

MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE
Wednesday, April 1, 2026 at 6:00 PM

This meeting will be held remotely.

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86523275284>

Meeting ID: 865 2327 5284

One tap mobile

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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, including announcing that the meeting is being recorded, roll call, welcome to visitors, and guidelines for participation.
2. 6:05 Review of meeting minutes of March 25, 2026
3. 6:10 Review motions and background
4. 6:45 Review draft of Finance Committee Report to Town Meeting
5. 7:20 Updates from Town Administrator
6. 7:25 Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting
7. 7:30 Next meeting dates
 - a. April 8 – FC report finalized
 - b. April 28 – Pre-town meeting
 - c. April 29 – FC Annual Town Meeting prep
 - d. May 2 – Annual Town Meeting
8. 7:35 Adjourn

SUMMARY OF ARTICLES

#	TOPIC	AMOUNT REQUESTED	% OF TOTAL	FUNDING SOURCE
1	Annual Reports			
2	Elected Wages			
3	Appointed Wages			
4	Town Operating Budget	13,815,938	23.72%	Taxation
5	CWF Operating Budget	3,306,973	5.68%	Taxation/Sewer User Fees
6	Airport Operating Budget	452,272	0.78%	Taxation/Sale of RE/Airport Rev
7	Colle Operating Budget	52,250	0.09%	Colle Receipts Reserved
8	FCTS Assessment	1,131,215	1.94%	Taxation/FCTS Stabilization
9	GMRSD Assessment	13,120,375	22.53%	Taxation
10	<u>GMRSD Material and Programs</u>			
	Highschool textbooks/instr materials	80,000	0.14%	Repurposed Special Article
	Sheffield Afterschool Program	70,000	0.12%	Repurposed Special Article
	Elementary Sch textbooks/instr mat	13,718	0.02%	Repurposed Special Article
11	<u>Recreation Articles</u>			
	Reseal Unity Park Skatepark	5,500	0.01%	Repurposed Special Article
	Montague Center Park			
	Improvements	7,326	0.01%	Repurposed Special Article
12	<u>Police Articles</u>			
	Refrigerator, radio batteries, recond	13,200	0.02%	Free Cash
	Two Police Cruisers	161,000	0.28%	Repurposed Special Article/Free Cash
	Rehabilitation HVAC Controls	37,100	0.06%	Repurposed Special Article/Free Cash
13	Five Year Taser Agreement			
14	<u>Airport Articles</u>			
	Upfit and Equip Heavy-Duty Pickup	26,000	0.04%	Repurposed Special Article/Free Cash
	Walking Path/Pioneer Hangar Upgra	142,500	0.24%	Cannabis Impact Stabilization
15	FY26 Airport Budget	8,144	0.01%	Airport Retained Earnings
16	<u>CWF Articles</u>			
	Heavy-Duty Pickup with Plow	85,000	0.15%	CWF Retained Earnings
	Wastewater Facility Planning Study	125,000	0.21%	CWF Retained Earnings
	CWF Generator Redesign	23,705	0.04%	Repurp Spec Art/CWF Ret Earnings
17	Secondary Clarifier Mechanism	966,000	1.66%	CWF Debt
18	<u>DPW Vehicles</u>			
	Compaction Roller	35,000	0.06%	Repurposed Special Article/Free Cash
	Replacement Heavy-Duty Pickup	80,000	0.14%	Repurposed Special Article/Free Cash
	Hydraulic Excavator	150,000	0.26%	Repurposed Special Article/Free Cash
	Compact Utility Tractor	65,000	0.11%	Repurposed Special Article/Free Cash
19	<u>DPW Projects</u>			
	Transfer Station Gate	30,000	0.05%	Repurposed Special Article/Free Cash
	Paving alleyways and parking lots	30,000	0.05%	Repurposed Special Article/Free Cash
	Repair municipal sidewalks	15,000	0.03%	Repurposed Special Article/Free Cash
20	DPW Equipment	30,785	0.05%	Free Cash
21	Carnegie Library Roof Repairs	16,500	0.03%	Repurposed Special Article/Free Cash
22	New Montague Library	23,704,053	40.68%	Town Debt/Grant
23	Second Street Land Acquisition			

SUMMARY OF ARTICLES

#	TOPIC	AMOUNT REQUESTED	% OF TOTAL	FUNDING SOURCE
24	Shea Facility and Theatrical Upgrades	100,000	0.17%	Repurp Special Article/Free Cash
25	Colle Building Tile and HVAC Repair	25,000	0.04%	Colle Receipts Reserved
26	<u>Annual Transfers to Reserves</u>			
	Franklin Tech Stabilization	50,000	0.09%	Free Cash
	Town Capital Stabilization	100,000	0.17%	Free Cash
	GMRSD Stabilization	89,489	0.15%	Taxation/Free Cash
	OPEB Trust Fund	100,000	0.17%	Taxation/Free Cash
27	Postage Machine Lease			
	Accessory Dwelling Unit Bylaw			
28	Change			
29	North Leverett Road Bridge Easement			
	Industrial Blvd and Millers Falls Rd			
30	Easement			
31	Personnel Bylaw Change			
	Local Option Liquor License			
32	Conversion			
33	Aggregate electricity load			
		58,264,043	100.00%	

DRAFT

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
TOWN OF MONTAGUE
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MAY 2, 2026
MOTIONS**

ARTICLE 1. Annual Reports (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to receive the reports of the Officers of the Town and any committees.

Background: This article appears regularly in the annual warrant and allows the receipt of reports.

ARTICLE 2. Wages for Elected Officials (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to fix the salaries of all elected officials as required by law for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026, as set forth in Schedule I, Elected Officials.

**SCHEDULE I
Elected Officials**

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>FY26 BUDGET</u>	<u>FY27 REQUEST</u>	<u>FY27 RECOMMEND</u>
MODERATOR	500	500	500
SELECTBOARD			
Chairman	2,640	2,640	2,640
Second/Third Members	2,400	2,400	2,400
BOARD OF ASSESSOR			
Chairman	1,980	1,980	1,980
Second/Third Members	1,800	1,800	1,800
BOARD OF HEALTH			
Chairman	1,980	1,980	1,980
Second/Third Members	1,800	1,800	1,800

Background: This article appears regularly in the annual warrant. All stipends were reviewed by the Finance Committee and Selectboard prior to the FY27 budget process.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 3. Wages for Appointed Officials (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to fix the salaries of all appointed officials as required by law for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026, as set forth in Schedule II, Appointed Officials.

**SCHEDULE II
Appointed Officials**

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>FY26 BUDGET</u>	<u>FY27 REQUEST</u>	<u>FY27 RECOMMEND</u>
<u>ANNUAL STIPENDS</u>			
BOARD OF REGISTRARS (3)	625	625	625
BOARD OF REGISTRARS TOWN CLERK	900	900	900
EMERGENCY MGMT DIRECTOR	6,444	6,444	6,444
ANIMAL INSPECTOR	1,764	1,764	1,764
BARN INSPECTOR	1,400	1,400	1,400
IT COORDINATOR	2,352	2,352	2,352
POLICE IT ADMINISTRATOR	6,000	6,000	6,000
FOREST WARDEN	1,882	1,882	1,882
TREE WARDEN	1,764	1,764	1,764
HEARING OFFICER	2,500	2,500	2,500
FARMERS MARKET MANAGER	3,750	3,750	3,750
FARMERS MARKET ASST MANAGER	750	750	750
SEXTON STIPEND	4,032	4,032	4,032
<u>RATES PER INSPECTION</u>			
ASST. BUILDING INSPECTOR	45.00	45.00	45.00
GAS INSPECTOR	45.00	45.00	45.00
PLUMBING INSPECTOR	45.00	45.00	45.00
ELECTRICAL INSPECTOR	45.00	45.00	45.00
<u>HOURLY RATES</u>			
EXTRA CLERICAL	15.00-18.75	15.00-18.75	15.00-18.75
ELECTION WORKERS	15.00-19.75	15.00-19.75	15.00-19.75
SUMMER HIGHWAY	15.00-18.75	15.00-18.75	15.00-18.75
SNOWPLOW DRIVERS	15.00-27.00	15.00-27.00	15.00-27.00
PART TIME POLICE OFFICERS	29.00-37.00	29.00-37.00	29.00-37.00
PART TIME DISPATCHERS	22.00-27.00	22.00-27.00	22.00-27.00
PARKS & RECREATION	15.00-24.25	15.00-24.25	15.00-24.25
AIRPORT INTERN	15.00-18.75	15.00-18.75	15.00-18.75

**SCHEDULE II
Appointed Officials**

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>FY26 BUDGET</u>	<u>FY27 REQUEST</u>	<u>FY27 RECOMMEND</u>
SHIFT DIFFERENTIALS			
<u>PART TIME POLICE OFFICERS</u>			
SECOND SHIFT	1.00	1.00	1.00
THIRD SHIFT	1.25	1.25	1.25
<u>PART TIME DISPATCHERS</u>			
SECOND SHIFT	1.00	1.00	1.00
THIRD SHIFT	1.25	1.25	1.25
<u>PART TIME CLERICAL/LIBRARIES</u>	1.00	1.00	1.00

**SCHEDULE II
Appointed Officials**

NON-UNION EMPLOYEES NOT SHOWN ABOVE

	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Range FY2026</u>		<u>Range FY2027</u>	
		<u>Start</u>	<u>End</u>	<u>Start</u>	<u>End</u>
<u>SALARIED</u>					
TOWN ADMINISTRATOR	A	98,027	127,920	100,477	131,118
ASSISTANT TOWN ADMIN	C	76,616	99,938	78,531	102,880
TOWN ACCOUNTANT	C	71,508	93,275	73,298	95,607
TAX COLLECTOR/TREASURER	C	71,508	93,275	73,298	95,607
TOWN CLERK	C	71,508	93,275	73,298	95,607
CHIEF OF POLICE	A	104,562	136,448	107,176	139,859
DPW SUPERINTENDENT	B	89,877	117,270	92,124	120,202
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH	C	71,508	93,275	73,298	95,607
LIBRARY DIRECTOR	C	71,508	93,275	73,298	95,607
CWF SUPERINTENDENT	B	89,877	117,270	92,124	120,202
<u>HOURLY</u>					
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT	E	28.28	36.90	28.99	37.82
POLICE LIEUTENANT	C	39.29	51.25	40.27	52.53
POLICE CUSTODIAN	I	18.07	23.58	18.52	24.17

Informational Only: Fiscal Year 2027 budgeted wages –

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR	120,507	EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT	35.65
ASSISTANT TOWN ADMIN.....	102,880	DPW SUPERINTENDENT	107,280
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH	80,498	CWF SUPERINTENDENT.....	113,733
TAX COLLECTOR/TREAS.....	90,597	TOWN ACCOUNTANT	90,597
TOWN CLERK.....	80,498	LIBRARY DIRECTOR.....	90,473
CHIEF OF POLICE*	165,448	POLICE LIEUTENANT.....	52.53
POLICE CUSTODIAN.....	24.17		

*includes additional 25% educational incentive pay

Background: This article appears regularly in the annual warrant. Changes for FY27:

1. All scales and salaries are updated to reflect new scales implemented in FY27 under the 2023 Wage and Class study and are under current contract through the end of FY28. The changes in FY27 consist of contractual steps and COLAs based on union negotiated rates.
2. CWF and DPW Superintendent and Police Chief moved up one grade, respectively. Assistant Town Administrator moved down one grade.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 4. Town Operating Budget (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$13,815,938 for the maintenance of the several departments of the Town, said sum to be allocated in accordance with Schedule III, Budget, and for any other necessary charges, with said sum to be raised from Taxation.

		Schedule III Town Operating Budget		SELECTBOARD FIN COMM RECOMMEND
DEPT NO.		BUDGET FY26	REQUEST FY27	FY27
GENERAL GOVERNMENT				
113	TOWN MEETING	3,180	3,180	3,180
122	SELECTBOARD	324,662	343,147	343,147
131	FINANCE COMMITTEE	600	575	575
132	RESERVE FUND	50,000	49,000	49,000
135	TOWN ACCOUNTANT	101,374	98,297	98,297
141	ASSESSORS	180,122	185,805	185,805
145	TREASURER/COLLECTOR	208,335	205,816	205,816
151	TOWN COUNSEL	82,475	67,475	67,475
155	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	103,352	110,279	110,279
159	SHARED COSTS	104,930	107,180	107,180
161	TOWN CLERK	219,144	248,690	248,690
175	PLANNING	142,394	152,701	152,701
176	ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS	700	686	686
190	PUBLIC BLDG UTILITIES	145,000	146,300	146,300
197	FARMERS MARKET	5,700	5,950	5,950
	TOTAL GENERAL GOVT	1,671,968	1,725,081	1,725,081
PUBLIC SAFETY				
211	POLICE	2,069,965	2,315,855	2,308,855
211	POLICE CRUISER	-	-	-
212	DISPATCH	410,868	448,858	448,858
241	BUILDING INSPECTOR	149,926	162,498	162,498

244	SEALER OF WEIGHTS	7,182	7,182	7,182
291	EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT	6,944	6,944	6,944
292	ANIMAL CONTROL	24,185	24,817	24,817
294	FOREST WARDEN	1,882	1,882	1,882
299	TREE WARDEN	30,474	29,774	29,774
	TOTAL PUBLIC SAFETY	2,701,426	2,997,810	2,990,810

Schedule III
Town Operating Budget

DEPT NO.		BUDGET FY26	REQUEST FY27	SELECTBOARD FIN COMM RECOMMEND FY27
	PUBLIC WORKS			
420	DEPT OF PUBLIC WORKS	1,810,284	1,875,942	1,875,942
420	EQUIPMENT LEASE PAYMENT	-	-	-
423	SNOW & ICE	324,750	324,750	324,750
433	SOLID WASTE	835,300	873,737	873,737
480	CHARGING STATIONS	3,000	6,500	6,500
491	CEMETERIES	32,150	32,150	32,150
	TOTAL PUBLIC WORKS	3,005,484	3,113,079	3,113,079
	HUMAN SERVICES			
511	BOARD OF HEALTH	172,144	175,954	175,954
541	COUNCIL ON AGING	77,207	81,085	81,085
543	VETERANS' SERVICES	101,000	81,000	81,000
	TOTAL HUMAN SERVICES	350,351	338,039	338,039
	CULTURE & RECREATION			
610	LIBRARIES	521,033	542,084	542,084
630	PARKS & RECREATION	169,326	179,107	179,107
691	HISTORICAL COMMISSION	500	500	500
693	WAR MEMORIALS	1,600	1,600	1,600
	TOTAL CULTURE/RECREATION	692,459	723,291	723,291
	DEBT SERVICE			
700	DEBT SERVICE	1,160,025	1,175,422	1,175,422
	INTERGOVERNMENTAL			
840	INTERGOVERNMENTAL	119,041	126,678	126,678
	MISCELLANEOUS			
910	EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	3,177,301	3,502,336	3,502,336

946 GENERAL INSURANCE	119,600	121,202	121,202
TOTAL MISCELLANEOUS	3,296,901	3,623,538	3,623,538
TOTAL TOWN BUDGET	12,997,655	13,822,938	13,815,938

Background: Schedule III includes the FY27 requests from all non-enterprise Town departments. This year the departments were asked to submit two budgets, one that was level service and one that was level service minus 2%. The Selectboard moved forward with the level service minus 2% budget after reviewing department narratives and discussions with several departments.

The Town Operating Budget request for FY27 is 6.3% higher than the previous year. Most increases are due to personnel costs. Last year the individual department budgets did not include wage increases for any wage and class adjustments. Those were all voted as special articles, so this year there is a shift as those wages are put into the department budgets. The largest individual increases are the Town Clerk, Police, and Employee Benefits budgets.

In the **General Government** category, the most notable changes are:

1. The Town Counsel budget is decreasing by \$15,000 or -18%. This decrease is due to removing the FERC licensing line and reducing the Labor Negotiations line with all union contracts up-to-date currently.
2. The Town Clerk budget is increasing by \$29,546, or 13.48%. FY27 is a three-election year for the department.
3. The Assessor department shifted most of their legal line over to consulting to help the department complete the revaluation year with the State and get more support around the software.
4. Overall, the General Government category only increased 3.18%

In the **Public Safety** category, the most notable changes are:

1. The largest changes were due to new police union and NAGE union contracts that began in FY26. This resulted in a 9.25% total department increase in Dispatch and an 8.39% increase in Building Inspector.
2. The Police Department increased 11.54%. The police wage lines increased 11.8% with most of the increase due to new contracts and planned internal promotions to fill senior open positions. The police department cruiser purchase for FY27 was moved to the capital articles by the Selectboard. The police department also increased the Leases/Support/Contracts line by \$27,000 for an IT consultant and taser licensing.
3. Overall, the Public Safety category increased by 10.71%.

In **Public Works**, the largest cost increase is the contract increases for trash/recycling pickup, which were increased by 5%. This was the contractual increase for Casella. The other increases were primarily due to personnel costs with the UE and NAGE union contracts beginning in FY26. The Solid Waste budget increased by 4.6%. Overall, the Public Works category increased by 3.58%.

In **Human Services**, the overall category decreased by -3.51%. The decrease is primarily due to the decrease in the Veterans’ Services budget line because there was a reduction in the veterans’ benefits that Montague had to pay this year instead of the predicted increase. Reduced this line back to the historical average. The increases in the Board of Health and Council on Aging lines were both due to personnel cost increases associated with the new union contracts.

Wages & Benefits – Since last year’s budget did not include COLAs or the wage and class changes, there has been a significant increase in all department’s personnel costs. FY27 includes both FY26 and FY27 wage changes in the taxation. The Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust voted to increase insurance by 12.48% for FY27. With this increase the HCGIT also voted to have plan changes, which are still going through the Insurance Advisory Committee process. As part of this process there is a mitigation cost to the Town that needs to be paid to the employees for the plan changes. The insurance is still budgeted at the 16% rate change due to the unknown amount of this mitigation cost.

Comment: The Finance Committee’s abstention was based on the member being recently appointed to the Finance Committee, so they were not part of the beginning budget process.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends 4-0-1

ARTICLE 5. Clean Water Facility Budget (Sewer Commissioners Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$3,306,973 for the purpose of operating the Clean Water Facility and associated pumping stations, said sum to be allocated in accordance with Schedule IV, CWF Budget, with \$268,497 to be raised from Taxation and \$3,038,476 to be raised from Sewer Revenue.

	BUDGET	REQUEST	SELECTBOARD FIN COMM RECOMMEND
	FY26	FY27	FY27
CLEAN WATER FACILITY			
Wages & Expenses	2,209,442	2,218,829	2,218,829
Capital Outlay	58,500	-	-
Debt Service	485,028	514,159	514,159
Employee Benefits	383,183	488,835	488,835

SUBTOTAL CWF	3,136,153	3,221,823	3,221,823
DPW SUBSIDIARY			
Wages & Expenses	85,150	85,150	85,150
Capital Outlay	-	-	-
SUBTOTAL DPW SUBSIDIARY	85,150	85,150	85,150
TOTAL CWF	3,221,303	3,306,973	3,306,973

Background: The largest increase in the budget this year was in the personnel lines, which increased \$111,516. The Selectboard approved a new position in the department, an Assistant Mechanic for \$55,500. The remaining increase was due to the new union contracts and wage and class adjustments. This year there was also a drastic decline in the Miller Falls overage charge (-\$86,229) due to major inflow and infiltration that was corrected in FY25. FY26 was the last year for the sludge press lease so that line was zeroed out for the FY27 budget year. Overall, the Clean Water Facility budget increased by 2.66% over FY26.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
 Finance Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 6. Airport Budget (Airport Commission Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$452,272 for the purpose of operating the Turners Falls Airport, said sum to be allocated in accordance with Schedule V, Airport Budget, with \$18,805 to be raised from Town Sale of Real Estate, \$103,167 to be raised from Taxation, and \$330,300 to be raised from Airport Revenue.

	BUDGET FY26	REQUEST FY27	SELECTBOARD FIN COMM RECOMMEND FY27
AIRPORT			
Wages & Expenses	271,625	288,504	288,504
Capital Outlay/Local Share	-	-	-
Debt Service	99,935	101,015	101,015
Employee Benefits	54,172	62,753	62,753
TOTAL AIRPORT	425,732	452,272	452,272

Background: The FY27 Airport budget has a 6.23% increase over FY26. The largest increase in the budget is in the employee benefits due to increases in health insurance

and the retirement assessment. The other largest increase was in wages. The primary driver being the wage and class study and the transition to making sure staff of the Airport are paid in accordance with that study. As has been done in previous years, the portion of the Pioneer Aviation Purchase Debt Service that is not funded by the FAA grant will be funded by Town's "Sale of Real Estate" account.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 7. Colle Budget (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$52,250 for the purpose of funding the operations and maintenance of the Colle Building, said sum to be raised from Colle Receipts Reserved for Appropriation.

Background: This budget is wholly funded by building lease fees, which are segregated to pay for all the normal building maintenance including some utilities and general repairs. The debt service from the renovation was paid off in FY23. Colle Receipts Reserved for Appropriations has a current balance of \$475,936.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 8. FCTS Assessment (Franklin County Technical School Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$1,131,215 for the purpose of paying the Franklin County Technical School District for Montague's share of the assessment for the yearly operation of the Franklin County Technical School, with \$231,907 to be raised from the Franklin County Technical School Stabilization Fund and \$899,308 to be raised from Taxation.

Background: Montague is one of 19 member towns in the Franklin County Technical School District, which operates a school in the Airport Industrial Park. The FY2027 assessment increased \$289,555 (34.4%). Montague's enrollment increased by 14 students following two lower enrollments years (74 and 73 students).

Comment 1: The Finance Committee has an internal policy to cushion sharp changes to the assessment. It provides additions or reductions to the FCTS Stabilization Fund to stabilize the assessment's impact on the budget. This year the estimated assessment was \$231,907 more than the early budgeted amount. This amount will be appropriated from the FCTS Stabilization Fund in accordance with the Finance Committee internal policy.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 9. GMRSD Assessment (Gill-Montague Regional School District Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$13,120,375 for the purpose of paying the Gill-Montague Regional School District for Montague's share of the assessment for the yearly operation of the Gill-Montague Regional Schools, said sum to be raised from Taxation.

Background: The GMRSD has provided additional information in a separate document in your packet. Montague's assessment increased by \$457,197 or 3.61% and is the Affordable Assessment amount provided to them by Montague. The Affordable Assessment amount is based on an agreement (the "Compact for Funding Education") to keep the local assessment "affordable," which was forged between the district and its two sending towns over a decade ago. The Affordable Assessment is calculated as 48.5% of Montague's available operating revenues, plus excluded debt for GMRSD capital projects.

This assessment funds the operation of five schools serving students from pre-school to 12th grade, as well as tuition, special education services, and school choice payments for some of the Montague resident students who are not enrolled at GMRSD schools.

The total GMRSD budget for FY27 is \$29,727,535. The combined assessments to member towns comprise (\$15,269,946) 51.4% of the district's total operating revenue. The remainder comes from state aid and reimbursements, grants, school choice payments from sending districts, etc.

Comment 1: The GMRSD has again managed to build a budget around an "affordable" figure provided to them by Montague, but not without cuts to their services. By approving this request, Town Meeting upholds its commitment to offer the district a significant, predetermined portion of Town revenue, while reserving the rest for other uses.

Comment 2: The Finance Committee's abstention was based on the member being recently appointed to the Finance Committee, so they were not part of the beginning budget process.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends 4-0-1

ARTICLE 10. GMRSD Afterschool and Instructional Materials (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$163,717.50 for the purpose of funding the Sheffield afterschool program, and purchase instructional materials for Turners Falls High School, Great Falls Middle School, Hillcrest Elementary School, and Sheffield Elementary School, with \$12,424 to be raised from the unexpended balance of Article #21E of the May 22, 2021 Annual Town Meeting, \$24,393.50 to be raised from the unexpended balance of Article #9 of the October 16, 2021 Special Town Meeting, \$86,900 to be raised from the unexpended balance of Article #23 of the May 7, 2022 Annual Town Meeting, and \$40,000 to be raised from the unexpended balance of Article #24 of the May 7, 2022 Annual Town Meeting.

Background: This article repurposes unused appropriations from Cannabis Impact stabilization funds to supplement the GMRSD budget through an investment in non-recurring expenses requested by the GMRSD. These expenses were cut or partially removed from the GMRSD FY27 operating budget in order to shield Montague and Gill from an unmanageable assessment increase. By funding this via a Special Article, a critical educational deficit is being addressed without creating a permanent, compounding increase in the annual Assessments to Montague and Gill.

1. Purchase instructional materials and equipment at Sheffield and Hillcrest Elementary Schools (\$13,717.50)
2. Purchase textbooks and instruction materials for Turners Falls High School and Great Falls Middle School (\$80,000)
3. Fund the Sheffield Elementary School After-School Program in FY27 (\$70,000)

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 11. Resealing Skatepark and Montague Center Park Improvements (Parks and Recreation Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$12,826 for the purpose of funding the following Recreation Department projects, including any and all incidental and related costs, with \$5,500 to be raised from the unexpended Article #4 of the May 6, 2023 Annual Town Meeting and \$7,326 to be raised from the unexpended Article #8 of the October 10, 2023 Special Town Meeting.

Preventive Maintenance at Unity Skatepark: (\$5,500): Work involves procuring a vendor to “reseal” the 2016 concrete skatepark. Re-sealing the skatepark every 2 years is a best practice to encourage longevity of the facility. The popular recreation facility celebrates its first 10 years this spring.

Montague Center Park Improvements: (\$7,326) This would re-purpose remaining funds from the Montague Center Playground reconstruction project to fund the purchase of equipment and materials for a basketball half-court at the park entrance off School Street. This was identified in the park needs assessment and master plan however, the amenity was not able to be included in the 2025 playground rehabilitation project. Montague DPW will partner with the Parks Department to install the asphalt, hoop, and related site furnishings.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 12. Police Equipment, Police Cruisers, and HVAC Controls at Police Station (Police Department Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$211,300 for the purpose of the following Police Department equipment and repair requests, and any and all incidental and

related costs, with \$19,060 to be raised from the unexpended portion of Article #15 of the June 13, 2020 Annual Town Meeting, \$13,100 to be raised from the unexpended portion of Article #28 of the May 6, 2023 Annual Town Meeting, and \$179,140 to be raised from Free Cash.

1. \$13,200 for a new evidence refrigerator, replacement radio batteries, and a battery reconditioner
2. \$161,000 for the purchase of two new police cruisers.
3. \$37,100 for the repairs of the HVAC controls at the Police Station.

Police Equipment: (\$13,200) The evidence refrigerator is no longer serviceable and needs to be replaced (\$8,800). This specialized equipment is essential for the compulsory storage of biological and DNA evidence. The portable radio batteries are beyond their useful life and a critical mass have failed. These are essential equipment and there are not enough working batteries to support a fully staffed department. The department requires 15 new batteries (\$2,000). The battery reconditioning unit will extend the usable life of department-issued batteries by restoring battery capacity and preventing premature failure. (\$2,400 for 2 units).

Police Cruisers Background: (\$161,000) This request is driven by documented vehicle age, mileage, escalating maintenance costs, and operational reliability concerns. The Town typically replaces one cruiser per year. Town did not purchase a cruiser in FY26 at the direction of the former Police Chief. With the Department back to full-staff for FY27, the need for serviceable cruisers has become a priority.

K9 Cruiser Replacement

The current K9 cruiser is a 2017 Ford Explorer with 150,212 miles (as of 2/10/26). The department averages approximately 16,000–18,000 miles per year per cruiser. The three-year average annual repair cost for this vehicle is \$4,164.61. Police vehicles operate under severe duty conditions, including extended idling, emergency response driving, and 24-hour deployment. The widely accepted service life for a 24-hour police cruiser is approximately 100,000 miles. This vehicle is now 50,000 miles beyond that benchmark and continues to experience increasing repair costs and downtime. Because this is a K9 vehicle, reliability is even more critical. Breakdowns not only impact response capability but also create potential safety risks for both the handler and the K9.

Patrol Cruiser (#5) Replacement

Cruiser #5, also a 2017 Ford Explorer, had 147,563 miles when it became inoperable approximately five (5) months ago. The vehicle is beyond repair and has been removed from service. The loss of this cruiser has already reduced fleet capacity. Operating with fewer frontline vehicles increases wear and mileage on the remaining cruisers and accelerates the need for additional replacements.

Replace HVAC Controls at Police Station: (\$37,100) This project addresses system reliability, officer and prisoner safety, and operational continuity within a 24-hour police facility. A geothermal system was installed with the new building in 2009. The system has been failing more frequently and repair costs have accordingly increased. The Andover Controls platform is obsolete and no longer supported. Gas detection sensors in the Sally port have exceeded their useful life and The controller serving AHU 4 is reporting sensor failures and stalled programs which indicating imminent failure. A qualified vendor will be hired to replace these systems.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 13. Five Year Taser Agreement (Police Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to authorize the Selectboard to enter into a five (5) year agreement, for the purchase and maintenance of tasers and related equipment for use by the Police Department, subject to the Selectboard’s determination that the contract is in the best interests of the Town, or take any other action relative thereto.

Background: Approval of this article would authorize the Selectboard to sign a five (5) year agreement with a vendor for the purchase and maintenance of tasers and related equipment for use by the Police Department. Funding for this agreement is expected to cost approximately \$X per year and will be funded by the Police Department’s operating budget. Town meeting authority is required for leases that exceed 3 years. A five-year agreement provides the most economically favorable terms to the Town.

Selectboard Recommends X-X

ARTICLE 14. Upfitting Heavy Duty Pickup, Multi-use path on Industrial Boulevard/upgrade to Pioneer passenger terminal (Airport Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$168,500 for the following Airport projects and vehicle, including any and all incidental and related costs, with \$5,000 to be appropriated from the unexpended portion of Article #25 of the May 16, 2017 Annual Town Meeting, \$21,000 to be appropriated from Free Cash, and \$142,500 to be appropriated from Cannabis Impact Fee Stabilization Fund.

1. \$26,000 to upfit and equip a heavy-duty pickup truck
2. \$142,500 as a grant match to construct a multi-use path on Industrial Boulevard and complete upgrades to the Pioneer passenger terminal.

Upfit Heavy Duty Pickup: (\$26,000) In 2023, the Airport purchased a 1994 Ford F-450 pickup through a municipal auction for use in snow removal, spill response, and general maintenance. Despite its age, the vehicle is in excellent condition, with no rust and fewer than 19,000 miles. Since purchase, the Airport has invested in a new 10-foot plow and running gear (\$10,850) and completed significant repairs in 2025 (\$7,845), including brakes, tires, suspension, and seals, extending the vehicle’s expected service life by 15+

years. The current utility body, however, limits functionality. This request would fund replacement with a flatbed or standard truck bed, along with toolboxes, lighting, and a backup camera (estimated total: ~\$26,000), allowing the vehicle to be used more efficiently. This investment avoids the need to purchase a new truck at a cost exceeding \$80,000, preserves prior investments, and ensures the Airport can meet increasing operational and safety demands; delaying the project may result in higher future costs due to rising material and labor prices.

Multi-Use Path/Passenger Terminal Background: (\$142,500) This project will construct a 0.9 long pedestrian/cyclist pathway along Industrial Blvd, starting at the intersection of Millers Falls Road and Industrial Blvd, and terminating at the Franklin County Technical School main entrance. In addition, this project will also fund upgrades to the “Pioneer Aviation” passenger terminal restrooms and passenger/crew waiting area to meet ADA regulation, with a special focus on family-oriented improvements in the passenger terminal. The Airport has applied for a \$2,850,000 grant from the FAA’s Airport Terminal Program. If successful, the Town’s match commitment would be \$142,500. Work would be expected to begin over the summer of 2026 with planning and engineering. The funding source would be from cannabis impact fees. The funds would only be spent if the grant is successful.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0

Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 15. FY26 Turners Falls Municipal Airport Operating (Airport Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$8,144 for the purpose of increasing FY26 Turners Falls Municipal Airport operating budget, including any and all incidental and related costs, with said sum to be raised from Airport Retained Earnings.

Background: Request is to transfer \$8,144 from the Airport Retained Earnings to the FY26 Airport Operating. Specifically, this amount will be used to increase the Buildings and Grounds Repair and Maintenance line. Ongoing increases in costs and a limited budget have contributed to a deficit in this line item for FY26.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0

Finance Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 16. CWF Truck, Wastewater Facility Planning Study, Main Generator Redesign (Clean Water Facility Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$233,705 for the purpose of the following Clean Water Facility equipment and project requests, and any and all incidental and related costs, with \$3,030 to be appropriated from the unexpended portion of Article #14 of the May 7, 2025 Annual Town Meeting and \$230,675 to be appropriated from Clean Water Facility Retained Earnings.

Heavy-Duty Work Truck with Plow Background: (\$85,000) The Clean Water Facility (CWF) currently operates with a fleet of two vehicles: a 2016 Ford Super Duty utility truck and a 2023 Ford E-Transit cargo van. This fleet size has remained unchanged since the early 1980s, despite increased staffing levels and expanded regulatory responsibilities. The van is in daily use for required inspections of eight pump stations and four grinder pumps, while the existing truck is regularly used by other staff for maintenance, parts runs, and emergency response. As a result, the CWF Foreman often relies on a personal vehicle to travel between sites, attend meetings, and respond to call-ins. The additional heavy-duty work truck would allow the Foreman to perform field oversight safely and efficiently, while also improving operational capacity. The vehicle would be equipped with a plow and hazard lighting to support required grounds maintenance at the facility and remote sites, and would provide additional seating to allow staff to travel together to trainings and meetings.

Wastewater Facility Planning Study Background: (\$125,000) The Clean Water Facility (CWF) is beginning the process of a major upgrade, focused on the Preliminary and Primary Treatment areas, much of which dates back to 1962 with only limited improvements since. Planned upgrades to this portion of the facility were deferred during the early 2000s CSO project due to budget constraints. Today, this area houses critical treatment processes and equipment and is experiencing significant deterioration, including failing piping, inadequate HVAC, and severe corrosion, creating operational challenges and safety concerns.

A Facilities Plan is required as the first step to evaluate existing conditions and develop a long-term improvement strategy. This study will assess buildings, systems, and equipment, and provide recommendations for upgrades to ensure reliable treatment, improve safety, and guide future capital investments. Given the age and condition of the infrastructure, initiating this planning effort now is essential. The Town will also seek grant funding to offset the municipal cost of the study.

Redesign Main Generator Project Background: (\$23,705) The CWF completed the Main Generator Project in May of 2025. Due to unforeseen scope adjustments identified during project execution, an additional \$23,705.08 is required to fully fund and formally close out the project. Funding to close out the project will be provided from two sources: \$20,674.60 from Retained Earnings and \$3,030.48 from the pump station generator project completed during the same period. The pump station project was delivered under budget and has sufficient remaining funds to help offset the Main Generator Project overrun. It is recommended that these available funds be reallocated to facilitate proper project closeout.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 17. Secondary Clarifier Mechanisms (Clean Water Facility Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$966,000 for the purpose of replacing two secondary clarifier mechanisms, including but not limited to engineering, bidding, and construction, as well as all other costs incidental and related thereto, and to meet this appropriation to authorize the Treasurer, with the approval of the Selectboard, to borrow said sum under General Laws Chapter 44, Sections 7 and 8, and/or Chapter 29C, or any other lawful enabling authority and to issue bonds or notes of the Town therefor; that the Treasurer with the approval of the Selectboard is authorized to borrow all or a portion of such amount from the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust established pursuant to Chapter 29C and in connection therewith to enter into a financing agreement and/or security agreement with the Trust and otherwise to contract with the Trust and the Department of Environmental Protection with respect to such loan and for any federal or state aid available for the project or for the financing thereof; and that the Selectboard, the Clean Water Facility Superintendent, or other appropriate local body or official is authorized to enter into a project regulatory agreement with the Department of Environmental Protection, to expend all funds available for the project and to take any other action necessary or convenient to carry out the project; while the entire borrowing will be issued as a general obligation of the Town payable from all sources of revenues, it is anticipated that the principal and interest due on the \$966,000 principal amount of such borrowing shall be repaid in the first instance through sewer user fees; and further to authorize the Selectboard to execute any other documents and/or agreements necessary to effectuate the purposes of this vote.

Background: The CWF utilizes two (2) 176,000-gallon capacity Secondary Clarifiers as an essential part of the separation of solids from liquids in the wastewater treatment process. The mechanisms in the clarifier tanks have not been replaced since initial installation occurred in 1980 and are well past their useful and expected life. It is important to replace the mechanisms before they experience catastrophic failure. The new units are also expected to reduce risk of NPDES permit violations. The original clarifier mechanisms were also designed to process paper mill waste, which is a thicker coarser material than the current waste experienced at the facility.

Work will include installing two secondary clarifier mechanisms as well as relining of the concrete tank. CWF staff will function as the general contractor which will present significant financial savings and efficiencies. Only technical tasks such as electrical and tank relining will be hired out to vendors.

The project will be funded through bonding (long term debt). The MA Clean Water Trust typically offers very favorable terms to the town for this type of project.

Selectboard Recommends 2-0
Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 18. DPW Roller, Pickup Truck, Large Used Excavator, Tractor (Department of Public Works Request)

MOVED: That the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$330,000 for the following Department of Public Works vehicles, including all equipment and any and all incidental and related costs, with \$2,615.68 to be appropriated from unexpended portion of Article #12 of the May 4, 2024 Town Meeting, \$23,633.18 to be appropriated from the unexpended portion of Article #13 of the March 14, 2024 Special Town meeting, \$125,308.25 to be appropriated from the unexpended portion of Article #15 of the May 4, 2024 Annual Town Meeting, \$23,334.34 to be appropriated from the unexpended portion of Article #20D of the May 7, 2022 Annual Town Meeting, and \$155,108.55 to be appropriated from Free Cash.

Compaction Roller: (\$35,000) This equipment will replace a 2013 RD12 Wacker Neuson Roller. The roller is used by the department to compact materials including asphalt and aggregates. It is a vital piece of equipment for all projects involving asphalt replacement, including patch work and trench work.

Replacement Heavy Duty Pickup: (\$80,000) This vehicle will replace a 2013 F-350 4WD Pickup that is used for plowing and treating on a routine route during winter weather, as well as by building maintenance staff year-round. The bed of the truck was previously replaced, but it is preferred to replace the entire vehicle before a motor replacement becomes necessary.

Large Hydraulic Excavator: (\$150,000) The purchase of a used large excavator, with an approximate operating weight of 30,000 lb., will improve the DPW's in-house project capabilities and promote savings on equipment rental costs. This purchase will allow more efficient and cost-effective execution of projects by DPW staff, including the 2024 culvert replacement on South Ferry Road, and the upcoming culvert repairs on South Street. This purchase would also give the Town the distinct advantage of having a small excavator (CWF), medium excavator (Airport), and large excavator (DPW) in its fleet, with vehicles shared between departments as necessary to accomplish jobs with different equipment needs. A used excavator is expected to be much more cost-effective, as a new one would be at least double the cost at well over \$300,000. This will not replace existing equipment.

Replacement Utility Tractor: (\$65,000) This purchase would replace a 2014 2032R Tractor used by the DPW primarily for winter sidewalk plowing and maintaining the grounds of the Parks & Recreation department. Snowblower, bucket, and rotator attachments used with the current tractor will be transferrable to the replacement.

Retired equipment will be disposed of per town surplus disposal policy and MGL 30B

Selectboard Recommends 3-0

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0

Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 19. Transfer Station Security Gate, Non-Chapter 90 Paving, Sidewalk Replacement/Repair (Department of Public Works Request)

MOVED: That the Town will to appropriate the sum of \$75,000, or any other amount, for the following Department of Public Works projects, including any and all incidental and related costs, with \$2,505 to be appropriated from the unexpended portion of Article #23 of the May 7, 2026 Annual Town Meeting, \$2,035 to be appropriated from the unexpended portion of Article #26 of the May 6, 2017 Annual Town Meeting, \$2,450 to be appropriated from the unexpended portion of Article #26 of the May 4, 2019 Annual Town Meeting, and \$68,010 to be appropriated from Free Cash.

Transfer Station Automatic Security Gate: (\$30,000) This purchase is necessary to improve the safety and security at the municipal transfer station. It will reduce illegal dumping and unauthorized access to the site. An automated gate has been recommended in a DEP annual inspection report. Work will consist of installing a new gate with secure automated access including new footings and electrical work.

Other Municipal Rights of Way Paving: (\$30,000) Funding is needed to support paving various alleys and other rights-of-way that are not included in the state's Chapter 90 program(which is the Town's main source of funding for paving). The First Street Alley was repaved last year. The Second Street Alley is planned for this spring funded by an appropriation from the previous year. The DPW plans to work southward to repave all downtown alleys over the next several years, then move onto other neighborhoods. Once all town's alleys have been repaved, this recurring capital request will no longer be necessary.

Sidewalk Replacement/Repair Background: (\$15,000) Dedicated funding is needed to support replacing and repairing sidewalks throughout the Town. Masonic Ave's sidewalks were replaced in the past year, with more work planned in that same neighborhood for the upcoming construction season.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0

Finance Committee Recommends 6-0

Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 20. DPW Equipment Account (Department of Public Works Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$30,785 for the purpose of purchasing, equipping, and making major repairs to DPW vehicles and equipment, including all incidental and related costs, said sum to be raised from Taxation.

Background: This fund provides available year-round funding for the Department of Public Works (DPW) superintendent to purchase and/or make major repairs to DPW vehicles and equipment. Expenditures from this fund are governed by a policy adopted in 2022. That policy requires Selectboard approval for any expenditure exceeding \$25,000. The policy also indicates that the fund should be replenished at the Annual

Town Meeting to a total of \$100,000 for the upcoming fiscal year, based on the amount in the fund as of March 1. This year the Capital Improvement Committee kept the balance at \$75,000 for the upcoming fiscal year.

Based on a balance of \$44,215 in the DPW discretionary account as of March 1, this appropriation is expected to return the total DPW discretionary fund balance to approximately \$75,000.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 21. Carnegie Library Roof Repairs (Library Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$16,500 for the purpose of funding roof repairs for the Carnegie Public Library, including any and all incidental and related costs, with \$12,950 to be appropriated from the unexpended portion of Article #25 of the May 4, 2019 Annual Town Meeting and \$3,550 to be appropriated from Free Cash.

Background: The main roof at the Carnegie Library requires repairs to prevent further deterioration and to extend its remaining life. This need was identified in a 2022 roof assessment. \$16,500 is budgeted to cover the expense of targeted roof repairs and to address ongoing bat intrusion into the building through installation of chimney caps and bat valves. This is a limited, practical investment to stabilize the envelope of the historic building in the short term (3-5 years), as Town Meeting will also be considering a separate article regarding construction of a new main branch library.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0
Finance Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 22. New Library Building Project (Library Request)

MOVED: That the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$23,704,053 for the purposes of planning, designing, permitting, constructing, equipping, and furnishing a new main library to be located at 38 Avenue A in Turners Falls, and for all other costs incidental or related thereto; and, in order to fund said appropriation, authorize the Treasurer with the approval of the Selectboard to borrow said funds pursuant to G.L. c.44, §7 or any other enabling authority and issue bonds and notes therefor; to authorize the Town to apply for any grants or loans available for the project, and accept and expend the grant of \$11,286,440 from the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program, and, further, that the amount of the authorized borrowing under this vote shall be reduced by (i) any grants received for the project, and (ii) any other unrestricted grants or gifts received by the Town from any other source on account of this project, prior to the issuance of bonds or notes under this vote; provided however, that the vote taken hereunder shall be expressly contingent upon approval by the voters of the Town at an election to exempt from the limitation on total taxes imposed under G.L. c.59, §21C (Proposition 2½) the amounts required to pay the principal of and interest on the borrowing authorized by this vote.

Background: The Town of Montague is considering a proposal to build a new main library at 38 Avenue A in Turners Falls, replacing the existing Carnegie Library. The current building no longer meets community needs due to accessibility issues, limited space, and outdated systems. After several years of study and public input, the preferred option is a new, approximately 20,000 square-foot library designed to better serve residents and support downtown activity. The project has been awarded an \$11.3 million state grant, covering nearly half of the total estimated cost. Under the terms of the grant, the Town must approve the full project cost.

This article would allow the Town to borrow its share of the project cost, with repayment funded through a debt exclusion under Proposition 2½. A debt exclusion is a temporary property tax increase used only to pay for a specific project and ends once the debt is paid off. A “yes” vote supports moving forward with the project, but it will only proceed if a majority of voters also approve the debt exclusion at the town-wide election on June 24, 2026. A “no” vote stops the project.

Selectboard Recommends 2-0
Finance Committee Recommends 6-0

ARTICLE 23. Acquire Second Street Parking Lot Parcel from Montague EDIC (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the town vote to acquire and accept, by donation, from the Montague Economic Development and Industrial Corporation, or the current owner, the real property located at Second Street, Turners Falls, Montague, and shown as Assessor’s Map 04-0-0280, and being Parcel 1 on a plan entitled “Turners Falls Heritage Park in Montague, Massachusetts Surveyed for Commonwealth of Massachusetts Dept. of Environmental Management,” dated July 14, 1989, recorded with the Franklin Registry of Deeds in Plan Book 75, Page 48, described in an Order of Taking recorded with said Registry in Book 2366, Page 337, for library purposes, on such terms and conditions as the Selectboard shall deem to be in the best interest of the Town; and to authorize the Selectboard to take all actions and execute all documents necessary for said acquisition.

Background: In October 2025, Town Meeting voters authorized the acquisition of the planned library parcel at 38 Avenue A from the Montague Economic Development & Industrial Corporation (EDIC). That was needed in order to obtain State funding. The transaction has not yet taken place due to the pending nature of the Library project.

This article expands that acquisition authority to include the parcel that encompasses the Second Street Public Parking Lot. During the library project’s schematic design phase, it became apparent that the property at 38 Avenue A did not contain sufficient space to meet the proposed facility’s stormwater drainage needs on its own, and would require underground infrastructure to be installed under the Second Street Parking lot. This installation will require the current parking lot to be excavated and re-paved, but should not impact its long-term viability to continue serving the parking needs of

downtown, the Discovery Center, and the new Library. EDIC voted on March 26, 2026 to authorize the transfer of this parcel to the Town, contingent upon the Library project moving forward. The Town has maintained the parking lot for over 2 decades.

Selectboard Recommends X-X

ARTICLE 24. Shea Theater accessibility and theater improvements (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$100,000 for the purpose of Shea facility and theatrical upgrades, including any and all incidental and related costs, with \$19,000 to be appropriated from the unexpended portion of Article #15 of the May 4, 2019 Annual Town Meeting and \$81,000 to be appropriated from Free Cash.

Background: The Shea Theater Arts Center, Inc. (“STAC”) recently entered into a new 10 year lease with the Town for the historic Shea Theater. Over its first ten years of operation, STAC invested nearly \$1 million in capital improvements and operational upgrades that stabilized the facility and strengthened its role as a regional cultural anchor.

As STAC begins its second decade, it faces a critical need to address aging systems and infrastructure that are reaching the end of their useful lives. Many of these systems are central to the safety, accessibility, and artistic quality of performances. Timely investment is essential to maintaining the theater’s vibrancy, expanding its production capacity, and ensuring safe, inclusive access for artists and audiences.

STAC is coordinating with the town to apply for a Cultural Facilities Fund grant which requires a 1:1 local match. This grant request will support the following priority improvements: install ADA accessible lift to main stage, upgrade sound and lighting system, partial replace 100+ year old hemp fly system, as well as exterior facade and lobby upgrades.

Selectboard Recommends 2-0-1

Finance Committee Recommends 5-0

Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 25. Colle Building Tile and HVAC Repairs (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote appropriate the sum of \$25,000 for the purpose of Colle building tile and HVAC repairs, including any and all incidental and related costs, with said sum to be raised from the Colle Receipts Reserved for Appropriation.

Background: The Colle Building is a municipally owned property leased by the Town to a local nonprofit organization (Center for Responsive Schools). The building serves a crucial economic development function in downtown. The Town is responsible for capital repairs and the following needs have been identified to maintain a safe, efficient, and professional work environment. The expense is funded entirely through the lease revenue.

- 1) Replace tile flooring in common areas - The flooring in hallways and common areas have reached the end of its useful life and presents both aesthetic and safety concerns.
- 2) Mechanical Systems Upgrades -The mechanical systems that serve the common areas, have become inefficient due to age and evolving building standards. Upgrades are necessary to ensure proper climate control, energy efficiency, and occupant comfort.

Selectboard Recommends 2-0
 Finance Committee Recommends 6-0
 Capital Improvements Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 25. Transfers to Reserves (Finance Committee Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to appropriate the following sums for the purpose of increasing the special purpose funds set forth below, said sums to be raised from Taxation and Free Cash.

Fund	Amount (\$)	Funding Source
Franklin County Technical Stabilization	\$	Free Cash, \$50,000
Town Capital Stabilization Fund	\$	Free Cash, \$100,000
GMRSD Stabilization Fund	\$	Taxation, \$39,489 Free Cash, \$50,000
OPEB Trust Fund	\$	Taxation, \$50,000 Free Cash, \$50,000
Total:	\$	\$339,489

Background: These are annual transfers to reserves from taxation per our financial policies.

- The **Town General Stabilization Fund** is intended to be used only in times of drastic revenue shortfalls. The policy is to have an annual appropriation of 0.3% of the prior year’s general operating revenue (PYGOR), but also to keep a minimum balance of 5% of PYGOR. While .03% of PYGOR is \$76,574, the current balance is above the minimum, so no appropriation is required this year. The current balance as of March 31st was \$1,390,680.69.

- The **Town Capital Stabilization Fund**, while still funded from taxation, has a slightly more complicated calculation. We start with 0.2% of PYGOR (\$51,094) as the base amount. Then we add part of the Kearsarge lease payment. The total lease payment is first evenly split between capital and operating. The operating half is included in the available revenues for the Affordable Assessment, but the Town percentage of that (51.5% or \$41,932) is allocated to the Town Capital Stabilization Fund. The capital half is split by the same allocation, with 51.5% (\$41,932) going to the Town Capital Stabilization Fund and 48.5% (\$39,489) going to the GMRSD Stabilization Fund. The total appropriation to the Town Capital Stabilization Fund is therefore $\$51,049 + \$41,932 + \$41,932 = \$134,913$. This year instead of using this formula and taxation to fund the Town Capital Stabilization, it was decided to fund the stabilization with free cash at \$100,000. This fund is used for capital projects. The balance as of March 31st was \$2,648,231.80.
- The **GMRSD Stabilization Fund** is funded by a portion of the annual Kearsarge Lease payment as described above. This fund is used for capital items for the GMRSD, and the balance as of March 31st was \$264,727.83.
- The **FCTS Stabilization Fund** is used to smooth out large fluctuations in the annual assessment due to large changes in enrollment. An expected assessment is calculated based on a three-year (FY24-FY26) average student enrollment multiplied by the current year (FY26) per-pupil cost. If the actual assessment is larger than that by more than \$10,000, the difference is funded from this fund. If the actual assessment is lower than the estimated assessment by more than \$10,000, the “savings” is put here to fund future increases. This year there was a large increase in enrollment, and the actual assessment was \$231,907 more than the estimated assessment using the above method. This is being funded through this stabilization. The balance on March 31st is \$312,676.30.
- The practice in recent years has been to add \$50,000 of taxation to the Other Post Employment Benefits (**OPEB**) **Trust Fund**. This fund was established to begin funding for the future health insurance cost of current employees after they retire. Funding this liability is not currently required, but it is a prudent thing to do. This appropriation of funds into the OPEB Trust is viewed both as mostly symbolic gestures showing that Montague recognizes its obligation (appreciated by bond rating agencies) and is beginning to address it, although the amount is well below what would be needed if we were actively funding the liability.

The Town’s long-term plan is to address the OPEB unfunded liability more aggressively after the Town’s unfunded pension liability has been “fully funded” (currently expected to occur in FY33). At that time the money currently appropriated to fund the unfunded pension liability will be available for use, on an annual basis, to more rigorously fund the unfunded OPEB liability, although

there may not be a formal funding schedule in place. However, even that will probably not be enough to meet the annual OPEB funding needs.

The balance in this as of March 31st was \$2,724,749.06. The current unfunded liability is \$9,908,364.

- Montague's financial policies (A-5 Reserves) suggest that amounts of Free Cash above a certain threshold should be put into town stabilization funds or the OPEB Trust Fund. The Finance Committee discussed options of what to do with the remaining free cash from this fiscal year. The result was to mirror how the Kearsarge lease payments are handled with a percentage going to the Gill Montague Regional Stabilization Fund and a larger percentage going to the Town Capital Stabilization Fund. They also chose to put an amount in the Franklin County Technical School Stabilization equal to the contribution to the Gill-Montague Regional Stabilization. The Finance Committee also wanted to put some money towards the OPEB Trust Fund but knowing that this liability is longer term than the pressing short-term capital needs the Town and School will be facing.

Selectboard Recommends X-X

Finance Committee Recommends 5-0

ARTICLE 27. Postage Machine 5-year Lease Agreement (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town will vote to authorize the Selectboard to enter into a five (5) year lease agreement for a postage machine in FY2027, subject to the Selectboard's determination that the contract is in the best interest of the Town, or take any vote or votes in relation thereto.

Background:

Approval of this article would authorize the Select Board to sign a five (5) year agreement with a vendor for the lease of a postage machine. Funding for this agreement is expected to cost approximately \$7,500 per year and will be funded by the "Shared Services" budget. Town meeting authority is required for leases that exceed 3 years. A five-year agreement is expected to provide the most economically favorable terms to the Town.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0

ARTICLE 28. Accessory Dwelling Units Zoning Bylaw (Planning Board Request)

MOVED: That the Town will vote to amend its Zoning Bylaws by amending Section 5.4 - Accessory Uses by inserting the text shown as underlined and deleting text shown as ~~struckthrough~~, by deleting Section 8.5 - Accessory Apartments and replacing it with an entirely new Section 8.5 – Accessory Dwelling Unit, and by amending Section 9.1.2(e) by deleting text shown as ~~struckthrough~~, all as shown below, or take any action relative thereto.

SECTION 5. DISTRICT REGULATION

5.4 Accessory Uses

Any use which is, in Franklin County, customarily accessory and incidental to a permitted Principal Use shall be permitted on the same lot with said Principal Use, or on a lot adjacent thereto in the same ownership, and with the exception of Protected Use Accessory Dwelling Units, all accessory uses are subject to the general limitation that it shall not be detrimental to the neighborhood or the property in the vicinity, and subject further to the following provision: wherever a Principal Use is allowed by Special Permit then Accessory Uses to the Principal Use shall be subject to a Special Permit, unless otherwise provided in the bylaws, and with the exception of Protected Use Accessory Dwelling Units. The following accessory uses have specific requirements in Section 8

SPECIAL REGULATIONS:

- *Trailers, Mobile Homes, and Campers, §8.1*
- *Home Occupations, §8.3*
- *Boarding of Animals, §8.4*
- *Accessory Apartments Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU), §8.5*
- *Solar Energy Installations, §8.9*

SECTION 8.5 ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT

8.5.1 Purpose

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) allow the Town of Montague to expand and diversify its housing supply by making efficient use of resources without requiring the creation of new lots. ADUs are intended to meet the changing housing needs of the community by providing smaller units in existing residential neighborhoods.

8.5.2 Applicability

The Town of Montague permits two types of Accessory Dwelling Units: a Protected Use ADU in accordance with MGL c. 40A §3 and 760 CMR 71.00, and a Local ADU. Both types of ADUs shall be permitted in any single-family residential zoning district that allows a single-family dwelling as-of-right or by Special Permit, including: AF, AF-2, AF-4, RS-1, RS-2, RB, NB, GB, HI, and SGODs Zoning Districts.

- (a) A Protected Use ADU shall meet the State definition per MGL c. 40A §1A, as well as State regulations under 760 CMR 71.00. The use of land or structures for a Protected Use ADU shall be as-of-right, meeting all requirements associated with the issuance of a building permit and meeting certain requirements listed in this section of the Zoning Bylaw, provided, however, that only one ADU on a lot may qualify as a Protected Use ADU.
- (b) A Local ADU shall meet the definition and specific requirements in this section of the Zoning Bylaw and shall only be allowed by Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals. When a lot has a Protected Use ADU and a second Protected Use or Local ADU is proposed, the second ADU shall be permitted by a Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals.
- (c) Either ADU type may be completely contained within the Principal Dwelling, attached to a Principal Dwelling, detached as a separate building or within a detached structure (e.g. above an existing detached garage). Any ADU may be

within an existing building or new construction.

8.5.2 Definitions

For the purposes of this section of the Zoning Bylaw, the following definitions shall apply:

- (a) **Local Accessory Dwelling Unit (Local ADU):** A Local ADU that is not a Protected Use ADU and shall be a self-contained residential dwelling unit, inclusive of sleeping, cooking, and sanitary facilities on the same lot as a Principal Dwelling that: (i) maintains a separate entrance, either directly from the outside or through an entry hall or corridor shared with the Principal Dwelling sufficient to meet the requirements of the state building code for safe egress; (ii) is not larger than a Gross Floor Area of 1,200 square feet; and (iii) is subject to such additional requirements found in this section of the Zoning Bylaw.
- (b) **Protected Use Accessory Dwelling Unit (Protected Use ADU):** Pursuant to MGL c. 40A §1A, and its associated state regulations under 76 CMR 71.00, a Protected Use ADU is a self-contained residential dwelling unit, inclusive of sleeping, cooking, and sanitary facilities on the same lot as a Principal Dwelling, subject to otherwise applicable dimensional and parking requirements, that (i) maintains a separate entrance, either directly from the outside or through an entry hall or corridor shared with the Principal Dwelling sufficient to meet the requirements of the state building code for safe egress; (ii) is not larger than a gross floor area of 900 square feet, provided that only one ADU on a Lot may qualify as a Protected Use ADU; and (iii) is subject to such additional requirements found in this section of the Zoning Bylaw.
- (c) **Gross Floor Area (GFA).** The sum of the areas of all stories of the building of compliant ceiling height pursuant to the Building Code, including basements, lofts, and intermediate floored tiers, measured from the interior faces of exterior walls or from the centerline of walls separating buildings or dwelling units but excluding crawl spaces, garage parking areas, attics, enclosed porches and similar spaces. Where there are multiple Principal Dwellings on the Lot, the GFA of the largest Principal Dwelling shall be used for determining the maximum size of a Protected Use ADU.
- (d) **Principal Dwelling.** A structure, regardless of whether it, or the Lot it is situated on, conforms to Zoning, including use requirements and dimensional requirements, such as setbacks, bulk, and height, that contains at least one Dwelling Unit and is, or will be, located on the same Lot as a Protected Use ADU.
- (e) **Transit Station.** A Subway Station, Commuter Rail Station, Ferry Terminal, or Bus Station.
- (f) **Bus Station.** A location serving as a point of embarkation for any bus operated by a Transit Authority.

8.5.3 General Requirements for Protected Use Accessory Dwelling Units and Local Accessory Dwelling Units

- (a) All ADUs shall be located on the same lot as the Principal Dwelling.
- (b) There shall be no more than one Local ADU and one Protected Use ADU permitted on the same lot as the Principal Dwelling.
- (c) All ADUs are exempt from the additional lot area/dwelling requirements of Section 5.5.1 of the Zoning Bylaw.
- (d) All ADUs shall meet the dimensional requirements for accessory structures under Section 5.5.2 of the Zoning Bylaw.
- (e) No additional or separate driveway curb cut to serve any ADU shall be permitted unless approved by the Department of Public Works.
- (f) All exterior lighting shall be designed and installed so as to be shielded, downcast, and dark sky compliant to avoid light trespass onto adjacent properties.
- (g) On-site storage and management of waste and recycling shall be located on the interior of the dwelling, within an attached garage or other accessory outbuilding, or screened appropriately from public view.
- (h) To the extent feasible, a newly constructed detached ADU shall be located behind the front building line of the Principal Dwelling closest to the street.
- (i) No camper or mobile home, as defined in Section 8.1.2 of the Zoning Bylaw, may be used as a Protected Use or Local ADU, nor may either ADU be mounted on a trailer.

8.5.4 Specific Requirements for Protected Use Accessory Dwelling Units

- (a) There is no minimum lot size required for a Protected Use ADU.
- (b) The more permissive (i.e. least restrictive) dimensional regulations found in Section 5 of the Zoning Bylaw for a detached single-family dwelling, the Principal Dwelling or an accessory structure, shall apply to the Protected Use ADU.
- (c) A minimum of one (1) parking space shall be provided for a Protected Use ADU that is further than 1/2 mile from the nearest transit station. In accordance with 760 CMR, no parking space shall be required for a Protected Use ADU located within 1/2 mile of a transit station.

8.5.5 Specific Requirements for Local Accessory Dwelling Units

- (a) A minimum of one (1) parking space shall be provided for a Local ADU.
- (b) A Local ADU shall be designed so that the appearance and scale of the structure is compatible with the Principal Dwelling.
- (c) The Gross Floor Area for a Local ADU does not include the area of unfinished basement space used for storage or utilities.

SECTION 9. SITE PLAN REVIEW AND SPECIAL PERMITS

9.1. Site Plan Review

9.1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Site Plan Review process is to provide detailed review of certain uses and structures which have a potential for significant impact on the character, infrastructure, and natural resources of the Town of Montague.

9.1.2 Applicability

The following activities and uses are subject to site plan review:

- (a) *All uses that involve the construction or expansion or change of use of over 3,000 square feet of floor area.*
- (b) *All uses that involve the development of over 130,680 square feet (3 acres) of land.*
- (c) *Any new structure, group of new structures, changes of use, or additions which result in an increase of 500 or more vehicle trips per day, as proposed in an applicant's business plan acceptable to the reviewing authority or estimated by a professional engineer.*
- (d) *All uses that involve the construction or expansion of a parking area that creates ten (10) or more new parking spaces, per §7.2.6*
- (e) *Specific Uses identified elsewhere in this bylaw:*
 - ~~• Accessory Apartments within existing single family homes, per §8.5~~
 - *Self-storage facilities, per §8.9*
 - *Solar energy and battery energy storage facilities, per §8.9*
 - *Medical Marijuana Treatment Center or Marijuana retailer, cultivation, production, research or testing, per §8.10*
 - *Open Space Residential Development, per §8.11*
 - *Planned Unit Development, per §8.12*

Background: Montague has allowed accessory dwelling units (ADUs) for decades, initially as "Accessory Apartments" that typically required a Special Permit and included conditions such as owner occupancy. In 2019, the Town updated its Zoning Bylaw to expand ADU options and increase the maximum size from 700 to 900 square feet, encouraging more housing on single-family properties. Since then, ADUs have become a more common way to add units in town. In 2024, the state passed the Affordable Homes Act, requiring municipalities to allow certain ADUs up to 900 square feet by-right in single-family zoning districts, with limits on local regulation.

These changes took effect in February 2025, prompting Montague to revisit its bylaw. In response, the Planning Board drafted amendments to align with state law while addressing local needs. The proposal creates two types of ADUs: a “protected use” ADU, which follows state rules and cannot require discretionary permits, owner occupancy, or excessive parking, and a “local” ADU, which allows more design flexibility but requires a Special Permit. Local ADUs could be larger—up to 1,200 square feet—and must meet additional design and parking requirements. This dual approach is intended to comply with state requirements while preserving options for property owners, including those who may benefit from larger or more tailored living spaces.

Planning Board Recommends 5-0
Selectboard Recommends 3-0

ARTICLE 29. Right-of-Way Authorization for North Leverett Road Bridge Replacement
(Selectboard)

MOVED: That the town vote to (a) authorize the Selectboard to acquire, by purchase, gift and/or eminent domain, on such terms as the Selectboard deems appropriate, the land and/or permanent and temporary easements in, on, under, over, across and along certain parcels of land located on or near the North Leverett Road Bridge over Sawmill River and approximately shown on plans entitled “Massachusetts Department of Transportation Highway Division Plan and Profile of North Leverett Road Over the Sawmill River (Bridge No. M-28-034) in the Town of Montague Franklin County,” prepared by TransSystems, on file with the Town Clerk, as said plans may be amended from time to time and/or incorporated into an easement plan, and land within 200 feet of said parcels, for public way purposes, including without limitation, for the construction, installation, inspection, maintenance, improvement, repair, replacement and/or relocation of a bridge, rights of way, sidewalks, drainage, utilities, driveways, retaining ways, guardrails, slopes, grading, rounding, construction, landscaping, and other structures and/or appurtenances, to enable the Town to undertake the Bridge Reconstruction Project and for any and all purposes and uses incidental or related thereto; (b) transfer the care, custody, and control of the portions of the Town-owned properties shown on the aforesaid plans from the board or officer having custody of the same for the purposes for which such properties are currently held to the Selectboard for the foregoing purposes and further to dedicate said portions of the Town-owned properties to said bridge and public way purposes, and, if applicable, authorize the Selectboard to submit petitions to the General Court to permit the foregoing under Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution or otherwise; (c) raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow a sum of money to fund the foregoing project and any and all costs incidental or related thereto, including, without limitation, the cost of any land/easement acquisitions, appraisals, and surveys; (d) and, further, authorize the Selectboard to enter into all agreements and take any and all actions as may be necessary or appropriate to carry out the purposes of this article, or pass any vote or votes in relation thereto.

Background: This article allows the Selectboard to proceed with acquisitions of easements that are necessary for the replacement of the structurally deficient bridge carrying North Leverett Road over the Sawmill River in Montague (Bridge No. M-28-034). Proposed work includes full replacement of the bridge superstructure and substructure, reconstruction of roadway approaches, drainage improvements, and installation of safety features consistent with current MassDOT standards. Traffic will be maintained during construction through staged construction and temporary traffic control measures. The construction contract is expected to be awarded in 2027.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0

ARTICLE 30. Right-of-Way Authorization for Intersection Safety Improvements at Millers Falls Road and Industrial Boulevard (Selectboard)

MOVED: To see if the Town will vote to (a) authorize the Selectboard to acquire, by purchase, gift and/or eminent domain, on such terms as the Selectboard deems appropriate, the land and/or permanent and temporary easements in, on, under, over, across and along certain parcels of land located on or near the intersection of Industrial Boulevard and Millers Falls Road, and approximately shown on plans entitled "Town of Montague ROW Plans FRTA-Industrial Bld/Millers Falls Rd Bus Stop Improvements," prepared by Fuss & O'Neill, on file with the Town Clerk, as said plans may be amended from time to time and/or incorporated into an easement plan, and land within 200 feet of said parcels, for public way purposes, including without limitation, for the construction, installation, inspection, maintenance, improvement, repair, replacement and/or relocation of a bus stop, rights of way, sidewalks, drainage, utilities, driveways, retaining ways, guardrails, slopes, grading, rounding, construction, landscaping, and other structures and/or appurtenances, to enable the Town to undertake the Industrial Boulevard/Millers Falls Road Bus Stop Project and for any and all purposes and uses incidental or related thereto; (b) raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow a sum of money to fund the foregoing project and any and all costs incidental or related thereto, including, without limitation, the cost of any land/easement acquisitions, appraisals, and surveys; (c) and, further, authorize the Selectboard to enter into all agreements and take any and all actions as may be necessary or appropriate to carry out the purposes of this article, or pass any vote or votes in relation thereto.

Background: This article allows the Selectboard to move forward with the acquisition of easements necessary for the planned safety improvements at the intersection of Millers Falls Road and Industrial Boulevard. The Project is being conducted in partnership with the Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) and is being funded by a MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant and a previous appropriation from the Town's Cannabis Impact fund. Construction is expected to begin in 2026.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0

ARTICLE 31. Personnel Policy Bylaw (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to rescind its existing Consolidated Personnel Bylaw and amend the Town's General Bylaws by adding a new Article, as set forth below, entitled "Personnel", the purpose of which shall be to establish fair and equitable personnel policies and a system of personnel administration based on merit principles that ensures uniform, efficient application of those policies, as authorized by M.G.L. c. 41 § 108C.

Background: This action marks a significant milestone in modernizing the town's human resource functions. Town of Montague has about 87 full time employees.

This article repeals the Town's existing Personnel By-Law and replaces it with updated language re-establishing the framework for the Town's personnel administration system under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 41, Section 108C. The revised bylaw confirms that the Selectboard will serve as the Town's Personnel Board and will oversee the

administration of the Town’s personnel system, including employee appointments and removals where applicable, development of hiring and performance standards, and annual review of compensation and benefits. The bylaw also clarifies that collective bargaining agreements and employment contracts will prevail where their terms conflict with personnel policies adopted under the bylaw.

The article further authorizes the Selectboard to adopt comprehensive personnel policies governing the rights, responsibilities, and benefits of Town employees. These policies will establish key elements of the Town’s personnel system, including recruitment and selection procedures, classification and compensation plans, personnel recordkeeping, and other administrative practices necessary for effective personnel management. Approval of this article will allow the Selectboard to implement and maintain an updated personnel policy manual without requiring future bylaw amendments for routine policy updates. A public draft of the Personnel Policy Manual is available at www.montague-ma.gov/XXXXXXX.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0

ARTICLE 32. Local Option to permit conversion of “Beer and Wine” licenses to “All-alcohol”
(Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the Town vote to accept the provisions of G.L. c.138, §12D, to allow the Selectboard as the local licensing authority of the Town, to approve a request from a licensee to convert an existing license to sell wines and malt beverages only for on-premises consumption to a license to sell all alcoholic beverages for on-site consumption, subject to all other provisions of G.L. c.138, including notice, publication, and certified mailing of, and a public hearing on, such conversion.

Background: 2025 legislation (M.G.L. c.138, §12D) gives towns the option to allow holders of *On-Premises Wine and Malt Only Licenses* to upgrade to *All-Alcoholic Beverages Licenses*. This change streamlines local licensing by removing the need for special approval from the state legislature and allows upgrades regardless of the usual license quota system. In Montague, this change would enable three existing businesses to expand their offerings. It would also make the community more attractive for new restaurants and entertainment venues. By adopting this article, the Town would reduce barriers for local businesses and support more diverse dining and entertainment options in Montague.

Selectboard Recommends 3-0

ARTICLE 33. Initiate Community Electricity Supply Aggregation Program (Selectboard Request)

MOVED: That the town vote to initiate the process to aggregate electrical load pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 164, Section 134, and further to authorize the Selectboard, or its designee, to research, develop, and participate in a contract or contracts to aggregate the electricity load of the residents and business in the Town, independently or in joint action with other municipalities, retaining the right of individual residents and businesses to opt out of the aggregation, or take any action in relation thereto.

Background: This article authorizes the Selectboard to begin the process of establishing a Community Electricity Aggregation (CEA) program under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 164, Section 134. Through aggregation, the Town may combine the electricity demand of residents and businesses to procure electricity supply competitively on their behalf, potentially providing more stable pricing and additional renewable energy options. CEA is widely adopted in Massachusetts; reportedly 245 of 301 eligible municipalities have implemented a program. Eversource would continue to deliver electricity, maintain infrastructure, respond to outages, and issue bills; only the electricity supply portion of the bill could change. Participation in the program would be automatic, but all residents and businesses would retain the right to opt out at any time and remain on the utility's Basic Service or choose another supplier. Approval of this article authorizes the Selectboard to research and develop the program and, if appropriate, enter into supply contracts independently or in partnership with other municipalities.

DRAFT

TOWN OF MONTAGUE FY2027 ANNUAL BUDGET



FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT TO
TOWN MEETING
MONTAGUE, MASSACHUSETTS

May 2, 2026, 9:00 AM

TURNERS FALLS HIGH SCHOOL THEATER



TOWN OF MONTAGUE

Finance Committee

One Avenue A

Turners Falls, Massachusetts 01376

413 863-3200 ext. 121

April 8, 2026

Dear Town Meeting Members:

One of the Finance Committee's responsibilities is to report to Town Meeting on the annual budget for the upcoming fiscal year. This booklet includes information and explanations of the major elements of the proposed budget, as well as background on each of the motions you will be asked to vote on. If you would like more details, you can find materials related to this year's budget development process on the Town's website at www.montague-ma.gov/p/374/Annual-Budget-Information, and of course if you have questions, any of us would be happy to speak with you.

The budget we are presenting to you is the result of a collaborative process that started in 2025 with a preliminary revenue forecast and solicitation from department heads and commissions of requests for anticipated budgets, when departments and committees were asked to prepare requests for anticipated capital and operating needs in their areas for Fiscal Year 2027. This year the directive was to submit budgets for "level services" and a budget for "level services minus 2%". The Capital Improvements Committee started reviewing capital requests for FY2027 in October, and department heads who were proposing significant staffing changes presented proposals to the Selectboard (acting as the Personnel Board) in December and January.

The Finance Committee and Selectboard had all the initial operating budget and special article requests in hand by mid-December 2025. We reviewed the requests, invited public input, gathered information through written correspondence, researched and asked questions, and discussed our concerns at public meetings in February and March.

The operating budget proposed for the Town was refined by this process, and our input also helped influence decisions about the special articles that would ultimately appear on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. When we reconvened with the Selectboard in mid-March, we received the Capital Improvements Committee's report and recommendations and then worked together to settle on a final budget to propose to you. We look forward to hearing what you think of it in May!

Respectfully, Your Finance Committee:

Dorinda Bell-Upp (Chair), Leigh Rae (Clerk), Christopher Menegoni, Francia Wisnewski,
Leigh Rae, Stuart Mieher, and Emily Siegenthaler

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT TO TOWN MEETING

Fiscal Year 2027

In accordance with the bylaws of the Town, the Montague Finance Committee has investigated the cost of maintenance and expenditures of departments of the Town and here recommend in detail the amounts to be appropriated for each department for the ensuing year. We have also considered articles in Town warrants requiring the appropriation of money throughout the year. We propose a balanced budget of \$34,566,903 to provide municipal services during Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27).

Further details on the development of the FY26 budget are available on the Town's website at www.montague-ma.gov/p/374/Annual-Budget-Information. The "Annual Budget Information" section includes a glossary of the terms that are bold-faced in this report, revenue estimates for FY27, line-item budget requests for all town departments, budget narratives, our Capital Improvements Committee's annual report, and other resources.

INTRODUCTION

This budget strives to provide effective municipal programs and services to Montague's residents, while assuring a financially sustainable future. Our **Revenue** estimates reflect our expectations for tax collections, local receipts, and state aid in various forms.

This year town departments were asked to submit two budgets, a "level services" budget and a "level services minus 2%", and for the most part departments were able to comply with this request. There was one new staff position requested this year by the Clean Water Facility, and it made it through the personnel board approval process. This position was for an Assistant Mechanic at the Clean Water Facility. The goal of the position is to help with upkeep of the current equipment and to have a transition plan in place if the current mechanic ever parts ways with the Town.

Montague's financial situation has stabilized in recent years, with an improved bond rating (AA since 2021) and increasing levels of reserves across most accounts with many of them exceeding the limit requirements set in the Montague Financial Policies. In the past years we have begun discussing the option of using long-term debt for larger capital expenses, and we feel encouraged by efforts to engage in longer-term planning that will ultimately help us make more strategic financial decisions. The Town's new Five-Year Capital Plan, which is updated annually, will be critical to that strategic decision-making process. This plan has been expanded to include more assets of the Town, including guardrails, roads, culverts, etc., to be more comprehensive of future liabilities of the Town. Following the Five-Year Capital Plan, the Finance Committee has been working to implement their own five-year plan that they are hoping to continue to work on during the off-budget season.

We are grateful to everyone who has worked with us throughout this annual budget season.

FUNDING GOALS

The Finance Committee pursued several goals while developing this budget:

1. To fund annual needs (both departmental operating budgets and recurring Special Articles) from recurring non-Reserve sources, and to avoid using **Reserves** for nonrecurring projects estimated to cost less than \$25,000. We accomplished this goal again this year, using a combination of **Taxation** and **Free Cash**. Our continued ability to fund the Town's departmental operating budget and the Education assessment using only taxation is a sign of our ongoing fiscal health.
2. To fund the assessment of the Gill-Montague Regional School District (GMRSD) according to the method described in the [Compact for Funding Education](#), which was ratified in 2009 and reaffirmed in 2019. The agreement was based on a model where Montague allocates 48.5% of defined revenues as the "Affordable Assessment," and that percentage has been used ever since. The funding of this assessment through taxation shows the support and commitment from the Town to the school district. Through an extensive process and joint meetings with various officers from the towns of Gill and Montague, the district's FY27 request matches that figure, and we recommend funding it.
3. To follow the Town's Financial Management Policies, which provide guidelines for capital spending, debt financing, and appropriations to various stabilization accounts. Bond rating agencies encourage towns to establish and follow such guidelines, and the Town's commitment to doing so resulted in favorable interest rates on debt issued in FY2022. These policies include both identifying capital projects of more than \$25,000 that might be eligible for financing through long-term debt and having annual non-excluded debt service costs of at least 5% of the Prior Year's General Operating Revenue.

Our ratio of non-excluded debt service for FY27 is only 0.15%. This year the capital requests did not include any larger projects to help us raise this percentage. Having certain levels of debt service within the operating budget is considered sound practice as it illustrates a community's ability to maintain infrastructure and capital assets within its regular revenues. All the FY2027 capital projects were recommended to be funded with **free cash** and/or with unexpended portions of previous year's special articles. The goal this year was to continue retaining the Town's Capital Stabilization Fund for future requests, because there is no expected decrease in the need for capital purchases in coming years.

Some notable accomplishments from this year:

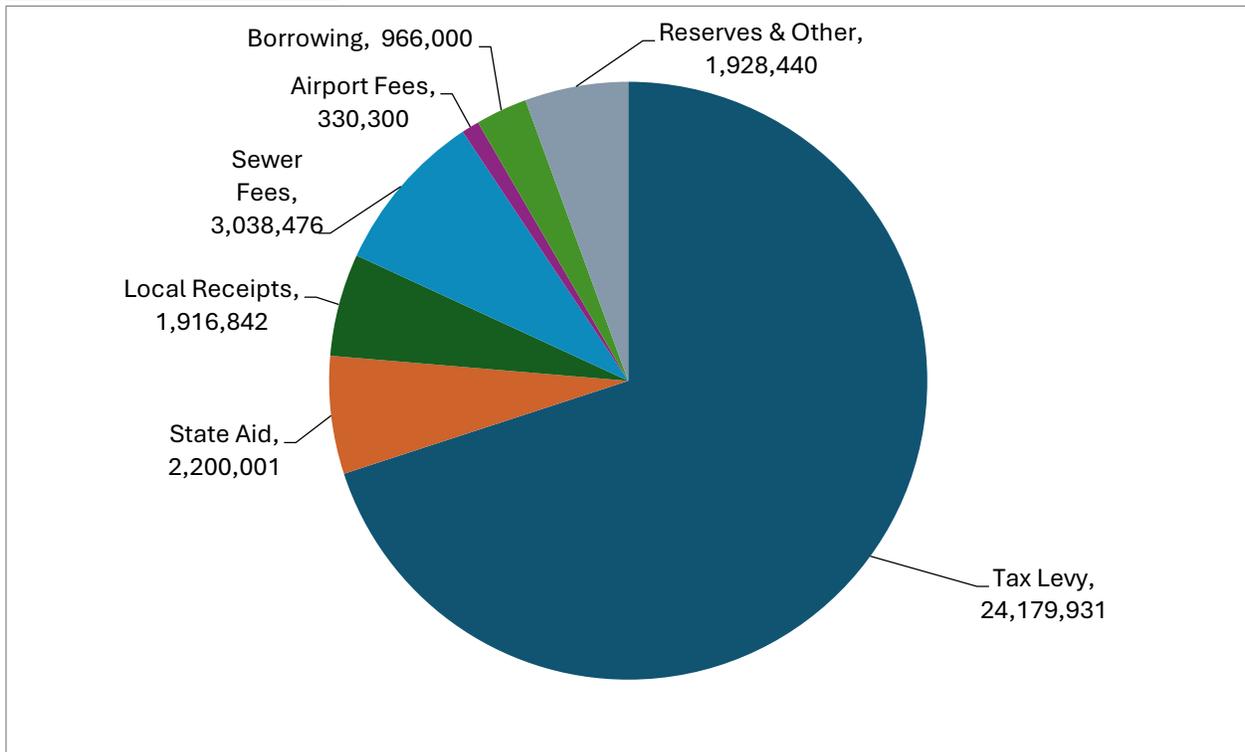
- The FY26 tax rate, set in December 2025, preserved \$1.1M in **Excess Capacity** for Montague, and the **Revenue** estimate for FY27 continues to maintain excess capacity by taxing the Town \$980,328 below the tax levy. Montague’s ability to raise revenue sufficient for its needs without taxing to the annual levy limit is an indicator of fiscal health and provides a reserve for possible future revenue reductions or capital needs.
- Contract negotiations for the bargaining units and non-union employees, covering 2026 to 2028, are completed and they incorporated the greater part of Montague’s acceptance of the Collins Center Wage and Class study that was initiated in FY2024.
- Starting in FY26 the Town has successfully transitioned to a quarterly tax billing system that allows for a more consistent cash flow for the Town. Having consistent cash flow helps prevent the Town from needing to do short term borrowings to pay bills and payroll.
- The Selectboard and Accounting offices have successfully implemented a new payroll system that allows employees more access to their payroll records with a digital portal. The system also has timesheet capabilities to help track and record employee’s time and accruals more accurately and efficiently.

Revenues

Massachusetts General Law requires municipalities to prepare an annual budget that balances revenues with expenditures. The revenue side of our budget is derived primarily from five sources: Property Taxes, State Aid, Local Receipts, Enterprise Fund (Clean Water Facility [CWF] and Airport) revenues, and Reserves (principally Free Cash or Stabilization Funds). A summary table with revenue and expense comparisons to FY26 and FY27 is on page 11 of this report.

The following chart illustrates the proportion of revenues expected from each source. Please note that later, in the Motions, when **“Taxation”** is named as a funding source, **it includes the combination of property taxes, state aid, and local receipts.**

REVENUE HIGHLIGHTS



Property Taxes Net levy revenue is estimated to be 4.28% higher than FY26. The proposed budget assumes that property will be taxed to a level of \$980,328 below the **Levy Limit**. The Tax Levy includes revenue from local taxes on residential, commercial, industrial, and personal property.

The Tax Levy also includes **New Growth**, which is estimated at \$200,000. Historically, Montague has only budgeted the average levels of residential growth. Starting last year, we began budgeting new growth at a higher amount that also includes the average of the commercial, industrial, and personal property new growth. While in recent years Montague has benefitted several times from unanticipated New Growth, we have been advised to estimate only the more historically normal levels of growth, since personal property new growth – attributable largely to utility companies – is both volatile and unknown until the fall.

In FY2026 the average single family home value for Montague was \$325,699, with an average tax bill of \$4,928. The FY2027 proposed budget is estimated to increase the average tax bill by \$120.51 annually. Please note that this estimate does not include any valuation increases and only an estimate of new growth, as the final numbers will not be known until the Fall of 2026 before the tax rate is set in November, so this estimate is based off current FY2026 valuations. Other factors that could shift before the final taxes

are set include changes to state aid, adjustments of local receipt estimates, votes to taxation at the fall Special Town Meeting, and changes to the split tax rate.

State Aid The budget projections use the Governor’s state aid figures, which provide only level funded from last year’s budgeted state aid. State Aid comprises about 8% of our planned revenue, so Montague should be able to adapt to any changes that occur, including altered state or federal funding.

Local Receipts The local receipts estimate is a 2.73% increase over the FY26 estimate with another drop in the School Resource Officer (SRO) Reimbursements due to funding of the Gill Montague Regional School District SRO being uncertain and the Franklin County Technical School requested a reduced reimbursement for this fiscal year due to their budgetary constraints.

	FY25 Estimated	FY26 Estimated	FY26 Estimated	% of Total
Local Receipts				
Excise/Meal Taxes	\$846,000	\$871,025	\$887,000	46.3%
Penalties & Fines	\$145,000	\$148,505	\$155,000	8.1%
Charges for Trash Disposal	\$275,000	\$280,500	\$285,000	14.9%
Rental - 50% Kearsarge	\$70,769	\$79,831	\$81,421	4.2%
SRO Reimbursements	\$142,500	\$77,500	\$72,000	3.8%
All Other	<u>\$379,827</u>	<u>\$408,608</u>	<u>\$436,421</u>	22.8%
	\$1,859,096	\$1,865,969	\$1,916,842	100.0%

Reserves include **Free Cash, Stabilization Funds**, and other miscellaneous funds. The proposed budget for FY27 uses \$788,594 of Free Cash for regular Special Articles and leaves a balance of \$51,807 to be carried over to next year.

We are recommending the use of \$142,500 from Cannabis Impact Fee Stabilization for Special Articles, and \$231,907 from Franklin County Technical School Stabilization for the annual assessment this year. The background on the motions includes an explanation of the funding source recommendations for articles.

Airport and Sewer Revenues Unlike most Town services, the Airport and the Clean Water Facility are **Enterprise Funds**. These operations collect fees from those who use their services along with other revenues, and that income is dedicated to funding their operations.

Airport revenues did not meet their goal for FY24 because of the delay of the solar project. This resulted in Town funding in future fiscal years and FY27 will again require some Town

funding. A grant funds much of the debt service, and the remaining balance of the Pioneer property debt service will be funded from Town Sale of Real Estate. While the Airport continues to pursue both this solar project and other revenue opportunities, it is likely that continued assistance from the general fund will be needed for a few more years. The Finance Committee is committed to work with the Airport to support a vision of self-sustainability and to support the Airport in having a realistic budget that supports the full operations of the department.

At the CWF, sewer revenues include residential sewer bills, industrial sewer bills, and septage fees. The revenue proportion has moved towards residential users since the closure of the last paper mill in Montague. The Town also pays a user fee to CWF to cover the cost of treating Inflow and Infiltration (I & I) in the system, which had a significant reduction in the FY27 budget due to efforts made by the DPW to find and repair areas of infiltration.

Education Revenue

Although it does not directly affect the Town's budget, Chapter 70 and Chapter 71 State Aid to local school districts is an important element of their funding, distinct from the Town's assessment contributions. The Gill-Montague Regional School District (GMRSD) has met the Affordable Assessment target, and the Franklin County Technical School's assessment has increased significantly due to a change in enrollment requirements by the state to a lottery system for admission.

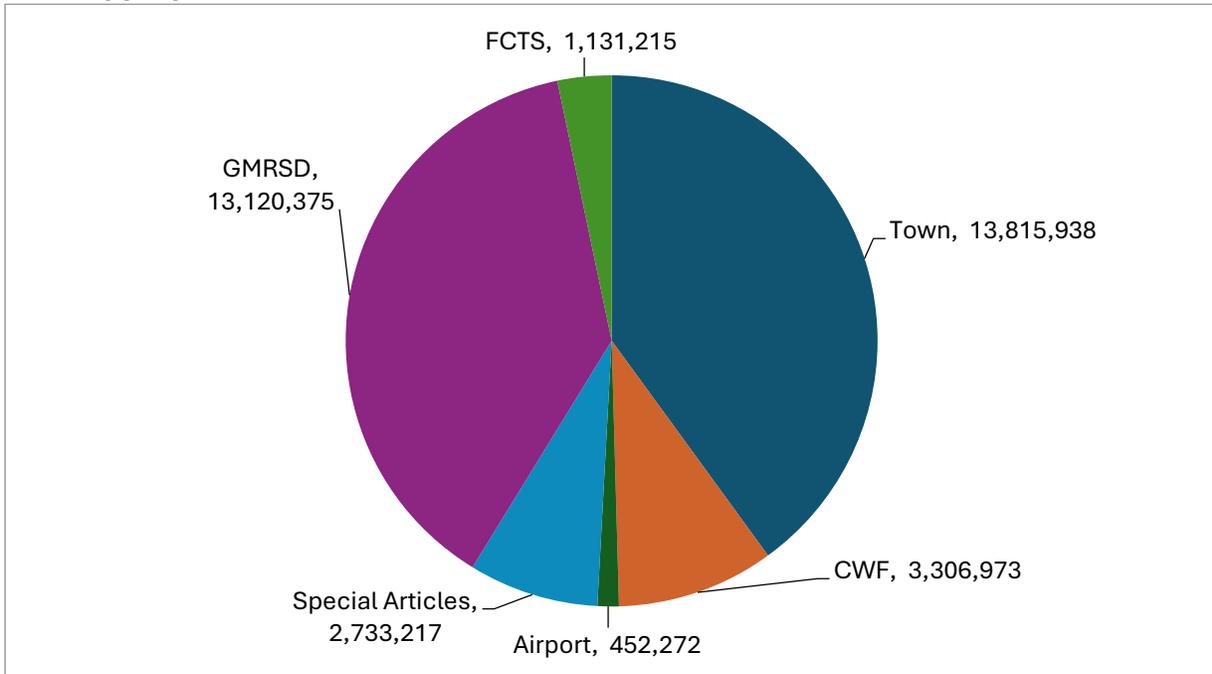
Expenditures

Expenditures are grouped into four basic categories: Town Operating, Education, Enterprise Funds, and Special Articles. Education (GMRSD + FCTS) takes the largest share, at 41%, followed by Town Operating at 40%, Enterprise Funds at 11%, and Special Articles at 8%. A summary table with revenue and expense comparisons to FY24, FY25, and FY26 is on page 11 of this report.

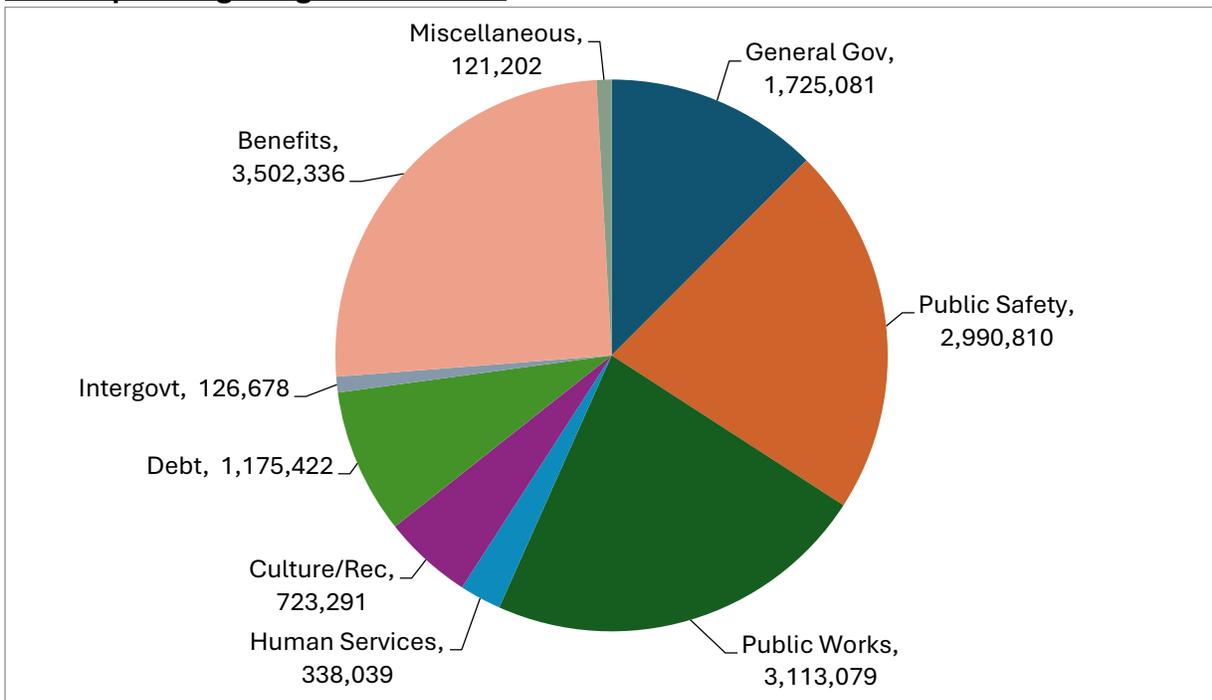
The charts on the next page show the allocations of the total appropriations being requested and the Town Operating budget.

Changes and items of note for specific budgets are noted under the relevant article's (4-10) background information.

Total Appropriations



Town Operating Budget Allocation:



The categories on the pie chart shown above correspond to lines on Schedule III, which is addressed in Article 4.

LOOKING FORWARD

The FY27 Budget that is being presented supports Montague's long-term goals and helps to continue to establish a sustainable path for the future. This budget was built with financial responsibility in mind. The budget worked on cutting out discretionary spending in departments by adopting the "level service minus 2%" budget. This helped to offset the large increase in wages and health insurance, and also created a more fiscally responsible budget. To fund the budget, we continue to use only established revenue sources which allow us to save and build our reserves. To ease the burden on taxpayers most of the reserve funding from taxation was shifted to free cash for this fiscal year.

The age and condition of town-owned buildings and equipment continues to be a concern. While we have dedicated certain revenue sources for the Town Capital Stabilization Fund (such as the Kearsarge property lease, retail cannabis sales tax, and set percentage from Taxation) the annual appropriations will not come close to addressing the scope of our infrastructure needs.

At present the Town's fiscal condition is relatively healthy, and the Reserve funds we have funded diligently over the years are now a resource we can draw on for internal stability in the externally unpredictable financial environment of the future. Commitment and resourcefulness of our Town employees also continues to be a source of strength, and we urge you to support their efforts to ensure that the Town's operations and programs will continue to meet our needs.

As we look ahead, we acknowledge that there are future operating challenges for the Airport (revenue shortfalls) and the Clean Water Facility (increase in operating costs). The next few years the Town will see larger wage increases annually until employees are stepped out again on the new scales. The Town is monitoring the insurance increases and working on researching alternatives to help mitigate those cost increases. We also acknowledge that there are large future capital projects on the horizon with the new Montague Library, the new Franklin County Technical School, and the new elementary school entering the feasibility phase of the MSBA program.

We will continue to work in collaboration with the Selectboard and Capital Improvements Committee to formulate and follow a clear plan to manage the Town's assets in a responsible manner. As always, we invite both general comments and specific questions from residents and Town Meeting members.

Respectfully submitted:

Dorinda Bell-Upp (Chair), Leigh Rae (Clerk), Christopher Menegoni, Francia Wisnewski, Leigh Rae, Stuart Miehler, and Emily Siegenthaler

	HISTORICAL ATM BUDGET SUMMARY				% Incr
REVENUES	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	
Net Tax Levy	21,570,869	22,191,924	23,112,922	24,179,931	4.6%
State Aid	1,914,986	2,085,265	2,202,926	2,200,001	-0.1%
Local Receipts	1,943,490	1,859,096	1,865,969	1,916,842	2.7%
Other Available	764,599	254,541	708,072	1,062,596	50.1%
Reserved Receipts	53,250	52,737	52,250	77,250	47.9%
Free Cash	2,180,701	314,000	1,255,200	788,594	-37.2%
Borrowing	0	1,120,300	3,000,000	966,000	-67.8%
Airport Fees	426,965	286,043	302,964	330,300	9.0%
Sewer User Fees	2,719,224	2,759,825	2,841,377	3,038,476	6.9%
Total Revenues	31,574,084	30,999,173	35,341,680	34,559,990	-2.2%
EXPENSES					
General Government	1,680,319	1,663,222	1,671,968	1,725,081	3.2%
Public Safety	2,650,917	2,763,598	2,701,426	2,990,810	10.7%
Public Works	2,774,507	2,940,162	3,005,484	3,113,079	3.6%
Human Services	310,537	305,173	350,351	338,039	-3.5%
Culture & Recreation	666,139	685,159	692,459	723,291	4.5%
Debt Service	1,154,319	1,158,857	1,160,025	1,175,422	1.3%
Intergovernmental	113,924	116,874	119,041	126,678	6.4%
Employee Benefits	2,490,334	2,657,083	2,926,701	3,502,336	19.7%
General Insurance	120,600	119,600	119,600	121,202	1.3%
CWF	3,006,124	3,119,324	3,221,303	3,306,973	2.7%
AIRPORT	426,965	419,677	425,732	452,272	6.2%
FCTS Assessment	1,053,018	837,356	841,660	1,131,215	34.4%
GMRSD Assessment	11,809,191	12,143,442	12,663,178	13,120,375	3.6%
Special Articles	3,398,085	2,069,646	5,442,752	2,733,217	-49.8%
Total Expenses	31,654,979	30,999,173	35,341,680	34,559,990	-2.2%