

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE, BOARD OF HEALTH AND SELECTBOARD
MEETING MINUTES
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM, 1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2020

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6:00 #1 Jen Audley, Finance committee chair opened the meeting

Finance Committee members present: Jen Audley, Fred Bowman, John Hanold, Shauna Wallace, and Francia Wisnewski.

Finance Committee members absent: Greg Garrison and Chris Menegoni

Selectboard members present: Chris Boutwell and Michael Nelson

Selectboard members absent: Rich Kuklewicz

Board of Health present Chris Boutwell and Michael Nelson

Board of Health absent Al Cummings

Others present: Town Administrator Steve Ellis, Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen, Director of Health Daniel Wasiuk, WPCF Consulting Superintendent Robert Trombley

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 can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/391520613>

6:01 #2 Introductions

6:05 #3 Discussion: FY21 Annual Budget Requests

511 Board of Health Daniel Wasiuk (Director of Health Department) presenting

The Board of Health staffing consists of a full time director (Daniel Wasiuk), a full time clerk and a nurse contracted for 4 hours a week. The Director is doing the health inspections (no separate position of Health Inspector). The Chair of the Board of Health (Al Cummings) is doing some office work, and accompanying the Director on some health inspections (housing/nuisance complaints). It was noted that this is a change for our town's Health Department. Small towns with no Health Department often rely on Board of Health members this way. Michael Nelson cautioned that in the future, they may need to add back a part-time health inspector.

Town Nurse - Has been on staff a few weeks. Is contracted for 4 hours a week. Currently has office hours on Wednesday from 1-5pm. Primary responsibility is state mandated disease management (investigate and follow-up with cases of infectious disease). Hours and availability will vary according to need/demand.

Questions:

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Jen Audley asked about the nurse's availability to work extra hours if needed.

Daniel Wasiuk answered: The nurse is employed by Greenfield, but has time on Wednesday afternoons, Fridays and weekends.

John Hanold asked if there are concerns about the new coronavirus (12 in US, 2 in MA).

Daniel Wasiuk answered: The WHO and the CDC are working on data collection and are encouraging good health practices.

Jen Audley asked about collaboration and coordination with MA DPH and other Boards of Health.

Daniel Wasiuk answered: He had a meeting last week and there is a meeting next week, predominantly about emergency management.

Francia Wisnewski asked why Greenfield stopped sharing the Community Health Nurse.

Daniel Wasiuk answered: Former Greenfield Mayor Martin withdrew from the agreement to have their nurse perform disease management services for other towns in November. Discussions have not been had with the new Mayor. Francia encouraged Daniel to pursue conversations about reestablishing the collaboration.

Francia Wisnewski asked about collaboration with the school district.

Francia Wisnewski asked "are you [the town nurse] open to the public?"

Daniel Wasiuk explained: When mandated disease surveillance is low, there is extra time [to assist the public].

Francia Wisnewski spoke of the importance of building up the nurse position to support our town's elderly and families with children.

Fred Bowman spoke about the changing town demographics and the possibility of the town needing a gerontology nurse. He also suggested that at some point the Health Department might survey the community about local needs.

6:33 661-440 Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF)

WPCF Consulting Superintendent Robert Trombley presented the committee with a maintenance issue list compiled by him and the staff. He said some of the issues on the list had already been addressed.

John Hanold asked what significant work has been recently completed. Robert Trombley listed several recent project including:

- Upgraded controllers at the Lake Pleasant pump station- completed
- Upgraded controllers at the Tech school - in process

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- Replaced the spare drive on the secondary clarifier
- Replaced the sludge garage door
- Purchased and in process of replacing two new screens on the Fournier Rotary Press

Unplanned expenses ran about \$93,000 this year. Steve Ellis explained that the plant is near the end of its life expectancy with a decades old (some parts 50 years old or more) collection system. He stated that it is an expensive operation even when it works properly, but that they are constantly tackling ongoing developing failures. Robert Trombley added that the staff is now maintenance project oriented. He elaborated on the changing dynamics of the waste being treated, explained that the facility was built to handle a certain composition of waste that is no longer present due in large part to the closing of the Strathmore paper mill, making the process more difficult to manage. The lack of paper fiber in the waste makes it more difficult for the Fournier Press to efficiently or completely dewater the sludge, to reduce the water content low enough to be able to ship it out as “cakes”.

Jen Audley asked if there were any changes to the budget that would need to be made at this time. Robert Trombley explained that there is potential for a \$10,000 to \$30,000 drop over four years in the electric use when changes are made to the aeration tank (smaller bubbles means more surface area for the organisms, which would result in a more efficient system). Robert Trombley feels this is a realistic budget. The budget represents a 5-6% increase. This would reflect a 2% sewer user rate increase, and if the special articles pass the sewer user rate will go up 4.75%.

Francia Wisnewski asked if weather has an impact on sewage treatment.

Robert Trombley answered: Yes. We have inflow infiltration, which is when clean water (rain and snow melt) gets into the system through cracks and broken pipes. This adds to the volume of sewage which means more chemicals are needed to be used to treat the sewage. This also means more pumping since the primary treatment plant is lower than the secondary treatment plant. The plant currently receives in between 800,000 and 900,000 gallons of sewage a day.

This led Steve Ellis to bring up line item 5796, which is the charge from Erving for treating sewage from Millers Falls in excess of certain limits. He reported that although the town replaced sections of pipe that absolutely needed to be replaced, during the January melt, as the water table increased, they still found plenty of clear water running through the system. One part of the solution in Millers may be educating the public about rectifying outdated plumbing, such as having a basement sump pump attached to the sewer line. The second part of the solution is to do both manual and camera observation of the pipes.

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John Hanold asked: Will the addition of a Laborer and Administrative Assistant in FY21 meet requirements of Mass DEP?

Robert Trombley answered: An operator left, and internal staff movement has led to a laborer position as well as the Superintendent position being open. Mr. Trombley also feels that office help will be needed, but that should wait until the new Superintendent is hired.

Jen Audley asked: What is the status of the composting study funded with a special article?:

Robert Trombley answered: There is still interest in the composting but it is currently on hold while other issues are addressed.

7:11 #4 Minutes Approval

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of February 5, 2020.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectboard Moved:

To approve the minutes of February 5, 2020.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

7:13 #5 Town Administrator's report

Steve Ellis reported that:

- He and Robert Trombley met with the Erving Town Administrator and a member of the Erving Selectboard to discuss the Millers Falls Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) issue. Erving understands and appreciates that the town of Montague is taking the issue seriously and has put significant money into trying to rectify the problem. Erving has not yet settled on its overage charge to Montague.
- The Selectboard approved the Special Town Meeting warrant as discussed last week.
- A proposal was received today for the building assessments for Hillcrest and the GMRSD administration building. The cost would be \$7,500 per building. The Capital Improvements Committee voted unanimously to recommend funding this, even though it is not a capital project.

7:21 #6 Town Accountant's report

Carolyn Olsen has given the finance committee updated revenue estimates.

7:22 #7 Discussion FY21 Revenue estimates

Jen Audley - At our next meeting we will lock in revenue estimates for next year, in order to give

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the GMRSD a firm number for their affordable assessment. We are using the Governor's budget for the state aid estimate.

The video recording by MCTV ends here

8 Discussion: Goals and questions for GMRSD and FCTS (February 26, 2020)

Jen Audley asked committee members to send her any budget-related questions they wanted the Schools to respond to.

#9 Finance Committee Contribution to FY2019 Annual Town Report

Jen Audley shared a draft of a report on the Finance Committee's activities from Jan-Dec 2019, for inclusion in the Annual Report of the Town of Montague. Committee members were asked to send suggestions for changes soon, as the deadline is Feb 20.

#10 Requests for future agendas none

#11 Topics not anticipated within the 48 hour posting requirements none

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

#12 Adjournment

List of Documents and Exhibits:

- Minutes of February 5, 2020
- Requests, narratives, and Q & A for departments on agenda
- WPCF maintenance needs list presented by Mr. Trombley
- Audley draft of Finance Committee section of Annual Report (2019)

Respectfully submitted by David Harmon