

JOINT MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, February 26, 2025 at 6 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, Jennifer Waryas, Leigh Rae, Chris Menegoni, and John Hanold

Finance Committee members absent: Francia Wisnewski

Others present: Town Administrator Walter Ramsey, Assistant Town Administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller, Town Accountant Angelica Desroches, Gregory Garrison – CIC, Lynn Reynolds – CIC

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

Meeting minutes:

Mr. Hanold moved to approve the minutes of February 19, 2025. Seconded by Mr. Bowman and approved.

Mr. Hanold requested that the words “none of” were removed from the top of page 2.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Waryas – Aye, Rae – Aye, Menegoni – Abstain

Non-CIC Articles:

- Conservation Commission - \$10,000 Mr. Ramsey presented the annual request to transfer \$10,000 to the Waidlich Memorial Conservation fund which is used to protect farmland and other open space. This is not a requirement every year and the Commission Chair often asks for it only if there is funding available. The fund was last used in 2020.

MOTION: To accept the Henry Waidlich fund transfer. Moved by Mr. Hanold. Seconded by Mr. Bowman

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

REVISED MOTION: Approve the Henry Waidlich conservation fund with funding source of taxation. Mr. Bowman moved. Seconded by Mr. Menegoni.

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

- Smith Vocation and Agricultural High School - \$59,000 Mr. Ramsey gave an overview that the estimate is based off 10% increase in tuition and \$200 dollars a day for transportation. Ms. Rae asked if there is a way to prevent this in the future, but Mr. Hanold replied that this is a state-mandated requirement. Ms. Rae shared concern about whether the student is using the transportation and wanted to make sure this is being followed up on.

MOTION: To approve \$59,000 for Smith Vocational tuition and transportation.

Mr. Bowman moved. Seconded by Mr. Menegoni

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

- Network equipment - \$20,000 Mr. Ramsey recommended this article be removed. There have been changes to the IT structure, so this article is not ready for Town Meeting this year.

- Library Accessibility/Upgrades - \$10,000 Mr. Ramsey described that the Library Director is requesting these funds to complete upgrades at the libraries for ADA and other upgrades. Mr. Hanold inquired whether these funds would be able to be used at the Director's discretion or is it set to a specific project. Mr. Ramsey assured him that it is not set to a specific project but can be used for what project feels like a priority at the time.

MOTION: To approve \$10,000 for the library accessibility/upgrades from free cash.

Mr. Bowman moved. Seconded by Mr. Bowman.

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

- Pay and Class Implementation - \$200,000 Mr. Ramsey reported that this article is for the funding of the negotiations and the wage and class implementation for the new contracts. Currently this is the best estimate given where we are in the negotiation process. Mr. Menegoni suggests making this its own article due to the nature of the article. Mr. Hanold wondered if the budget as it stands does not include any salary and wage changes. Ms. Desroches reported that the budget as it stands only includes contractual steps, no COLAs or shift to the wage and class. Mr. Hanold questioned the timeline for completion. Mr. Ramsey stated he is trying to get it more wrapped up before the final vote next month. Ms. Bell-Upp suggested tabling this vote for a few weeks until there are more finite numbers.
- Appropriation to OPEB -\$50,000, Appropriation to Capital Improvement Stabilization-\$131,890, Appropriation to GMRSD Stabilization-\$38,718. Ms. Bell-Upp discussed that these are the annual routine appropriations. Mr. Menegoni questioned if these are the annual appropriations from free cash. Ms. Desroches answered that these are the annual appropriations from taxation due to the financial policy.

MOTION: To approve \$50,000 for appropriation to OPEB, \$131,890 for appropriation to Capital Improvement stabilization, \$38,718 for appropriation to GMRSD from taxation.

Mr. Menegoni moved. Seconded by Mr. Hanold.

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

Capital Improvement Committee Updates:

- Mr. Garrison reported that this year the CIC was presented with 18 capital requests, one of which was already approved in the STM. This leaves 17 capital requests for the ATM. 5 of these requests were not part of the 5-year capital plan, but the other 12 were part of the capital plan.
- CWF -The first project is the CWF mini-excavator. Mr. Garrison added that CWF often does a lot of their own work, and this will help them be timelier and more effective with their projects. The next two requests are for generators at Lake Pleasant station and a portable one. The current generators are far past their life expectancy and are essential for the running of the pump stations. The last article from the CWF requests is the replacement of 3 thicken sludge pumps from 1981. They plan on replacing the 3 pistons with 2 modern ones. These need to be replaced for compliance with EPA and DEP regulations.
- DPW/CWF- The first project is the Phase 2 sewer collection system rehabilitation. This project comes in at \$3,000,000. The project will be working on lining pipes and replacing manholes in multiple areas around town. This is a multi-year project and suggested funding source would be borrowing with a split between Town and CWF budgets. Mr. Nolan-Zeller added that NPDES permit includes work that must complete work within a certain time period and CIC wanted to do this project as one bulk project instead of breaking it into smaller pieces.

CIC Calls meeting to order at 6:42.

Ms. Rae questioned if there was a 5-year capital project budget that is being kept and updated. Mr. Garrison reported that the CIC keeps a 5-year capital plan and keeps it updated. Mr. Ramsey added that phase 1 is already under way and that this is phase 2. The Town has 10 years to complete this work but that will probably become more expensive over time. He also reminded the Committee that this project will probably be bonded due to the amount of the project. Ms. Waryas questioned what the impact would be and the split between taxation and rate payers would be. Mr. Ramsey answered that they are currently looking at a 60/40 split with taxation paying for the combined sewer system and that rate payers would pay for the separate sewer system.

- DPW – The DPW had four requests for vehicle replacements. Two dump trucks, a camera van, and a pickup. These were followed by two articles that were not on the capital plan but have become priorities. The first of these is Meadow Rd guardrail/culvert work due to deterioration of guardrail pilons with the cost being primarily having a company place the new pilons. The second is Oakman St slope stabilization due to wash out with the cost being primarily for engineering. Mr. Hanold wondered if there was a way to prevent these emergency expenditures. Mr. Garrison stated that he has been working with the Director to add guardrails, roads, culverts, and bridges to the 5-year capital plan, so he is doing a thorough analysis of what the standing of these is in the Town currently. The final DPW project is for road paving for alleys and other non-chapter 90 eligible roads/parking lots.
- Library- The only project for the library this year is to renovate the storefront of the Millers Falls Library. Last year they renovated the side of the building and this year they are requesting to renovate the front entry.
- Parks and Recreation – The parks and recreation are requesting money to replace the rubber surface of the park and with that they are requesting replacement of the 24-year-old tube slide. Both are past their expiration and require updating.
- Selectboard/Planning – The first project is for the design to support the Complete Streets grant for \$500,000 for renovation of Montague Center. Ms. Rae expressed concern about whether this project included the area near the Book Mill due to a recent serious accident. Mr. Nolan-Zeller responded that this current funding only addresses the Complete Streets Grant project that focuses on the Town Common area. The final project is FRTA bus stop improvements. This is only the Montague portion to supplement the MA DOT grant that FRTA received. Mr. Ramsey identified that the funding source for this project would be Cannabis Impact Fees due to the proximity to the cannabis store located here and the increase in traffic in this area due to the store.

CIC adjourns their meeting at 7:26.

Updates from Town Administrator:

Mr. Ramsey gave an update of the Franklin Regional Shelter assessment, which came in at \$4,800 over the \$800 that it is currently at. But after the reaction from the community this was reduced to a 10% increase, so it is at \$880 for FY26.

Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting:

Next Meetings:

- a. 3/5/25 – Final Vote Sch I & Sch II
- b. 3/12/25 – CIC/FC/SB meeting – capital requests, CIC report, votes
- c. 3/19/25 – FCTS, SB/FC reconciliation, vote remaining articles
- d. 3/26/25 – FC Final Votes and report

Adjournment

Mr. Bowman makes the motion to adjourn at 7:32 PM. Seconded by Mr. Hanold and approved.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Angelica Desroches

Documents and exhibits:

Minutes of February 19, 2025