

**Montague Finance Committee
Final Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 2, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.**

This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded: <https://vimeo.com/673012586>

PRESENT: Jen Audley, Chair; Gregory Garrison, Vice-Chair; John Hanold, Fred Bowman, Jennifer Waryas, Francia Wisnewski, Chris Menegoni, members; BettyLou Mallet, scribe.

OTHERS PRESENT: Carolyn Olsen, Accountant; Steve Ellis, Town Administrator; Jon Dobosz, Parks and Recreation Director; Tom Bergeron, Superintendent of Public Works; Caitlin Kelley, Library Director; Ariel Elan, resident.

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair, Jen Audley. All members present. This meeting is being recorded by Carolyn Olsen as well as being aired on MCTV.

2. Public Comment – There were no public comments received via email nor anyone who would wish to speak with the FinCom this evening regarding any items on the agenda. FinCom members did not receive any questions from the public regarding items on tonight's agenda.

3. Approval of the minutes of January 26, 2022 Finance Committee meeting.

The members received the draft minutes for their review however CM stated he did not receive the documents. JH asked to open this topic for discussion as he had a question about a comment and description on page 2. JA spoke with the committee regarding this information and FW concurred therefore JH accepted that information as written. JW also discussed what was written from her comment regarding the school committee. The committee discussed and the information was revised. **On a motion by JH and seconded by FB, the minutes of January 26, 2022 were approved with revisions. JH, aye; FB, aye; FW, aye; GG, aye; JW, aye; CM, abstained; JA aye; Approved 6-0.**

4. Comprehensive Plan Commission – Invitation to appoint a Finance Committee designee

The FinCom has received an invitation from the Town Planner's Office asking the Committee to designate a member to be on the Comprehensive Plan Commission (Master Plan). This comprehensive plan will take several years to complete with quarterly or monthly meetings engaging in different activities. This designee will be the liaison for communication. CM and FW both expressed interest. A decision has not been made tonight however the two interested can communicate with Walter, attend the first meeting and make a decision who will be the designee.

5. FY23 Budget Investigation

JA opened the discussion about items presented on the budget under the categories of Tree Warden, Public Works, Human Services and Culture and Recreation and asked the committee if they had any questions or concerns. JH had concerns about the Parks & Recreation line item. FW had questions about the charging stations. CM had questions about the sewer vac truck and asks for clarification on the cemetery wall and the DPW doing the work. JA stated that the sewer vac truck/cemetery wall/DPW work are special articles for the upcoming STM and will be discussed when the time comes for the FinCom to make recommendations on the articles. JH amends his request and does not have any Parks & Recreation concerns.

Tom Bergeron, Highway Superintendent explained that the special article for the cemetery wall is for funds to purchase blocks and stone and to hire a tree crew to cut trees out of the stonewall. He stated the DPW will be doing the majority of the work and will hire the tree crew so therefore, this article is for the materials for the stonewall and the cost of the tree crew. GG stated that the CIC has had several conversations regarding this article and the cost has been lowered significantly as the DPW will be doing the majority of the work however the tree work is beyond their scope.

ARTICLE 5 – REPAIR RETAINING WALL AT BURNHAM CEMETERY (Cemetery Commission Request) **That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$10,000 for the purpose of repairing a retaining wall and for other related maintenance, renovations, and improvements at the Burnham Cemetery including but not limited to the grading and clearing of trees to prevent recurrence of the issue, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. JA made the motion that the Finance Committee recommends, seconded by JH. No discussion. FB, aye; FW, aye; GG, aye; JW, aye; JH, aye; CM, aye; JA, aye. (7 aye, 0 nay)**

FW knows that the charging stations are not breaking even and wants to know if there is a plan to sustain them. Steve stated that the charging stations are under the purview of Walter Ramsey and that they are under a 5-year warranty program. The Town owns them and at this point, what is being paid to use them is enough to cover the costs. The maintenance is under warranty. JA stated she wanted it to be on record that Rich Kuklewicz, Chair of the Selectboard had expressed his objection to the town subsidizing the charging stations but had stopped short of recommending a change to the budget. GG stated that the charging stations are an earlier generation and feels that they are a benefit to the community downtown. He feels that they will be a benefit in the long run. JW would like to increase the awareness of the charging stations and asks how the public are made aware of their location. GG stated that are apps available letting the public know of their location.

Since there were no other concerns about the line items of the FY23 budget, the floor was opened for more general discussion with the heads of three specific department who were present tonight, JA gave an overview of the departments' requests, followed by discussion of their special article requests.

DPW has agreed to collaborate with the Parks and Recreation Department to have the groundskeeping they need at the parks done with a seasonal DPW employee. The DPW has requested materials for specific projects and that department will move money around on the line items from where the funds are least spent to where there is more activity in specific funds within that department.

Jon Dobosz from the Parks and Recreation Department has item requests on the special town meeting warrant. He concurred that they are working with the DPW for the groundskeeping employee.

Caitlin Kelley, the new Library Director stated that her budget requests are pretty straightforward and does have a few special articles on the Special Town Meeting warrant. Caitlin has increased staff time so that they can have monthly staff meetings as well as wifi to have hotspots available for patrons to check out. JA also mentioned that on this budget, the COA has requested an increase in hours for the Director which the Selectboard supports and she assumes the Finance Committee does as well, since they have not brought it up. The last item on this agenda is for the Cemetery Commission, which recently acquired the Highland Cemetery. They have a special article that will allow them to use the revenue in selling cemetery plots to create an emergency cemetery repair fund.

The meeting then opened for questions from the FinCom to the Heads of these three specific departments.

GG asked Jon Dobosz about the transfer of funds for the groundskeeper. Initially the Parks and Rec were requesting their own groundskeeper but after speaking with Tom Bergeron, they will keep the groundskeeper under the DPW budget and Tom had increased enough funding for summer help to support Jon for up to 12 weeks with Unity Park and the Friday's with the additional parks. The DPW will still be mowing the lawns.

The FinCom now moved on to discuss the articles on the Special Town Meeting (STM). JA stated that they will have more time to discuss the articles for the Annual Town Meeting (ATM) and would like to keep the focus of any discussion of capital articles this evening on generating questions for the Capital Improvement Committee (CIC). There will not be any deliberating of the CIC as this is not posted as a joint meeting.

CM brought up the sewer vac truck and its maintenance. He has done research on parts for this truck and was wondering about refurbishing it again. Tom Bergeron stated that this truck has already been refurbished and it was a great expense. The costs of the parts, if they are able to obtain them, would be even more expensive. Tom is speaking with the representatives tomorrow for the truck and will be discussing all of the options as well as the trade-in value of the old truck.

JH asked Tom Bergeron if he should schedule the Vactor truck requests earlier, at the STM due to the increased price of steel. Tom does feel that it may be less expensive now than in May/June and also knows that price quotes will only be held for 30 days. Tom hopes to have a high percentage of information after his meeting with the representatives and then would discuss the benefit of possibly moving his request up to the STM.

Switching over to the Library requests, there are 2 capital projects on the ATM that are being reviewed by the CIC. CM had a question on the Carnegie basement repair, fixing the water issue outside before the cellar repair. The outside water issue has been addressed and the article on the STM is for the reimbursement on dollars spent on engineering. GG stated that because the basement is considered a workspace, something needs to be done to mitigate the water flow from rain away from the building. Also, Caitlin explained that the oil furnace does not have any zones and therefore two minisplits have been recommended to help dehumidify the basement. JH strongly supports these projects at Carnegie to improve the conditions with increased moisture.

ARTICLE 10 – ENGINEERING PLAN FOR CARNEGIE DRIVEWAY (Library Request)

That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$5,270 for the purpose of obtaining an engineered plan for the Carnegie Library's driveway project, including any and all incidental and related costs, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. There were no other questions about this article. JA made a motion to recommend Article 10, seconded by GG. FB, aye; JW, aye; FW, aye; GG, aye; CM, aye; JH, aye; JA, aye; (7 aye, 0 nay).

JA explained that the request to increase the Libraries FY22 budget is to account for expenses associated with the unexpected retirement of the prior Director early in the fiscal year.

ARTICLE 9 – INCREASE FY22 LIBRARY BUDGET (Library Request)

That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$10,616 for the purpose of increasing the Fiscal Year 2022 Libraries budget, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. JA made a motion to recom-

mend, seconded by JH and no discussion. FB, aye; JW, aye; JH, aye; CM, aye; GG, aye; FW, aye; JA, aye. (7 aye, 0 nay).

The ATM request from the DPW regarding materials such as concrete for the sidewalk project. Tom Bergeron stated that this special article can actually be removed as he had also increased his line item for the amount of materials. CO asked Tom Bergeron to send her an email stating this information so she may have this information in writing.

Tree Warden – JA stated that the tree warden had retired from his role as a full-time DPW employee in the same year that more extensive tree bylaws have been adopted which actually increases the responsibilities to the tree warden position. Tom explained to the committee that this situation had helped him appreciate the benefits of having the new tree warden be a DPW employee. JH asked if TB was aware of any qualified DPW employees who might want to run for tree warden and TB said he was aware of one.

Jon Dobosz spoke with the committee about the articles he has requested on the STM. The riding lawn-mower is over 20 years old and has passed its useful life. The department needs it for spring and summer use and that is the reason for it being placed on the STM warrant.

ARTICLE 7 – PARKS & RECREATION RIDING MOWER (Parks & Recreation Request)

That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$2,500 for the purpose of purchasing and equipping a riding mower for the Parks and Recreation Department, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. JA made a motion to recommend, seconded by FB. No discussion. FB aye; FW, aye; JW, aye; GG, aye; JH, aye; CM, aye; JA, aye. (7 aye, 0 nay).

ARTICLE 8 – UNITY PARK SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM (Parks & Recreation Request)

That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$4,500 for the purpose of purchasing and installing additional security cameras and updating the surveillance system at Unity Park, 56 1st Street, including any and all incidental and related costs, said sum to be raised from Free Cash.

Discussion – JA read the background information provided with the draft motions and Jon added that the current camera is 12-15 years old and focuses on a very small area of the playground. There is a need to cover more areas such as the ball field, skate park, parking lot and other areas of the playground. JW asked about what kinds of situations are happening in the area. Jon stated that is destruction of property and inappropriate behavior. JA noted that the Parks & Recreation Department had to go to Town Meeting with this request because their small budget did not allow for any other way of funding this type of purchase, while other town departments had more options and might be able to make this purchase without the same scrutiny. She asked about the absence of a consistent approach to decisions about surveillance and the acquisition of cameras by other departments. JH asked, if approved, what change would be made in the day-to-day activities in an ability to follow-up on what the cameras show. Jon feels with the current camera, the follow-up information is not reliable. Also, with a new camera, although they would not be monitoring it throughout the day, it would be reliable to view the footage should there be a report of a situation that had happened. JA asked if Jon Dobosz knew how long the recordings would be saved for, and Jon said he did not know. GG asked about the resolution of the recordings; Jon Dobosz did not have that information.

JA made the motion to recommend Article 8 – Unity Park Surveillance System. Seconded by GG. JW feels that there is not enough information to warrant her decision. FB acknowledges that a new system will give the public a more secure feeling, especially at night. FB, aye; JW, abstained; GG, aye; JH, aye with Jon being prepared to answer questions at the STM; CM, abstained; FW, abstained; JA, nay. (3 aye, 1 nay; 3 abstained). FW asked if she could change her vote and JA said “no.” FW indicated that if she had been allowed to change her vote she would have changed it to a “nay.”

ARTICLE 4 – MOVE FUNDS FROM SALE OF CEMETERY LOTS TO SPECIAL FUND FOR ACCESS BY CEMETERY COMMISSION FOR EMERGENCY REPAIRS (Cemetery Commission Request)

JA requested that the title introducing the motion for this article be revised to avoid use of the word “article.”

That the Town vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, borrow or otherwise provide the sum of \$10,000 for the purpose of making emergency repairs to town cemeteries, including any and all incidental and related costs, said sum to be raised from Sale of Highland Cemetery Lots. JA made the motion to recommend, seconded by JH. No discussion. FB, aye; GG, aye; CM, aye; FW, aye; JH, aye; JW, aye; JA, aye. (7 aye, 0 nay).

ARTICLE 13 – MONTAGUE STUDENT AT SMITH VOCATIONAL (Town Accountant Request)
That the Town vote to appropriate sum of \$15,463 for the purpose of providing tuition and transportation for a Montague resident attending Smith Vocational School, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Carolyn Olsen provided an updated \$ figure for the vote on this article. JA made the motion to recommend, seconded by FB. FB, aye; GG, aye; JH, aye; FW, aye; JW, aye; CM, aye; JA, aye. (7 aye, 0 nay).

ARTICLE 6 – Increase FY22 Airport Budget (Airport Commission Request)
That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$20,377 for the purpose of increasing the FY22 Airport Budget, with \$3,000 to be transferred from Airport Benefits and \$17,377 to be raised from Airport Retained Earnings. JA made the motion to recommend, seconded by GG. CM, aye; GG, aye; JH, aye; FW, aye; JW, aye; FB, aye; JA, aye. (7 aye, 0 nay).

CO stated that this is a one-time request due to a change in tenant. CM complimented the Airport transferring funds from retained earnings and making the upgrades which will allow increased earnings.

7. Topics Not Anticipated

CO stated that printouts of updated pages from the Version 7 budgets are ready to be picked up in her office. Steve stated that the request for remote town meetings through July 15 passed through the House and now through the Senate and if no other changes in language, will go before the Governor. JA received a request from Wendy Bogusz for the Finance Committee's write-up for the Annual Report. She asks for a volunteer to write up the 2021 report.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 9, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. The focus will be on budget requests from Public Safety and the Board of Health. There will also be continued discussion of special town meeting requests and recommendations.

On a motion by FB and seconded by JH, the meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m. JW, aye; FB, aye; FW, aye; GG, aye; JH, aye; CM, aye; JA, aye.

Respectfully submitted,

BettyLou Mallet
Scribe

Meeting materials:

ATM and STM article summary 01-31-2022

Budgets for 2022-02-02 Review

FY23 Special Articles for Review 2022-02-02

STM Articles for Review 2022-02-02

Approved by Montague Finance Committee – February 9, 2022