

MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE/ MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Draft Minutes

Wednesday, January 4, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded: <https://vimeo.com/786457280>

PRESENT: Chair Francia Wisnewski, Clerk Dorinda Bell-Upp, Chris Menegoni, John Hanold and Fred Bowman, members; Accountant Carolyn Olsen; Town Administrator Steve Ellis, Selectboard Chair, Rich Kuklewicz, Selectboard Clerk Chris Boutwell, Selectboard member Matt Lord, Joanne Blier, GMRSD Business Manager and Scribe BettyLou Mallet.

ABSENT: Greg Garrison and Jennifer Waryas, Finance Committee members.

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER – The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Finance Committee Chair Francia Wisnewski. Roll call of Finance Committee members; there was a quorum. The meeting was called to order by the Selectboard Chair Rich Kuklewicz and all members present. The meeting is being recorded by CO as well as aired on MCTV.

2. REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES: December 14, 2022 – The FinCom members received the draft minutes of the December 14, 2022 meeting for their review. No discussion. **On a motion by JH and second by FB, the minutes were approved as written. DB-U, aye; JH, aye; FB, aye; CM, aye; FW, aye.**

3. MAKE RECOMMENDATION FOR AMOUNT OF EXCESS CAPACITY TO KEEP IN FY24 BUDGET

FW stated the FinCom has had preliminary discussion regarding excess capacity when presented information from CO. Steve Ellis stated the Selectboard have not had any discussions. JH distributed documentation on how to plan/budget excess capacity which discussed the history of excess capacity and this document was presented on the screen for all attending to view. JH highlighted some points regarding excess capacity and suggests a decision to be made which is “not too hot or not too cold”. Careful thought needs to be made as what is decided for excess capacity can have a large impact on the school district. Steve Ellis explained the settlement of the FirstLight case which coincided with greater than expected new growth. Rich Kuklewicz stated his concerns regarding re-licensing of the hydro facility in Northfield which can have an impact on the evaluation. Also, Gill-Montague and Franklin County Tech School are in discussion regarding major building projects.

Joanne Blier of Gill-Montague stated the new school projects would begin by applying through the MSBA in 2026/2027 followed by a feasibility study in FY29. CO shared the Budget Document File on the screen for audience viewing and explained how the affordable assessment was calculated. SE explained that it will take time to develop a policy for calculations regarding excess capacity as well as it may take awhile to make the best decision. After discussion, the premise is to not do anything which would give the school district a lower percentage.

The FinCom recommends the excess capacity for FY24 not be more than 1.246 million and not less than \$933,000. Steve Ellis stated the Selectboard will focus on the budget at their January 17, 2023 meeting. DB-U, abstained; JH, aye; CM, abstained; FB, aye; FW, aye. (3 aye, 2 abstentions). Motion passes.

4. SET PRELIMINARY AMOUNTS FOR USE OF FREE CASH/TOWN CAPITAL STABILIZATION FOR FY24 BUDGET – CO stated \$300,000 in Capital Stabilization and \$300,000 for

individual articles is what has been standard for the past few years. The general consensus of the Fin-Com is to continue with past practices.

5. UPDATES FROM TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Steve stated the Selectboard met on December 19 and created a schedule. They will consider the budget, identify questions and who to invite at the January 9th meeting. There will be a budget “hearing” with staff on January 17 as well as discussion on excess capacity. January 23 is reserved to finalize recommendations and January 30 will be set aside to make recommendations for information to be brought forward to the Finance Committee. He also spoke about the StreetScape budget and how \$975,000 has been earmarked to accelerate the project. The new Town Planner (Maureen Pollock) began today and the process is starting for a new Health Director.

6. WHICH DEPARTMENTS TO INVITE TO MEETINGS – FW suggests to follow the calendar from last year. JH stated it will be helpful for the FinCom to identify the departments which will not require a meeting but rather communicate through email to answer questions. This will open up dates to have meetings with larger departments. The FinCom is to review the departments and submit questions to FW for smaller departments.

7. REVIEW BUDGET CALENDAR – Steve placed the updated budget calendar on the screen for all to review. The FinCom will discuss when larger departments should meet and not wait until the Selectboard has finished their process.

8. FUTURE MEETING TOPICS – Meetings with department heads, CIC update and location of January 31, 2023 meeting with GMRSD.

9. TOPICS NOT ANTICIPATED WITHIN 48 HOURS OF POSTING – JH stated there may be future dates where the FinCom may not have a quorum. A questionnaire will be sent to members regarding their attendance for meetings held on January 11, 18, 25 and 31, 2023.

10. ADJOURNMENT – On a motion by CB and second by ML, the Montague Selectboard meeting adjourned at 7:19 p.m. CB, aye; ML, aye; RK aye.

On a motion by FB and second by JH, the Montague Finance Committee adjourned the meeting at 7:20 p.m. CM, aye; JH, aye; FB, aye; DB-U, aye; FW, aye.

Respectfully submitted,

BettyLou Mallet
Scribe