Town of Montague FY23 Annual Budget Development Process

Developing the budget we'll bring to our Annual Town Meeting on May 7, 2022 is a collaborative process that involves the Finance Committee, the Town Administrator, the Town Accountant, the Capital Improvements Committee, and the Selectboard, staff from the Town's departments, and members of the Town's many committees and boards. Much of the process takes place in public meetings, allowing you to follow along and weigh in along the way.

December 2021-January 2022: Information Gathering –> Selectboard & Town Admin Proposal

In December the Selectboard, Finance Committee, Town Administrator, and Town Accountant began to receive and review information about anticipated revenue and expenditures for the fiscal year (FY23) that will begin on July 1, 2022. Most of that information came from the Town's department heads, who were instructed to prepare requests for funding that would allow them to provide "level services" as well as requests for changes in staffing, programs, and one-time expenses that might appear as "special articles" on an upcoming Town Meeting Warrant.

By January 26, the Town Administrator and Selectboard will complete a preliminary review of the requests received and will provide the Finance Committee with a proposal for the FY23 budget that includes:

- Recommendations related to personnel changes requested by Town departments and enterprise funds (adding staff, increasing hours, regrading/reworking positions, etc.)
- Recommendations on any other significant opportunities or changes they believe should be addressed in the town's FY23 budget.
- An updated estimate, based on available information, of the revenue we can reasonably expect to receive to support the FY23 budget.
- An updated estimate, based on available information, of what it would cost to support the expenditures proposed for FY23.

January-February 2022: Finance Committee Investigation

At this point, the Finance Committee will begin to focus intensively on evaluating the proposed operating budget, including looking at the long-term implications of changes initiated in FY23. Our goal will be to decide whether we will recommend the budget proposal we received to Town Meeting, or offer suggestions for modifications. Our investigation will include discussion by the committee, conversations and correspondence with staff and committees, and opportunities for the public to give input and ask questions. While members of the Selectboard are welcome to attend Finance Committee meetings during this period, they are not expected to participate.

Most of this will happen during Finance Committee meetings on Wednesday evenings. Our meetings typically begin at 6PM and last about 90 minutes. We will expect to continue holding meetings online at least until March 2022; you can find the Zoom link on the meeting agendas, which will be posted here: https://montague-ma.gov/calendar. Our meetings are also broadcast and recorded by MCTV (Channel 17 / https://vimeo.com/mctvchannel17/videos)

During this phase, the Finance Committee will dedicate time at the beginning of each of its meetings for hearing comments from the public. If you have thoughts that you'd like to share "on the record," please come to a meeting to share them briefly in person or send us an email: montaguefinancecommittee@gmail.com.

Here are the dates of our "investigation" meetings and the topics we expect to focus on at each:

Jan 26 – FY23 revenue estimates and Selectboard/Town Administrator recommendations on expenditures. Also possible: Gill-Montague school district topics and financial articles for March 3 Special Town Meeting

Feb 2 – Requests from departments in the Human Services, Culture & Recreation, and Public Works categories, including Parks & Rec; Libraries; Council on Aging; Cemeteries, Veterans; Tree Warden; and DPW. Also possible: financial articles for March 3 Special Town Meeting

Feb 9 – Requests from departments in the Public Safety category - which includes Police, Dispatch, Building Inspection, Emergency Management and Animal Control - and the Board of Health.

Feb 16 - Requests from departments in the General Government category, including Selectboard, Accountant, Assessor, Clerk, Treasurer, Planning, and IT.

Feb 23 – Requests from the Town's enterprise funds: the Water Control Pollution Facility and the Turners Falls Airport.

And here are some other meetings that may be of interest that are not Finance Committee meetings:

Jan 18 and Jan 25 (Tues, 6:30PM) – The Selectboard reviews personnel-related requests for FY23

Jan 31 (Mon, 5:30PM) - Gill-Montague Regional School District FY23 budget presentation for town officials from Gill and Montague (hosted by Montague Selectboard)

Feb 8 (Tues, 6:30PM) - Gill-Montague Regional School District FY23 budget hearing (hosted by GMRSD - http://gmrsd.org/welcome-gmrsd/school-committee)

Feb 9 (Wed, 6:30PM) - Franklin County Technical School District FY23 budget hearing (for details contact: https://www.fcts.us/gallery/2/1658/s/Barbara-Williams)

Feb 28 (Mon, 5:30PM) – Franklin County Technical School District FY23 budget presentation for town officials from Gill and Montague (hosted by Montague Selectboard)

March 3 (Thurs., 6:30PM) – Montague Special Town Meeting (Winter FY22)

March- April 2022: Reconciliation and Warrant Votes

In March, the Finance Committee and the Selectboard will convene together several times at the Finance Committee's meeting time. During this phase, we will hear the Capital Improvement Committee's recommendations on requests for FY23 capital expenditures, we will attempt to agree upon a single budget proposal that we will bring to Town Meeting, we will discuss uses of and contributions to the Town's Reserve funds in FY23, and we will vote recommendations on the articles that will appear on the Annual Town Meeting warrant.

The Finance Committee's report on the proposed budget, the warrant, and background information on articles will be posted and mailed to Town Meeting members by April 19, 2022.

Jen Audley, Chair
Montague Finance Committee
January 17, 2022