

MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE
Wednesday, February 14, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.
This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded:
<https://vimeo.com/913160792>

Finance Committee Chair Francia Wisnewski called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Finance Committee members present: Chair Francia Wisnewski. Vice Chair Dorinda Bell-Upp, Clerk Fred Bowman and members Greg Garrison, Chris Menegoni, and Jennifer Waryas

Finance Committee members absent: John Hanold

Others present: Assistant Town Administrator Walter Ramsey and Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen

The meeting was recorded by MCTV as well as by Carolyn Olsen.

Meeting minutes:

Mr. Garrison moved to approve the minutes of January 31, 2024 and February 7, 2024. Seconded by Mr. Bowman and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman- Aye, Garrison– Aye Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Waryas – Aye, Wisnewski - Abstain

Final revenue estimates, budgeted excess capacity and GMRSD Affordable Assessment:

Ms. Olsen reported that there were no changes to the previous amounts.

Review of articles for March 14, 2024 Special Town Meeting:

- a. Add position of Truck Driver/Laborer in Training at Grade B. This was discussed at the January 24, 2024 meeting during the DPW Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) budget discussion.
- b. Add position of Sexton to Schedule II with stipend of \$100/burial. This was discussed at the December 13, 2023 meeting and voted on at the January 17, 2024 meeting.
- c. Increase part-time Police Officer wage range from \$25-\$28/hour to \$29-\$35/hour. This was discussed and voted on at the January 17, 2024 Finance Committee Meeting. Ms. Olsen noted that Schedule II will also include shift differentials for part-time police officers and dispatchers at the Annual Town Meeting. While it is not strictly necessary, counsel has recommended that they be added for clarity and transparency.
- d. \$1,974 for PY Treasurer department out of grade pay. The Assistant Treasurer/Tax Collector should have received out of grade pay during the absence of the Treasurer/Tax Collector that extended beyond four weeks. This was not realized until after the close of FY23, so must now be approved by Town Meeting.

- e. \$300 for PY Libraries department longevity pay. When preparing the FY23 budget, this was overlooked. The employee asked about it after the close of FY23, so it must now be approved by Town Meeting.
- f. \$8,481 for FY24 Building Inspector budget. When Town employees retire, they are entitled to a buy-back of 25% of their unused sick leave, to a maximum of \$3,500, as well as payment of any unused accrued vacation time. The retirement was not anticipated during the FY25 budget process, so an additional appropriation is required.
- g. \$23,000 for FY24 Selectboard budget. Same as above

Items h-j were previously discussed on January 10th, 17th, and 24th

- h. \$10,000 for FY24 Airport budget. This would cover some of the unexpected operating expenses that have already occurred, and would be funded from the existing Capital Outlay appropriation. The Capital Outlay budget was originally intended for a purpose that will now be funded through the \$152,315 town share of the airport grant project below.
- i. \$24,261 transfer to Airport from Sale of Real Estate. This funds the portion of the current year revenue shortfall that specifically relates to funding the non-grant funded portion of the Pioneer debt service.
- j. \$128,000 transfer to Airport. This would cover the remaining expected revenue shortfall and would be funded from Free Cash.
- k. \$152,315 for Town share of Airport grant project. Instead of 3 separate and drastically increasing annual appropriations, this single article would appropriate the town share for all three phases of the Pioneer ramp project. Since this clearly identifies this as a capital project, the funding will come from the Town Capital Stabilization Fund.
- l. \$125,000 for Wastewater Asset Vulnerability Inventory. The Wastewater Asset Vulnerability Inventory is a tool to manage wastewater related assets and to facilitate compliance with the town's National Pollution Elimination Discharge System (NPDES) permit. The project includes inventorying the Town's Clean Water Facility and collection system asset information, compiling information into the Town's Geographic Information System, determining if any assets are within the 100-year or 500-year floodplain, defining the criticality of each asset, and identifying the highest priority assets. The Town has been awarded a 60% reimbursement grant (\$75,000) from the Clean Water Trust's Asset Management Program. With \$15,000 planned for in-kind services match, the town's cash match obligation would ultimately be \$35,000. The entire project cost of \$125,000, however, must be appropriated in order to obtain the reimbursement grant. As well as being something the town should do, it is also required under our NPDES permit.
- m. \$90,000 for DPW Skid Steer. This was previously discussed at the January 10, 2024 and January 24, 2024 meetings.

- n. \$222,880 to replace South Ferry Road Culvert. This was previously discussed at the January 10, 2024 and January 24, 2024 meetings.
- o. Revoke Opioid Stabilization Fund authorization. These funds may only be used for the purposes allowed by the settlement document. When the Town first received money from the opioid settlement, the Department of Revenue (DOR) determined that the funds could only be general fund revenue, which would make it difficult to ensure that they were then properly spent, or they would need to go to a special purpose stabilization fund. Montague created such a fund and voted that all future settlement funds go directly into this stabilization fund. DOR has now agreed that these specific funds can be in a special revenue fund, which allows them to be spent without town meeting approval. This article allows us to close the stabilization fund and move the settlement monies into a special revenue fund.

Capital Improvements Committee (CIC) Updates:

Mr. Garrison reported that the CIC voted to approve \$152,315 for the local share of the airport grant, \$90,000 for the DPW skid steer, and \$222,880 to replace the South Ferry Road culvert.

There were two last-minute requests received for the Annual Town Meeting. The first is \$365,000 to replace a 10-wheel dump truck that can no longer be repaired. The second is the CWF requesting \$50,000 to rehabilitate and add a mini split to the Farren garage so the CWF can use it as a temporary maintenance facility. The CIC feels another option may be for the CWF to drive a little further to the DPW garage if the two departments can work out a plan to share that space. A main issue with using the Farren garage is that the Town does not currently own the property and may not own it before the Annual Town Meeting.

Assistant Town Administrator Updates:

Mr. Ramsey updated the Finance Committee on the Selectboard's decision to include the full amount of the \$94,668 Erving bill for treating excess flow from Millers Falls in the FY25 CWF budget rather than creating a special article to fund the amount in excess of the \$55,000 currently in the FY25 budget. The full amount is already in the calculation for the taxation share of the CWF budget.

Ms. Waryas asked about the status of the inflow discovered in Millers Falls. Mr. Ramsey said that the DPW is trying to find the source of the inflow in three pipes on Federal Street. The DPW is looking at obtaining a device that puts smoke into the pipes, which allows smoke to rise from the ground where breaks occur. This makes it easier to find breaks and avoids issues with property boundaries.

Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting: none

Finance Committee Adjournment

Ms. Waryas makes the motion to adjourn at 6:45 PM. Seconded by Mr. Garrison and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman- Aye, Garrison– Aye Menegoni – Aye, Waryas – Aye, Wisnewski - Aye

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Olsen

Next Meeting – February 21, 2024 - GMRSD

Documents and exhibits:

Minutes of January 31, 2024 and February 7, 2024

Draft March 14, 2024 Town Meeting Warrant