

**Special Town Meeting
October 29, 2014
Background Information**

- Article 1 Rescind Unused Borrowing Authority of Former Town Meeting Vote.** This article rescinds the remaining \$8,365.10 in unused borrowing authority of Article 23 of the May 5, 2012 Annual Town Meeting. The article originally authorized the appropriation of \$85,000 for the purpose of repairing and resurfacing the parking lot at the Sheffield School.
- Article 2 Rescind the unused Borrowing Authority of Former Town Meeting Vote.** This article rescinds the \$15,000 in unused borrowing authority of Article 24 of the May 5, 2012 Annual Town Meeting. The article originally appropriated \$15,000 for the purpose of funding ADA projects in the Gill-Montague regional School District, but none of the appropriation was ever expended; and the town was informed that it is no longer needed.
- Article 3 Increase the Town's Quota of All-Alcohol On-Premises Licenses to Accommodate Redevelopment Project in Millers Falls.** Article 3 would authorize the Selectmen to petition the State Legislature to increase the town's current all-alcohol on-premises license quota to accommodate a proposed restaurant in the Powers Block on East Main Street in Millers Falls. The town has selected a developer for this property (Mr. Robert Obear) under its commercial homesteading program. The liquor license is critical in the developer's efforts to attract a restaurant operator to the Powers Block. The license, if authorized, could only be used at that location for that purpose and not transferred.
- Article 4 Increase the Town's Quota of All-Alcohol Off-Premises Licenses to Allow an Existing Off-premises Beer and Wine License to be Upgraded.** The Montague Village Store of Main Street in Montague Center has asked the town to petition the State Legislature to increase the town's quota of All Alcohol, off-premises licenses for their use.
- Article 5 Increase the Town's Quota of All-Alcohol On-Premises Licenses to Accommodate a Restaurant at the former Montage Inn.** Thomas Walsh is considering the acquisition of the former Montague Inn, has approached the Selectmen and asked that the town petition the legislature for an increase in its quota of All-Alcohol, On-Premises licenses. This license is needed to attract a proposed family restaurant.
- Article 6 Appropriate funds to Supplement the FY 2015 Water Pollution Control Facility Budget.** Article 6 would appropriate the sum of \$20,000 for the purpose of funding engineering services at the WPCF. The appropriation will be used to bring in an engineer to work on the efficiency of the plant and increasing revenues. The engineer has been used in the past for this purpose, but the budget

has been reduced. When the budget was initially prepared, the department was not sure if they were going to continue with the services. The State has since increased their requirements for the types of work for which the engineer will provide assistance. This article will be funded out of sewer retained earnings.

- Article 7** **Appropriate funds to Purchase and Install Software in the WPCF Laboratory.** The WPCF is requesting \$20,000 for lab software. The existing lab data program was originally installed in 1982. Updates for the program ceased to be available some 10 years ago since the company went out of business. There have been no payments for support or upgrades since then for this program. The software is used to create monthly reports. If the software failed the reports would become very labor intensive. A new computer for the lab was installed this year; and the old software can not run on the new computer. This article will be funded out of sewer retained earnings.
- Article 8** **Appropriate \$13,700 for the Purpose of Supplementing the FY 2015 Budget for Wages.** The WPCF is requesting that \$13,700 be added to the FY 2015 Budget to fund the temporary employee for an additional period of time to total 1 year. The employee is not expected to take health insurance, but there is sufficient budget to cover this cost if needed. The employee is needed because the WPCF is planning to increase the number of thickened sludge loads that it receives at the WPCF from other communities. This is designed to increase revenues that the WPCF generates. The temporary employee will be available to perform a number of other functions typically performed by a laborer, and free up other personnel to devote more time to the processing of the additional loads of sludge. This appropriation will be funded out of sewer retained earnings.
- Article 9** **Appropriate Funds from Sewer Retained Earnings to Reduce the FY 2015 Sewer Rates.** The Sewer Commissioners recently voted to use \$294,000 in sewer retained earning to reduce the sewer rates. Rates will actually be stabilized at their FY 2014 levels if this amount of retained earnings is appropriated for this purpose.
- Article 10** **Establish a WPCF Capital Improvement Stabilization Fund and Appropriate \$100,000 into this Fund.** Article 10 would create a capital improvement stabilization fund for the WPCF and appropriate \$100,000 into this account from sewer retained earnings. The creation of such an account is in recognition of the fact that the Town will be facing significant capital needs in the coming years; and that failure to build a capital reserve fund will result in significant instability in the sewer rates in the future. It is the town's hope and plan to make regular deposits into this account. It is also a well known fact that the existence of healthy financial reserves is a key factor that rating agencies consider when they assign a bond rating. Higher bond ratings in return result in lower interest rates, and savings, on any future borrowings.

- Article 11** **Establish a Town, Special Purpose Capital Stabilization Fund and Appropriate \$350,000 into this Fund.** Article 11 is similar in purpose to Article 10, except in this case the town is establishing a capital stabilization fund for the General Fund. The rationale for creating such a fund is the same as that articulated in Article 10. The town recently adopted financial policies recommending reserve levels that, as a percentage, are tied to the overall town appropriation. The town recently succeeded in obtaining an increase in its bond rating from A+ to AA- partially because of the initiatives taken by the Selectmen and Finance Committee to begin building its financial reserves. This appropriation is to be funded from free cash.
- Article 12** **Increase the Pay Range for Part Time (per-diem) Dispatchers.** Article 12 would increase the pay range for part time (per diem) dispatchers from \$13.00-\$15.00 per hour to \$17.00 to \$19.00 per hour. The higher range is needed to keep the town competitive in hiring part time dispatchers. The ability to attract and retain qualified part time dispatchers helps the department to keep down overall personnel costs.
- Article 13** **Appropriate \$22,000 for the Purpose of Supplementing the FY 2015 Dispatch Budget.** This article would appropriate the sum of \$22,000 for the purpose of supplementing the FY 2015 Dispatch Budget. These funds are needed to fund anticipated shortfall in the Dispatch overtime budget due to the additional costs incurred filling a vacant position. This appropriation to be funded from free cash.
- Article 14.** **Transfer the Sum of \$6,000 from the Colle Receipts Reserved for Appropriation Account into the FY 2015 Town Reserve Fund.** This article would transfer \$6,000 from the Colle Receipts Reserved for Appropriation Account into the FY 2015 Town Reserve Fund. In FY 2014, the Colle Account experienced a \$6,000 deficit that was funded out of the Town Reserve Fund. In Article 14 the Town is being reimbursed that amount by the Colle Fund.
- Article 15.** **Change the Method of Financing the FY 2015 Airport Budget as a Means of Reimbursing the Town for the Funding of Airport Expenses out of the FY 2014 Town Reserve Fund.** This article would reduce the amount of tax funds used to fund the FY 2015 Airport Budget by \$1,500, from \$9,347 to \$7,847. At the same time, it would increase the amount of the FY 2015 budget funded by airport user fees by \$1,500 from \$27,165 to \$28,665. This is the mechanism recommended by Town Counsel to effectuate such a reimbursement.
- Article 16.** **Appropriate the Sum of \$12,000 for the Purpose of Stripping and Replacing the Roof of Airport Property.** This article would appropriate the sum of \$12,000 for the purpose of stripping and replacing the roof of the airport property (former Koch farm house) located at 321 Millers Falls Road.

- Article 17. Amend Town Zoning to Include Changes to the Site Plan Review Section.** Article 17 would amend the Montague Zoning Bylaws include changes to the site plan review section. 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. The intent of the proposed amendments is to:
- Provide a clearly articulated site plan approval process that is easily interpreted by residents, local officials, and project proponents. This should also ensure consistency and enforceability among site plan review procedures followed by the Planning Board and Zoning Board.
 - Allow for municipal review of high impact/small footprint uses that are not otherwise reviewable under current bylaws because they are less than 5,000 square feet. In effect, more development projects will be applicable to site plan review. (ex. Convenience stores, fast food restaurants, new parking areas)
 - Encourage investment in Montague by making the site plan review process streamlined when a land use is permitted as of right.
- Article 18. Authorize the Board of Selectmen to Acquire by Gift or Eminent Domain Temporary Easements in certain parcel of land on Montague City Road to Accommodate the Montague City Road Bike Path Crossing and Bus Stop Improvement Project.** This article would provide the Board of Selectmen with the authority to acquire the necessary land rights to implement the Montague City Road Bike Path Crossing and Bus Stop Improvements.
- Article 19. Appropriate \$300 to pay Prior Year Bills.** This article would appropriate funds needed to pay water bills incurred in a prior year.
- Article 20. Appropriate \$16,084 for the Purpose of Reimbursing the Turners Falls Fire District for their Portion of Medicare Reimbursements Received by the Town.** This article would appropriate \$16,084 to reimburse the Turners Falls Fire District for Medicare reimbursements received by the town that were related to Turners Falls Fire District Retirees. This appropriation would be funded out of free cash.
- Article 21. Appropriate \$213,039 to Increase the Town Stabilization Fund.** In the recently adopted town financial policies, the town also committed to building the town stabilization fund. This article would appropriate \$213,039 from free cash into the town stabilization fund. The rationale for building the town's reserves has already been explained above.
- Article 22. Appropriate \$10,000 to Repair the Carnegie and Millers Falls Libraries.** This article would appropriate \$10,000 for the purpose of making various repairs at the Carnegie and Millers Falls libraries. These include repairing the roof and other improvements at the Millers Falls Library, scraping and priming all wood trim from top of windows to new roof flashing at the Carnegie Library.