time and manpower. Having this robotic camera system would also save time with the ability to pinpoint the situation and repair in a timely basis rather than asking for outside help which could take hours or days. The Town of Montague has 63 miles of sewer to maintain.

A few of the members stated they felt being rushed to make this decision and would like to defer this article to the February Winter Town meeting. Other members were in favor of upgrading capabilities of the sewer management given the age and complexity of the Town's sewer system.

On a motion by Fred Bowman and seconded by John Hanold, the FinCom approved Article 7 as written with the funding source as Free Cash. FB, aye; JH, aye; JW, aye; FW, aye; GG, abstained; JA abstained. The Selectboard will discuss at their meeting on Monday. Fred Bowman or John Hanold will discuss this article at the STM.

Article 1 (Funds for WPCF) – JH read the article and the background information on the Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF). There was no additional discussion on this article as it was discussed at last week's FinCom meeting. **On a motion by Fred Bowman and seconded by John Hanold, the FinCom approved Article 1 as written with the funding source from WPCF retained Earnings. JH, aye; FB, aye; JW, aye; GG, aye; FW, aye; JA, aye.**

Article 2 (Funds for Clerical Assistance for Finance Committee)– JA read her alternate background information to the committee. She asked if any of the FinCom members thought her description was accurate. **On a motion by FB and seconded by FW, the FinCom approved Article 2 as written with the funding source as Free Cash. FB, aye; FW, aye; JH, aye; GG, aye; JW, aye; JA, aye.**

Article 3 (Rescind funds for Strathmore Mill Complex)– This article was discussed at last week's FinCom meeting. JH read the motion and the background information. There was no further discussion. **On a motion by JH and seconded by FB, the FinCom approved Article 3 as written with no actual financial impact. JH, aye; FB, aye; JW, aye; GG, aye; FW, aye; JA, aye.**

Article 4 – (Funds for premium paid on sale of Town's DPW Facility Bond Anticipation Note) JH read the article and the background information provided. The committee stated the background explains this article completely. There was no discussion. **On a motion by JH and seconded by FB, the**

FinCom approved Article 4 as written with the funding source from the Fund Balance Reserved for Excluded Debt. JH, aye; FB, aye; GG, aye; JW, aye; FW, aye; JA, aye.

Article 5 (Funds for MCTV cable)– JH read the article and the background information. **JH moved and FB seconded.** During discussion, Jeff Singleton asked if there is a town list of what money is being spent on? Is there an accounting? The Committee told him that MCTV has its own Board and they do issue their own reports documentation. **The FinCom approved Article 5 as written with the funding source being PEG Access Funds. JH, aye; FB, aye; JW, aye; GG, aye; FW, aye; JA, aye.**

Article 6 (Montague City Road Flooding Relief Project)– Steve Ellis read the article and the background information. This article was discussed thoroughly at last week’s FinCom meeting. There was no discussion. **On a motion by JH and seconded by FB, Article 6 was approved by the FinCom as written with the funding source being Free Cash. JH, aye; FB, aye; GG, aye; FW, aye; JW, aye; JA aye.** It was asked if any FinCom member would like to speak about this article at the STM. No offers.

Article XX (Repay the Town for Reserve Fund Transfer to the WPCF) This article, a proposed article regarding payment of a reserve fund transfer by the WPCF, was removed as the DOR would not allow it.

Article 8 (Increasing WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund) – JH read the article and background information. JA stated the Selectboard are acting as the Sewer Commissioners to set the sewer rate so they have an important role in this decision. Rich Kuklewicz stated this plan is being rebuild a little at a time and will need a stabilization fund to help cover the costs coming the Town’s way. No further discussion. **On a motion by JH and seconded by FB, the FinCom approved Article 8 as written with the funding source being the WPCF Retained Earnings. FB, aye; JW, aye; JH, aye; FW, aye; GG, aye; JA, aye.**

Article 9 (Increasing special purpose funds)– JA read the article and background information. The background information was written by CO. JH suggested corrections to background information editorial so votes to approve and simply submit suggestions to CO for consideration. Several of the FinCom and SB members discussed this article and suggested a few adjustments to be made. As there was no further discussion, **JH moved and FW seconded and the FinCom approved Article 9 as written with the funding source as Free Cash. JH, aye; FB, aye; JW, aye; FW, aye; GG, aye; JA, aye.**

Article 10 (Repay airport)– JA read the article and the background information. Self-explanatory with the installment payments. No further discussion. **On a motion by FB and seconded by JH, the FinCom approves Article 10 as written with the funding source being Retained Earnings. FB, aye; JH, aye; GG, aye; FW, aye; JW, aye; JH, aye.**

Article 11 (Council on Aging building repairs) Steve Ellis spoke openly on this article rather than reading it with the background information. The request was made for the Selectboard to remove this article from the warrant so that it can be brought back in a more tidier, more coherent and less expensive package. No vote taken as this article has been removed from the STM warrant.

Article 12 (5th Street Pedestrian Bridge)– This article was discussed at last week’s FinCom meeting. The Selectboard came to the FinCom for recommendations. JA read the article and Steve summarized

the table on Page 9. There was a discussion regarding bids and timing and possibly looking into the alternates. The Selectboard will discuss further at their meeting on Monday. **On a motion by JH and seconded by FB, the FinCom approved article 12 as written with the funding source of Free Cash. JH, aye; FB, aye; FW, aye; GG, aye; JW, aye; JA, aye.**

Article 13 (Evidence-based substance abuse prevention program)– Steve Ellis read the article and background. There was discussion between the FinCom members and the Selectboard regarding the Host Community Agreements and the Town. JA supports the use of these funds but wishes more time to discuss. **On a motion by FB and seconded by JH, the FinCom approved Article 13 as written with the funding source being the Cannabis Impact Fee Fund. FB, aye; JH, aye; FW, aye; GG, aye; JW, aye; JA, aye.**

Article 14 (Dispatch budget)– JA read the article but did not read the background information as it was discussed at length at last week’s FinCom meeting. There was discussion with the FinCom members about the process of the increase and grade changes already approved by the Selectboard and it not being the normal process. The Selectboard stated it was an urgent matter and therefore, they approved to move forward with the increase at their last meeting. **On a motion by JH and seconded by FB, the FinCom approved Article 14 as written with the funding source being Free Cash. JH, aye; FB, aye; FW, aye; JW, aye; GG, aye; JA, aye.**

Article 15 – This article was not discussed due to the dollar amount. No votes taken.

The Selectboard adjourned the meeting at 8:53 p.m. on a motion by Rich Kuklewicz and seconded by Matt Lord. CB, aye; ML, aye; RK, aye.

Steve Ellis adjourned at 8:53 p.m. Carolyn Olsen adjourned at 8:54 p.m. The meeting is now on local recording.

The FinCom continued discussion regarding rescheduling the presentation of the policies and financial forecast to October 6, 2021 as there is no time due to the STM preparation. There will be another FinCom meeting next Wednesday, September 29, 2021 with this single topic on the agenda. There were no further agenda items to discuss. **On a motion by FB and seconded by JH, the FinCom voted to adjourn at 8:59 p.m. JH, aye; FB, aye; FW, aye; GG, aye; JW, aye; JA aye.**

Respectfully submitted,

BettyLou Mallet
Scribe

Voted as amended by Finance Committee: 09/29/2021

Meeting materials: <https://montague-ma.gov/d/5448/Finance-Committee-Meeting>