

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM, 1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2020
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- The Chair opened the meeting at 6:03 PM in the Upstairs Meeting Room
- **Finance Committee members present:** Jen Audley, Fred Bowman, John Hanold, Chris Menegoni, Shauna Wallace, and Francia Wisnewski. Greg Garrison was absent.
- **Selectboard members present:** Chris Boutwell, Rich Kuklewicz and Michael Nelson
- **Others present:** Town Administrator Steve Ellis, Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen, Dispatch Manager Marsha Odle and Police Chief Chris Williams
- 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 available at: <https://vimeo.com/390010418> (part 1) and <https://vimeo.com/389819581> (part 2)

Discussion: FY21 Annual Budget Requests Review and special article requests for STM

212 Dispatch

Marsha Odle explained the special article request to appropriate an additional \$12,000 for the FY2020 Dispatch budget. Two full-time positions became vacant back to back. One replacement is now fully trained, but the second has only been working for 3 weeks. The training time varies by individual, and is difficult to predict. While a new employee is training, the shifts are covered through a combination of overtime and the use of per-diems. Marsha Odle said that the \$12,000 amount would cover the worst case scenario to cover wages for the remainder of FY20.

The Finance Committee and Selectboard acknowledged that the nature of the job is unpredictable as the stress of the position is intense. It requires a level of multi-tasking skills and emotional resolve that is very high. Steve Ellis said that, during exit interviews, uncompetitive wages have not been raised as the cause for leaving.

211 Police

Chief Williams elaborated on the written responses he'd provided and answered additional questions.

Vehicles: A current vehicle inventory was provided. The new hybrid cruiser is being outfitted and should be in service later this month. The Chief comments we are in good shape in regards to our vehicle fleet and also mentioned obtaining another hybrid marked cruiser in FY21. He will assess the performance of our current hybrid before making this purchase.

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When vehicles are purchased they are utilized as line cruisers then recycled down to detective, SRO, or administrative use vehicles before they are finally traded in. Determining which vehicle is ready to be traded in is dependent on mileage and how much money has been put into the vehicle over its lifetime for repairs. He further commented that the reason the town needs more cruisers than there are officers on duty at a time is due to the fact that they rotate in their schedules and it is better to have a slightly larger number of cruisers so that if something happens to one of them there would be no decrease in service to the town. Chief Williams added that cruisers accrue approximately 27,000 miles per year.

School Resource Officers (SRO's): Chief Williams has reviewed the agreements with the Franklin County Tech School (FCTS) as well as the Gill-Montague Regional School District (GMRSD). The FCTS has agreed to a reimbursement equivalent to 100% of the lowest paid officer. GMRSD pays a flat fee of \$50,250 per year. The MOU with FCTS is in year 2 of a 3-year cycle; the MOU with the GMRSD does not have an end date. He informs us that he meets every year with the school districts to discuss what the SROs are doing and how they are working out, but there is no written evaluation. The annual meeting with the GMRSD superintendent and TFHS principal is next week.

Chief Williams noted that because the SROs accrue compensatory time from working a five-day week during the school year and also have five weeks of vacation time to use, they typically do not work during school vacations.

John Hanold and others expressed the opinion that when the time comes for the agreements to be renegotiated, the school districts should be encouraged to pay more of the actual cost of having two senior officers on campus instead of on patrol in the community. Chief Williams and others note that having a more experienced officer in the school is beneficial. Several other benefits were articulated, including:

- Officers assigned to schools help control smaller situations that may arise before they become a crisis.
- Having officers present makes a lasting positive image of law enforcement in the minds of youth.
- Outreach from SROs facilitates faster response from the court and probation systems than when initiated by the schools.
- Officers assigned to schools provide information about youth and families that help others on the force serve more effectively.
- SROs have increased the schools' level of preparedness for emergencies and would be onsite should an incident occur
- Training the SROs receive has a positive effect on the whole police force as they all benefit from training received.

John Hanold commented that the SROs seem to be performing unique services that would otherwise not be provided by the school system.

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Francia Wisniewski requested more information about the trainings the SROs receive. Jen Audley asked for the Police Department to work with the schools to provide information addressing resident questions about the SROs' duties, training, and the impact of their presence in the schools on students, staff, and public safety. She suggested looking at whether there had been a change in the frequency of the schools calling the police department since the implementation of the SROs.

Rich Kuklewicz comments that the state has an unfunded mandate requiring SROs in schools, and that the schools directly requested the SROs from the police department.

Discretionary fund. There will not be a request this year, but there are still some funds available from prior appropriations. Chief Williams stated that the remaining funds are to be used for the installation of 22 new handheld radios, 4 base units, and 10 cruiser radios. Through an agreement with FRCOG the state agreed to pay for the equipment and the towns would pay for the installation.

Chief Williams also reviewed the Special Article request to add a \$3,000 annual stipend for the Police IT Administrator to Schedule II, Wages for Appointed Officials. The Lieutenant has performed IT duties for the department that are not typically within the scope of a lieutenant's job description. Since it is not expected that a future Lieutenant will have these skills, those duties do not belong in the Lieutenant job description.

As part of a new contract already approved by the Selectboard, Lieutenant Bonnett, upon approval by Town Meeting, will receive an annual stipend of \$3,000 for his IT work. Steve Ellis and Chief Williams both agreed it would be very difficult and expensive to source a specialized IT professional for the police department outside of the current arrangement. It would be expensive because an outside source would cost a lot more, and more difficult because that source would need to undergo extensive background checks in order to deal with sensitive information. The police department has always handled its own IT and IT equipment needs. This funding for the FY20 STM article will come from the existing budget so no additional funds would need to be appropriated.

Budgets for 241 Building Inspector, 244 Sealer of Weights, 291 Emergency Management, 292 Animal Control, 294 Forest Warden, 299 Tree Warden were reviewed with no additional discussion.

March 5, 2020 Special Town Meeting Article Recommendations

Article #1 would add a \$3,000 annual stipend for the Police IT Specialist to Schedule II, wages for appointed officials.

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Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #1.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectboard Moved:

To recommend Article #1.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #2 would rescind Article #21 of the May 5, 2018 Annual Town Meeting, which authorized \$510,000 for the installation of a solar array at the WPCF. The project is no longer deemed to be financially advantageous.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #2.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectboard Moved:

To recommend Article #2.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #3 would appropriate \$19,000 for 20 ADA compliant voting booths.

Finance Committee Moved:

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

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectboard Moved:

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

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #4 would appropriate an additional \$12,000 for the FY2020 Dispatch budget.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #4, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

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Selectboard Moved:

To recommend Article #4, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #5 would appropriate \$1,348 for prior year bills of the WPCF department.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #5, to be funded from Sewer Retained Earnings.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectboard Moved:

To recommend Article #5, to be funded from Sewer Retained Earnings.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #6 would appropriate an additional \$130,000 for the FY2020 WPCF budget.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #6, to be funded from Sewer Retained Earnings.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectboard Moved:

To recommend Article #6, to be funded from Sewer Retained Earnings.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #7 would appropriate \$75,000 for the removal and disposal of a failed oil tank and its vault and the purchase and installation of new above ground oil tanks at the WPCF.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #7, to be funded from the WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectboard Moved:

To recommend Article #7, to be funded from the WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

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Article #8 would appropriate \$800,000 for the Town Capital Stabilization Fund.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #8, to be funded from Overlay Surplus.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectboard Moved:

To recommend Article #8, to be funded from Overlay Surplus.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

The Finance Committee decided to vote on Articles 9-12 as a consent agenda

Article #9 would create a new Cannabis Impact Fee Stabilization Fund.

Article #10 would allow the town to put certain receipts directly into a specified stabilization fund.

Article #11 would allow the town to direct 100% of all retail sales tax from sales of cannabis to the Town Capital Stabilization Fund.

Article #12 would allow the town to direct 100% of all impact fees from the host agreements for cannabis facilities to the Cannabis Impact Fee Stabilization Fund.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Articles #9-12.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectboard Moved:

To recommend Articles #9-12.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Minutes

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of January 22, 2020.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectboard Moved:

To approve the minutes of January 22, 2020.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of January 29, 2020.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

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Selectboard Moved:

To approve the minutes of January 29, 2020.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Discussion: Goals and questions for WPCF (February 12, 2020)

In addition to responses for the questions already submitted by John Hanold, the committee hopes the representatives from the WPCF will provide information on the current status of the plant and prospects for the future. Also whether their budget request for FY21 is still accurate or what changes might be needed.

Town Accountant's report

Carolyn Olsen noted that the current budget file shows a deficit and asked that everyone think about how they would recommend balancing the budget.

Carolyn Olsen asked that if anyone had any questions not answered in the Special Town Meeting background, they let her know as soon as possible so she could make sure they were addressed.

The budget calendar has been modified. The final Revenue estimates, New Growth and Affordable Assessment will move to February 26th to allow enough time for the GMRSD School Committee to post their meeting materials prior to their final budget vote.

Jen Audley asked that everyone review the estimated revenues so that we can address questions about them at next week's meeting.

Town Administrator's report

The Montague wood bank has 20 half-cord lots available through a program intended to help low income and elderly residents. If you are interested in obtaining some wood, contact Roberta Potter at the Senior Center.

The search for a new WPCF Superintendent has identified two new candidates.

Report on February 3rd meeting with local legislators about FY21 state budget priorities

Steve Ellis reported that the meeting with our local legislators was successful and they seemed particularly attentive to the needs of Montague. The meeting left attendees feeling like our legislators have a deep appreciation and respect for our town.

No requests for future agendas.

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Topics not anticipated within the 48 hour posting requirements - none

Upcoming Finance Committee Meeting Dates February 12, 26; March 4, 11, 18, 25

Meeting was adjourned at 8:10PM

List of Documents and Exhibits:

- Minutes of January 22, 2020
- Minutes of January 29, 2020
- Requests, narratives, and Q & A for departments on agenda
- March 5, 2020 Special Town Meeting Warrant and draft motions
- Police Department Vehicle Inventory
- Chief Chris Williams written responses to FinCom questions
- Memo on Montague priorities for FY21 MA budget (given to Representative Blais and Senator Comerford)

Respectfully submitted by Shauna Wallace