

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
March 21, 2012

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Meeting Date: March 21, 2012
Location: 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls MA

Called to Order: 6:00 PM

Finance Committee Members Present: John Hanold, Michael Naughton, Andrew Killeen, Lynn Reynolds and Roy Rosenblatt

Board of Selectmen Members: Pat Allen, Chris Boutwell and Mark Fairbrother

Others Present: Frank Abbondanzio (Town Administrator) and Carolyn Olsen (Town Accountant)

Minutes

Selectmen Moved:

To approve the minutes of March 14, 2012.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 1 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of March 14, 2012.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Mr. Hanold said the Gill-Montague Regional School District School Committee will be voting on their Fiscal Year 2013 budget on March 27, but noted that this will be a vote on the budget, not the town assessments.

Special Town Meeting

Special article requests for the April 4, 2012 Special Town Meeting were discussed.

Mr. Naughton suggested use up the one-time state aid first and then use Free Cash.

Article #1 requests \$3,331 for the settlement of the Fiscal Year 2012 contract with the Town of Montague Employee Association.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #1, to be funded from One-Time State Aid.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #1, to be funded from One-Time State Aid.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Article #2 requests \$1,908 to pay non-union employees comparable Fiscal Year 2012 increases to the Town of Montague Employee Association agreement.

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Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #2, to be funded from One-Time State Aid.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #2, to be funded from One-Time State Aid.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Article #3 requests \$30,000 to pay for a town-wide pay and classification study.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #3, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 2 In Favor 3 Opposed Abstained

The dissenting members preferred another funding source.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #3, to be funded from Stabilization.

Vote: 3 In Favor 2 Opposed Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #3, to be funded from Stabilization.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Article #4 requests \$20,000 to supplement the Fiscal Year 2012 Reserve Fund budget.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #4, to be funded from One-Time State Aid.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #4, to be funded from One-Time State Aid.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Article #5 requests \$15,000 to supplement the Fiscal Year 2012 Town Counsel budget.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #5, to be funded from One-Time State Aid.

Vote: 3 In Favor 1 Opposed 1 Abstained

The dissenting members preferred another funding source.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #5, to be funded from One-Time State Aid.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

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Article #6 requests \$9,000 to preserve town records from 1754 through 1925.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #6, to be funded from One-Time State Aid.

Vote: 3 In Favor 1 Opposed 1 Abstained

The dissenting members preferred another funding source.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #6, to be funded from One-Time State Aid.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Article #7 requests \$9,000 to supplement the Fiscal Year 2012 Dispatch budget.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #7, to be funded from One-Time State Aid.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #7, to be funded from One-Time State Aid.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Article #8 requests \$40,000 to supplement the Fiscal Year 2012 Water Pollution Control Facility budget.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #8, to be funded from Sewer Retained Earnings.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #8, to be funded from Sewer Retained Earnings.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Article #9 requests \$25,000 to make repairs to the Montague Center School.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #9, to be funded from Stabilization.

Vote: 3 In Favor 2 Opposed Abstained

The dissenting members preferred another funding source.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #9, to be funded from Stabilization.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Article #10 requests \$14,000 to purchase new energy efficient LED lighting for the Shea Theater.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #10, to be funded from Stabilization.

Vote: 3 In Favor 2 Opposed ___ Abstained

The dissenting members preferred another funding source.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #10, to be funded from Stabilization.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed ___ Abstained

Article #11 requests \$12,500 to provide the town share of a federal grant to provide perimeter fencing at the Turners Falls Municipal Airport.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #11, to be funded from Airport Retained Earnings.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed ___ Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #11, to be funded from Airport Retained Earnings.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed ___ Abstained

Article #12 requests \$10,000 to be provided to the Henry Waidlich Conservation Trust Fund.

Mr. Abbondanzio stated that this used to be voted by town meeting on an annual basis, but this stopped around 2000. This money acts as a local match for putting agricultural restrictions on parcels of land.

Mr. Fairbrother, as chair of the Conservation Commission, strongly supports this and noted that there will be more information on what has been done with this money in the past available at the town meeting.

Mr. Killeen asked about the benefits of agricultural restrictions. Mr. Abbondanzio stated that aside from the benefit of preserving natural beauty, studies have shown that taxes generated from residential development of agricultural lands don't even come close to paying for the associated costs. Mr. Fairbrother explained that when a landowner requests an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR), local land trusts and the state cobble funding together to make the purchase, which usually requires some match from the town. The money in the conservation trust is used for this match. Mr. Abbondanzio noted that you're not really buying the land, you're buying the development rights – the value difference between the valuation as agricultural land and as developable lots.

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Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #12, to be funded from One-Time State Aid.

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 1 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #12, to be funded from One-Time State Aid.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Mr. Killeen asked if we have too much of the town's money given the balances in Free Cash and Stabilization. Mr. Hanold said we have a prudent amount given some of our challenges, and any money available is eventually used for the town. Mr. Killeen brings this up because, while the numbers are going down, we started with a combined total of over 1.5 million between Free Cash and the Stabilization fund, and if we start with a target of \$800,000 for Stabilization, we will have well over the target. Mr. Naughton pointed out that the \$800,000 is not a maximum, and we have several large capital needs coming up in the near future.

Annual Town Meeting Special Articles

Article #12 requests \$60,000 to buy and install a fourth dewatering zone on the Fournier Rotary Press.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #12, to be funded from Sewer Debt.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #12, to be funded from Sewer Debt.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Article #13 requests \$35,000 for an Inflow and Infiltration Flow Metering and Rainfall study.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #13, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #13, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Article #14 requests \$8,200 for information technology.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #14, to be funded from taxation.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

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Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #14, to be funded from taxation.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Mr Hanold took this opportunity to express his opinion that we should use Stabilization for the amount of the Gill-Montague Regional School District assessment that is in excess of the affordable assessment.

Article #15 requests \$20,000 for police equipment.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #15, to be funded from taxation.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #15, to be funded from taxation.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Article #16 requests \$8,000 for new flooring in the Town Hall.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #16, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 3 In Favor 2 Opposed Abstained

The dissenting members preferred another funding source.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #16, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Article #17 requests \$75,000 for DPW vehicles, equipment and major repairs.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #17, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #17, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Article #18 requests \$54,055 to be provided for lease payments for 2 DPW trucks.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #18, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

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Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #18, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Article #19 requests \$200,000 for an all-wheel drive six-wheel dump truck.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #19, to be leased at \$44,000 funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 4 In Favor 1 Opposed Abstained

Mr. Hanold would prefer using Stabilization to purchase the truck.

Mr. Naughton prefers a lease because in part, it makes it easier to plan annual expenses. He does not see the interest cost as a significant factor.

Mr. Killeen thinks we make out better with a lease due to the time value of money.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #19, to be leased at \$44,000 funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Mr. Boutwell noted that we had the same discussion about leasing versus purchasing with the street sweeper last year and noted the savings from interest with a purchase.

Ms. Allen said if we were to do that we need a definite long term plan for purchases to determine what is really being spent each year.

Article #20 requests \$4,000 for children's programming at the Libraries.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #20, to be funded from One-Time State Aid.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Mr. Killeen believes this should be funded from taxation as part of the operating budget.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #20, to be funded from One-Time State Aid.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Article #21 requests \$8,000 to be provided for library technology.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #21, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 3 In Favor 2 Opposed Abstained

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The dissenting members favored funding this from Stabilization.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #21, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Article #22 requests \$15,000 for maintaining the Montague Center School.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #22, to be funded from One-Time State Aid.

Vote: 5 In Favor Opposed Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #22, to be funded from One-Time State Aid.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Article #23 requests \$85,000 to repair and resurface a parking lot at the Sheffield School.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #23, to be funded from Debt.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #23, to be funded from Debt.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Article #24 requests \$15,000 for ADA projects in the Gill-Montague Regional School District.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #24, to be funded from Debt.

Vote: 5 In Favor Opposed Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #24, to be funded from Debt.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Meeting Adjourned at 7:51 PM

List of Documents and Exhibits –

- Minutes of March 14, 2012
- Special Town Meeting Warrant for April 4, 2014

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Next Meetings

- 6:00 PM March 28, 2012 Balance budget, recommendations for WPCF, Colle, Airport, FCTS, GMRSD, remaining supplemental requests, and Town operating budget
Revisit funding sources for ATM special articles
Assign Finance Committee Report
- 6:00 PM April 11, 2012 Final votes on budget, final wording on report