

MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE
Wednesday, October 2, 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, Francia Wisnewski, Leigh Rae, Chris Menegoni

Finance Committee members absent: Josh Bell

Others present: Town Accountant Angelica Desroches, Town Administrator Walter Ramsey

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

Meeting minutes:

- Ms. Wisnewski moved to approve the minutes of September 24, 2025. Seconded by Mr. Bowman and approved.
- Ms. Rae asked for clarification on the discussion of Article 1 where it mentions staffing. She wanted it to be clearer that the bill payments were missed due to staffing changes.
 - Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Wisnewski – Aye, Waryas – Abstain, Rae—Aye, Menegoni – Abstain

Review and Vote Recommendations for STM financial articles:

- **Prior Year Bills for \$19,559.25**
 - Move to recommend \$19,559.25 for the payment of prior year bills, \$18,995.85 to be raised from Free Cash and \$563.40 to be raised from CWF Retained Earnings. Ms. Rae moved the motion. Mr. Menegoni seconded the motion.
 - Ms. Wisnewski inquired as to why there is a split in funding sources. Ms. Desroches reported that one of the bills was from the Clean Water Facility, so it needs to be charged to the Clean Water Facility.
 - Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Wisnewski – Aye, Waryas – Aye, Rae—Aye, Menegoni – Aye
- **PEG Access Funds for \$12,500**
 - Move to recommend \$12,500 for the purpose of purchasing and installing cable related equipment for MCTV, to be raised from PEG Access Funds. Mr. Menegoni moved the motion. Mr. Bowman seconded the motion.
 - Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Wisnewski – Aye, Waryas – Aye, Rae—Aye, Menegoni – Aye
- **NEPBA Police Union Contract for \$95,100**
 - Move to recommend \$95,100 for the New England Police Benevolent Association contract retroactive to July 1, 2025, to be raised from Free Cash. Mr. Bowman moved the motion. Ms. Waryas seconded the motion.

- Ms. Wisnewski requested more information about the article. Mr. Ramsey overviewed that this article covers both the patrol and sergeants' contracts, with \$44,600 being for the sergeants' union and \$50,500 being for the patrol union. This funds the first year of a three contract. The contract removes the bottom three steps and adds two steps to the top. All officers eligible for a step get two steps in the first year with no COLA, in year two there is a 2.5% COLA and in year three there is a 3.5% COLA. This was negotiated in mediation and was able to be settled before arbitration.
- Ms. Waryas wanted more information about how this affects next year's budget. Mr. Ramsey stated that year one is the most expensive of the contract and then it tapers down in the other two years. Ms. Desroches stated that with the staffing turnover and transitions next years budget impact appears to be mostly absorbed by the transitions so far. There are still openings in the department and a few large hires left before more can be known about next year.
- Ms. Wisnewski didn't feel she had all the information. She wanted to know about how many employees this covers and what future implications are. Ms. Rae stated a lot of that information is in the background. Ms. Wisnewski stated that it was not sent timely enough for her review. Mr. Ramsey reported that the contracts cover 5 active employees in the Sergeant's union and 9 active employees in the Patrol union. Typically, the police department has 18 people, so there are still vacancies that have not been filled. With a new police chief in the process of being hired and then they will be tasked with reorganizing and hiring open positions.
 - Bell-Up – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Wisnewski – Abstain, Waryas – Aye, Rae – Aye, Menegoni – Aye

- **Unrepresented Employees Wage and Class Implementation for \$26,990**

- Move to recommend \$26,990 for the implementation of the wage and class scale for unrepresented employees, \$24,505 to be raised from Free Cash and \$2,485 to be raised from Clean Water Facility Retained Earnings. Mr. Menegoni moved the motion. Mr. Bowman seconded the motion.
 - Bell-Up – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Wisnewski – Aye, Waryas – Aye, Rae – Aye, Menegoni – Aye

- **Town Health Insurance for \$274,600**

- Move to recommend \$274,600 for the additional appropriation to the Town Health Insurance for FY26, \$250,600 to be raised from Taxation and \$24,000 to be raised from Sewer Revenues. Mr. Bowman moved the motion. Ms. Wisnewski seconded the motion.
- Mr. Menegoni questioned why the Clean Water Facility was part of the funding source. Ms. Desroches stated that it covers the insurance increase for the employees of the facility. Ms. Rae questioned if this means sewer rates will go up. Ms. Desroches responded that the current rates were built with a buffer that covers this increase.
- Ms. Waryas wanted to know why it was coming from taxation and what the Town is doing to prevent this from happening in the future. Ms. Desroches responded that since it is an ongoing cost it is important to try to get it into the tax rate this year so there is not a larger spike next year. Mr. Ramsey reported that the Town is looking at a couple options for alternatives, including looking into transitioning to other health insurance companies while working with the Hampshire County Trust to work on reform to prevent this in the future.

- Ms. Wisnewski wanted to know what the rules of allocating to an enterprise are. Ms. Desroches informed her that enterprise funds are supposed to absorb all costs of their services both directly and through indirects and this includes costs of employee insurances and benefits.
 - Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Wisnewski – Aye, Waryas – Abstain, Rae—Aye, Menegoni – Aye
- **South Street Culverts Rehabilitation for \$50,000**
 - Move to recommend \$50,000 for the rehabilitation of South Street culverts, to be raised from Free Cash. Mr. Menegoni moved the motion. Mr. Bowman seconded the motion.
 - Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Wisnewski – Aye, Waryas – Aye, Rae—Aye, Menegoni – Aye
- **Airport Fuel Revolving Increase to \$350,000**
 - Move to recommend increasing the Airport Fuel Revolving fund to \$350,000 cap on expenditures. Mr. Menegoni moved the motion. Mr. Bowman seconded the motion.
 - Ms. Waryas wanted to know what the reason for the increase was. Ms. Bell-Upp stated they are selling a lot more fuel. Ms. Desroches responded that he gets revenue from selling the fuel and uses that revenue to purchase more fuel and with the usage increasing he needs to buy more.
 - Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Wisnewski – Aye, Waryas – Aye, Rae—Aye, Menegoni – Aye

Updates from Town Administrator

- Mr. Ramsey wanted to leave room for discussion of the articles that are financially adjacent.
 - The first article to review was the Kearsarge PILOT. Mr. Menegoni had questions about the terms of the PILOT stating that they did not seem in line with Gill and did not take into consideration the depreciation of the property. Mr. Ramsey informed that these PILOTs were already agreed upon in 2019 and are being renegotiated because of a change of hands. Mr. Ramsey stated that Kearsarge has already agreed to these terms, which answered Mr. Menegoni's concerns.
 - The second/third article was the HERO Act articles. The first votes in an annual COLA change set by the state and the second one increases the base exemption by 50%. The first costs around \$1,200 and the second costs around \$21,200. Ms. Rae stated some of the background was confusing to her and Mr. Ramsey reported he would clarify it some. Mr. Menegoni wanted to know if the number of veterans is predicted to change over time. Mr. Ramsey responded that it has been consistent over the past few years.
 - The fourth article is regarding the room occupancy tax. The Selectboard proposed 6% for the local option.

Next Meeting dates/topics:

- Discussed upcoming meetings. Decided on a date for the November meeting that met all Finance Committee members' schedules.
- October 15 – Pre-town meeting at 6pm
- October 22 – Special Town Meeting at 6:30pm
- November 19 – Capital Improvement Committee and Reserve Fund Transfer for Recreation

Adjournment

Mr. Bowman makes the motion to adjourn at 6:52 PM. Seconded by Mr. Menegoni and approved.
Bell-Up – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Wisnewski – Aye, Waryas – Aye, Rae—Aye, Menegoni – Aye

Respectfully submitted,
Angelica Desroches

Documents and exhibits: