

MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, October 14, 2026 at 6:00 PM

This meeting will be held remotely.

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Meeting Being Recorded

Votes May Be Taken

Recordings are archived at <https://vimeo.com/mctvchannel17/videos>

1. 6:00 Call to order for all, including announcing that the meeting is being recorded, roll call, welcome to visitors, and guidelines for participation.
2. 6:02 Review of meeting minutes of September 30, 2026
3. 6:05 Stipend Review
4. 6:40 STM Prep
5. 7:00 Updates from Town Administrator
6. 7:15 Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting.
7. 7:20 Next Meeting dates/topics
 - a. October 21 – Pre Town Meeting
 - b. October 28 – Special Town Meeting
8. 7:25 Adjourn

MEETING OF MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, September 30, 2026 at 6 PM

This meeting was held in person at 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA and recorded by MCTV.

Finance Committee Chair Dorinda Bell-Upp called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Finance Committee members present: Chair Dorinda Bell-Upp, Chris Menegoni, Stuart Mieher, Leigh Rae (6:03), Emily Siegenthaler, James Hughes, Josh Bell

Finance Committee members absent:

Others present: Town Accountant Angelica Desroches

The meeting was recorded by MCTV.

Meeting minutes:

- Mr. Menegoni moved to approve the minutes of September 23, 2026 with the changes from Ms. Rae. Seconded by Mr. Bell and approved.
- Ms. Rae requested the following be added to the minutes of September 23, 2026. "Leigh Rae expressed concern over the cost of the feasibility study and how much input our building committee had in determining a scope for a concept design that would reflect our needs. Even though the state would assume 75% of the overall cost if our program were accepted by the State MSBA, in the interest of public spending (whether for the state or our town), \$1.75 million for a feasibility study that would produce a concept plan that then would be developed further into construction documentation (at even more cost) seems very expensive."
 - Bell-Upp – Aye, Mieher — Aye, Siegenthaler – Aye, Hughes – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Bell – Aye

Special Town Meeting Article Vote

- Prior Year Bills - \$1,643.02
 - Ms. Siegenthaler moved to recommend appropriating \$1,643.02 for the payment of prior year bills, with said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by Mr. Menegoni.
 - Bell-Upp – Aye, Mieher — Aye, Siegenthaler – Aye, Hughes – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Bell – Aye
- Airport FY26 Operating Deficit - \$38,550.27
 - Ms. Siegenthaler moved to recommend appropriating \$38,550.27 for the funding of the FY26 Airport operating deficit, with said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by Mr. Hughes.
 - Ms. Bell-Upp confirmed that if this deficit is not funded by free cash, it will automatically be funded by taxation as mandated by state law.
 - Mr. Menegoni wanted to note that often this department is using operating budgets to cover capital expenditure. This means it avoids the typical request channels that other departments follow. Ms. Bell-Upp responded that the Selectboard has addressed this concern with more meetings and oversight of the Airport operations.

- Bell-Upp – Aye, Mieher —Aye, Rae – Aye, Siegenthaler – Aye, Hughes – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Bell – Aye
- Airport FY27 Revenue Deficit - \$15,000
 - Mr. Menegoni moved to recommend appropriating \$15,000 for the funding of the FY27 Airport revenue deficit, with said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by Mr. Mieher.
 - Ms. Desroches updated the committee on what the ramifications are if this article is not approved by town meeting. The Town would risk having their recap rejected during tax rate setting season and being forced to call an emergency town meeting to approve further funding or further cuts to balance the Airport budget before tax rates could be set.
 - This number represents the current revenue deficit prediction if there are further revenue deficits by the annual town meeting there would need to be another article to address those.
 - Bell-Upp – Aye, Mieher —Aye, Rae – Aye, Siegenthaler – Aye, Hughes – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Bell – Aye
- Grant Deficit Cleanup - \$61,502.31
 - Ms. Rae moved to recommend appropriating \$61,502.31 for the funding of grant deficits, with said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by Mr. Hughes.
 - Mr. Mieher questioned if these grant deficits are due to not being submitted for reimbursement. Ms. Desroches described that there is a mix of reasons in this grouping of grants. There are several grants that no state reimbursement was received and some that the grant match was not appropriated.
 - Ms. Rae noted that this article shows the need for more administrative support at the airport, which Ms. Bell-Upp confirmed has been started. Also noted that there is additional oversight starting for the Airport as well.
 - Bell-Upp – Aye, Mieher —Aye, Rae – Aye, Siegenthaler – Aye, Hughes – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Bell – Aye
- Cemetery Maintenance/Sexton Stipend - \$12,032
 - Mr. Menegoni moved to recommend appropriating \$12,032 for funding cemetery maintenance and the FY27 sexton stipend, with said sum to be raised from Cemetery Receipts Reserved. Seconded by Mr. Bell.
 - Ms. Rae questioned what the funding source is for this article. Ms. Desroches reported that they currently have \$127,687 in cemetery receipts reserved account from sales of new plots.
 - Discussed that this article will be for extraordinary maintenance not related to the mowing and line trimming that are paid out of the general fund. This is mostly going to be going to costs related to the continued set up and establishment of the new green burial area of the cemetery.
 - Bell-Upp – Aye, Mieher —Aye, Rae – Aye, Siegenthaler – Aye, Hughes – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Bell – Aye
- Departmental Requests - \$16,300
 - Ms. Siegenthaler moved to recommend appropriating \$16,300 for the funding of the below listed departmental projects, with said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by Mr. Menegoni.
 - \$5,600 for walk-behind automatic floor scrubber
 - \$7,700 for infield groomer

- \$3,000 for resurfacing Unity Park walkway and whale unit area
- Ms. Rae inquired as to whether the automatic floor scrubber is something that can be shared between departments. Ms. Desroches confirmed that that is the plan, especially with the new library building.
- Ms. Rae wondered if the infield groomer could be purchased with a fundraiser. Ms. Bell-Upp stated that she is not aware of a “friends” group that could manage this fundraiser for the Recreation department. Mr. Menegoni wanted to know if this could also be shared with the school or if any of the schools have one that could be borrowed instead. Ms. Desroches reported that she would reach out to the Recreation Director to get those answers.
- Bell-Upp – Aye, Mieher —Aye, Rae – Aye, Siegenthaler – Aye, Hughes – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Bell – Aye
- Consolidated Elementary School Feasibility Study - \$1,750,000
 - Ms. Siegenthaler moved to recommend appropriating \$1,750,000 for funding of the consolidated elementary school feasibility study, with \$500,000 to be raised from Capital Stabilization and \$1,250,000 to be raised from Borrowing. Seconded by Mr. Menegoni.
 - Mr. Mieher stated that he is struggling with finding enough information and that he finds the distribution of information at this time to be inconsistent.
 - Mr. Menegoni updated that the Capital Improvement Committee did have a vote earlier in the day on this project. They did research to confirm that the dollar amount was in line with what they were seeing with other projects. He also added that the timing of this article is important to make sure the Town is in line with the shared funding from the state.
 - Ms. Rae added that this project is far too expensive and where is the accountability at the state level to recognize that this process is not right. That this level of money spent just for a conceptual plan, not a buildable plan, seems unsustainable and beyond the means of municipalities.
 - Ms. Bell-Upp reported that the town has two aging buildings and the two buildings don’t allow staff and supply sharing. The two buildings limit the ability to have classroom reconfiguration based on class sizes as well.
 - Ms. Rae also questioned why this decision must be made right now. She wanted to delay the Finance Committee vote until after the October 6th election about regionalization. Ms. Desroches outlined the timeline for the Town Meeting packets to be mailed. Mr. Menegoni questioned whether the results of that election would change anything about the feasibility study. He reported that this appears to be following the MSBA process and it would not change based on the regionalization because the elementary schools would remain the same under that plan.
 - The Committee discussed what options the building committee has to drive the feasibility study and how many options are pursued. They wondered if they could have less options reviewed and if that would lower the cost of the study.
 - Ms. Rae expressed her feelings that this process seems to have a structural problem and that the state needs to be aware of the cost and the issue. She would like to see advocacy at the state level to change the MSBA process and have it be less top-down with towns having more say in the process and budget.

- Ms. Siegenthaler wondered if this amount of money is only the maximum appropriation. If the regionalization vote goes through, then maybe the cost of the feasibility study will end up costing less in the long run.
- Bell-Upp – Aye, Mieher —No, Rae – No, Siegenthaler – Aye, Hughes – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Bell – Aye

Updates on Montague Police Department Visit

- Mr. Mieher gave an update to the Finance Committee on the visit he had to the police station. He stated that there is a tight staffing level at the police station given the area, people, and shifts that need to be covered. There is a lot of administrative work which it appears they needed more support for. He was looking to possibly hire another administrative staff. Ms. Bell-Upp discussed that there was recently a bunch of promotions that should help with some of the administrative tasks that he needs support for. The Finance Committee discussed wanting to get a report of how things have changed in the police station following those promotions during the budget season.

Next Meeting dates/topics:

- October 14 – STM prep and stipend review
- October 21 – Pre Town Meeting
- October 28 – Special Town Meeting

Adjournment

Mr. Menegoni makes the motion to adjourn at 7:50 PM. Seconded by Mr. Mieher and approved.

- Bell-Upp – Aye, Mieher —Aye, Rae - Aye, Siegenthaler – Aye, Hughes – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Bell – Aye

Respectfully submitted,
Angelica Desroches

Documents and exhibits:

Position	2026 Name	2026 Sent	2026 Received	FY19 Stipend	FY24 Stipend	FY26 Stipend	FY27 Recommend
Moderator	Elizabeth Irving	8/25/2026	8/25/2026	370	500	500	
Selectboard Chair	Richard Kuklewicz	8/25/2026		2355	2355	2640	
Selectboard Member	Nathaniel Card Schiffbauer	8/25/2026		2140	2140	2400	
Selectboard Member	Marina Goldman	8/25/2026	8/26/2026	2140	2140	2400	
Bd of Assessors Chair	Ann Cenzano	8/25/2026		1765	1765	1980	
Bd of Assessors Member	Ann Fisk	8/25/2026		1605	1605	1800	
Bd of Assessors Member	Rebecca Stabelewski	8/25/2026		1605	1605	1800	
Clerk to Bd Registrars	Wendy Bogusz	8/25/2026		840	900	900	
Tree Warden	Samuel Urkiel	8/25/2026	8/25/2026	1575	1575	1764	
Bd of Health Chair	Melanie Ames-Zamojski	8/25/2026		1765	1765	1980	
Bd of Health Member	Michael Nelsen	8/25/2026	8/25/2026	1605	1605	1800	
Bd of Health Member	Rachel Stoler	8/25/2026	8/25/2026	1605	1605	1800	
Board of Registrars	Tina Sulda	8/25/2026		525	625	625	
Board of Registrars	Stanley Dobosz	8/25/2026		525	625	625	
Board of Registrars				525	625	625	
Emerg Management Director	John Zellmann	8/25/2026	8/26/2026	5765	5765	6444	
Animal Inspector	Kathleen Burek	8/25/2026		1575	1575	1764	
Barn Inspector	Kathleen Burek	8/25/2026		1050	1050	1400	
IT Coordinator	Fern Smith	8/25/2026	9/2/2026	2100	2100	2352	
PD IT Administrator	Jason Haskins	8/25/2026	9/11/2026	3000	3000	6000	
Forest Warden	Richard Sawin	8/25/2026		1710	1710	1882	
Assistant Bldg Inspector	David Jensen	8/25/2026		35	35	45	
Gas Inspector	John Letourneau	8/25/2026		35	35	45	
Plumbing Inspector	John Letourneau	8/25/2026		35	35	45	
Electrical Inspector	Wayne Shaw	8/25/2026		35	35	45	
Farmers Market Mgr	Jenny Vanderbilt	8/25/2026	9/9/2026			3750	
Assistant Market Mgr	Annabel Levine	8/25/2026	9/9/2026			750	
Cemetery Sexton	Amber Korby	8/25/2026	9/18/2026			4032	

Stipend Survey Responses

Moderator

Elizabeth Irving:

No changes! Thanks for asking. (esp. if the town will cover the fee for me to be part of the mass moderator's association)

Selectboard

Rich Kuklewicz:

Nate Card Schiffbauer:

Marina Goldman:

No change

Thanks , Marina

Board of Assessors

Ann Cenzano

Ann Fisk

Rebecca Sabelawski

Clerk to Registrars

Wendy Bogusz

Tree Warden

Samuel Urkiel:

I've been in the position since July so no changes have been made, but a compensation comparison to other towns would be great!

Thanks, Sam

Cemetery Sexton

Amber Korby:

Hello Angelica,

I regret that I've missed responding to your stipend inquiry in a timely way. My apologies if that's impacted your ability to report.

The nature of the Cemetery Sexton position has not fundamentally changed over the years. My basic responsibilities haven't changed, though they do fluctuate in volume. This past year, for example burials are almost half of the previous year, but sales and sales tours are doubled. I do a lot of work outside of the written scope that I consider "volunteer" work, though it's in service to the Sexton position. Judith and I have had meetings with FERCOG to work on a GIS mapping project which will give us a digital tool for tracking and sharing grave locations to the public. We have also engaged with public volunteers to do a similar mapping job at the historic cemetery of Dry Hill, to physically cut back overgrown brush to find gravestones and then make a map to identify where they are. I've initiated planting and maintenance of some flower gardens at Highland Cemetery to flank the entrances of the new green burial grounds path, a beautification and visibility project. I've worked with local volunteers to plant a native shrub hedgerow at the fenceline of Highland Cemetery to encourage native pollinators and establish more flora. I've initiated a monthly headstone cleaning volunteer day at Old South cemetery in service to restoration causes as well as community engagement. I also have engaged in community connection by participating on panel discussions , in my capacity as a Cemetery Sexton, at the Greenfield library, last year, and upcoming October 7th. And another death and dying panel at the Easthampton Council on Aging in November. Additionally, when we've hired contractors outside of the scope of monthly mowing, to address forest clean up and accessibility in our newly developed green burial section, I have always worked with them to do this physical work of cutting and hauling the branches, weeding invasives, and spreading new woodchips on our forest path.

The stipend is sufficient for the roughly 80 hours of specified work I do for the cemetery, in service to the town. I am deeply committed to the values and vision of this work and am happy to continue to add value through volunteering my time to extra projects. I'd never turn down an increase in stipend, but understand that the budget gets tighter and tighter every year.

*Thank you for all the help,
Amber Korby*

Board of Health

Melanie Ames-Zamojski:

Mark Nelson:

Hi Angelica,

I don't believe there have been any significant changes to my position regarding the Board of Health stipend. While I appreciate the compensation, it is certainly not the reason I serve on the Board. Whatever amount the Finance Committee allocates is appreciated.

I would also encourage the Finance Committee to consider a stipend for themselves given the number of meetings and time commitment involved.

*Thank you,
Michael Nelson
Rachel Stoler*

Hi Angelica:

I am still on the Board of Health, and the requirements of my position have not changed since FY'23.

*Regards,
Rachel*

Board of Registrars

Stanley Dobosz

Tina Sulda

Craig LeBlanc

Emergency Management Director

John Zellmann:

Hi Angelica,

There have been no changes to the position of Emergency Management Director since the last review.

I am requesting no changes to the annual stipend this year.

Thank you

John Zellmann

Animal Inspector

Kathleen Burek

Barn Inspector

Kathleen Burek

IT Coordinator

Fern Smith:

Technology continues to become more integrated into nearly every aspect of Town operations, and the systems employees rely on are increasingly complex. The Town IT Coordinator provides day-to-day support across Town departments, including troubleshooting computers, phones, software, connectivity, and basic network issues; responding to outages; opening and managing support tickets; and coordinating with the Town's technology providers. While the Town

appropriately contracts with an outside IT firm for network management and specialized technical services, it remains important to have an internal IT Coordinator with day-to-day knowledge of Town operations and an understanding of how our software, hardware and network systems work together to best support employees.

The role has also grown beyond troubleshooting. The IT Coordinator has implemented and coordinated cybersecurity awareness training for Town employees and has taken a more active role in technology procurement and asset management. This includes working to streamline how technology is purchased, tracked, replaced and managed, as well as providing internal oversight and helping hold the Town's IT consultant accountable for the services, equipment and support being provided. As technology continues to evolve, including the increased use of artificial intelligence, the Town will need to continue adapting to new technology, cybersecurity, privacy and operational considerations.

In reviewing the stipend, it is important to consider the Town-wide scope and continuing importance of the position. The Town IT Coordinator supports departments throughout the organization, while the Police Department has a separate IT Coordinator serving that department, and both utilize third-party IT providers. The Town IT Coordinator stipend is currently less than half of the Police IT Coordinator stipend. This comparison is not intended to question the Police stipend, but to provide context when considering the value of retaining a knowledgeable internal IT Coordinator who can provide immediate support, understand the Town's technology environment, oversee technology resources and vendors, and help the Town adapt as its technology needs continue to change.

Thanks,

Fern

Police IT Administrator

Jason Haskins:

Hi Angelica,

Sorry, I was tied up in Oral Board interviews yesterday. Here is my response.

I was not employed by the Town during FY2023, so I cannot speak directly to the original creation of the stipend. Based on my understanding, the Police Department IT Administrator stipend was established for the Lieutenant position to manage the Department's information technology needs, including maintenance of the server and firewall, troubleshooting and resolving routine IT issues, and being available to address technology-related problems outside of normal working hours.

When I was hired as Chief, the stipend was incorporated into my overall compensation package. Under my employment agreement, the stipend was structured as follows:

Contract Year 1: \$6,000

Contract Year 2: \$3,000

Contract Year 3: \$0

The intent was that the stipend would then return to the Lieutenant position (now the Deputy Chief position) as part of that role's responsibilities. Meaning, the Deputy Chief's contract could include \$3,000 during my second contract year and \$6,000 during my third contract year and beyond.

Since FY2025, the Department has retained an outside IT vendor to address more complex technology issues. However, Department personnel continue to perform day-to-day technology-related functions, coordinate with the vendor, address routine IT issues, manage user access and permissions, and serve as the primary point of contact for technology matters affecting Department operations.

I hope this information is helpful. Please let me know if the Committee requires any additional information.

Respectfully,

Chief Jason D. Haskins, MSCJA

Forest Warden

Richard Sawin

Assistant Building Inspector

David Jensen

Gas Inspector

John Letourneau

Plumbing Inspector

John Letourneau

Electrical Inspector

Wayne Shaw

Great Falls Farmers Market Manager

Jenny Vanderbilt:

Hello Angelica,

Your timing for this question is great. Due to this summer's busyness, I planned to create a presentation for the selectboard/Walter at the end of this fall about how the position has changed. For now, to answer your question, here is some info:

The simple answer is that the role has not changed in and of itself, but the work has significantly increased due to more vendors and customers, and as a result, the role has changed too.

Using Placer.Ai data, we had an average of 51.4 customers per market in August 2025. This year, in August, we have an average of 84.6

In August of 2023, there were on average 3.5 vendors per market. In August of 2026, there were, on average, 10 vendors per market.

The hours on Saturday and during the week are longer.

With more vendors, we have to stay later after the market to cash out SNAP sales, collect vendor fees, and break down.

We also have to arrive earlier for the park layout and to ensure vendor questions are answered, etc.

More of the manager's time during market hours is spent on running sales, leaving other duties that historically could be worked on during the market to the time between markets.

We need to complete more petty check requests, bank trips, and paperwork.

We have had more customer service needs, which means that we are in the park longer on Saturdays, as those take time during the market.

Before this year, except for special guest markets/scheduled activities (once a month or so), it was reasonable for the market manager to vend while they managed. By the end of last year, that was increasingly challenging. This year, I have been able to manage the market and vend 0 times.

We have to spend more time on admin tasks.

There have been 45 adult vendor applications submitted this year to date. We accept applications on a rolling basis all season long and tend to have new vendor applications in the fall, so this total is likely not complete for 2026. In 2023, there were 18.

Every application needs to be screened and there needs to be at least one email to the applicant. In July of this year, before we were halfway through the season, the manager's booth had exceeded last year's total SNAP sales.

There is a need for a winter market. Data obtained from the DTA indicates that over 100 households in Montague do not use HIP during the months we do not have a market. This year, we plan to have 2 indoor winter markets. We eventually plan to expand these to once a month during winter months. If this occurs, hours will also increase.

My thoughts for structure and sustainability

Just so the committee is aware-- I plan to propose some structural changes to the manager position. Primarily, I think we should move to a co-manager model where two people would split the entire stipend (both manager and asst.). This will help with sustainability and managing the changing role. I hope that dividing the role in two will allow us to create a bit more sustainability by equally sharing the workload and stipend.

(As a final note, I personally do not want to receive more than \$3,000 per year for my work. However, to be a good steward of this position I also need to advocate for a stipend/workload that is adequate.)

*Let me know if there are any questions or if you need more information,
Jenny*

Great Falls Farmers Market Asst Manager

Annie Levine:

Hi Angelica,

Please see Jenny's response which covers much of the growth situation at the market. The market has grown significantly, and after two years of having a manager and assistant manager, we are talking about transitioning into a shared, co-manager situation for next year's market. Becoming a co-manager would mean an increase in responsibility which would necessitate an increase in the stipend.

To address a change of responsibilities, we are considering taking the full market stipend (\$4500) and splitting it evenly between the two of us. If the stipend amount does not change, but the distribution between us does, is that something that needs to be approved by Town Meeting or is it something that can be adjusted by the Selectboard at any time? It would be ideal to be able to enact whatever change is decided upon before the start of the 2027 market season.

Thanks,

Annie Levine