

MEETING OF MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, January 7, 2026 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. Selectboard Chair Matt Lord called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM.

Finance Committee members present: Chair Dorinda Bell-Upp, Vice Chair Fred Bowman, Francia Wisnewski, Leigh Rae, Chris Menegoni, Josh Bell, Jennifer Waryas (at 6:13pm)

Selectboard members present: Matt Lord, Marina Goldman

Others present: Town Accountant Angelica Desroches, Town Administrator Walter Ramsey, Treasure Collector Eileen Seymour, and DPW Superintendent Sam Urkiel

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

Meeting minutes:

- Ms. Rae moved to approve the minutes of December 17, 2025. Seconded by Mr. Menegoni and approved.
 - Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Wisnewski – Aye, Rae—Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Bell – Aye

FY27 Budget Discussion with Treasurer Collector:

- Ms. Seymour explained the effect of borrowing on her office capacity. She reported that short term borrowing is less time consuming and long-term borrowing often takes more time. The town does not do a bond unless there is more than \$2 million in debt.
- Ms. Seymour discussed recent changes in her office with going to quarterly taxes and moving trash barrel sticker sales to once a year. Ms. Rae asked about putting sewer bills and barrel stickers on the tax bills. Ms. Seymour replied that it would get complicated with escrow accounts and with mixing fees with taxes on one bill.
- Ms. Wisnewski inquired about the 10% wage increases, if the current staffing level is adequate, the 30% reduction in postage, early payoff incentives for citizens, and any pressures foreseen from the 2% reduction. Ms. Desroches answered the question of wage increase and stated that all wages in the budget are entered by herself. They are based off where an employee is currently being paid and then giving all employees any contractual increases based on union contracts or non-union contracts for the fiscal year. This was compounded this budget due to the timing of the union contract settlements last budget cycle, so it in essence appears like two budget years hitting the department budgets. Ms. Seymour stated that this is the 3rd quarter since moving to quarterly and while she feels the department is at capacity she is not ready to decide yet about staffing. Ms. Waryas asked why the town moved to quarterly and Ms. Seymour responded that it was to improve cash flow, so they did not have to borrow to pay bills. Ms. Seymour responded to the question about the 30% decrease in postage by saying she had

already decreased other lines to where she felt comfortable and saw a little less activity on the postage line but overall isn't sure how that cut will go.

- Mr. Lord wondered about the tax title line and if the costs of these are predictable due to the long process of tax title. Ms. Seymour stated that usually she can foresee heavy hitting years but there are times when bills come in from the lawyer for doing 25 years of research on a property that were not expected.
- Ms. Rae wanted to request more information about the forecasting of the town around debt. Ms. Seymour stated that every time they go out to bond the financial advisors look to see if it makes sense to refinance and consolidate debt and that often before large projects are proposed there are debt schedules created to know the financial impact on the taxpayers and rate payers.

FY27 Budget Discussion with DPW Superintendent:

- Ms. Rae began the questions wondering about the specifics around the parts, accessories, repairs and maintenance, and discretionary lines. Mr. Urkiel explained that repairs and maintenance is often related to contracted services for repairs like calling in HVAC repair or sending vehicles out for repairs that can't be completed in house. He stated over the past years those lines have mostly been spent and that they often get creative with repairs to save money. Ms. Rae wondered what the discretionary line item is for, to which Mr. Urkiel stated it is for large unforeseen expenses that need to be fixed quickly to keep operations going without needing to wait for funding.
- Ms. Rae changed the subject to the solid waste budget and ways that the community can save money in this budget. Mr. Urkiel discussed that he encourages using different garage sale sites and other resources so people can reuse stuff that others would throw away. Mr. Lord noted that some of the solid waste line is contractual and there is a portion that is based on tonnage. Mr. Urkiel informed everyone that the tonnage is consistent year-to-year and does not fluctuate a lot.
- Ms. Bell-Upp wondered what the solid waste office supply line, that is \$13,000 is for. Mr. Urkiel informed her that most of that line is for the purchase of the trash stickers themselves.
- Ms. Wisnewski wanted to know more about Mr. Urkiel's assumption about fuel prices leveling off. Mr. Urkiel stated that most of the travel has been more local and they are seeing a reduction in fuel usage. They only use large amounts of fuel when they are hauling materials with the large trucks from far away. Mr. Urkiel added that they have also been working on reusing as much material as possible. His example being the usage of materials from milling for future gravel use.
- Ms. Rae asked Mr. Urkiel if he anticipates any overages from open special articles, to which he replied that he does not see any overages at this time.

Updates from Town Administrator

- Ms. Bell-Upp asked Mr. Ramsey if he wants the Finance Committee to give recommendations for budgets now. Mr. Lord stated that it would be helpful to hear their granular critiques. Mr. Lord and Ms. Bell-Upp both expressed concerns over the cuts to the postage line. Mr. Lord also expressed concern with cuts to the repairs and maintenance lines given FY26 expenses have already exceeded the budgets on some of those lines.

- Ms. Wisnewski discussed wanting to have more citizen engagement and expressed an interest in holding public office hours for the community to come in and have conversations with committee members.
- Mr. Ramsey reported that there is now a FY27 municipal budget planning page on the website to help inform the community about the process.
- Mr. Ramsey also updated that the health insurance company is not planning on releasing rates until early February and it is the same timeline with the MIIA health insurance quote that the town has requested. Mr. Lord inquired about whether there is exploration into the GIC plan and the funding they offered. Mr. Ramsey stated that there is no funding, but they allowed a longer timeline to pay back lingering health claims if there was a switch to GIC. He also stated that the benefit to MIIA is that they offer Blue Cross Blue Shield so it would be a smoother transition.

Next Meeting dates/topics:

- January 21 – Town Clerk and Airport
- January 28 – Library and Police
- February 5 – Gill-Montague Regional School District

Adjournment

Ms. Goldman makes motion to adjourn at 7:13 PM. Seconded by Mr. Lord and approved.

Lord – Aye, Goldman – Aye

Mr. Bowman makes the motion to adjourn at 7:14 PM. Seconded by Ms. Waryas and approved.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Angelica Desroches

Documents and exhibits: