

**MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**Wednesday, January 8, 2025 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 John Hanold

**Finance Committee members absent:** Jennifer Waryas, Francia Wisniewski

**Others present:** Town Administrator Walter Ramsey, Assistant Town Administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller and Town Accountant Angelica Desroches, MCTV Dean Garvin

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

**Meeting minutes:**

Mr. Hanold moved to approve the minutes of December 11, 2024. Seconded by Mr. Bowman and approved.

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

**Review and Recommendations for STM financial articles**

- Article 1:
  - Ms. Bell-Upp **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. Seconded by Mr. Bowman.  
Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye
- Article 2:
  - Ms. Bell-Upp **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. Seconded by Mr. Menegoni.
    - Mr. Hanold noted that this is a routine article that happens every year to move money to MCTV.  
Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye
- Article 3:
  - Ms. Bell-Upp **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. Seconded by Mr. Hanold.
    - Mr. Hanold wondered why the transportation costs were higher this year. Mr. Ramsey reported that it was bid out by the school and that they did

not choose the lowest bidder because they were not vetted by the school. When the Town discovered that the rate was \$400 a day after the second month of school it was put out to rebid. After the rebid, the current company lowered the rate to \$200 a day to keep the contract. Ms. Bell-Upp shared that in the past Montague teamed with Greenfield for this transportation. Mr. Ramsey stated that unfortunately that was not available this year. Mr. Hanold would like someone to follow up to make sure that the student is using the service to which Mr. Ramsey agreed he would follow up on that.

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

- Article 4:

- Ms. Bell-Upp **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. Seconded by Mr. Bowman.
  - Mr. Ramsey provided background for the article stating that the Selectboard had to utilize this special article two times this fiscal year. The first time was for the Clean Water Facility generator bid and the second time was for the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge repair bid.

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

- Article 5:

- Ms. Bell-Upp **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. Seconded by Mr. Bowman.
  - Mr. Hanold was curious if there was a possibility of dual use space. Does it have to be separate spaces. He also shared that he has been to the Clean Water Facility many times over the past years and feels that the upgrade to the area would definitely be beneficial to them. Mr. Menegoni said that the work is going to be done in-house for the most part and that the presentation at the CIC showed two very functional spaces. The Clean Water Facility has been having difficulty finding meeting space for the project and compliance meetings they often end up having with providers. Mr. Nolan-Zeller reported to the board that the CIC voted unanimously to recommend the project for the STM. And that this is the only capital article for the STM, the rest of the capital articles will be for the ATM.

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

- Article 6:

- Ms. Bell-Upp **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. Seconded by Mr. Bowman
  - Mr. Hanold shared concerns with this request that the Airport is budgeting too close to the margins to get the budget approved at the ATM. Mr. Ramsey reported that the Airport Commission is aware of all the overages and approved the overspending of the account lines with the understanding they were going to backfill with the retained earnings at the STM. Mr. Bowman stated that the lack of finding a qualified intern seems to be more of an issue with the school than it does with the Airport planning. Mr. Menegoni questioned whether using the retained earnings now would just keep pushing the underfunding and overspending problem to the future. Ms. Bell-Upp asked Mr. Ramsey what the results of the wage and class study were and how they impact the Airport. Mr. Ramsey answered that the wage and class recommended bringing the Airport Operations Manager downgraded a grade and the Airport Manager be moved up two grades. He also shared that the current budget does not have the wage and class changes budgeted in them yet, but that the wage and class have been the steppingstone used in negotiations. Given the wage and class study changes the Selectboard will be meeting with the Airport Manager Monday night to discuss the STM articles, wages, and the FY26 budget. Ms. Bell-Upp questioned whether the Finance Committee should wait until next week to vote on this Article with the Airport Manager attending so they can ask him questions directly. Mr. Menegoni and Mr. Hanold agreed.
  - Ms. Bell-Upp withdrew her motion.

#### **Updates from Town Administrator**

- Mr. Ramsey shared with the committee that the Selectboard will be reviewing personnel changes at the library, CWF, and COA. He also reiterated that they will be meeting with the Airport Manager on Monday night to discuss STM article and FY26 budget.
- Starting January 15<sup>th</sup> the Selectboard and Finance Committee will be shifting toward the FY26 budget. There are some unknowns currently with the health insurance increase that is currently budgeted at 5% and the sewer I&I taxation number. The complication of the implementation of the wage and class study with union negotiations is also being worked out. The current goal is to utilize a special article to fund those negotiations since they may not be completed by the ATM.
- Mr. Ramsey gave a presentation to the Finance Committee on the wage and class study results. Montague was compared to 14 communities in the commutable distance around Montague. Overall found Montague to be comparable with those communities. They also reviewed all job descriptions and redrafted them for accuracy and legal compliance. He highlighted changes in the Airport, COA Director, CWF Superintendent, and DPW

Superintendent. Mr. Hanold stated that the Finance Committee and ATM should agree on the grading changes. Mr. Hanold, Mr. Ramsey, and Ms. Desroches discussed how the downgraded positions would be handled and stated that employees would be red lined not cut in pay.

**Next Meetings**

- a. 1/15/25 – Cemetery, COA, Airport, STM Articles
- b. 1/22/25 – 5:30 start time Library, CWF

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

Ms. Bell-Upp asked for a consensus on the proposed 5:30 start time on January 22. Committee members were favorable. Mr. Hanold wanted to revisit the meeting time for future meetings to see if there can be a time that is more beneficial to the Committee member's time and the Montague staff's time.

Ms. Bell-Upp wanted to know who hosts the future February 5<sup>th</sup> meeting with the school. Mr. Garvin from MCTV reported that in the past it has depended on the location of the meeting.

**Adjournment**

Mr. Bowman makes the motion to adjourn at 6:56 PM. Seconded by Mr. Hanold and approved.

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Angelica Desroches

**Documents and exhibits:**

Minutes of January 8, 2025