

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND SELECTBOARD
MEETING MINUTES
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM
1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019
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The Chair opens the meeting

- Meeting was opened at 6:02 PM in the Upstairs Meeting Room
- **Finance Committee members present:** Fred Bowman, Chris Menegoni, Richard Widmer, Jen Audley, and Michael Naughton. John Hanold participated remotely. Greg Garrison was absent.
- **Selectboard members present:** Richard Kuklewicz. Michael Nelson arrived at 6:12. Chris Boutwell was absent.
- **Others present:** Town Administrator Steve Ellis, Police Chief Christopher Williams, Dispatch Manager Marsha Odle, Treasurer/Tax Collector Eileen Seymour, Director of Assessing Karen Tonelli and Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen
- Vice Chair Michael Naughton, as acting chair, announced that the meeting is being recorded by MCCI and asked if anyone else was recording the meeting. No one else was recording the meeting.

Minutes

Finance Committee:

Moved by Fred Bowman, seconded by Chris Menegoni, to approve the minutes of January 9, 2019.

Vote:

Naughton - Aye

Hanold - Aye

Menegoni - Aye

Bowman - Aye

Audley - Aye

Widmer - Aye

Police and Dispatch Budget Requests

Mr. Naughton reviewed the previously asked and answered questions that are attached.

Additional topics:

- Explaining the budget request for a new cruiser, Chief Williams noted that the 2020 police vehicle models have been reconfigured and none of the existing equipment will fit these new models, so new equipment would also have to be purchased for a 2020 model. Chief

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Williams is looking to find a new vehicle in an older model. The newer model is also available as a hybrid, and several members expressed support for pursuing that option. Discussion focused on the projected energy savings and whether keeping the battery charged would be an issue. Chief Williams noted that the hybrid is the same vehicle as the regular model, so it would be fully capable of meeting the department's operational needs. Mr. Kuklewicz suggested working with the Energy Committee to make the decision on the hybrid issue. Mr. Naughton noted that buying an older model now will simply postpone the need to buy and outfit a newer model. Chief Williams was asked to obtain and present information on costs and expected savings for three options – an older model that can re-use existing equipment, a new model with new equipment, and a new hybrid model with new equipment.

- Mr. Naughton asked the Selectboard members present, in their roles as Police commissioners and Personnel Board about need for both a Staff Sergeant and Lieutenant. Chief Williams and Ms. Odle explained that the Lieutenant is mostly administrative, and specifically handles information technology and oversees employee training. The Staff Sergeant is responsible for scheduling, and also goes out on patrol. That officer works the 3-11 shift and is in charge when the Chief and Lieutenant are not on duty. The Lieutenant is certified to train in many areas, which saves money in both registration fees and overtime for travel time. The Chief also finds it very helpful to have a second administrative officer. Mr. Naughton suggested making the IT position separate from the Lieutenant, but it was noted that this is currently part of the Lieutenant's job description.
- Chief Williams was asked if staffing levels were adequate. Once current vacancies are filled, staffing will be adequate, although an additional patrolman position would be welcome.
- Mr. Hanold asked if other towns our size have Lieutenants, and how they handle information technology and training. This varies by town. Greenfield has 2 Lieutenants; most local towns are considerably smaller than Montague.
- Chief Williams noted that last summer had a more active downtown presence from the School Resource Officer (SRO). Having two SROs available this summer this year will be even better. Mr. Naughton noted that the Franklin County Technical School pays the entire cost of an additional officer, but the Gill-Montague Regional School District pays 75%, with Montague paying the rest. He would like better data to justify this split. Chief Williams said that a 75/25 split is standard practice; Ms. Audley would like to see the data behind that.

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- Ms. Audley wants to be confident that the discretionary account is not used for normal, expected operating expenses. A fuller discussion was postponed until the time when all the various discretionary accounts are discussed.

Treasurer Budget Request

Ms. Seymour, as part of her budget request, is asking that she be placed on step 7 instead of step 4. Ms. Seymour doesn't have much more to say that wasn't included in her attached narrative, except to emphasize that she is clearly not a skilled negotiator. Ms. Seymour accepted starting on step one because she really wanted the job, but explains that while she had no municipal experience, she did have 30 years of banking experience. After being in the position for 2 years, she has a good grasp on the responsibilities and is asking for fair and equitable treatment. Other department heads have been hired at above step one, and while some had specific position experience, others did not. Mr. Kuklewicz said we were happy to get Ms. Seymour, she's done a great job and we are very fortunate to have her. Mr. Ellis said that Ms. Seymour is an amazing collaborator, but cautioned that we need to consider precedent and be aware of others in this position. Mr. Ellis is sympathetic to her request on a personal level and understands the basis for it; but professionally he has concern that granting such an accommodation would be a problematic precedent and undermine the integrity of our wage scale. Mr. Naughton is interested in whatever precedent might be set, and noted that when Ms. Bourbeau became Town Clerk her step was renegotiated on town meeting floor by the previous Town Clerk. Ms. Audley said it would be helpful to know if there are situations of precedent to increase steps and what those situations were.

Mr. Naughton asked whose decision this is. Because the position will be elected for Fiscal Year 2020, the position will not be under the Personnel Board. The Finance Committee would still appreciate the input of the Personnel Board, so they will meet to discuss the issue and make a recommendation.

Capital Improvements Committee (CIC)

The CIC requested input and or determination on the following issues relative to categorization of various special article requests, and how they impact the amount allocated for additional capital projects.

1. That the expense associated with the DPW discretionary account (\$100,000 request) is understood to be outside the annual allocation for capital projects.

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2. That the Clerk's request for election ballot tabulators (\$50,000) are not considered a capital expense because the individual cost of the tabulators is below the \$25,000 threshold.
3. That the CIC intends to make recommendations relative to the merits and importance of building improvement/repair requests of less than \$25,000, but that these items remain outside the annual allocation for capital projects.
4. That the CIC may suggest when GMRSD stabilization account be considered as a source for the district's projects for non-town owned building requests.
5. The WPCF special article requests, since they are funded by the enterprise fund, are outside of the \$110,000 allocation.

The tabulators were discussed as to whether they met the definition of a capital item given that the individual items were under the threshold. The consensus was that the article for the tabulators should be treated as a capital item. It was also noted that the tabulators are different than the typical building, infrastructure, and major equipment item request that go to the CIC, but still come under the policy definition of capital items, and therefore the purview of the CIC. Mr. Kuklewicz suggested that, while this is a capital article, it could be treated as outside the funding allocation. Mr. Ellis noted that the Finance Committee can always vote to approve additional projects and funding amounts. Mr. Naughton noted that the financial policies were based on best practices of others and not on Montague's track record, and therefore they should not prevent us from doing what we think we should for the town in a given year.

Mr. Naughton wants to raise the question of reducing precincts and have this be done before purchasing tabulators. Mr. Naughton further noted that even if there are fewer precincts, we may still need more tabulators than precincts, with multiple tabulators at each precinct.

The Finance Committee confirmed the above stated understandings of items 1 and 3-5 and concluded that item 2 was a capital expense.

Topics not anticipated within in the 48 hour posting requirements - None

Executive Session entered at 7:30 PM

Finance Committee:

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Moved by Fred Bowman, seconded by Chris Menegoni, to enter into Executive Session under G.L. c 30A, §21 (a)(3) to discuss potential litigation concerning FirstLight, where open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the town, so declared by the acting chair, and the open meeting will only reconvene for the purpose of adjourning.

Roll Call Vote:

Naughton - Aye

Hanold - Aye

Menegoni - Aye

Bowman - Aye

Audley - Aye

Widmer - Aye

Selectboard:

Moved by Michael Nelson, seconded by Richard Kuklewicz, To enter into Executive Session under G.L. c 30A, §21 (a)(3) to discuss potential litigation concerning FirstLight, where open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the town, so declared by the chair, and the open meeting will only reconvene for the purpose of adjourning.

Roll Call Vote:

Nelson - Aye

Kuklewicz - Aye

Meeting reconvened at 8:48 PM.

Selectboard:

Moved by Michael Nelson, seconded by Richard Kuklewicz, to adjourn at 8:48 PM.

Roll Call Vote:

Nelson - Aye

Kuklewicz - Aye

Finance Committee:

Moved by Chris Menegoni, seconded by Richard Widmer, to adjourn at 8:48 PM.

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Naughton - Aye
Bowman - Aye

Hanold - Aye
Audley - Aye

Menegoni - Aye
Widmer – Aye

Next Meeting Date: – January 23rd to meet with WPCF and DPW

Meeting adjourned at 7:38 PM

List of Documents and Exhibits:

- Minutes of January 9, 2016
- Police/Dispatch Questions and Answers
- Treasurer's Additional Information Regarding Wage Request

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Department Q & A
Police

Questions from Finance Committee to Police/Dispatch

DISPATCH

1. Why the increase in travel, particularly as compared to recent expenditures?

The increase was a mistake on my part. I am not sure why I made the change. In excel I changed it back to level funded.

POLICE BUDGET – EXPENSES

2. Police – narrative says new cruiser will be in excess of \$45K, but budget is for \$43K.

Regarding the cruiser price. I did not make the change because I have not received a quote as of yet. I have made 2 requests via email and phone but our rep at HMQ has not gotten back to us. The 2020 Ford Pursuit Explorers are changing their configuration and most of the interchangeable parts/equipment (lights/radio/cage) will not fit in the 2020 model. I spoke with the Leverett Chief and he recently purchased a 2020 unmarked cruiser with cheapest lights and half cage and he paid in excess of 48K, he stated the hybrid model was \$52K. I am currently checking with another company who has the state bid on cruisers. I know I will have to amend the amount I put down, I just don't have a solid figure yet.

3. 5350 is already 50% overspent at 12/31. Is level funding adequate?

5350 is used for new hires and covers the cost of the Physical Agility Test, Physical and the Psychological Exam. FY19 we were budgeted at \$1,500 and I am requesting \$2,100. It cost \$1050 per person.

4. What sorts of things would the department typically purchase with funds in the "Other Supplies" line (5580)? You have only spent 3K of 13K from this line in FY19 -- do you expect to spend the remainder before the end of FY19?

5580-Other Supplies. We use this line item to purchase narcan, medical supplies, defibrillator pad's, replace a broken defibrillator, broken/damaged cell phones, network/IT/software, toner for all the printers, printer ink, paper, water, gun cleaning supplies, desks/filing cabinets/chairs, computer keyboards, mouses, etc. I do expect to spend the remainder. The person who makes the majority of these purchases was on admin-leave for five months and is now back on duty. He recently purchased a \$1,000 worth of needed supplies that will be reflected at the end of the month account report. Lt. Bonnett recently ordered and is in the process of paying for a "Fire Wall System" that will protect all of the department's computers. I was going to use the "Discretionary Account" to pay for this. Should I instead pay for it off of this line item?

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POLICE – PERSONNEL

5. Why do we need a police lieutenant and a staff sergeant position? How does this structure serve the town better than eliminating one or both of these positions and instead having more patrol officers?

The Lieutenant (non-union) is a strictly administrative position and is the back up to the Chief. The Lieutenant does not back up officers on patrol unless it is for an emergency requiring his assistance. The Staff Sergeant is a patrol supervisor and is currently in charge of the 3-11 shift. The Staff Sergeant is responsible for the supervision of all the sergeants and patrolman. The Staff Sergeant has some administrative duties such as scheduling, Pistol Permits and registering sex offenders. The current rank structure gives a clear line of communication and chain of command within the department. One person alone could not be responsible for all of the administrative duties, there would not be enough time of day for one person to accomplish all the tasks in an efficient manner.

6. Looking ahead: can we keep track of how much of Officer Wells' time is devoted to GMRSD and how much is devoted to the town? (Asked because I think because as we build a history and gain experience with how this works out that we try to make the cost sharing as equitable as possible for both the district and the town.)

Officer Dan Miner is the School Resource Officer at GMRSD. The cost of the School Resource Officer is based on the junior patrolman rate of pay. Officer Miner is at the school while in session. During vacation time within the school year the S.R.O.'s are in uniform and are used in a community policing role. The S.R.O. takes the majority of their vacation time off during the summer vacation and when not on vacation they are in uniform/community policing.

POLICE DISCRETIONARY ACCOUNT

7. Does this budget need a separate "Discretionary Fund?" Is there a reason that purchases made from this couldn't be made from appropriate accounts in the regular budget?

I do believe we need a "Discretionary Fund". There are times where purchases need to be made on an emergency basis or on a as needed basis that was not planned for. This is a learning experience for me as I just recently took over as Chief and cannot speak as to past purchases other than the ones I made this year. If I remember right, this fund was used in the past when a cruiser was totaled. Our insurance covered the price of full replacement. This cruiser was a Ford Taurus and we upgraded to a Ford Explorer and the difference was \$7,000. This fund was used to make up the \$7,000 difference. When I was acting Chief 7 years ago there were a lot of citizens concern regarding speeding within the town and I was able to purchase the portable speed sign that we have now without having to request the money for it and delay the purchase.

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8. I'm wondering if some of the things you've said you plan to use your FY20 discretionary fund for are things you should include in your FY20 operating budget instead.

9. I'm also concerned that some of the ways you've reported spending your discretionary fund seem like expenses that could have been incorporated in the department's operating budget over the past several years. (note from Carolyn – at the end of the year, expenses from the Discretionary account that could have been paid from the operating budget are transferred back to the operating budget to the extent that funds are available.)

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Treasurer's Information on Wage Request

Dear Finance Committee members,

I realized after listening to the committee meeting from 1/9/19 that I did not do a good job of explaining the "why" behind my request for a Step increase. This request was not an easy one for me to make as I don't like to ask for anything for myself, but the reality is that I have to look out for myself.

When I was hired, I was hired in at Step 1 of my grade, which looking back has not been the case with other recent department head hiring's. I understand I had no municipal experience, and that some did, but I did have 30 years of finance in my background. I take full responsibility for my lack of negotiating my salary but honestly I was very happy to get the job and didn't want to jeopardize it.

Jump forward 2+ years and I feel I have a very good grasp on the job and this request is purely to try to bring me more in line with other department heads. I am in no way proposing that I should be at the top of any grade, I have to earn that over time and I am fully prepared to do that. I also in no way expect any kind of special treatment; this is just an attempt to bring me closer to my peers.

Full disclosure: I did go to Steve prior to this request; however he is concerned that it may set a precedent. He did tell me that he would support an increase for me, however, feels that the process could cause some problems down the road. I respect that opinion, however, I feel that if someone else feels this way, they also have every right to state their case and go through the same process.

I hope this explains better why I am requesting this Step increase. I will be at the meeting 1/16/19 but sometimes find it easier to explain in writing than in person. Again, I appreciate your consideration of this request.