

**SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
BACKGROUND INFORMATION
September 10, 2012**

ARTICLE 1. Authorize the Use of Retained Earnings to Reduce the Sewer Rate.

Article 1 would authorize the Board of Selectmen to use \$160,000 from the sewer retained earnings account to stabilize or reduce the sewer rates for FY 2012. This article is voted in most years, and it is similar to the town's use of free cash to reduce the tax rate. The Town has been fortunate in recent years having a favorable balance in this account, and being able to avoid increases in sewer rates for four successive years.

ARTICLE 2. Change the Method of Financing for Article 12 as Voted at the May 5, 2012 Annual Town Meeting.

This article would change the method of financing Article 12 of the May 5, 2012 Annual Town Meeting from "sewer borrowing" to "retained earnings." This appropriation funded the purchase and installation of a fourth dewatering zone on the Fournier Rotary Press at the Water Pollution Control Facility. The change in the method of financing is recommended because of an unusually high balance in the retained earnings account and the desire to avoid more debt.

ARTICLE 3. Rescind the Remaining Borrowing Authority for the Combined Sewer Overflow Project.

Article 3 would rescind the remaining \$849,500 in borrowing authorization for the Combined Sewer Overflow Project which was approved under Article 6 of the June 9, 2005 Annual Town Meeting. This authorization is no longer needed because the project has been completed. It was not used because a significant proportion of the project was funded by federal grants. This was not anticipated when the appropriation was originally authorized.

ARTICLE 4. Ratify a One Year Agreement with First Light Hydro Generating Company and the Town for the Fiscal Year 2013 Valuations for Electric Generation Facilities.

Article 4 has been requested by the Board of Assessors. It is similar to the type of agreement that has been negotiated with the utility company in the past. This year, it would involve the ratification of an agreement that has been reached with First Light Hydro Generating Company for FY 2013 valuations. In the past the town has entered into agreements that with First Light that were three years in duration. This corresponded to the three year valuation cycle under which the Assessors operated. Recently, the

State Department of Revenue changed the valuation cycle from three to four years. This resulted in a 4th year in which no agreement had been negotiated with First Light. This is why the present agreement is for one year only.

ARTICLE 5. Replace Backstop at Unity Project.

The Parks and Recreation Department requested this article earlier, but it was inadvertently excluded from the annual or special town meeting warrant. The backstop improvement is needed to avoid unnecessary damage to cars from errant foul balls.

ARTICLE 6. Increase FY 2013 Operating Budget of Dispatch Department.

Article 6 would appropriate \$2,190 to increase the FY 2013 budget for the Police Dispatch Department. The appropriation is needed to fund an additional fifty cents per hour in wages that will be paid to dispatchers beginning on January 1, 2013. This increase is in recognition of the additional responsibility that will be assumed by the Dispatch Department in handling emergency calls for the Turners Falls Fire District. The District has agreed to reimburse the town for all of these additional costs. Municipal accounting requires that this be appropriated up-front and that the reimbursements flow into the general fund as estimated receipts.

ARTICLE 7. Appropriate \$15,000 to Fund a Replacement Vehicle for the Police Chief.

This article would appropriate \$15,000 to purchase a replacement vehicle for the Police Chief. The current Police Chief cruiser is a 1998 Ford Taurus with over 140,000 miles on it. It is in extremely poor condition. The cruiser was recently inspected by a local reputable mechanic and the inspection revealed that the cruiser needs extensive repairs, amounting to over \$5,000. The mechanic's opinion was that the cruiser is not worth repairing.

ARTICLE 8. Appropriate Funds for a Police Chief Assessment Center.

Article 8 would appropriate \$6,600 for a "Police Chief Assessment Center". The Civil Service Commission currently allows communities to use a "sole assessment center" in lieu of a written test to evaluate candidates for the position of Police Chief. The Board of Selectmen has opted to use this process and has selected Badgequest, a civil service commission approved consultant, to conduct the assessment center on October 5th. The process is expected to produce a recommended Police Chief candidate by the middle of October.

ARTICLE 9. Appropriate Additional Funds for Strathmore Mill Debris Pile Cleanup.

This article would appropriate an additional \$35,000 in funding for the purpose of demolition, abatement and removal of the collapsed form Strathmore Mill Building #16 which was destroyed in a fire in 2007. The town has already authorized the borrowing of \$130,000 for this purpose at its October 20, 2011 special town meeting. The additional funds are necessary because bids came in higher than anticipated. The work will include asbestos removal, hazardous material removal, removal of various overhead hazards, cleanup of the collapsed building and repairs to the existing structures that remain.

ARTICLE 10. Appropriation of Funds for Board of Director Insurance for the Montague EDIC

This article would appropriate \$1,500 to purchase Board of Director insurance for the Montague Economic and Industrial Corporation. This coverage is needed to protect members of the board from personal lawsuits that might arise out of decision made by the board. All other town officials are currently protected in a similar manner through the town public official liability insurance policy. As a separate corporation, authorized under Chapter 121C, Mass. General Laws, an Economic Development Corporation falls outside the legal realm of a municipality, and is not technically part of the town.

ARTICLE 11. Changes to Article II, Section 2 of the Town By-Laws Affecting the Composition of the Town’s Finance Committee and the Definition of a Quorum on Future Votes by that Committee.

Article 11 would amend the town by-laws, Article II, Section 2, by replacing the language “consisting of 9 residents” with “consisting of at least 5 residents” in the first sentence, and inserting “A quorum of this committee shall be a majority of the current appointees” after the second sentence. The current wording of the bylaw requires 5 members at a meeting to obtain a quorum. This has been problematic in that we don’t always have 5 members, and members must occasionally miss a meeting. The change is intended to make it possible to conduct business with fewer members.

ARTICLE 12. Taking Action to Designate Land Located at the Turnpike Road Landfill Site as a Priority Development Site in Anticipation of Developing the Property as an Industrial Park.

This article would authorize the filing of an application with the Interagency Permitting Board for the designation of a parcel of land

comprising 183 acres of municipal property off Turnpike Road as a Priority Development Site under the provisions of Chapter 43D of Mass. General Laws as adopted by Town Meeting on October 11, 2007. The site has been identified by the town as a future location for an industrial park. Priority Development Site designation will help the town to obtain grant funding for the development of the Industrial Park and will facilitate marketing and sale of parcels at the park once it is completed. This would be the Town's second Priority Development Site. The town designated the Strathmore Mill as a PDS in October, 2007.

ARTICLE 13. Authorize the Board of Selectmen to Convey All or Any Portion of the St. Anne's Rectory Building.

Article 13 would authorize the Board of Selectmen to convey all or any portion of the St. Anne's rectory building. The ultimate goal of the Board is to convey the entire property through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. The town recently took ownership of the Rectory property. Under the proposed authorization the Board of Selectmen would also be empowered to negotiate property exchanges with adjacent property owners. These exchanges are considered necessary to straighten out zoning problems that exist for both the rectory and church properties, prior to their outright sale. Article 13 would enable the town to acquire portions of the St. Anne's Church and former Parochial School properties from the current owners in exchange for conveyance of portions of the Rectory property to the same owners on terms deemed appropriate to the Board of Selectmen.

ARTICLE 14. Establish Revolving Fund for the Town's Recycling Program.

This article would establish a revolving loan fund in accordance with MGL Chapter 44, Section 53E 1/2 for the remainder of FY 2013 for the receipts generated under the town's recycling program and expenditures related to the town's solid waste and recycling programs, membership and services of the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District, and the purchase of recycled content or environmentally preferable products. The fund would be administered by the Board of Selectmen and would not exceed \$15,000 in expenditures in FY 2013.