

MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE
Final Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 5, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded: <https://vimeo.com/662827394>

PRESENT: Jen Audley, Chair; Greg Garrison, Vice-Chair; Fred Bowman, John Hanold, Francia Wisniewski, Jennifer Waryas and Christopher Menegoni, members; Betty Lou Mallet, Scribe.

OTHERS PRESENT: Carolyn Olsen, Town Accountant; Steve Ellis, Town Administrator, Ariel Elan, resident (arrived at 6:45 p.m.)

1. The meeting was called to order by Chair, Jen Audley. All members present. The meeting is being recorded by Carolyn Olsen, Town Accountant as well as aired on MCTV.
2. **Approval of the Minutes of December 15, 2021 as well as check-in on minutes revision process** – The members received and reviewed the draft minutes of December 15, 2021. There were no questions. **On a motion by JH and seconded by GG, the minutes were approved as written. JH, aye; GG, aye; FB, aye; JW, aye; FW, aye; CM, aye; JA, aye.** JA reminded the members about the process of the revisions and the current method of receiving them as each revision or suggestion was made. JH suggested in order to reduce confusion among the FinCom members as well as make the process easier for the Scribe, take all suggested revisions and send out the revised draft minutes one time for the members to vote. BettyLou Mallet stated she will now create the draft minutes, send to the members for their review, ask for revisions to be sent back in a specific time frame and then send out the revised minutes two days prior to the meeting for vote.
3. **Updates from Town Administrator and Town Accountant – Topics anticipated include the timeline for the March 3, 2022 Special Town Meeting.**

Steve Ellis thanked the FinCom for participating in Monday night's Selectboard meeting. The second round of meetings regarding the budget requests have begun. The Selectboard will be in a position to take votes at their January 24th meeting and deliver the budget on both requested personnel changes and the budget in general to the FinCom for their January 26th meeting.

Steve presented on the screen, the articles for the March 3rd Special Town Meeting. This meeting will likely be via Zoom and Suzor IT will assist with technical issues. The voting will be utilized within the Zoom platform. The items highlighted in the spreadsheet shown presented both capital and non-capital funds categories; the 5th Street Bridge Contingency Funds (Selectboard), RTV with plow and salt spreader (WPCF), Hillcrest Floor Covering Repair/Replacement (GMRSD), Unity Park Security Camera System and Riding Lawn Mower (Parks and Recreation), Carnegie Parking Lot/Drainage (Library) and the Repair of the Burnham Street Cemetery Retaining Wall (Cemetery Commission).

JA asked for background information on the non-capital articles. She also asked if some could be covered from the library's request to fund unanticipated engineering expenses that were established at the last Annual Town Meeting rather than being covered otherwise at the Special Town Meeting. Although

Steve will bring that before the Selectboard, he hesitates due to the potential need for that appropriation for other projects.

JA stated the FinCom will need time to discuss the non-capital items and will schedule that discussion before the warrant is finalized. FW questioned the cameras at Unity Park and their installation. Steve will ask Jon Dobosz to come and speak with the FinCom about the installation and maintenance of the cameras.

JH also feels a brief description will be quite helpful for the non-capital items. Scheduling one meeting to discuss and vote on them would be adequate.

Steve mentioned the 5th Street Bridge project as well as items at the WPCF with respect to the high and volatile costs in the steel market. JW wondered if a significant amount of research has gone into the steel market and is concerned about making quick decisions in purchasing it. Steve stated he is relying on information he is receiving about future investments by the State and Federal Government. He mentioned that the screw pumps have been on a list for the WPCF for many months and if they fail, it will be catastrophic.

GG also mentioned that the CIC had looked at both requests for the 5th Street Bridge and WPCF and found that there is a very narrow manufacturing market for the steel needed and the Town has to rely on those vendors and their marketplace.

JH asked if these two items could be advanced from the Annual Town Meeting to the Special Town Meeting in order to avoid such escalation in steel pricing. Steve Ellis will consider this in discussions with the Selectboard.

Carolyn Olsen did not have any information to add for the Town Accountant updates.

4. Discussion of FY23 Budget Development Process

JA shared a calendar on the screen for the members to review. This calendar showed the FY23 Budget Schedule and the target dates to be used in order to prepare for the Annual Town Meeting on May 7, 2022. JA asked the members what they felt were priorities for discussion and what items could be finalized pretty quickly. She asks the members to pay attention to the Selectboard's deliberations in the next month whether via attending the meetings, watching the recordings, reading in the newspaper or speaking to a Selectboard member.

The Selectboard has invited the FCTS on February 28th for their presentation of their budget and the GMRSD's date is tentatively January 31 for their presentation.

GG stated the items of interest to him are the Personnel issues that are popping up unexpectedly. He also feels items of importance are the WPCF with their costly issues which raise a red flag and finally, he'd like to hear from the Airport and receive an update on their status.

JH does not feel the need to meet with the Assessors, Treasurer or police and that their requests could actually be handled through questions/answers via email. He feels that he could just ask questions to these departments and that his main concerns were the Selectboard and Planning budgets and how they integrate and how the clerk's space needs will be met. He would prefer that the additional summer grounds maintenance be coordinated through the DPW.

FB concurs with JH on the DPW and Parks/Recreation and that it is actually a personnel issue and perhaps hire full-time individuals who can work between both the DPW and Parks/Recreation departments.

FW agrees with most of the ideas discussed and how many can be handled through emails. She would like to hear more on the BOH and how the pandemic has changed that department. She also appreciated how the budget narratives this year were more comprehensive and found that very helpful.

JA said it is important for the FinCom to meet the new department heads and take interest in their positions and what they offer to the Town. She will keep this in mind for perhaps a future meeting agenda item.

JW mentioned that when considering adding personnel, the organizational chart and roles and responsibilities needs to be looked at from a holistic perspective (lens). She is also interested in the special article request from the BOH in need of a vehicle as well as the assessors' software being upgraded. These items could be handled via email.

CM also agrees with most of the items discussed tonight. He'd like further discussion on the BOH especially with the vehicle request as well as the WPCF, IT and Library.

JA would like to spend time looking at the revenue side at one of the upcoming meetings. CO stated the Selectboard will have updated information on revenue at their January 26th meeting.

5. **Agenda requests and topics for upcoming meetings** – For the next meeting, the FinCom was asked to review the Reserve Fund Policy and to discuss scheduling selected department heads for appearances. The next meeting date is Wednesday, January 12, 2022.

6. **Topics not anticipated** – Carolyn Olsen suggested the FinCom members email her their questions for other departments and she will compile them and send off so that members of those departments will not receive multiple emails/questions from several of the FinCom members.

On a motion by JH and seconded by FB, the meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m. FB, aye; FW, aye; JH, aye; JW, aye; CM, aye; GG, aye; JA, aye. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

BettyLou Mallet
Scribe

Finance Committee approved - 01/12/2022