



Town of Montague
Department, Board, Committee, Commission
BUDGET NARRATIVE

FY 22

Complete this form electronically! Be clear and concise!

Department: Town Meeting (113) Submitted by: Steven Ellis

1. Please describe and provide the rationale for any substantial changes in your FY22 line item budget submission.

Estimating the budget for Town Meeting in FY22 is very difficult due to uncertainty as to the form of those meetings (indoor, outdoor, remote) over the course of the year. The budget submitted increases sharply by proportion 50%), but the total dollar cost to the Town reflects a change of only \$1,050. The additional cost is largely due to a \$1000 set aside within the Other Professional Services line for a sound engineer to conduct an outdoor Special Town Meeting next Fall, if necessary, at the TFHS parking lot, where tables and chairs are available free of charge.

This plan would rely on a late September STM to optimize weather conditions and acknowledges that COVID-19 vaccination of the general public may still be ongoing at the time. It is conservative relative to more expensive options involving rental of a massive tent and chairs or use of facilitated video services, both of which carry costs in the range of (\$5,000). This is a “we can’t know what will be best” budget that accounts for the simplest and best known COVID-safe option at our disposal. This proposal may evolve over the course of the budget cycle as a planned remote STM is implemented in February.

2. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY21? What is the status of those expenditures/investments?

N/A

3. Did you receive funding for a discretionary account in FY21? What have you purchased to date, at what cost? Looking forward in FY22, what do you expect to purchase at what cost?

N/A

4. To-date in FY21, has your department experienced any notable successes, such as improving or providing new programs or services, or implementing new technologies? If so, please describe.

We held a very successful outdoor ATM in June 2020 followed by a logistically challenging STM in October 2020. We are currently researching our approach to a remote STM in February. It has been a challenge, but I believe we’ve done a good job managing the uncertainty of the situation and creating safe environments for the conduct of Town Meeting business.

5. Are there challenges to your department’s ability to meet its goals and objectives that are due to its FY21 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation(s) for improving the situation.

The uncertainty of how to conduct a remote Special and Annual Town Meeting later this year coupled with the minimal budget available for Town Meeting is clearly problematic. That said, we are enjoying the challenge of defining and pursuing available options for conduct of these meetings and appreciate a supportive Selectboard and Finance Committee that we understand are willing to consider use of a Reserve Fund transfer if it is necessary.