

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING  
MAY 2, 2015  
BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**ARTICLES  
1-3**

**Consent Agenda for More Routine Articles**

This year the Town Moderator is continuing a practice introduced a couple of years ago, in which articles that have traditionally evoked little discussion or debate on town meeting floor will be voted as a block, without a full reading by the Town Moderator. Town meeting members will, however, be permitted to put a hold on any or all of these consent articles, in which case the article subject to the hold will be subject to a full reading and debate. The purpose of the consent agenda is to expedite consideration of routine town meeting articles. The first five articles fall into this category.

Consent agenda articles include:

- Receipt of annual reports
- Authority to apply for, receive and expend grants
- Annual authorization of hazmat revolving fund

**ARTICLE 4**

**Fix the Salaries of Elected Officials.** This article appears regularly on the annual warrant. The recommended wage increases for the Town Clerk and Treasurer/Tax Collector are comparable to increases provided to other full-time employees. Both the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee recommend step increases allowed under the new salary schedule including a 1% cost of living raise.

**ARTICLE 5**

**Fix the Salaries of Appointed Officials.** This article appears regularly on the annual warrant. Recommended salary ranges for full-time appointed officials reflect the implementation of existing collective bargaining agreements, individual employment contracts authorized by law (i.e. Town Administrator, Police Chief), stipends and wage/salary ranges established by the Personnel Board for various part-time employees.

**ARTICLE 6**

**Departmental Appropriation Article.** This article includes the FY 2016 operating budget for the town departments, except for the Water Pollution Control Facility, the Colle Building, which is funded through receipts reserved for appropriation, and the Airport. Budgets for these items are shown in Articles 7, 8 and 9 respectively. It also does not include funds required to meet the town's assessments to the Franklin County Technical School District and the Gill-Montague Regional School District which are addressed in Articles 10 and 12.

Conservative revenue assumptions continued to drive the budget preparation process this year, although the health of the state economy is certainly trending in a positive direction. The FY 2016 budget was prepared with the expectation that unrestricted state aid will be level funded pending a resolution between the Governor's budget and the State Legislature. Property taxes are assumed to increase by the allowable 2 ½ percent plus an estimated, modest amount of new

growth (\$120,000). The revenue estimates also assume that the Franklin County Technical School will reimburse all of the cost of the school resource police officer. These costs will total \$56,706. Another change for FY2016 is the loss of Medicare part D reimbursements on behalf of retirees, which is reflected in a reduced estimate for local receipts. All other revenue categories are essentially level funded with the FY 2015 numbers.

This year it was decided to show the adjusted FY2015 budget, which includes supplemental appropriations, as a comparison rather than the FY2015 budget that was approved at Town Meeting. The intent is to compare requests for next year to the total appropriations for the current year. Both the adjusted FY2015 budget and the FY2016 budget reflect final contract settlements with all unions. The amount requested by departments (\$8,428,454) in Article 6 represents a \$146,919 or 1.77% increase over the FY2015 adjusted budget.

The Town Administrator's budget includes reductions in the Police and Dispatch overtime requests, reducing the Tree Warden's stipend to the amount recommended on Schedule I, and limiting the Libraries budget to a 4% increase. These changes result in an increase of \$105,771 or 1.3% over the adjusted FY2015 budget. The Selectmen and Finance Committee adopted these recommendations and recommended additional cuts in the Selectmen's budget (\$3,500) and Snow and Ice (\$10,000), resulting in a recommended FY2016 budget (\$8,373,806) that represents a \$92,271 or 1.1% increase over the adjusted FY 2015 budget.

**Personnel Costs** account for \$145,280 or 98.9% of the total requested increase. Personnel increase requests in the Police and Dispatch departments alone account for \$103,839 or 71.4% of all currently known increases in personnel. \$12,000 of the requested Dispatch increase is for additional required training and overtime that has been paid by a grant in the past, but which may not be available for FY2016. IN the Police department, the request includes increases of \$23,000 in overtime to cover additional required training and additional overtime to fill shifts due to unexpected injuries. The bulk of the increased personnel costs in these departments are the result of cost-of-living adjustments and step increases. The budgets for the Selectmen and Board of Health include an additional 5 hours a week for both the Executive Assistant and Health Inspector. Funding of **step increases**, for those employees who are eligible, and 1% cost-of-living adjustments account for the balance of the increased personnel costs.

Total **Expenses** for the general fund will increase by \$90,843 or 3.4% in FY 2016. Notable changes in this budget include the following: **General Government** Public Utilities (+\$4,205) and Shared Costs (+4,650), **Public Works** (+\$54,500) spread throughout the budget including increases in Trash/Recycling Removal (+13,200), Snow & Ice (\$14,000), various Repairs and Maintenance Accounts (+\$3,000), Public Works Supplies (+\$6,000), and Parts and Accessories (+\$10,500), **Public Safety** (+\$21,845) mainly driven by a (+\$4,410) increase in police liability insurance owing to greater than normal Section 111F (injured on duty) claims, Repair/Maintenance (+\$4,000), Gasoline (\$+5,000) , a new Dispatch expense for ambulance dispatching (+\$3,000) and increases for dispatch training (+2,300), **Human Services** (-\$14,540) mostly due to a \$15,000 decrease in Veteran's Benefits costs. **Recreation and Culture**

(+\$18,188) mainly reflecting shifting regular operation costs of Parks & Recreation and the Libraries from other sources to accurately reflect the fixed costs of these programs; **Debt** (-835); and **Intergovernmental** (+\$90),.

**Employee Benefits** will decrease by a total of \$31,064 or -1.7% over FY 2015. Pension Costs increase by \$35,712 or 4.0%. This is more than offset by the decrease in Health Insurance by \$71,300. The reduction in Health Insurance costs is primarily due to a decrease in retiree premiums. This is the eighth year in succession that the town's health provider, Hampshire Health Insurance Group, has delivered premium increases that are well below the state average.

## ARTICLE 7

**Enterprise Fund Operating Budget of Montague Water Pollution Control Facility.** This article contains the FY 2016 budget for the Montague Water Pollution Control Facility, 91.1% of which is funded out of sewer user fees. The balance (\$200,000 or 8.9%) is funded out of taxation and reflects the cost of treating infiltration and inflow at both the Montague WPCF and Town of Erving WWTP.

The amount requested in the Selectmen's Budget (\$2,244,913) represents a \$67,627 or 3.1% increase over FY 2015. Of the increase, \$57,835 or 85.5% is for wages and benefits for a one-year temporary employee. The expense is expected to be offset by additional revenues from taking in sludge from other towns. The **Operations and Maintenance** budget for the WPCF will increase by \$68,250 or 4.7% over FY 2015. **Personnel:** Personnel costs increase by \$54,477 or 13.2% in the proposed budget. This is due to the inclusion of a one-year temporary position, cost of living and step increases for all employees, and a \$4,354 or 11.5% increase in the overtime budget. On the **Expense** side, there are two major increases; \$34,000 for Engineering costs, which has supported the plant in evolving the sludge reduction process and decreasing nutrients going into the river, and \$20,000 for Sludge Handling Equipment Supplies. The **Highway Subsidiary**, which funds maintenance of the sewer collection system by the DPW, is level funded at the FY 2015 appropriation of \$54,959. **WPCF Debt** costs will decrease by \$24,416 or 5.2% for FY 2016 mostly due an old debt issue being paid off in FY 2015. Finally, **Employee Benefits** will increase by \$23,523 or 11.5 %, reflecting the addition of the temporary employee.

## ARTICLE 8

**Colle Receipts Reserved for Appropriation.** Article 8 appropriates \$80,350 for the operation and maintenance of the Colle Building, a town owned facility. The Colle is a discrete cost center that is currently funded from receipts reserved for appropriation, without a subsidy from taxpayers. Although not actually referred to as such, this type of account is very similar to an enterprise fund, meaning that the operation is self-funded. Colle receipts are earned from lease payments that are made by tenants of the building, which is currently 100% leased up. The FY 2016 budget for the Colle is slightly lower than that of FY 2015, reflecting a modest decline in the annual debt service requirement.

## ARTICLE 9

**Airport Enterprise Fund Operating Budget.** The FY 2016 Airport operating budget (\$46,278) represents a \$776 or 1.7% increase over FY 2015. The budget is financed through a combination of airport user fees and taxation. Under the proposed FY 2016 budget, user fees will comprise 66.7% (\$0,847) of the total airport operating budget. The remainder (\$15,431) is funded out of taxation.

The ultimate goal of the Airport Commission is to make the airport a fully self supporting operation. User fees are generated through PILOT fees and leasing of airport property, including a residence that is located on the corner of Millers Falls Road and West Mineral Road. This year's budget increase is entirely due to the 1% cost of living adjustment and step increase for the Airport Manager's salary.

**ARTICLE 10**      **Franklin County Technical School District Assessment.** This article funds Montague's share of the cost of operating the Franklin County Technical School (FCTS). It also includes Montague's capital assessment. The amount requested (\$760,615) represents a \$78,014 or 11.4% increase over FY 2015. Montague's assessment increased because there were three more Montague students attending FCTS this year.

**ARTICLE 11**      **Gill-Montague Regional School District Assessment.** Article 11 funds Montague's share of the cost of operating the Gill Montague Regional School District (GMRSD). This year the District approved a budget of \$18,347,689 (local funds), which represents an \$858,866 or 4.9% increase. The District has requested an assessment of \$8,498,343. This represents an increase of \$204,885 or 2.5% from FY 2015. This increase meets the criteria of an affordable assessment.

**ARTICLE 12**      **Documenting and Improving Sewer and Storm Water Lines and Drains.** This project is to inspect, clean, and slip line critical parts of the sewer and storm drain systems, especially those sections with transite pipes and is a continuation of work done under two articles approved last year. Under last year's articles, the town has lined about 1,000 of pipe. The work includes videoing various storm drains as part of the inspection process and will likely be an ongoing maintenance need due to the layout of the pipes.

**ARTICLE 13**      **Sheffield Windows.** The GMRSD has obtained funding from the Massachusetts School Building Assistance Program that will pay for 76% of the \$1.1million project that will replace windows in the auditorium/gymnasium wing of the Sheffield School. This wing was added in 1935 and all of the windows are the original, single-glazed, double-hung units with weights on chains to facilitate opening. Most of the sashes are true divided lights with wood muntins. The wood components are showing signs of rot and the glazing compound is in various states of failure. Replacement of these windows will improve the school's thermal performance, durability and aesthetics. This project is subject to a debt exclusion vote, which will allow the debt payments (net of the state reimbursement) to be funded without impacting the town's levy limit.

**ARTICLE 14**      **Sheffield Boiler and Burners.** The #1 boiler in the Sheffield School has failed. This boiler was repaired in 2011. It saw extensive use in 2013-2014 while boiler #2 was down and deliberations on its replacement were made. At the end of those deliberations boiler parts were replaced and essentially boiler #2 was rebuilt in 2014. Now Boiler #1 is down and Boiler #2 is carrying the full load of this heating season. The option of replacing these boilers with a new system has been determined to be cost prohibitive. There are also two burners, one of which

is more than 20 years old. This article will also replace both burners with new and more energy efficient burners.

- ARTICLE 15**      **DPW Discretionary Account Appropriation.** Article 15 would appropriate \$100,000 for the purpose of funding the DPW Discretionary Account. The purpose of this account is to enable the DPW Superintendent to fund purchases of and/or major repairs to DPW vehicles and equipment. This account addresses unforeseen expenditures where timeliness is important, it is not possible to secure town meeting appropriation, and the magnitude of such expenditures would quickly exhaust the Finance Committee reserve fund. \$100,000 was requested by the DPW but the Selectmen, Finance Committee and Capital Improvements Committee are recommending only \$75,000.
- ARTICLE 16**      **Lease Payments for a Dump Truck by DPW.** This article would appropriate the sum of \$43,325 to fund the fourth year of a five year lease of a 2013 International dump truck by the DPW.
- ARTICLE 17**      **Shea Theater Roof.** This article would appropriate the sum of \$20,000 to replace the front portion of the Shea Theater roof including costs associated with the temporary and possibly permanent relocation of the air handling units currently located on the roof and the cleanup of bird waste from the roof. This work is being coordinated with the implementation of a DOER energy grant that will used to fund the purchase and installation of a new and more efficient heating system in the theater.
- ARTICLE 18**      **Funding for Purchase of Police Equipment.** Article 18 would appropriate \$15,000 to purchase police equipment such as firearms and accessories, computers and accessories, police cruiser equipment, department equipment and furniture, bullet-proof vests, tasers, radios or any similar items, PBT's and other breath test devices, police badges, as well as all other necessary equipment and extraordinary repairs needed to assist the police department.
- ARTICLE 19**      **Town Records.** The Town Clerk is requesting that \$46,000 be appropriated to hire a consultant to review all town records currently stored at Town Hall, determine which records need to be kept and which can be discarded, and set up systems for retention and storage. This will enable departments to not only be kept current on which records needs to be kept, but also to locate documents quickly and efficiently.
- ARTICLE 20**      **Increase the Town Capital Stabilization Fund.** The newly adopted Financial Policies strongly recommend an annual appropriation to this fund from taxation, in addition to any appropriations from available Free Cash. This will be the first of an annual appropriation from taxation, with the amount determined as a percentage of prior year revenues.
- ARTICLE 21**      **Appropriate Funds for the Operation and Maintenance of the Montague Center School Building.** Article 21 would appropriate \$15,000 for the purpose of funding maintenance costs, security, and utility costs associated with the town ownership of the Montague Center School property. This property is expected to be transferred to a new owner shortly after Town Meeting, so hopefully this article can be rescinded at a later town meeting.

**ARTICLE 22**                    **Change Posting Requirements for Town Meeting Warrants.** The existing by-laws require that Town Meeting Warrants be posted at each post office in town, as well as each public library. Two of the libraries have very limited schedules, the post offices are not always open to meet posting needs, and all Town Meeting Members already receive the warrant in the mail within the required time frame. Making this change would avoid delays and questions that can occur if a library employee forgets to post a warrant in a timely manner. The warrants will still be available on the town's official posting site, which is the bulletin board at the rear of Town Hall.

**ARTICLE 23**                    **Funding for Information Technology, Equipment, Parts, Accessories etc.**  
Article 23 would appropriate the sum of \$8,200 to fund information technology equipment, parts, accessories, software and installation.

**ARTICLE 24**                    **Broadband Access.** This article would have funded costs associated with the design, construction and installation, including incidental costs thereto, of a broadband fiber-to-the-home network to provide cable service to sections of the Town that do not have access to such service, to also include installation of a fiber backbone to enable future expansion of cable service throughout the Town, with this expenditure to be reduced by the gifts, grants or other funding sources. While the town board have generally been very supportive of this concept; and expect that it will continued to be explored, the Town recently learned that borrowing for the intended purpose will not be legally possible in the absence of a municipal light plant or the adoption of special legislation. For this reason, the Board of Selectmen is expected to recommend a negative vote at this time.

**ARTICLE 25**                    **Graffiti By-Law.** Over the years the Police Department has received numerous calls and complaints from building owners and private citizens reporting nuisance, racial or disgusting paintings/pictures being placed on buildings in town without the owners' permission. Some pictures have been very graphic and offensive. Officers have also located paintings while they are out on patrol. Many officers try to remove the graffiti themselves to prevent the spread of more. Because of this, the Police Chief has had to purchase graffiti removal equipment and supplies for the officers. Police have also had to call in for help from the DPW to remove some of the graffiti that they were unable to do on their own.

It is hoped that this by-law will prevent future graffiti from occurring and it will cause the building owners to respond more quickly to our requests to remove these pictures or paintings from their building. The by-law should also free up the police and DPW from having to remove these unlawful paintings.

Police have a difficult time getting many building owners, most of whom do not live in our community, to help out with the removal or covering over of these unlawful or unwanted paintings. When the owners are contacted for their help in removing the paintings they often refuse. Currently there is no penalty for refusing to remove the graffiti

from a building. This new by-law will encourage building owners to help out with keeping our community beautiful and safe; otherwise they will face a fine.

Many graffiti paintings are too large for police to remove with the supplies that are available to them. Therefore they need another way to do away with these unlawful paintings. By making the landlords responsible for their buildings, Chief Dodge believes the police will have a better response from them. It is not their goal to start issuing building owners a fine. Chief Dodge is hoping this by-law will encourage building owners to actually help out with this problem and take whatever measures are necessary to clear these unlawful paintings from their buildings. Police will work with building owners to get this accomplished. As long as building owners show they are making an effort to help with this problem they will not be fined. The ones who ignore requests to remove graffiti will be the ones who actually receive a fine.

Police have found that graffiti also attracts new graffiti. They have seen this over the years and that is the reason the officers started cleaning the graffiti on their own. Police have found that if graffiti is removed right away it prevents other paintings from occurring. The more people that are involved in the removal process, the quicker it will be done.

Graffiti is also connected with gangs, gang activity, and the marking of a gang's turf. Police do not want to have gang problems in our community. It is hoped that by eliminating these painted messages the town is working to prevent the presence of gang activity.

Lastly, police believe there is no reason for a child to possess spray paint without the knowledge of their parents. If a child is using spray paint for any reason then the parent should be aware so they can be monitored. This by-law will prevent children from possessing spray paint and stop the stores from selling to underage children. The result will be the elimination of graffiti by underage children.

**ARTICLE 26**

**Authorize a Five-Year Contract.** This article would allow the Town to sign a 5-year contract extension for processing recyclable paper and containers at the Springfield Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) on Birnie Ave. in Springfield. The town is currently a party to a 10 year processing contract that expires on June 30, 2015. That contract allows for a 5 year extension to 2020.

**ARTICLE 27**

**Liquor License.** This article would allow the Selectmen to petition for an additional all alcohol on premises liquor license for the Five-Eyed Fox, located at 37 Third Street in Turners Falls.

**ARTICLES 28-30**

**Articles 28, 29 and 30** are petitioned articles.