

**MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**Wednesday, November 6, 2024 at 6:00 PM**  
**This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded:**  
<https://vimeo.com/982262386>

Finance Committee Chair Dorinda Bell-Upp called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

**Finance Committee members present:** Chair Dorinda Bell-Upp, Vice Chair Fred Bowman, Clerk Chris Menegoni and member Francia Wisnewski

**Finance Committee members absent:** Jennifer Waryas, Kristin Bodin, John Hanold

**Others present:** Town Administrator Walter Ramsey and Town Accountant Angelica Desroches

The meeting was recorded by MCTV as well as by Angelica Desroches

**Meeting minutes:**

Mr. Bowman moved to approve the minutes of September 4, 2024. Seconded by Mr. Menegoni and approved.  
Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Wisnewski - Aye

**FY26 Budget Schedule/Calendar**

Mr. Ramsey discussed the current proposed budget schedule. Discussed that budget requests are due to Accounting by December 9<sup>th</sup>. He reported that there is a tax classification hearing tentatively scheduled for either November 25<sup>th</sup> or December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Discussed having a Finance Committee meeting on December 11<sup>th</sup> to begin reviewing the preliminary budget submissions. Informed the Finance Committee that the STM is being proposed for the last Wednesday of February at this time.

- Ms. Wisnewski discussed which of the tasks of the calendar belonged to the Finance Committee. Discussed that the layout shows that the Finance Committee meetings are on the right side of the calendar as has been presented in the past.

**FY26 Budget Discussion**

Mr. Ramsey presented the status on the FY26 budget. He presented preliminary revenue figures. Discussed the possibility of raising the new growth prediction from the historical 75,000 to a more reasonable estimate given the last 10 years averages. Mr. Ramsey reported that the Selectboard was in favor of increasing the estimate to a more historically accurate number. Discussed that state aid and local receipts were increased conservatively given historical actuals. Mr. Ramsey then presented the three scenarios for budgeting the excess capacity. Scenario one is to level fund the excess capacity, so it is the same as the previous years at 1,149,954. Scenario two is to increase the excess capacity by 75% of FY25's actual new growth numbers, so it would be 1,314,312. Scenario three would be to decrease the budgeted capacity to the point that the school Affordable Assessment reaches the 10-year average increase of 3.91%, so it would be 986,000.

- Ms. Bell-Upp reported that she had some confusion about understanding option 2. Ms. Desroches reported that the option was developed during a year in which Montague had a higher new growth year than expected so it appears to be developed to have increased excess capacity under that favorable new growth figure.
- Ms. Wisnewski questioned what was expected from the Finance Committee with the presentation. Mr. Ramsey reported that there are no votes expected. The presentation was aimed at getting more opinions on the scenarios and the status of the revenue predictions.

- Mr. Menegoni reported that the information is difficult to process without seeing spreadsheets and formulas. Mr. Ramsey discussed that he will be sending out the details to the Finance Committee following the meeting for them to review.
- Ms. Bell-Upp discussed being in favor of the raise to the new growth number. The higher new growth number would be more equitable to the school and would help bring down the free cash numbers that are not always shared equitably with the school.

### **New Financial Software Updates**

Ms. Desroches reported to the Finance Committee that she is in the early stages of reviewing new financial software options for the Town of Montague. Discussed that the current software system is outdated and is no longer getting any updates to it. Discussed that we are reviewing different software options and getting price points and demos for what is available.

- Mr. Menegoni asked if any of the software systems being reviewed can be integrated with current systems. Ms. Desroches informed the Finance Committee that she has had discussions with the same software company as is in the Collectors office which would be fully integrated.
- Mr. Ramsey talked about wanting a software system that the department heads can also go in and review their budgets and the details of their accounts. He also discussed wanting a system that is fully integrated with permitting and other departmental functions. Discussed that the current permitting software is not meeting expectations so looking to improve that.

### **Updates from Town Administrator**

Mr. Ramsey reported that the capital requests were due last week and that committees are beginning to review the requests. Mr. Ramsey updated the Finance Committee that the ARPA funds are down to 1,500 of unencumbered funds. He stated that the ARPA funds have been used for many important projects for the Town of Montague including most recently the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Project.

Mr. Ramsey stated that the idea of stipends for the School Committee members has begun to be discussed again. The details and mechanics of the stipends have not been completely figured out but that discussion with the school around this topic has begun.

- Ms. Wisnewski shared that she thought a stipend for those members would be a good thing and that she would be happy to support it.

### **Next Meetings**

December 11<sup>th</sup> – to begin to review budgets and narratives.

### **Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting:**

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Bowman makes the motion to adjourn at 6:35 PM. Seconded by Mr. Menegoni and approved.

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Angelica Desroches

### **Documents and exhibits:**

Minutes of November 6, 2024