

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

- Finance Committee members present: Jen Audley (chair), Christopher Menegoni, John Hanold, Shauna Wallace and Francina Wisnewski. Greg Garrison and Frederic Bowman were absent.
- Others present: Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen
- The Chair announced that the meeting was 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 available online at: <https://vimeo.com/372639157>.
- Mr. Hanold took minutes during this meeting.

**Minutes of October 16 and October 30, 2019**

Finance Committee Moved:

- To approve the minutes of October 16, 2019 (distributed previously)  
Vote: 4 In favor    0 Opposed    0 Abstained
- Revised minutes of October 30, 2019 were reviewed and approved as submitted  
Vote: 4 In favor    0 Opposed    0 Abstained

**Town Accountant's Report**

This opportunity is regularly provided for recurring news from the Town Accountant.

- The Selectboard met on November 4 in a Tax Classification Hearing to set the tax rates for FY2020 for all classes of property and to determine the Residential Factor for use in establishing Montague's split tax rates. (See minutes for October 30 for discussion of Finance Committee's review of the issues.) Ms. Audley and Mr. Hanold attended the Hearing. The Selectboard approved Tax Rates of \$17.57 (Residential) and \$26.94 (Commercial, Industrial and Personal Property), continuing the 1.30 differential used in prior years. These rates increased 2.5% and 2.8% over those for FY2019 and provide an Excess Taxation Capacity of \$300,000. The Selectboard is interested in having more historical data available for consideration in advance of future years' Tax Classification Hearings.

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**Attendance at Annual Meeting of Assn. Of Town Finance Committees**

Ms. Audley, Wallace and Wisnewski attended this meeting in Bridgewater MA on October 26, and found it educational (particularly for new members), but discussion was heavily oriented to concerns of towns in eastern and central Massachusetts. Hand-outs from workshops are available at <https://www.mma.org/resources/local-aid-and-finance/> on the MMA website. The presentations and materials distributed by the Town Administrator of Northborough and opening remarks by John Roberston of the MMA were noted as being particularly insightful.

Copies of a summary analysis by the MA Taxpayers Foundation of the state's position at the end of FY2019 that was provided at the ATFC meeting were distributed.

**FY2021 Budget Cycle Calendar and FinComm Inputs**

The Committee discussed the first draft of the schedule, which will be fleshed out in future weeks. Ms. Olsen will send a copy of the FY20 Budget File to new members to enable them to see what is involved in the hearing and deliberation process.

Ms. Audley will ask the Capital Improvements Committee for an overview of the projects they will be reviewing, and will seek an organization chart of town departments.

Budget input sheets for Finance Committee and Reserve Fund departments were distributed and possible revisions for FY2021 were discussed. Recommendations for revisions to these budgets will be discussed further at a future meeting.

Clerical support of our meetings was discussed briefly, and various members volunteered to look into alternate approaches. Mr. Hanold observed that other committees in Montague rotate the responsibility or rely on staff assistance.

**Agenda for November 20 and Beyond**

On November 20 we will hear from Board of Health, Planning and Selectboard department heads about changes they anticipate, in advance of their submission of budget requests in late December. The next milestones are preparation of the Revenue Forecast by Mr. Ellis and Ms. Olsen and preparation of the budget instructions by Mr. Ellis, expected by December 4.

**Other Matters**

Francia Wisnewski has been appointed to the committee by the moderator, and has attended as an incumbent member, but cannot vote until she is sworn in to fill the seat Richard Widmer notified us on October 11 that he wished to vacate. As of November 6 there has been no

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response to reminders from Ms. Audley, Moderator Chris Collins or the Town Clerk that a signed resignation letter from Mr. Widmer is required. Ms. Audley will follow up.

**The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 PM**

Documents distributed and discussed at this meeting:

- Minutes for 10/16/19 and 10/30/19
- FY19 Tax Rate Recapitulation and MTA Analysis
- FY20 Levy Limit Worksheet (via Karen Tonelli)
- Town of Montague FY21 Budget Development Timeline (draft: 10/30)
- "Budget Input sheets for Departments 131 & 132 (Finance Committee & Reserve Fund)

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