

**MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**Draft Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, February 15, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.**

**This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded:** <https://vimeo.com/799584229>

**PRESENT:** Chair Francia Wisnewski, Vice Chair Gregory Garrison, Clerk Dorinda Bell-Upp, John Hanold, Jennifer Waryas and Fred Bowman, members; Accountant Carolyn Olsen, Town Administrator Steve Ellis and Scribe BettyLou Mallet.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Moderator Ray Godin, Town Clerk Debra Bourbeau, Treasurer/Tax Collector Eileen Seymour and Director of Assessing Karen Tonelli

**ABSENT:** Chris Menegoni

**1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER** – The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 6:00 p.m. The meeting is being recorded by CO and aired on MCTV. There is a quorum. FW stated the agenda items were being reorganized in order to accommodate the staff and guests.

**2. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT** – Steve stated the Finance Committee presented questions regarding the Town Meeting, Selectboard budget and the Colle budget. Ray Godin is in attendance and described the Moderator stipend and his thoughts regarding the position. The FY24 stipend request is \$500 which is increased from the FY23 budget of \$370. Ray described the increased duties such as 2 winter meetings, additional appointed positions as well as it is the last term for the Moderator. The increase is also to get in line with other Moderator's in the area. Ray encourages membership dues for the Massachusetts Moderator Association which covers the annual educational conference and allows communication with other area moderators. The travel line item would allow the next Moderator to attend such events. JW asked about the various stipends within the town positions. CO stated the elected positions usually receive the stipend. There are also stipends for appointed positions and the ranges were reviewed and adjusted in 2020 by the Finance Committee.

Steve stated the increase of 3.4% is accurate due to unspent funds in FY23 in the Colle budget, and noted that the Colle budget no longer has debt expense. The roof is going to be replaced and the HVAC system is old, therefore, a consultant will be obtained for updating the HVAC system in the future. There is an increase in the subscriptions line item for the Selectboard budget and it is important to continue with the Statehouse News as he utilizes it for communication with State Legislators. JH asked about the redistribution of duties from CO office to the Assistant Town Administrator and Selectboard Clerk. Steve stated there has been substantial progress in migrating duties along with human resources duties and that he has been working on the storm water overflow reporting as well.

**3. TOWN CLERK BUDGET DISCUSSION** – Deb Bourbeau was present to discuss the Town Clerk budget. JH expressed his caution in adding another position to the Town Clerk's office although he is aware the duties have grown. Deb stated there are no tasks that can be set aside and new responsibilities under the new election laws have turned the entire election process upside down. She stated there will be 4 elections in 2024, and each one of those elections takes 3-4 months of work. The election laws include early voting, voting by mail, absentee voting etc. Due to the increased tasks, the day-to-day duties may not be completed in a timely manner. She appreciates the volunteers who help with filing and creating ballot packets, but the office is in need of a trained individual who has a work sta-

tion and completes the daily tasks. GG asked about the Freedom of Information Act and has that increased the day-to-day duties. Deb stated the public records requests (for which the Town Clerk is responsible for recording and tracking), Open Meeting Law and town meeting process is through the Town Clerk's Office. She stated the new employee will work at the counter waiting on individuals who come into the office, online and annual requests as well as election procedures. FW states she supports the position and understands the need for the additional employee.

**4. TREASURER/TAX COLLECTOR BUDGET DISCUSSION** – Eileen Seymour stated the Treasurer/Tax Collector position does not have any major issues in the budget this year. She is working with Wendy Bogusz and Steve Ellis to transfer the Human Resource piece of her position. DB-U asked about the impact of moving to quarterly billing in the future and possible online options. Eileen stated she has started research, but it is not on the radar for FY24. It can possibly be discussed for FY25 and voted at Town Meeting. Quarterly billing would help with cash flow and will not change the postage costs as 2 quarters will be included in each mailing. There were no other questions for this budget.

**5. BOARD OF ASSESSORS BUDGET DISCUSSION** – Karen Tonelli discussed the Assessor's budget and the impact of changing property valuation date from June 30 to January 1. She described the new growth in town such as new buildings, additions and decks as well as the new trends on utilities such as Eversource and FirstLight. She felt that if the date were changed from June 30<sup>th</sup> to January 1<sup>st</sup>, she would feel comfortable with the residential new growth but the timeliness of commercial new growth would not be improved. If the date change were to be voted at Town Meeting, the following fiscal year would only include 6 months of new growth and then we would go back to having a full year of new growth in the following fiscal year. No other questions for Karen and the Assessor's budget.

**6. REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES – February 8, 2023** – The members received the draft minutes of February 8, 2023 for their review. **GG moved and JH seconded. No discussion or revisions. FB, aye; GG, aye; JH, aye; JW, aye; DB-U, aye; FW, aye. The minutes of February 8, 2023 were approved as written.**

**7. FUTURE MEETING TOPICS** – Moving the valuation date from June 30 to January 1 will be placed on a future agenda when Steve Ellis will be in attendance.

**8. TOPICS NOT ANTICIPATED WITHIN 48 HOURS OF POSTING** – None

**9. ADJOURNMENT** – **On a motion by JW and second by JH, the Finance Committee meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m. FB, aye; GG, aye; JH, aye; JW, aye; DB-U, aye; FW, aye.**

Respectfully submitted,

BettyLou Mallet  
Scribe