

Section 1
Budget Message

TOWN OF MONTAGUE

FISCAL YEAR 2016

**TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S ANNUAL BUDGET &
FINANCIAL PLAN**

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TOWN ADMINISTRATOR**

Fiscal Year 2016 Annual Budget & Financial Plan Budget Message

March 5, 2015

To: The Honorable Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee:

I am pleased to submit the Town Administrator's recommended Budget and Financial Plan. This report includes the proposed Operating Budget for the Town and a detailed Capital budget for FY 2016 and Capital Program the period FY 2016 – FY 2021.

Recommended FY 2016 Spending Plan

The FY 2016 Town Administrator's Recommended Budget for town operating departments is \$19,871,070. This figure represents an increase of \$480,271 or 2.5 % over FY 2015. This budget includes the expenses of the General Fund and the Sewer and Airport Enterprise. The budget also recommends \$9,258,958 in spending on Education, an increase of \$282,899 or 3.2 % over FY 2015. This includes General Fund expenses of \$8,386,847, \$8,498,343 for the Gill-Montague assessment, \$845 more than the affordable assessment calculated for FY 2016. It is also a 2.5% increase over FY 2015. The Franklin County Technical School Assessment is estimated at \$760,615, which is a \$78,014 or 11.4 % increase over FY 2015, reflecting an increase in the number of Montague students attending the Tech School from 67 to 70. It is recommended that a portion of this assessment (\$40,615) be funded out of the FCTS Stabilization fund. This is a balanced budget.

The budget continues the services and programs currently being provided. Additional funds are requested to expand or enlarge existing programs or add new programs/activities consistent with town-wide goals. Program expansions are proposed in the General Government, Public Safety, and Recreation and Culture in the General Fund and in the Sewer Enterprise Fund. The revenue estimates for this budget are relatively conservative assuming the town levies to the maximum levy limit, that unrestricted state aid is level funded. It also assumes that there is very little other additional revenue growth.

Total recommended spending on special articles is \$2,100,127. This includes \$1,730,673 in borrowing, including \$385,000 in sewer borrowing and \$1,345,673 in town borrowing. \$815,868 or 76% of the estimated cost of the Sheffield Windows/Doors project

(\$1,116,764) would be reimbursed under the Mass School Building Authority grant program, so that portion of the recommended borrowing would only be short term.

The recommended grand total of expenditures is \$21,971,197. The original amount requested was \$22,708,493 including \$19,992,330 in spending on the operating budget and \$2,716,163 in spending on special articles. The Town Administrator's budget includes reductions from this amount of \$46,455 from the General Fund Operating Budget (primarily in the Police, Dispatch and Library accounts) and \$80,122 from the WPCF Operating Budget, including the elimination of salary and benefits requested for the creation of a new, ninth permanent staff person at the WPCF. The recommended budget also eliminated funding for \$34,000 in engineering consulting services at the WPCF. Additional reductions of \$340,000 were made in the requested WPCF capital budget. These included \$300,000 in WPCF capital requests, a reduction of DPW Discretionary spending from \$100,000 to \$75,000 and the elimination of \$15,000 spending on the Montague Center School which will not be needed if the property is transferred to a private owner before June 30, 2015, as is anticipated.

This proposed spending is balanced by revenues of 20,729,064. These include \$14,896,389 in **Property Taxes**, \$1,260,000 in **Local Receipts**, \$1,509,148 in **Net State Aid**, \$250,000 in **Free Cash**, \$315,153 in **Available Funds and Stabilization**, \$30,847 in **Airport User Fees**, \$1,345,673 in Town borrowing, \$385,000 in **Sewer Borrowing** and \$1,978,987 in **Sewer User Fees**.

Overall Budget Summary (Sources and Uses)

	FY 14 Budget	FY15 Budget	FY16 Requested	FY16 TA Recommend
Revenue				
Property Tax (Net Levy)	\$14,007,061	\$14,424,463	\$14,896,389	\$14,896,389
Local Receipts	\$ 1,424,397	\$ 1,290,810	\$ 1,260,000	\$ 1,260,000
State Aid (Net of Charges)	\$ 1,417,661	\$ 1,509,148	\$ 1,509,148	\$ 1,509,148
Free Cash	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000
Other Available Funds				
FCTS SRO Reimbursement	\$ 0	\$ 76,645	\$ 56,706	\$ 56,706
Spec. Article Balances	\$ 0	\$ 15,000	\$ -	\$ -

Receipts Reserved for Appropriation	\$ 94,216	\$ 86,738	\$ 80,350	\$ 80,350
Free Cash for Spec Articles	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Town Stabilization	\$ 275,054	\$ 113,000	\$ 206,000	\$ 137,482
FCTS Stabilization	\$ 24,000	\$ 0	\$ 40,615	\$ 40,615
Borrowing anticipation of grants	\$ 0	\$ 3,560,000	\$ 0	\$ 0
Town Borrowing	\$ 0	\$ 400,000	\$ 1,345,673	\$ 1,345,673
Sewer Borrowing	\$ 0	\$ 3,160,000	\$ 961,036	\$ 385,000
Sewer User Fees	\$ 1,733,363	\$ 2,018,586	\$ 2,059,099	\$ 1,978,987
Airport User Fees	\$ 31,461	\$ 36,165	\$ 30,847	\$ 30,847
Total Revenues	\$19,256,214	\$23,379,555	\$22,695,863	\$21,971,197

General Fund Expenditures	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Level Svc.	FY 2016 Level Svc.	FY 2016 Recommend	\$ Change	% Change
General Government	\$ 1,000,860	\$ 1,103,142	\$ 1,141,643	\$ 1,141,643	\$ 38,501	3.5
Public Safety	\$ 1,698,240	\$ 1,824,643	\$ 1,953,168	\$ 1,917,968	\$ 93,320	5.1
Public Works	\$ 1,703,547	\$ 1,785,271	\$ 1,828,029	\$ 1,828,029	\$ 42,758	2.4
Human Services	\$ 312,557	\$ 338,693	\$ 334,077	\$ 334,077	\$ (4,616)	(1.4)
Recreation and Culture	\$ 427,288	\$ 444,127	\$ 474,975	\$ 469,028	\$ 24,901	5.6
Debt Service	\$ 627,106	\$ 662,036	\$ 661,201	\$ 661,201	\$ (835)	(.001)
Intergovernmental	\$ 87,874	\$ 94,169	\$ 94,259	\$ 94,259	\$ 94	(.001)
Employee Benefits	\$ 1,730,791	\$ 1,882,335	\$ 1,851,271	\$ 1,851,271	\$ (31,064)	(1.7)
General Insurances	\$ 81,915	\$ 87,619	\$ 89,371	\$ 89,371	\$ 1,752	2.0
Grand Total General Fund	\$ 7,670,178	\$ 8,222,035	\$ 8,427,995	\$ 8,386,847	\$ 165,812	2.0
Water Pollution Control						
WPCF O&M	\$ 1,346,908	\$ 1,428,230	\$ 1,539,761	\$ 1,471,649	\$ 43,414	3.0
DPW Subsidiary	\$ 17,339	\$ 54,959	\$ 54,959	\$ 54,959	\$ 0	N/C
WPCF Debt	\$ 349,764	\$ 461,198	\$ 437,052	\$ 437,052	\$ (24,246)	(5.2)
WPCF Employee Benefits	\$ 160,893	\$ 202,806	\$ 227,327	\$ 215,327	\$ 12,521	6.2
Total WPCF	\$ 1,874,905	\$ 2,147,193	\$ 2,259,099	\$ 2,178,987	\$ 31,794	1.5

Plus Town Share WPCF/MF	\$ 174,502	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 0	N/C
Airport	\$ 44,652	\$ 45,512	\$ 46,278	\$ 46,278	\$ 766	1.7
Education						
FCTS Assessment	\$ 731,659	\$ 682,601	\$ 760,615	\$ 760,615	\$ 78,014	11.4
GMRSD Assessment	\$ 7,965,557	\$ 8,293,458	\$ 8,498,343	\$ 8,498,343	\$ 204,885	2.5
Total Education	\$ 8,697,216	\$ 8,976,059	\$ 9,258,958	\$ 9,258,958	\$ 282,899	2.7
TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET	\$ 17,286,952	\$ 19,390,799	\$ 19,992,330	\$ 19,871,070	\$ 480,271	2.5

PLUS SPECIAL ARTICLES

	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16 Request	FY 16 Recommend
Operating Approp. to Gen Stab/OPEB	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 48,947	\$ 48,947
Operating Approp. To CI Stab.	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 32,632	\$ 32,632
PAYGO Capital to meet Minimum FY 16 =45,774	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Computer Equipment/Software	\$ 8,200	\$ 8,200	\$ 8,200	\$ 8,200
Shea Roof Repair	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
Assessor Software Update	\$ 0	\$ 9,500	\$ 0	\$ 0
Assessor Abatement Software to operating				
Preservation of Town Records	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 46,000	\$ 46,000
Police Discretionary	\$ 20,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000
DPW Discretionary	\$ 75,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 75,000
6 wheel dump truck last payment July 2013	\$ 54,055	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
6 wheel dump (FY 17 final payment)	\$ 44,000	\$ 43,325	\$ 43,325	\$ 43,325
One Ton Dump Truck	\$ 50,000	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Plow& Sander for New Dump (STM)				
Purchase Bucket Truck	\$ 95,000	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0

Replace Furnace at MC Library	\$ 10,000	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Unity Park Playground Surface (to operating)				
Windows for Unity Park Field House	\$ 8,000	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Line, clean, inspect, GIS drains	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 385,000	\$ 385,000
Replace two pump stations	\$ 0	\$3,000,000	\$ 0	\$ 0
Montague Center School Maintenance	\$ 10,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 0
Colle RRA	\$ 94,216	\$ 86,738	\$ 80,350	\$ 80,350
Sewer Maintenance	\$ 0	\$ 75,000	\$ 0	\$ 0
Sewer Rehab	\$ 0	\$ 175,000	\$ 0	\$ 0
WPCF Ops Bldg Heating System	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 376,036	\$ 0
WPCF Primary Sludge Pump Replacement	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 100,000	\$ 0
WPCF Ops Bldg Repairs/Painting	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 100,000	\$ 0
Transfer FCTS decrease to stabilization	\$ 0	\$ 49,058	\$ 0	\$ 0
Records Storage	\$ 0	\$ 8,000	\$ 0	\$ 0
Skateboard Park – Town Share	\$ 0	\$ 400,000	\$ 0	\$ 0
Library AC Repair to DPW operating				
GMRSD Doors	\$ 0	\$ 38,000	\$ 0	\$ 0
Additional Amounts TOMEA (pay class)				
Additional Amounts UE (pay class)	\$ 0	\$ 44,469	\$ 0	\$ 0
Sheffield School Burner Replacement&Boiler	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 145,000	\$ 145,000
Sheffield Windows	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$1,116,764	\$ 1,116,764
GMRSD Trailer (town share)	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 41,309	\$ 41,309
GMRSD Snow Plow (town share)	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 42,600	\$ 42,600
TOTAL SPECIAL ARTICLES	\$ 468,471	\$4,067,290	\$ 2,716,163	\$ 2,100,127
TOTAL ESTIMATED USES	\$18,755,423	\$23,458,089	\$22,708,493	\$21,971,197

Budget Format

The FY 2016 budget is, once again, presented in a **Program Budget** format. This process was introduced last year as a means of improving the functioning of the budget as a management and communication tool. This format is also designed to contribute to a better understanding of how government operates. In FY 2015 this information was successfully collected, analyzed and organized for presentation on the town's web site. In essence departments are required to describe what they do; the resources that are required to get the job done; how proposed actions relate to town-wide and departmental goals and objectives; how efficient their department has been in delivering a given service, and how effective. These connections are articulated in budget narratives that are submitted along with line item budgets in January.

The narratives include; (1.) Budget Statement: describes the most significant changes contained in the budget submission; (2.) Budget Goals/Objectives: describing the department's primary objectives for the upcoming and subsequent years, tied to a list of town-wide goals and objectives that was provided by this office. Ideally, these suggest the type and quantity of resources that the department is requesting in its budget; (3.) Major Accomplishments: highlights the significant achievements of a department/program and its efficiency/effectiveness in the use of budget resources in prior years; and (4.) Performance/Workload Indicators: concrete, objective measures of the workload that is performed by individual departments/programs. Although the FY 2016 budget narrative submissions do not include a Program Description/Description of Services, as they did in FY 2015, this information will be made available on the web in a separate document.

Budget Support Documents

In order to make the narrative information gathered during the budget process, and the budget research performed both this year and last, available to the public and town boards this office has created a series of files on the Town web site that are collectively referred to as "**Budget Support Information**". These include the following files:

- Town Goals and Objectives
- Program Narratives including department/program descriptions, goals/objective, major accomplishments, and performance workload indicators.
- Revenue Analysis and History (2008-2014)
- Financial Policies and Procedures (2014)

- Financial Trend Monitoring Report (NEW)

Budget Goals

As always, the town's most important budget goal is to maintain a core of essential municipal services, while at the same time, minimizing the impact of spending upon the tax and sewer rates. The Town's spending plan should also relate directly to the delivery of services and programs that advance the goals and objectives of the department and Town. A detailed description of the town goals that have been articulated in the various plans and studies developed by the Town in recent years, including the Town Master Plan, Open Space Plan, Economic Development Plan, HUD Livability Plan, Housing plan, Energy Plan and Community Development Plan, is included in the "Budget Support Information" file. These plans help the town to identify needs, to establish priorities, to set goals and objectives, to develop a work plan for the town departments and allocate budget resources for specific tasks and activities.

Summary of Significant Changes

The proposed FY 2016 spending plan includes the following significant changes:

Operating Budget

General Government

Selectmen: A request to increase the hours of the Selectmen's Executive Assistant from 30 to 35 hours per week

Shared Costs: A \$4,000 or 25% increase in the cost of the computer repairs and maintenance budget and a \$1,500 or 75% increase in the stipend for the IT Administrator.

Assessors: \$3,860 in funding to upgrade the assessors abatement software.

Public Safety

Police Department: The Police requested an additional appropriation of \$32,000 for overtime and a \$14,000 for training costs. The proposed budget cuts \$30,000 from the amount requested for overtime.

Dispatch: An additional \$10,000 was requested by Dispatch for training. This increase has been reduced to \$5,000 in the proposed budget.

Public Works

Solid Waste Collection and Disposal: This budget will increase by \$13,200 or 3% reflecting the contractual agreement.

Snow and Ice: Spending on snow and ice will increase by \$14,500. This is due to the increased cost of sand and salt.

Human Services

Board of Health: The Board of Health budget will increase by \$9,000 or 7% reflecting the cost of increasing the hours of the Health Agent from 20 to 25 hours per week.

Veterans: Spending on the Veterans Benefits budget will actually decline by \$15,000.

Recreation and Culture

Library: The Library is proposing to increase its expense budget by \$12,106 or 11.1%, and an overall increase in the overall Library budget of \$21,864 or 6.5%. The rationale for much of this increase is that in the past the Libraries have funded some expense costs out of Library Aid that should have been funded out of the operating budget. The Town Administrator's budget assumes that some of these costs will continue to be funded by use of Library Aid and that the overall Library budget increase will be limited to 4%.

Parks and Recreation: The Parks and Recreation budget would increase by \$11,394 or 11%, including a \$7,622 or 180% increase in expenses. This increase reflects a change in the way recreation program costs are recognized and charged. Costs associated with the operation of the pool, for example, will now be completely funded by the Recreation Revolving Fund, while some administrative overhead costs previously charged to the revolving fund will be charged to the operating budget. The budget also includes new costs associated with Facilities/Grounds Repairs and Maintenance.

Intergovernmental

FRCOG: The most significant change is a \$6,485 reduction in the FRCOG assessment. This decrease reflects recent legislative changes that will require the State to assume the cost of retirement costs. These will no longer be part of the Statutory Assessment. The FRCOG voted to pass along some but not all of the savings that will be realized by this measure in the form of reduced town assessments.

Franklin County Technical School: The assessment number being carried for the FCTS is an estimate at this point. The actual number will not be known until the Governor releases his budget and net minimum spending numbers for communities. The Town Administrator budget assumes that spending will increase by \$37,399 or 5.5% to \$720,000. This number reflects an increase in the number of Montague students attending FCTS. It could end up being higher, as the Tech School is currently projecting an overall increase to town assessments of 5%. If the actual assessment to Montague exceeds \$720,000 the additional funding required will be funded from FTCT Stabilization.

Gill-Montague Regional School District: The Gill-Montague Regional School District assessment is projected to increase by \$204,040 or 2.5% to \$8,497,498 in the Town Administrator's budget. This number is in line with the town's calculation of an affordable assessment. The actual request from the District is expected to exceed the recommended number by an unknown amount.

Special Articles:

Appropriation of Funds into Reserves

General: In FY 2015 the Board of Selectmen adopted Financial Policies and Procedures that included a conscious effort to build the town reserve funds to a level that would strengthen the town's overall financial condition and improve its position with bond rating agencies. The Finance Committee strongly endorsed these new policies and procedures. Following the formal adoption of the policies and procedures, the town made a significant appropriation into reserves, including newly created capital stabilization reserve for both the Town and WPCF.. The Town Administrator strongly urges the town to continue its efforts to maintain its reserve funds at the recommended levels.

If the Finance Committee finds that it is difficult to balance the current year's budget using the recommended appropriations into reserves, the town may wish to defer these appropriations under a Fall special town meeting when the town's financial condition (i.e. based on actual state aid and certified free cash) is better known.

Operating Appropriation to General Stabilization/OPEB: The Town Administrator recommends that the Town appropriate \$48,947 into an Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Stabilization Fund. Although the Town is currently only required under GASB 45 to recognize its future OPEB liability, mainly associated with retiree health insurance, the town's auditor and Standard and Poor (the bond rating agency) have both strongly urged the Town to begin to address this liability.

Operating Appropriation to Town Capital Stabilization: The Town Administrator recommends that the town appropriate \$32,632 into the Town Capital Stabilization Fund.

PAYGO Capital to meet Minimum FY 2016+\$45,774: The Town Administrator believes that the current town commitment to capital spending more than meets the minimum threshold established and does not recommend any additional appropriation.

Computer Equipment/Software: The Town Administrator recommends that this item continue to be funded at the requested level of \$8,200.

Shea Roof Repair: As owner of the Shea Theater, the Town has capital obligations that need to be met; and the condition of the roof is one of them. It is known that the smaller roof requires immediate attention. The Town Administrator recommends that the Town appropriate \$20,000 to repair this roof. If it is found that the larger roof also needs to be addressed and/or there are other capital items that require immediate attention, the Town Administrator recommends that they be packaged as a larger borrowing item.

Preservation of Town Records: The Town Clerk's Office has provided a solid case for hiring a professional consultant to evaluate current records storage and to develop a plan to deal with the future storage and preservation of town records. The Town Administrator recommends that the town appropriate \$46,000 for this purpose.

Police Discretionary: The Town Administrator recommends that the town continue to fund the Police Discretionary account at \$15,000.

DPW Discretionary: The DPW has requested an appropriation of \$100,000 for this fund. The Town Administrator recommends that the Town appropriate \$75,000, as the account is currently carrying a sufficient balance -- some of which may be carried forward to FY 2016.

Dump Truck Lease: The Town Administrator recommends that the Town fund the fourth year of this five year lease through an appropriation of \$43,325.

Line, clean, inspect GIS drains: The Town Administrator strongly recommends that the town appropriate \$385,000 in sewer borrowing to continue its sewer line evaluation and rehabilitation. The sewer line inspections performed this year have increased our

awareness of the need to continue making improvements to our sewer collection system if we hope to avoid a repeat of the sewer collapse emergency that occurred in 2013. This is a high priority in this budget. In fact, upon the advice of the DPW Superintendent, the Town Administrator is recommending that the funding originally requested for the rehabilitation of the 1868 storm line be used instead to increase funding for the sewer line inspection and lining, and that work on the 1868 storm line be deferred.

Colle RRA: The Town Administrator recommends an appropriation of \$80,350 out of Colle Receipts Reserved for Appropriation.

Sheffield Boiler: The #1 boiler at Sheffield has failed. This boiler was repaired in 2011. This equipment is more than 20 years old and should be replaced with a more efficient boiler. The projected cost is \$120,000. The Town Administrator recommends borrowing

Sheffield Burner: The replacement of the Sheffield Burner #2 is also recommended at a cost of \$25,000.

Sheffield School Windows and Doors Project: The Town Administrator recommends that the town borrow sufficient funding to undertake the Sheffield School Auditorium and Gym windows and doors under the MSBA program.

GMRSD Trailer/Snow Plow: Although the town's share of the purchase of a trailer and a snow plow are included in the budget, these items should be more closely scrutinized by the Capital Improvements Committee before making a final recommendation to town meeting. These items were received very late in the process.

Capital Improvements at the Water Pollution Control Facility: The Town Administrator recommends that the \$576,036 requested to make capital improvements at the WPCF including the Operations Building Heating System, Primary Sludge Pump Replacement, and Operations Building Repairs/Painting, not be funded until the enterprise fund develops and builds a capital stabilization plan that assumes a fixed annual rate of growth (3%) in sewer user fees, that captures and banks one-time departmental revenues such as sludge and septage fees in a savings account, and greater restraint in the use of sewer retained earnings to reduce sewer rates. Failure to adopt such fiscal policies, in combination with unrestrained levels of capital spending, can only lead to dramatic spikes in sewer rates down the road.

Conclusions

In conclusion, I am pleased to complete the first stage in Montague's budgeting process. It should be pointed out that this is only the first step in the budget process, and that the final budget will most certainly include changes, some possibly significant, in the actual amount of expenditures that will be made. It may also reflect changes in the sources from which the budget will be funded, as revenue forecasts, including the likely FY 2016 state aid numbers, become more firm.

The Town Administrator would like to thank the department heads for their cooperation in helping to put together this budget document. The budget narratives that were submitted required a lot of thought and hard work on their part, but I think they should provide web site readers with a greater understanding of and appreciation for the excellent work that Montague's town employees do every day. The Town is fortunate to have the qualified and experienced workforce that it has today. Their knowledge and experience have enabled the town to achieve many amazing things. Readers are strongly encouraged to take a look at the budget narratives that were submitted by departments (See "Budget Support Information" file on Town web site), because they describe individual as well as departmental achievements that are far too numerous to mention here. For example, in recent years, the Montague Water Pollution Control Facility has been singled out for recognition by the EPA, been featured in the Wall Street Journal and recognized by the scientific community for its innovative and creative solutions to the problems faced by all water pollution control plants nationwide. The work being done by the WPCF is cutting edge. Our DPW has also taken on a significant amount of new responsibilities including the day to day maintenance of several properties acquired through tax title foreclosure. Our Police Department is second to none in protecting persons and property and involving the community in crime prevention efforts and community policing. It has also consistently been a leader in efforts to maximize cooperation and coordination with county-wide law enforcement agencies, including recent efforts to find a permanent home for the Regional Dog Kennel – a program run by the Franklin County Sheriff's department and the implementation of the Code Red emergency notification system. In the past decade our libraries have doubled their circulation and have greatly expanded the programs and services that they offer to children and adults. Our Parks and Recreation Department recently achieved a major milestone when it completed the second phase of the Unity Park improvement project – a \$1.2 million upgrade and received a \$225,000 PARC grant that will be used with funds raised in the community by a devoted citizen committee to build a skate board park in the coming year. In 2011, our River Culture Program was recognized by the state receiving a "Commonwealth Award" and designation of Turners Falls RiverCulture as a "creative community". Our planner ensures that many of the values that are important to Montague residents, including the protection of the environment and the creation of job opportunities and quality of housing, are protected and revitalization of our downtowns ensured. To these highly visible achievements must be added the less visible, more mundane but equally important accomplishments of Town Hall staff that routinely exceed standard

benchmarks in the delivery of administrative and financial services important to the operation of the town. These include the generation of tax bills, the efficient collection of Town revenues (98% efficiency), and the timely submission of financial statements, and formulation of financial policies and procedures, that have enabled the town to be “first in the state” in obtaining free cash certification, and to achieve a bond upgrade from Standard and Poor, which will enable the Town to save significant borrowing costs in the future. Finally, our code enforcement staff ensures that residents can feel secure in the knowledge that their dwellings are safe and food services and other establishments meet sanitary and health codes. Their active participation in effective programs such as the Attorney General’s Receivership Program also guarantee that the overall quality of Montague’s housing stock will continue to improve. These are all services that we have come to expect from our town employees and they have always delivered.

Respectfully Submitted

Frank Abbondanzio,
TOWN ADMINISTRATOR