

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM, 1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2019  
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**The Chair opened the meeting at 6:00 PM**

- Finance Committee members present: Jen Audley (chair); Frederic Bowman, Christopher Menegoni; Greg Garrison. John Hanold was absent.
- Others present: Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen, Town Administrator Steve Ellis, Shauna Wallace, and Deidre Pleasant for Montague Community Television
- The Chair announced that the meeting is being recorded by MCTV and asked if anyone else was recording the meeting. No one else was recording the meeting. The recording of the meeting is archived online at: <https://vimeo.com/367047708>
- Mr. Bowman took the minutes for this meeting.

**Widmer resignation**

On Oct 11, 2019, Mr. Widmer sent a letter of resignation to the Chair and the Town Administrator by email, which was forwarded to the Moderator and the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk has notified Mr. Widmer that he must submit a signed copy to make it official. The Moderator has indicated to Ms. Audley that he will appoint two new Finance Committee members before the October 30, 2019 meeting.

**Minutes of September 25, 2019**

Finance Committee Moved:

- To approve the minutes of September 25, 2019
- To add the revised version of “The ‘Affordable Assessment’: A History and Update” provided by Mike Naughton to the Finance Committee’s [“Funding Education”](#) page on the Town of Montague Website.

Vote:   4   In Favor        0   Opposed        0   Abstained

**Review of 10/2/19 Special Town Meeting**

Discussion of questions and comments we heard from town meeting members related to fieldhouse roof project, capital planning, and what town meeting members can do to understand the context of the decisions brought to them at Town Meetings.

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The Capital Improvement Committee is in the process of developing a building inventory and a capital plan.

Ms. Audley suggested that the Finance Committee increase its efforts to inform the public about the timeline for the FY21 budget development process.

**Progress report on the new DPW facility building project (Mr. Ellis)**

Site development is underway and has gone smoothly so far – no use of contingency. Building is scheduled to arrive in January 2020.

Building committee has contained costs where possible and the project is on track to come in below budget. Building committee will bring a proposal to the Selectboard on 10/28 to use some of the savings to install a fueling station at the new building site and to decommission the current fueling station, which is located at the transfer station. This was cut during the design phase due to cost; a new estimate based on actual project costs is considerably lower, about 400K. With this feature added, the total cost of the project is anticipated to be +/- \$10 million.

**Report on “Municipal Budgets and Tax Recap” workshop offered by the MA Division of Local Services on Greenfield on 10/3/19 (Ms. Audley)**

The Division of Local Services website: <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/division-of-local-services> provides public access to a wealth of information for municipalities, including data, tools, analysis of interest to this committee. Ms. Audley will note this and add links to relevant tools on the Finance Committee’s webpage.

The DLS recommends that municipalities use Financial Policies, a 5-year financial forecast, and a 5-year capital plan as the foundation for building their annual budgets. Montague has Financial Policies that were adopted in 2014 but may need review, and is working towards having the other components. The Finance Committee will be involved in developing them.

The Director of Assessing has indicated that the FY20 tax classification hearing will be held in conjunction with a Selectboard meeting on 11/4 or 11/18. Finance Committee members are encouraged to attend the hearing. Ms. Olsen offered a brief description of what the Selectboard will be deciding, which includes setting residential and commercial tax rates.

**Montague Finance Committee representation at the annual meeting of the Association of Town Finance Committees, on 10/26/19 at Bridgewater State College**

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Mr. Hanold and Ms. Audley are registered. The committee supported the use of Finance Committee funds to pay the registration and travel costs for the new members to attend as well, if they want to take advantage of this once-a-year learning opportunity.

**Requests for future agendas**

Mr. Ellis asked if the committee would be interested in having the Health Department director; the Town Planner, and the Town Administrator attend a future meeting to describe staffing and other organizational changes that reflect changing approaches to using Town resources. This was tentatively scheduled for the Nov 20 meeting; the Selectboard is expected to consider the staffing changes at their Oct 28 meeting.

**The meeting was adjourned at 7:02PM**

Documents distributed and discussed at this meeting:

- Minutes for 9/25/19
- “The ‘Affordable Assessment’: A History and Update” (Updated)
- Widmer resignation email
- DPW Estimated Project Cashflow and Project Budget Update

**Next Meeting Dates:** 10/30; 11/6; 11/20; 12/4; 12/18