

SELECTBOARD AND FINANCE COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM, 1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 2020  
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The Chair opened the meeting

**#1** Meeting was opened at 6:06 PM in the in Upstairs Meeting Room

Roll-Call

- **Finance Committee members participating remotely:** Jen Audley, Fred Bowman, Greg Garrison, John Hanold, and Francina Wisnewski.
- **Finance Committee members absent:** Chris Menegoni
- **Selectboard members participating remotely:** Rich Kuklewicz. Chris Boutwell arrived at 6:52 PM.
- **Selectboard members absent:** Michael Nelson
- **Others participating remotely:** Town Administrator Steve Ellis, Executive Assistant Wendy Bogusz, and Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen
- The Chair announced that the meeting is being recorded by the Town of Montague via Zoom and asked if anyone else was recording the meeting. No one else was recording the meeting. Remote participation for both members and the public was provided by Zoom. The link to the Zoom recording is <https://vimeo.com/421091369>.

**#2 Minutes**

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of May 6, 2020.

Vote: Audley –Aye, Bowman –Aye, Garrison –Aye, Hanold –Aye, Wisnewski- Aye

**#3 Town Administrator's Update**

Steve Ellis said the most important thing is to be able to hold an Annual Town Meeting. On Tuesday, **May 26**, the Selectboard and Board of Health **will** consider holding the meeting at a parking lot at the Turners Falls High School. Steve Ellis believes this is the best option of the 4 considered. Sanitation processes were reviewed. KN95 masks and bottled water will be provided to all attendees. A local professional will handle the sound system. Once approved, a handout with location photos and instructions will be distributed to Town Meeting Members.

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The Selectboard approved a submission for consulting support and development from the Collins Center through a DLS Community Compact grant. They would assist us with the development of a 5 year financial forecast for the Town, which would include multiple scenarios for the FY22 budget. Other components are reviewing our present financial policies and targeted training in some categories like sewer rate setting.

The DPW facility completion is now expected to be mid-August.

**#4 Town Accountant's Update**

Carolyn Olsen has been working on what a one-twelfth budget might look like, but is waiting for information from the Division of Local Services. The difficulties of this were discussed. Steve Ellis reiterated that there are huge opportunity costs of a one-twelfth budget as it will require staff to constantly revisit operational tasks.

**#5 Review Guidance for municipalities from MA Division of Local Services:**

The link to the guidance provided to date from DLS is <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-resources-and-guidance-for-municipal-officials>. The overview does not contain a great deal of information for items relative to the Finance Committee.

**#6 Finalize Finance Committee's Report to Town Meeting for FY 2021**

The motions section of the report was reorganized to segregate articles to be voted at the Annual Town Meeting and those deferred until later. Members were asked for any additional input.

No further changes were suggested.

The possible methodologies to allow questions on the warrant articles were discussed at some length. Concerns included:

- The report does not include the suggestion that it would be helpful for town meeting members to send questions ahead of time to enable either responses ahead of town meeting or a list of questions and answers to be available at town meeting.
- This invited the topic of pre-town meetings. Some meeting participants who had experience with past pre-town meetings felt that, since generally any question asked at a pre-town meeting was also asked again at the actual town meeting, it was not an effective use of time.

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- Rich Kuklewicz suggested, to facilitate people being able to ask questions, the option of having Town Meeting members text their questions to a designated person during the meeting.
- Francia Wisnewski suggested that if Town Meeting Members voted by ballot, the voting and discussion could be separated. Carolyn Olsen said that she had investigated that option and learned that it was not allowed.
- Jen Audley would like to be able to differentiate between those questions that a member would be satisfied with having answered before Town Meeting, and those that someone wants to ask at Town Meeting for all to hear.

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve Finance Committee Report to Town Meeting as presented

Vote: Audley –Aye, Bowman –Aye, Garrison –Aye, Hanold –Aye, Wisnewski- Aye

## **#7 Future Meeting dates, requests for future agendas**

Jen Audley doesn't think we need a regular meeting before the Annual Town Meeting, but suggested members let the Selectboard know their availability for potential pre-town meetings. John Hanold wants to make sure town meeting members have the opportunity to ask questions, so his name and phone number can be made available to answer people's questions.

Chris Boutwell arrived at 6:52 PM. The Selectboard meeting was called to order.

Roll-Call

**Selectboard members participating remotely:** Rich Kuklewicz. Chris Boutwell arrived at 6:52 PM.

At this point the earlier discussion about the best way to provide answers to questions was resumed.

- Rich Kuklewicz generally thinks that Town Meeting is the place to ask questions.
- Steve Ellis said we don't have to reinvent the Town Meeting process. We can investigate having people send questions directly to the Moderator, which seems like a good innovation. The Finance Committee Report covers most issues very well. This is the easiest and best

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articulated message we've ever presented to Town Meeting. Fred Bowman agreed to just have people come to Town Meeting and ask questions rather than complicating things unnecessarily.

- Jen Audley noted the report says we welcome comments and questions, without giving directions **for how** to do so.
- Francia Wisnewski said that if you're asking for ideas, but they can't be implemented **because of lack of capacity**, she understands, but **wants to push a bit harder and even more so to think out of the box as during this pandemic we are not doing business as usual.**
- Chris Boutwell noted that when we had pre-town meetings, people would ask questions and get answers. And a different person would ask the same questions again at the annual. Whatever we do, there will be questions at the annual town meeting.
- Jen Audley is afraid people will feel constrained to not ask questions if there is perceived pressure to keep the Town Meeting short and wants to make sure **that Town Meeting Members are able to come the meeting feeling prepared to** make informed decisions.
- Rich Kuklewicz suggested we have a joint Selectboard and Finance Committee meeting on Wednesday, June 10<sup>th</sup> and publicize it in the Town Meeting packet. Rich Kuklewicz thinks a call-in option would be easier to manage, but that a Zoom meeting was also a possibility. This met with general approval. Rich Kuklewicz and Jen Audley will co-chair the meeting and work out an agenda.

**The discussion returned to the issue of future meetings.**

Jen Audley said the Finance Committee doesn't normally meet often **over** the summer, but we may need to this year. Meetings are not likely to be more than twice a month.

Jen Audley will schedule a meeting before 6/30 in case we aren't able to pass a budget before then. John Hanold suggested also scheduling a meeting before 7/15 to take care of end-of year business and any necessary transfers

Francia Wisnewski suggested including information about the 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget in the packet to Town Meeting members, to encourage them to attend Town Meeting.

**#8 Topics not anticipated within the 48 hour posting requirements - none**

**#9 Motion to Adjourn**

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Finance Committee Moved:

To adjourn at 7:13 PM.

Vote: Audley –Aye, Bowman –Aye, Garrison –Aye, Hanold –Aye, Menegoni -Aye

Selectboard Moved:

To adjourn at 7:13PM.

Vote: Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

**Upcoming Finance Committee Meeting Dates** June 10<sup>th</sup> joint meeting with Selectboard to address questions about the Town Meeting warrant.

Respectfully submitted by Carolyn Olsen

**List of Documents and Exhibits:**

- Minutes of May 6, 2020
- Draft of FY21 Report to Town Meeting (includes warrant articles, background, and recommendations)