

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM, 1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2020

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Meeting was opened by the Chair at 6:00 PM in the Upstairs Meeting Room

- **Finance Committee members present:** Jen Audley, Fred Bowman, Greg Garrison, John Hanold, Chris Menegoni, Shauna Wallace, and Francia Wisnewski.
- **Others present:** Town Administrator Steve Ellis and Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen
- 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.

**Minutes**

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of December 11, 2019.

Vote: 7 In Favor            0 Opposed            0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of January 8, 2020.

Vote: 7 In Favor            0 Opposed            0 Abstained

Recommendations for allocating \$800,000 recently released to Overlay Surplus have been moved to Finance Committee's January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 meeting.

**Town Administrator's Report**

Mr. Ellis reports that we were successful in the issue of our bonds. We bonded the sum of \$9.8 million in total. This includes \$6M for the DPW and refunding of 2007 USDA loans and 2009 bonds associated with public safety complex. The true interest cost came out at 2.237%, which compared to last year is a full percentage decrease. This re-bonding will result in several hundred thousand dollars of savings over the life of the refunded issues. The process also decreased the term of the USDA bonds by 3 years (to conclude in 2038.)

We received confirmation that our representatives to the school district regionalization committee are actively participating. Mike Naughton updated Mr. Ellis that two meetings have occurred mainly to set up meeting structure and organization. Our representatives from Gill and Montague seem to be working well and they have invited Erving to join as Erving has expressed interest in knowing how things progress. Two other representatives from Montague, Lynn Reynolds and Heather Katsoulis, also are in attendance at these meetings.

We have been approached with the possibility of having a budget priority conversation with Representative Natalie Blais or Jo Comerford or their staff. Other suggested participants are the Chairs or designees of the Finance Committee and Selectboard. Mr. Ellis suggested the meeting occur on either February 4<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> 2020 at 6PM.

Mr. Ellis also wishes to notify the public that on February 4<sup>th</sup> at the Shea Theater there will be a design public hearing focused on the General Pierce Bridge Reconstruction

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Project. There had been a misreport by the Greenfield Recorder that this bridge was expected to be completed at the end of calendar year 2020 when in fact it is supposed to be a multi-year project that significantly impacts travel into and out of our community. If you would like to hear the story from Mass D.O.T. architects, design, and implementation teams, the doors open at 5:30PM. MCTV will also be collaborating with the Shea Theater to broadcast this event.

Special town meeting will be March 5<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm at the Turners Falls High School Auditorium. The warrant is open through January 30<sup>th</sup> until 10am for new articles. We are expecting to see many financial articles such as amended budgets from Dispatch and the WPCF. A fully developed agenda will be available as soon as possible.

### **Town Accountant's Report**

No report this week.

### **Fiscal Year 2021 Budget**

An initial budget hearing schedule has been prepared by Jen Audley. The Finance Committee plans on voting on the special meeting articles on February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Audley notes that last year we held department hearings and then voted on them the following week. This year we are expecting to have fewer hearings and we should expect to hear from and vote on department budgets the week they are scheduled.

Pre-Hearing questions for future scheduled meetings discussed were for

- **January 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020** – Questions for Schedule I Elected officials and Schedule II Appointed officials have been finalized.
- **January 29<sup>th</sup> 2020** - Planning, ZBA, Medic, Airport and the DPW.
- **February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020** - Public Safety (Police, Dispatch, Building Inspector, Sealer of Weights, Emergency Management, Animal Control, Forest Warden, Tree Warden) and Special Town Articles
- **February 12<sup>th</sup> 2020** – Board of Health and WPCF
- **February 26<sup>th</sup> 2020** – Schools (Both School districts will be present)
- **March 4<sup>th</sup> 2020** – Human Services (Council on Aging, Veterans, Libraries, Parks & Recreation, Historical Commission, and Memorials)
- **March 11<sup>th</sup> 2020** – Public Building Utilities, Intergovernmental, Employee Benefits, Insurance, and Colle Building.

### **Annual Budget Report for FY2021**

The re-format of the FY20 Annual Budget Report was received well by the public, therefore our report format for this year will remain very similar. John Hanold requests that the commentary on the articles be more condensed. We will attempt to coordinate with the CIC on commentary if available to consolidate information. The report will include revenue highlights and things worthy of mention even if they aren't directly related to this year's budget.

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Jen Audley would like to write a newspaper article for the Montague Reporter and our town Website outlining our Finance Committee review schedule and process to give the public an idea of how to come to meetings to be engaged. She would be writing this as herself and not as a representative of the Finance Committee.

**Preliminary Review of FY21 Schedules I& II**

The only changes in these budgets are those that were pre-negotiated in prior years, cost-of-living-adjustments for full-time employees, and changes to meet the new minimum wage.

**Finance Committee Liaison to DPW Building Committee**

Mr. Hanold would like the support of the Finance Committee to be a regular attendee to the DPW Building Committee as a non-voting member. In the past there has not been a Finance Committee liaison on large projects and having a member present should allow for better coordination of information between large projects and the Finance Committee.

Finance Committee Moved:

To endorse John Hanold to attend the DPW Building Committee as a non-voting member.

Vote: 7 In Favor      0 Opposed      0 Abstained

**Requests for Future Agendas**

Jen Audley would like the Finance Committee to compile a list of priorities to raise to our legislators and choose a delegate prior to the meeting. Francina Wisnewski would like to attend to listen to the meeting.

**Topics not anticipated within in the 48 hour posting requirements –**

**Meeting adjourned at 7:38 PM**

**List of Documents and Exhibits:**

- Minutes of December 11, 2019
- Minutes of January 8, 2020
- Proposed Draft of Questions for Budget Hearings
- Proposed FY2021 Budget Schedule.

Respectfully submitted by Shauna Wallace