

MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE AND SELECTBOARD
Final Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 6, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded: <https://vimeo.com/696788335>

PRESENT: Chair Jen Audley (left at 7:11 p.m.); Vice-Chair Gregory Garrison; John Hanold, Jennifer Waryas, Chris Menegoni and Francina Wisnewski (arrived at 6:36 p.m), Finance Committee members; Selectboard Chair Rich Kuklewicz; Selectboard Vice-Chair, Chris Boutwell and Matt Lord, member.

OTHERS PRESENT: Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen; Tom Bergeron, DPW Superintendent (left at 6:36 p.m.); Ariel Elan, public; BettyLou Mallet, Scribe.

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Jen Audley. The meeting is being recorded and aired on MCTV. Finance Committee members were called to order by name. Selectboard members were called to order by name.

2. REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES: March 30, 2022

The Finance Committee members received and reviewed the draft minutes of March 30, 2022. There were no discussions. **GG moved and JH seconded the motion to approve. GG, aye; JH, aye; JW, aye; CM, aye; JA, aye. The Finance Committee meeting minutes of March 30, 2022 were approved as written.**

3. DISCUSSION AND REVIEW OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RELATED TO DPW DISCRETIONARY FUND REQUEST FOR FY23

The agenda was amended to include this topic after the Selectboard met with Tom Bergeron yesterday and he asked for reconsideration in the matter of the dollar amount to allocate to replenishing the DPW discretionary account. The Selectboard would like to obtain opinions from the Capital Improvements Committee and Finance Committee before making the decision for the Annual Town Meeting.

The Capital Improvements Committee (CIC) met this afternoon with Tom Bergeron and GG who is the Chair, updated the Finance Committee and Selectboard with the outcome of the meeting.

The CIC voted today to increase the allocation to the fund from \$50,000 to \$75,000.

Also during the CIC meeting this afternoon, a draft policy was reviewed which outlines uses and procedures related to the DPW discretionary fund. GG recommends updating and reviewing this policy. There were no questions for GG.

Tom Bergeron explained that charges to the DPW discretionary fund often occur unpredictably and tend to fall after the CIC looks at spending-to-date and makes its recommendations in February. He also has a new office manager who did not charge some eligible expenses to the discretionary fund in the first months of the year. He explained the importance of being able to access the funds for repairs and replacement parts quickly, rather than wait to place on a warrant for a special town meeting.

JA asked CO to explain “why doesn’t it work for the DPW to have a line in the budget for repairing equipment?” CO stated the DPW has a line for routine equipment maintenance repair in their budget.

Extraordinary repairs go to the discretionary account. Because there is a \$5,000 limit on capital outlay, it would be difficult in advance to determine how much should be capital outlay versus capital expenses as capital outlay is to be separated.

JH understands the DPW cannot fund every expense in the operating budget as well as the importance of the carryover to the next year.

JA stated the question for this year is how large should the allocation to the fund be. Her inclination is to follow the CIC's recommendation.

CM understands the process and how some repairs, such as hydraulics, can be planned over a course of time but to look at the overall budget over a course of a few years and the costs of repairs and general budget, looks to be close to the requested amount.

JA asked Tom Bergeron if he would be comfortable with the CIC recommendation of \$75,000 or would still ask for the \$100,000 at ATM. Mr. Bergeron stated after meeting with the CIC, he will accept the \$75,000. JA also asked if he is saving up for purchases that would otherwise qualify for CIC review. Tom stated that in the past once he gets through the winter months, he would look at the funds and perhaps purchase a 1-ton dump truck or a pick-up truck if he's in need of a replacement rather than placing a request through a special town meeting. However, the ending balance in the account has not allowed for this in recent years, and with vehicles costing more, it is unlikely to happen in the future.

JH agrees with increasing the funds to \$75,000 rather than requiring the need to generate a special article. He supports the CIC recommendation.

ML asked for the price for the zero-turn mower. Tom stated \$18,000. CO stated this would be a non-capital special article and not be purchased out of an operating budget unless the capital budget had an outlay line appropriated in it.

RK stated he spoke with Steve this afternoon regarding the draft policy GG mentioned and feels its best to review and put in use. He feels Tom has acted with fiscal prudence and utilized this fund very well.

JA stated the FinCom should vote on recommendation that will appear on the warrant. **GG makes the motion that the Finance Committee approve the \$75,000 for the DPW discretionary budget for FY23 to be raised from taxation. JH seconded. No discussion. GG, aye; JH, aye; JW, aye; CM, aye; JA, aye.**

RK entertains a motion for the Selectboard to following the Capital Improvement Committee's recommendation to fund the DPW discretionary fund budget for FY23 in the amount of \$75,000 to be raised from taxation. CB made the motion and seconded by ML stating Article 15. CB, aye; ML, aye; RK, aye.

FW joined the meeting at 6:36 p.m. and was brought up-to-date by JA. ML left the meeting at 6:36 p.m.

4. REVIEW OF MOTIONS AND BACKGROUND FOR 5/7/22 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The Finance Committee received a list of the remaining financial articles needing recommendations for the upcoming Annual Town Meeting.

ARTICLE 4 – The Finance Committee received additional background information for the Assistant Town Administrator, Selectboard Administrative Assistant and the WPCF Laboratory Manager positions. This article is an addition to the classification plan so therefore a funding source is not needed. **JA made the motion to add the positions of Assistant Town Administrator, Selectboard Administrative Assistant and WPCF Laboratory Manager to the Town’s Classification Plan. Seconded by GG.** JA would like to amend the background information for this article by moving the detailed explanation of Finance Committee members’ concerns about the ATA position to accompany this article, rather than the operating budget article. JW asks before voting, if a member does not support all three of the positions, how does one vote? CO stated if a member votes against the article, the reason will be explained in the comments. **GG, aye; JW, nay; FW, aye; JH, nay; CM, nay; JA, aye. (3 aye, 3 nay).** JA asks if the comment that was moved from the operating budget adequately covers the reasons for the nay votes. JW looked at the background information CO placed on the screen which included her statement about the ATA position. JW, CM, and JH said the comment was sufficient. JH also stated the reasons for voting against this article can be expanded upon at town meeting.

ARTICLE 15 – DPW Discretionary Account - Previously discussed in the beginning of this meeting and voted on.

ARTICLE 17 – **JA made the motion to recommend \$21,584 to increase Article #18C from May 22, 2021 ATM (Project Bid and Overrun Account) to be raised from Taxation. Seconded by GG.** No discussion or input on background information. **GG, aye; JW, aye; CM, aye; JH, aye; FW, aye; JA, aye.**

ARTICLE 18 – **JA made the motion to recommend \$415,000 for Town capital projects, with \$190,000 from Free Cash and \$225,000 from the Town Capital Stabilization Fund (\$125,000 for Town Hall Roof – Town Capital Stabilization Fund; \$60,000 for Shea Front Roof – Free Cash; \$130,000 for Carnegie Basement Renovation – Free Cash; \$100,000 for Montague Center Library Masonry Repair – Town Capital Stabilization Fund). Seconded by GG.** CO stated this article requires 2/3 vote for all 4 items at Town Meeting, **GG aye; JW, aye; FW, aye; CM, aye; JH, aye; JA, aye.**

ARTICLE 19 – **JA made the motion to amend Article #4 from the March 3, 2022 Special Town Meeting to allow previously appropriated \$125,000 for lease of a Vector truck to be used toward the outright purchase of that vehicle. No source needed. Seconded by GG.** The Selectboard allocated ARPA funds for an outright purchase of this vehicle. No questions. **GG, aye; JW, aye; FW, aye; JH, aye; CM, aye; JA, aye.**

ARTICLE 20 – **JA moved to recommend \$346,164 to increase various reserve accounts to be funded from Taxation. Seconded by GG.** The background information defines in detail the funding of the Town Capital Stabilization Fund, the OPEB Trust Fund, the GMRSD Stabilization Fund and the FCTS Stabilization Fund. **GG, aye; JW, aye; JH, aye; FW, aye; CM, aye; JA, aye.**

ARTICLE 21 – **JA moved to recommend \$173,800 for substance abuse counselors to be funded from the Cannabis Impact Fee Stabilization Fund. GG seconds.** No questions or discussion. **GG, aye; JW, aye; JH, aye; FW, aye; CM, aye; JA, aye.**

ARTICLE 22 – JA moved to recommend \$40,000 for afterschool STEM programs to be funded from the Cannabis Impact Fee Stabilization Fund. GG seconded. JW asks if there is a resource she can review which lists the different expenses this fund can be used for. FW also asks for additional information regarding these funds and how it can help the community and those who are affected but its use. RK stated ML has worked on this program but the Selectboard will be sending out a request and then review the proposals received and confirm the proposals fit within the guidelines. This is a placeholder to receive proposals. JW can receive information what the fees can be used for from Steve Ellis. CO also stated the background information which was voted on at the March 5, 2020 Special Town Meeting Articles 9-12 on the Town’s website under Town Meetings.

JA expresses concern that the background information reads as if the funding is earmarked for a particular vendor or a particular agency for a specific purpose and feels that is incorrect as working with procurement rules is required. Like FW, JA is concerned about the process that is specific for an intended program. RK stated ML has talked to a couple people but it is not intended for a specific program. GG concurs with JA on the background description and how the process is not very clear. CO will ask Steve to clarify the background information. JA would like the background information modeled after last year’s request for evidence-based family parent education programming, which specified that there would be an RFP. **GG, abstain; JW, aye; JH, aye; FW, aye; CM, aye – an enrichment program is moving in the right direction; JA, aye but may change vote at Town Meeting depending on background information.**

ARTICLE 23 – JA made the motion to recommend \$25,000 for design and feasibility study costs for roadway safety improvements in vicinity of the Millers Falls Road and Industrial Blvd intersection to be funded from the Cannabis Impact Fee Stabilization Fund. GG seconds. No discussion or questions. This funding is for improving the roadway safety near the facility that is contributing the impact fees. GG, aye; JW, aye; FW, aye; JH, aye; CM, aye; JA, aye.

ARTICLE 24 – JA made the motion to recommend establishing a Canal District Utility Improvement Fund and to allow the funds received for that purpose to be directly dedicated to that fund. (No source is needed), JH seconds. JH, aye; GG, aye; JW, aye; CM, aye; FW, aye; JA, aye.

ARTICLE 25 – JA made the motion to recommend rescission of \$286,081.30 of unused borrowing authority for Airport property acquisition (no source needed). GG seconds. GG, aye; JW, aye; JH, aye; CM, aye; FW, aye; JA, aye.

ARTICLE 26 – JA made the motion to recommend rescission of \$1,305,011.05 of unused borrowing authority for the DPW Facility (no source needed). GG seconds. No questions or discussion. GG, aye; JW, aye; FW, aye; JH, aye; CM, aye; JA, aye.

JA left the meeting at 7:11pm and passed the responsibilities over the GG.

RK entertained a motion for the Selectboard to adjourn. CB made the motion. RK second. CB, aye; RK, aye. Selectboard adjourned the meeting at 7:12 p.m.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINANCE COMMITTEE’S REPORT TO TOWN MEETING

GG stated CO sent out the draft Finance Committee Report for the upcoming ATM which included the FinCom contributions under various topics. She will incorporate all of the information that is discussed

and decided upon tonight and send back to the committee for final review at next week's meeting. GG drafted information to be added to the report regarding Fred Bowman's contribution to the committee. JH asked about JA's mention in the cover letter about the budgeted committees and stated it should be departments. CO feels what she was trying to explain is that the Finance Committee is a Committee with a budget. JH also feels that on page 9 of the expenditure section of the airport, it is "muddy" and like a PR statement. He would like more specifics as to what the Airport is doing. FW stated she and JW worked on that piece of the report and knows it should be defined. GG suggested FW and JW to reach out to Bryan however CO stated the report is to stay specifically for FY23 budget and there was nothing noteworthy to report. It will be written to reference the background information in Article 7 and the information written in the draft will be simplified. There is also additional information to be added when received from Joanne Blier at the GMRSD.

FW asks about cannabis tax revenue information which she states is obsolete. GG states it needs to be revised and quite a few good points were brought up tonight and asks for her to meet with Steve who can assist in drafting a paragraph stating what the cannabis tax revenue can be used for, how much it is and where the funds are coming from. CO will take information from the March 5 meeting and insert into the paragraph for FW.

CO asked about notable accomplishments and where the Finance Committee should add about the financial policies and how 13 policies were adopted and the rest will be reviewed and adopted in the fall. She is waiting for the Gill-Montague education piece.

6. DISCUSSION OF FINANCE COMMITTEE SEATS AVAILABLE FOR FY23

GG stated JA and FB's positions are becoming available for FY23. JH had a 3-way conversation with JA/JH/Reporter and he has come up with a solution. JH stated JA does not want to be referenced as providing information however using the montaguefinancecommittee@gmail.com email address is only used by JA. The ad should state how to contact the Finance Committee members and CO is happy to be the contact person and then will forward to the Finance Committee as a group. JH proposes a 2 inch x 2 column ad in black and white and run for 2 weeks. FW asks if there is a Finance Committee job description. JH states the information is found on the website under the Finance Committee as well as under bylaws.

JW has been working in marketing and design for 25 years and know how to approach the audience. In addition to the Montague Reporter, she would like to broaden the audience by utilizing Facebook where the Finance Committee can have a campaign and share their stories. GG will have a conversation with JW as it is worth doing it. JH will send in the ad and GG will follow-up with some ideas with JW. CO suggests GG and JW to put together a 1-page advertisement that can be printed on colored paper and placed in the town meeting member packets. CO would like the information by next Thursday.

GG also stated he has 1-2 more years to be on the Finance Committee and will renew his position on the CIC. He cannot take on the position of Chair due to his work schedule and JH has been Chair for decades. He asks JW, FW and CM to think about the position of Chair. He described the position of being the Chair. JH stated there are other ways to collectively run the meeting and he is happy to be a part of that collective body. He encourages the members to consider. FW would like to discuss more about the collaboration of the position of Chair and also share in the responsibilities which were discussed by JA. FW would like to see a young, active business person in the community to be part of the Finance Committee to be more progressive in the direction of the Committee along with using the knowledge of the experienced members.

CM mentioned that he would like to be a part of the CIC who has experience of being on the Finance Committee as well.

7. FUTURE AGENDA REQUESTS AND TOPICS NOT ANTICIPATED

8. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by FW and seconded by JH, the Committee adjourned the meeting. JH, aye; FW, aye; JW, aye; CM, aye; GG, aye. Meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

UPCOMING MEETING DATES – April 13, 2022 – Finalize report and check-in with BettyLou Mallet

Respectfully submitted,
BettyLou Mallet
Scribe

Meeting Materials: DPW Detail
Draft FC Report to TM with Motions and Background Information
Remaining Votes Needed

Finance Committee Approved: 04/13/2022