

MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE
Wednesday, January 8, 2025 at 6:00 PM

This meeting will be held remotely.
Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86523275284>

Meeting ID: 865 2327 5284
One tap mobile
+13126266799,,85916016153# US (Chicago)
+16465588656,,85916016153# US (New York)

Meeting Being Recorded

Votes May Be Taken

Recordings are archived at <https://vimeo.com/mctvchannel17/videos>

1. 6:00 Call to order, including announcing that the meeting is being recorded, roll call, welcome to visitors, and guidelines for participation.
2. 6:02 Review of meeting minutes of December 11, 2024
3. 6:05 Review and Recommendations for STM financial articles
 - a. \$36,000 to FY25 Reserve Fund
 - b. \$12,500 for MCTV (PEG Access Funds)
 - c. \$20,547 for Smith Vocational transportation
 - d. \$24,751.20 for Bid/Project Overrun
 - e. \$48,500 for conference/breakroom at CWF
 - f. \$24,000 Airport Reserve Fund transfer
4. 6:40 Updates from Town Administrator
5. 6:50 Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting
6. 6:55 Next meeting dates
 - a. 1/15/25 – Cemetery, COA, Airport, STM Articles
 - b. 1/22/25 – 5:30 start time? Library, CWF, STM Articles
7. 7:00 Adjourn

MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE
Wednesday, December 11, 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 members Franca Wisnewski, John Hanold

Finance Committee members absent: Jennifer Waryas

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 November 6, 2024. Seconded by Ms. Wisnewski and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Wisnewski – Aye, Hanold – Abstain, Menegoni – Not present

Reserve Fund Transfer Smith Vocational Transportation

- Ms. Desroches presented that there is a predicted shortfall in the Smith Vocational special article due to the budgeted transportation rate of \$75 a day and the actual rate of \$200 a day. Discussed that it was \$400 a day at the beginning of the year until it was discovered by the Town Administrator and he worked with the school to renegotiate a lower rate. Discussed requesting a partial transfer of \$12,500 to cover the deficit until the winter STM when another vote will be made to request the remainder of the deficit predicted at 20,550.
- Mr. Hanold asked why there is no request for the full amount of the deficit.
- Ms. Desroches stated that the reserve fund does not have enough in its balance currently, so the goal is to be able to pay bills until the STM in the winter.
- Ms. Bell-Upp made a motion to approve the transfer of \$12,500 from the reserve fund to account number 001-5-950-5300-035 for the purpose of Smith Vocational transportation. Moved by Mr. Hanold. Seconded by Mr. Bowman and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Wisnewski – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni—Not present

FY26 Budget Discussion

- Mr. Ramsey discussed that the plan for this year is to mirror the process of last year's budget process. The Selectboard has been meeting with departments to discuss staffing changes or expansion of services. The current requests are based off the request for no

expansion of services. The budget is also without a COLA increase since the Town is currently negotiating with the three unions for next year.

- Mr. Hanold discussed wanting more information or a presentation about the wage and class study that was performed last year so there can be a better understanding of the financial ramifications of the results. Mr. Ramsey reported that he would be willing to give a presentation on that at the next meeting.
- Mr. Ramsey discussed the personnel changes that have been presented to the Selectboard. The Council on Aging is requesting an assistant to help the current Director meet the needs of the programming that she is currently offering. Reported that her part-time hours do not allow her to meet the full needs of the department and the community. Mr. Hanold discussed wanting to make sure that the current Director is not going beyond her role to meet the needs of the community. Discussed wanting to make sure that the expansion is still within the goals of the department. Mr. Ramsey reported that another staffing change is from the Library who is looking to implement two new positions and wants to upgrade the staff that are currently a grade A to a grade B. Discussed that this is under the purview of the Selectboard and is being considered as part of the wage and class study. Mr. Ramsey reported that the Cemetery Commission is requesting changing the cemetery paid position from a per burial to a stipend position. Mr. Hanold reported that while this is a financially neutral change, he is concerned about the future ability of the cemetery receipts reserved to fund the position and doesn't want to set up something that will require the Town to subsidize burials of the future. Mr. Menegoni reported that the proposal seemed like it was based off current revenue production and appeared to be sustainable in the future. Mr. Ramsey reported that the Farmers Market is looking to add an assistant so that the staff can take off some of the Saturdays of the Farmers Market season.
- Mr. Ramsey reported that another increase that was requested from the Selectboard office is to increase the streetscape maintenance expense line so that the Town can hire a professional to maintain the planters on Avenue A to keep them consistent and well maintained to help improve business and appeal to downtown. Mr. Menegoni wanted to make sure that business input was going to be included in that decision as the planters are in front of their businesses.
- Ms. Bell-Upp discussed that the Town Clerk narrative appeared to state that the department is struggling and wants to know if it is a financial need in the office. Mr. Ramsey reported that the department has received an extra office space and an extra position in the last two years and so far they have not completed their move or filled the position. Mr. Hanold stated that with FY26 being a one election year it seems like a good year for the office to stabilize and utilize the tools and finances they have been provided. He discussed some concern with putting too much money into the problem without knowing what the true source of the issue is. Mr. Bowman discussed that times have changed and that we are not aware of what each department's current jobs and responsibilities are. He discussed that things have changed a lot in his time with the Town and he wanted to make sure departments are funded so they have the tools and salaries to do their jobs.

- Finance Committee selected departments they would like to meet with to ask further questions based on a consensus of the members. They chose the following departments: Library, Cemetery, DPW, Town Clerk, Council on Aging, Clean Water, Airport.
- Ms. Desroches discussed the only changes to the revenue projections have been an adjustment to FY25 actual new growth. Mr. Hanold discussed the \$200,000 FY26 projection for new growth and desire to make sure it is sustainable. Ms. Desroches discussed that it will be reviewed on a yearly basis.

Updates from Town Administrator

- Mr. Ramsey reported that the winter STM needed to be moved to February 12, 2025. Asked the Finance Committee if that was reasonable given that most of the articles are routine yearly requests. Mr. Hanold reported that the Committee is there to support the Town so they are ready to do what is needed of them.

Next Meetings

- January 8, January 15, January 22: Wage and Class study, STM articles, meet with departments for FY26 budgets

Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting:

- Ms. Bell-Upp reported that Kristi Bodin resigned from the Finance Committee. Discussed the need to start recruiting and filling the position.

Adjournment

Mr. Bowman makes the motion to adjourn at 7:22 PM. Seconded by Mr. Hanold and approved.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Angelica Desroches

Documents and exhibits:

Minutes of December 11, 2024

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
TOWN OF MONTAGUE
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
February 12, 2025

MOTIONS WITH BACKGROUND INFORMATION

ARTICLE 1: MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$36,000 for the purpose of supplementing the FY25 Reserve Fund Budget, said sum to be raised from Free Cash.

Selectboard Recommends X-X
Finance Committee Recommends X-X

Background

The Reserve Fund has been requested and approved two times this fiscal year. The first request was for \$23,500 to cover the retirement costs of the previous Town Accountant. The second request was for \$12,500 to cover tuition and transportation costs for the Smith Vocational special article short fall. The Finance Committee requests that the Reserve Fund be replenished to cover unexpected costs to come for the remainder of the fiscal year.

ARTICLE 2. MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$12,500 for the purpose of purchasing and installing cable-related equipment for MCTV and anything incidental or related thereto, said sum to be raised from PEG Access Funds.

Selectboard Recommends X-X
Finance Committee Recommends X-X

Background

This is an annual article to appropriate the PEG (Public-Education-Government) access funds provided to the Town by Comcast under the terms of its cable franchisee license for use by the town's PEG access provider, Montague Community Television.

ARTICLE 3: MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$20,547 for the purpose of increasing the amount appropriated pursuant to Article #13 of the May 4, 2024, Annual Town Meeting, which provided funding for the tuition and transportation for a Smith Vocational Montague student, said sum to be raised from Free Cash.

Selectboard Recommends X-X
Finance Committee Recommends X-X

Background

The Smith Vocational special article was budgeted with an estimate for \$75 a day for transportation costs. The September and October transportation costs were \$400 a day. When this was discovered by the Town Administrator the

transportation costs were renegotiated at \$200 a day. The overall short fall for this special article is \$33,047. The Finance Committee has voted out of the Reserve Fund to cover \$12,500 of the shortfall. This leaves a remainder of \$20,547 to cover the remainder of the tuition and transportation costs of the one Montague student currently enrolled in the school.

ARTICLE 4. MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$24,751.20 for the purpose of increasing the amount appropriated pursuant to Article #18C of the May 22, 2021, Annual Town Meeting, which provided funds for bid and project overruns, said sum to be raised from Free Cash.

Selectboard Recommends X-X
Finance Committee Recommends X-X

Background

The Bid and Project Overrun special article enables the Selectboard to supplement the budgets for capital projects so that they may be fully and satisfactorily executed. The fund began the fiscal year with a balance of \$26,223.31. In October \$14,949 was voted by the Selectboard to cover the CWF generator project bid overage. In December the Selectboard voted \$11,025.51 to cover the bid overage for the 11th Street Bridge Repairs. This leaves the bid overrun special article with \$248.80 remaining. The Town Administrator requests to replenish this fund to \$25,000 to face the rising costs and the possibility of running into bid overages in the fiscal year.

ARTICLE 5: MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$48,500 for the purpose of conducting a conference room and breakroom renovation in the Clean Water Facility, including any and all incidental and related costs, with \$20,000 to be raised from the unexpended balance of Article #7 of the October 29, 2014 Special Town Meeting and \$1,218.40 to be raised from the unexpended balance of Article #15 of the March 2, 2023 Special Town Meeting and \$27,281.60 to be raised from CWF Retained Earnings.

Selectboard Recommends X-X
Finance Committee Recommends X-X
Capital Improvements Committee Recommends X-X

Background

This project is considered phase two of the Main Generator replacement project at the CWF, where after the main generator has been removed from the room in the Administration Building, the room will be converted into a usable space for staff. Converting the old generator room would alleviate two issues by:

- Creating a larger updated staff breakroom space
- Provide a much-needed conference/meeting room for the facility (Staff currently shares the breakroom as an impromptu meeting room space)

As the old generator room has a larger footprint than the current breakroom, it will be turned into the new staff breakroom. The old staff breakroom will be converted into a conference/meeting room space with additional file storage.

ARTICLE 6: MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$24,000 for the purpose of supplementing the FY25 operating budget, with \$7,000 going to Airport PT Intern, \$13,000 to the Airport Build and Grounds, and \$4,000 to the Airport Equipment Repair and Maintenance accounts, said sum to be raised from Airport Retained Earnings.

Selectboard Recommends X-X

Finance Committee Recommends X-X

Background

\$7,000 to 600-5-482-5124 (PT Intern)- Due to no qualified individuals this year in the student hiring pool an employee from the summer was retained at a slightly higher rate to work for the winter and spring season. Additional work is also being completed in-house, where in the past it would have been outsourced to a contractor, increasing the internal labor hours. Both require additional funding for the position to keep it viable until the end of June. This will not increase the hours or related cost, it will allow us to maintain the current staffing levels.

\$13,000 to 600-5-482-5241 (Building & Grounds)- Many large expenses over the summer and fall have depleted this line item and additional funds are needed to operate until June. A significant amount of funding was put into preventative maintenance of the 6 buildings covered under this line item, including some preemptive repairs. To bring the facility closer to meeting the Department of Public Safety standards additional costs such as emergency lighting, fire extinguishers, first aid stations, and signage, were also expended. Despite the majority of repairs being done by airport staff, items that are electrical, plumbing, and propane related must be sourced out to licensed and insured professionals.

\$4,000 to 600-5-482-5244 (Equipment Repair & Maintenance)- Several smaller but unexpected expenses have depleted this line item. A gearbox on the large flail mower (DOP: 2011) had to be replaced costing over \$2,200. The airport operations truck, purchased with a 100% grant in 2019 required preventative and reactive maintenance repairs exceeding \$6,000 to ensure continued safe operation. In addition, the backup generator for the administration offices required \$2,000 in repairs to meet new safety code and emission requirements. While all necessary, these were not included or expected in the FY25 budget planning process.

ARTICLE 7: MOVED: That the Town will vote to accept as a public way the roadway known as Sandy Lane, as heretofore laid out by the Selectboard and shown on a plan of land entitled

“Proposed Street Acceptance Plan ‘Sandy Lane’ Plan of Land in Montague, Massachusetts,” dated January 18, 2024, prepared by Harold L. Eaton and Associates, Inc., on file with the Town Clerk, and authorize the Selectboard to acquire, by gift, purchase, and/or eminent domain, the fee to and/or easements in Sandy Lane for all purposes for which public ways are used in the Town of Montague and any drainage, utility and/or other easements related thereto.

Selectboard Recommends X-X
Planning Board Recommends X-X

Background

Sandy Lane is located off Turnpike Road and provides access to the Transfer Station, Regional Dog Shelter, Franklin Regional Transit Authority Bus Garage, and Judd Wire, Inc. In 2023, The 723 foot long road was reconstructed by FRTA to the Town’s subdivision standards as a condition of FRTA’s development plan for a new maintenance facility. While the land under Sandy Lane itself is owned in fee-simple by the town, Sandy Lane has never been accepted as a public way. By accepting Sandy Lane as a public way, the town will be able to receive Chapter 90 reimbursement from the state to help support ongoing maintenance of the roadway.

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
TOWN OF MONTAGUE
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
February 12, 2025

Franklin, ss.

To either of the Constables of the Town of Montague in the County of Franklin:

GREETINGS:

In the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, you are hereby directed to notify and warn the Inhabitants of the Town of Montague qualified to vote in Town affairs to meet in the Turners Falls High School Theater, 222 Turnpike Road, Montague on Wednesday, February 12, 2025, at 6:30 P.M. and to act on the following articles and any motions which may be presented.

ARTICLE 1: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, borrow, or otherwise provide the sum of \$36,000 or any other amount for the purpose of supplementing the FY25 Reserve Fund Budget, or pass any vote or votes in relation thereto.

(Finance Committee Request)

ARTICLE 2: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, borrow or otherwise provide the sum of \$12,500, or any other amount, for the purpose of purchasing and installing cable related equipment for MCTV and anything incidental or related thereto, or pass any vote or votes in relation thereto.

(Selectboard Request)

ARTICLE 3: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$20,547 for the purpose of increasing the amount appropriated pursuant to Article #13 of the May 4, 2024, Annual Town Meeting, which provided funding for the tuition and transportation for a Smith Vocational Montague student, or pass any vote or votes in relation thereto.

(Town Accountant Request)

ARTICLE 4: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, borrow or otherwise provide the sum of \$24,751.20, or any other amount, for the purpose of increasing the amount appropriated pursuant to Article #18C of the May 22, 2021, Annual Town Meeting, which provided funds for bid and project overruns, or pass any vote or votes in relation thereto.

(Town Administrator Request)

ARTICLE 5: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, borrow, or otherwise provide the sum of \$48,500, or any other amount, for the purpose of conducting a conference room and breakroom renovation at the Clean Water Facility, including any and all incidental and related costs, or pass any vote or votes in relation thereto.
(Clean Water Facility Request)

ARTICLE 6: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, borrow, or otherwise provide the sum of \$24,000, or any other amount, for the purpose of supplementing the FY25 Airport operating budget with \$7,000 going to Airport PT Intern, \$13,000 to the Airport Build and Grounds, and \$4,000 to the Airport Equipment Repair and Maintenance account and any and all incidental or related costs, or pass any vote or votes in relation thereto.

(Airport Request)

ARTICLE 7: To see if the Town will vote to accept as a public way the roadway known as Sandy Lane, as heretofore laid out by the Selectboard and shown on a plan of land entitled "Proposed Street Acceptance Plan 'Sandy Lane' Plan of Land in Montague, Massachusetts," dated January 18, 2024, prepared by Harold L. Eaton and Associates, Inc., on file with the Town Clerk, and authorize the Selectboard to acquire, by gift, purchase, and/or eminent domain, the fee to and/or easements in Sandy Lane for all purposes for which public ways are used in the Town of Montague and any drainage, utility and/or other easements related thereto, or pass any vote or votes in relation thereto.

(Selectboard Request)