

MEETING OF MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE
Wednesday, January 14, 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 6:04 PM.

Finance Committee members present: Chair Dorinda Bell-Upp, Vice Chair Fred Bowman, Francia Wisnewski, Leigh Rae, Chris Menegoni

Finance Committee members absent: Jennifer Waryas and Josh Bell

Selectboard members present: Matt Lord, Marina Goldman

Others present: Town Accountant Angelica Desroches, Town Administrator Walter Ramsey, Director of Assessing Adam Tocci, Clean Water Facility Superintendent Chelsey Little

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

Meeting minutes:

- Ms. Wisnewski moved to approve the minutes of January 7, 2026. Seconded by Ms. Rae and approved.
 - Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Wisnewski – Aye, Rae—Aye, Menegoni – Aye

FY27 Budget Discussion with Director of Assessing:

- Ms. Bell-Upp began a discussion on whether there was a shortfall this year in the Assessor budget due to the valuation line going over.
- Ms. Rae questioned why there were no larger savings following the First Light Pilot agreement as was discussed in the town meeting vote for that PILOT. Mr. Tocci explained that in FY27 the Town will be having a revaluation year in which the state will be doing a more intensive look at valuations and the assessment process. Mr. Tocci stated that he shifted a lot of the legal line to consulting to help him hire out professionals to help him through this revaluation given his limited experience with the software and the community since he is new to Montague. He anticipates these consulting costs tapering off as he gains experience with the software and the community. Ms. Wisnewski noted that he had a plan to reduce the consulting line overtime and build the knowledge of the department.
- Mr. Ramsey wanted to follow up and inform everyone that there was a special article that was voted to fund the legal portion of the First Light dispute. This special article is now going to be closed out and can be used as a funding source for other projects.

FY27 Budget Discussion with Clean Water Facility Superintendent:

- Ms. Little gave an overview of her budget. She highlighted that increases in the wage lines were driven by the wage and class adjustment that occurred this year. She reported that the

electricity line is being held steady at this time but that after completing several energy grant projects the energy cost of the plant decreased by 67%, which reduced bills from around \$20,000 a month to \$6,000 to \$10,000. Ms. Little discussed that she did some shifting between lines to try and match the fluctuation of expenses over time. She discussed that each year can be different in cost needs and that sometimes she needs more in her secondary costs for one year and less in the next year.

- Ms. Bell-Upp inquired about the large expenditure overage in the grounds line. Ms. Little stated that she has had a lot of projects that ended this fiscal year that required extra expenses in that line, but she does not foresee that to be normal.
- Mr. Lord questioned how Ms. Little tracks the lines that go over and which of the other lines she is saving money in to cover it. Ms. Little replied that she does not actually move the budget but more tracks it internally.
- Ms. Little continued to review the budget and highlighted that the water line has been reduced due to changes that the plant made in the process of using water and recycling water. These changes were implemented after the plant received a large water bill last fiscal year. She reported that she had to increase the chemical line because chemical costs are increasing every year. She shared good news in her budget that the Millers Falls overage line has been reduced significantly following the repairs that DPW did a few fiscal years ago. Last part of the budget that Ms. Little highlighted is the request for a new employee. This position would be an additional mechanic. The reason behind needing this position is to keep up with all the repairs that the plant needs to avoid sending work out to vendors for repair, which costs more money.
- Ms. Bell-Upp wondered if there were additional cuts that Ms. Little could make so that the budget would still be -2% with the new employee. At first Ms. Little struggled with where else to cut, then Mr. Lord suggested cutting the electricity line following the conversation about how much that bill has been lowered following energy-efficient changes. Ms. Little agreed that this is somewhere she could adjust to meet the -2%. Mr. Lord also informed the group that there was a presentation of the role to the Selectboard on Monday and he sees the position being open for part of the year at the plant while this position is created and filled.
- Mr. Ramsey asked Ms. Little to inform the Finance Committee how the savings of the Millers Falls overage affects the budget. She discussed that there is an Inflow and Infiltration calculation that is used to charge the taxpayers for the runoff that the plant is caused to treat from the combined sewer system. She stated that DPW has been doing a great job on updating systems and repairing the CSO system and that last year the plant had zero discharges from the plant that were untreated and they used to have up to 12 a year.
- Ms. Wisnewski questioned Ms. Little about what her large concerns are in the next few years given all the changes with grants. Ms. Little stated she is concerned about the possible loss of federal grants but that there are still grants on the state side.
- The meeting discussed capital requests next. Ms. Little discussed she has three capital project requests a truck to come out of retained earnings, clarifier mechanism to come out of borrowing, and a planning study to be funded by grant. Ms. Rae inquired as to how the debt payments are made. Ms. Little stated it is paid out of the CWF debt tab. She reported that she has a new software system to help them with setting rates and this system you can input capital projects and it will predict future rates based on the debt costs.

Updates from Town Administrator

- Mr. Ramsey reported that there are some non-capital special article requests that should be discussed by the Finance Committee at some point.

Next Meeting dates/topics:

- January 28 – Library and Police
- February 5 – Gill-Montague Regional School District
- Ms. Bell-Upp stated that she would like to have a future meeting to discuss some of the bigger picture items that keep coming up in meetings. She would like a dedicated meeting to discuss forecasting and the long term.

Adjournment

Ms. Goldman makes motion to adjourn at 6:59 PM. Seconded by Mr. Lord and approved.

Lord – Aye, Goldman – Aye

Ms. Wisnewski makes the motion to adjourn at 7:00 PM. Seconded by Ms. Rae and approved.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Angelica Desroches

Documents and exhibits: