

JOINT MEETING OF MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE and CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, November 19, 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, Josh Bell

Capital Improvement members present: Greg Garrison, Lynn Reynolds, Ariel Elan, Chris Menegoni

Others present: Town Accountant Angelica Desroches, Town Administrator Walter Ramsey, Assistant Town Administrator Christopher Nolan-Zeller

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

Meeting minutes:

- Ms. Wisnewski moved to approve the minutes of October 1, 2025. Seconded by Ms. Rae and approved.
 - Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Wisnewski – Aye, Waryas – Aye, Rae—Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Bell – Aye

Capital Improvement Committee FY27 Budget Planning:

- Mr. Garrison started his presentation with reiterating the balances of reserves for the Town with a focus on the free cash and stabilization balances that are accessible to fund Capital Improvement projects as seen on the Reserve Balances sheet. He then began to summarize each department's requests starting with the Clean Water Facilities requests totaling \$1.176 million. This included a large request to replace two secondary clarifier mechanisms with a total of \$966,000. The second request is for a super duty work truck with plow and lights. The final request is for a wastewater facility planning study to evaluate the facility and make a cost-effective plan to handle the large expensive repairs that are expected to arise in the future. Ms. Rae questioned whether the large request could be funded through bonding. To which Mr. Garrison responded that that is a Finance Committee decision and part of why these requests are being discussed now so that Finance Committee can begin to think about those decisions.
- Ms. Waryas asked Mr. Garrison if the Finance Committee was given the detailed requests from the department heads. Mr. Nolan-Zeller reported that it had not been sent to them at this time but that he could send it out. Ms. Wisnewski requested that they be sent to improve transparency and conversation at meetings in the future. Mr. Garrison stated that the purpose of this meeting is to give a high-level overview of what has been requested and that at this time the CIC has not even had the opportunity to meet with department heads to fully vet these projects to move forward.
- Ms. Bell-Upp questioned why there were no school requests on the current list. Mr. Nolan-Zeller reported that there is some hesitancy to make requests pending the MSBA New Elementary

School project acceptance. Mr. Garrison also informed everyone that the due date for the school committee's requests is not until December to give them extra time.

- Mr. Garrison then gave an overview of the DPW requests with total \$485,000. Five of these requests are for vehicles. One is for the discretionary fund, and the last one is for a security gate at the transfer station. Mr. Garrison stated that the CIC current timeline for vehicle replacement was around 12 years but given upgrades to facilities they are going to talk with DPW about whether that timeline still makes sense. Ms. Rae also questioned the request for the excavator since CWF already requested one last year. Mr. Garrison responded that they are going to ask about sharing different equipment amongst departments as well.
- Ms. Rae inquired as to whether there was other infrastructure on the 5-year capital plan that includes traffic calming measures to address safety in the villages. Mr. Ramsey reported that the Montague Center is about to get \$500,000 in traffic calming infrastructure, which is almost entirely grant funded and that Chapter 90 can be used for these types of roadway improvements as well. Mr. Garrison discussed that CIC is starting to include more infrastructure in the plan including culverts, guardrails, drainage, etc to make it more comprehensive.
- Ms. Waryas wanted to know if there was a plan that the CIC was operating off or do, they just respond to department requests. Mr. Garrison stated that there is a 5-year capital plan on the website with all requests outlined by department for the next 5 years. And regarding the current requests there is a question on whether it is on the 5-year capital plan as part of the criteria. Ms. Elan added that while there is a 5-year capital plan it is important to be open to requests that are new like the guardrail request from FY26 that was safety related.
- Mr. Garrison went on to discuss the last of the requests. The Airport is requesting to upfit and repair an F-450 truck. The Library is requesting Carnegie Library roof repairs. The Police Department is requesting to update the radio system and building security system, but they are allowing time for these requests while the new chief settles into his role. The Selectboard is requesting that tiles be replaced in the Colle building which would be funded by the Colle fund. Mr. Garrison wrapped up that the CIC will be meeting with department heads over the next few months and will come back to the Finance Committee with the finalized capital requests at the end of that process.

FY27 Budget Calendar and Current Revenue Projections:

- Ms. Desroches presented this year's budget calendar in two formats to allow for different perspective based on how people want to see it. At this point in the budget cycle there are no requests in from departments, because these are due December 8th.
- Ms. Bell-Upp questioned whether we are planning a winter special. Mr. Ramsey reported that it is still to be determined at this point in time.
- Ms. Bell-Upp wondered when narratives are due. Ms. Desroches stated that they are also due December 8th. Since narratives and budgets are due December 8th then the Finance Committee should meet on December 17th so they have time to review the narratives and budgets to decide on who they want to meet this year.
- Ms. Desroches inquired about how the Finance Committee would like to receive materials this year. She offered to email the information and create a shared drive. Ms. Wisnewski stated she liked the shared drive because with all the changes in the budget file it is hard to keep track of all the emailed spreadsheets.
- Ms. Bell-Upp asked if Ms. Desroches wanted to share anything about the current budget. Ms. Desroches reported that with the current revenue projections and an insurance increase of 20%

the budget is in deficit by around \$300,000, which is why the department heads were asked to create a level service budget and a level service budget minus 2% this year.

- Mr. Ramsey commented that he thinks the Finance Committee should have a meeting soon regarding the large facility projects that are being proposed. Including the library, Franklin County Tech School, and the MSBA new elementary school project. This meeting should focus on the Town's bonding capacity regarding these projects.

Updates from Town Administrator

- Mr. Ramsey gave an overview on the current proposed employee insurance buy out program. This plan would essentially be an incentive to employees who can take another insurance plan to do so.
- Ms. Bell-Upp questioned the financial impact of having employees leaving the plan. Wondering if it would lead to higher costs. Ms. Desroches stated that since we are part of the Hampshire Trust we already have larger buying power since there are a lot of members in the trust.
- Ms. Wisnewski wondered how this would work with the state marketplace. Ms. Desroches answered that the employees sign off that they are not leaving the plan to go on a state health insurance plan.
- Mr. Bell advocated positively for the program. He stated that it could be beneficial to the Town and the certain demographic of people that it could serve.
- Mr. Ramsey wrapped up by saying that the Town is also looking into other options to help fight the increase in insurance costs by exploring other avenues and once the information is gathered there will be public presentations and discussions about it.
- Mr. Ramsey reported that at the December 1st Selectboard meeting the Franklin County Tech School will be giving a public presentation on the proposed new high school building through MSBA.

Next Meeting dates/topics:

- December 17 – Department Budgets and Narratives Review

Adjournment

Mr. Bowman makes the motion to adjourn at 7:08 PM. Seconded by Mr. Bell and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Wisnewski – Aye, Waryas – Aye, Rae—Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Bell – Aye

Respectfully submitted,
Angelica Desroches

Documents and exhibits:

Reserve Fund Balances