

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
MAY 7, 2016
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 stipend increases for the Board of Selectmen members will increase from \$1,500 to \$2,040, and for the Tree Warden, from \$1,300 to \$1,500. As the salaries of the Town Clerk and Treasurer/Collector are linked to those of the full time appointed officials, and those salaries are subject to on-going negotiations, there are no salary increases recommended for the Town Clerk or Treasurer/Collector at this time.

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. No cost of living increases are included at this time, as labor negotiations are still on-going.

ARTICLE 6

Establishment of a New Position of Lieutenant in the Police Department. Article 6 provides for the creation of a new position – that of Lieutenant – in the Police Department. The Lieutenant will be assigned administrative duties currently performed by Sergeants, thus freeing them up to be out on the street where they are needed. The Lieutenant will also fill in for the Chief during his absence and take command of the Police Department. This position will be classified at Grade G + 8.5% within the Classification Plan with a Lieutenant to be hired at no lower than Step 6. The Lieutenant shall be entitled to all benefits award to all other non-union management personnel, as well as sick leave, longevity, and educational incentives, and clothing, uniform and cleaning allowances currently afforded to police personnel through the collective bargaining agreement with IBPO.

Articles 7-13

Town Operating Budget: Articles 7-13, with the exception of article 9 and 11, include the appropriations necessary to fund the operating budget of the Town Departments, Water Pollution Control Facility, Airport and Schools. What follows is a very general summary of the FY 2017 budget parameters.

Revenues: 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 2017 budget was prepared with the expectation that unrestricted state aid will increase by \$56,810 or 4.3%, but that **Net State Aid** would only increase by \$37,999 or 2.5% due to \$22,044 increase in State Charges attributable to an increase in the level of service by the FRTA to Montague including the continuation of service to Amherst, which increased the town assessment by \$23,417 or 40%. This estimate assumes that the State Legislature will match the Governor's budget proposal. **Net Property Taxes** are assumed to increase by the allowable 2 ½ percent plus an estimated, modest amount of new growth (\$120,000) or an overall increase of \$490,479 or 3.3% over FY 2016. 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 \$51,826. **Local Receipts** are estimated to increase by \$42,834 or 3.4%.

Expenditures: On the spending side of the equation, the Finance Committee has proposed a total, balanced budget of \$23,040,295. This budget includes: **General Operating Budget** - \$8,725,506, **Water Pollution Control Facility Budget** - \$2,331,733, **Airport Enterprise Budget** - \$48,812, **Education Assessments** - \$9,461,927.

ARTICLE 7

Departmental Appropriation Article. This article includes the FY 2017 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 8, 9 and 10 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 12 and 13.

The departmental budget will increase by \$322,700 or 3.84% in FY 2017. The main drivers behind this increase are: **Employee Benefits and General Insurances**, which will increase by \$115,599 or 6%. This includes a 10.6% increase in health insurance costs driven by a 7% increase in premiums. This is the first significant increase in health insurance in the last five years; **Public Works**, which will increase by \$92,666 or 5.1%. Two new positions - a DPW Maintenance position and a Groundskeeper position are included in the FY 2017 spending plan. One other Groundskeeper position was requested by the DPW, but it is not recommended for funding; **General Government**, which will increase by \$55,425 or 4.8%, primarily attributable to the Town Administrator search, retirement buyout costs and the costs of running the National elections; **Public Safety**, a \$55,191 or 2.9% increase. Costs in the **Health and Human Services, Debt and Intergovernmental** departments actually declined.

- ARTICLE 8** **Water Pollution Control Facility Budget.** Article 8 funds the operating budget of the Water Pollution Control Facility. Spending on the WPCF will increase by \$86,320 or 3.8% in FY 2017. The **WPCF Operations and Maintenance** budget will increase by \$75,941 or 5%, while **Employee Benefits** will rise by \$22,033 or 9.7%, for the same reasons cited in Article 7 above.
- ARTICLE 9** **Colle Building Budget.** Article 9 funds the appropriation for the operation and maintenance of the Colle Building. This budget would appropriate \$102,150 from Colle Receipts Reserved for Appropriation. This is a significant increase over FY 2016 which was \$80,350. The increase is needed to address growing maintenance needs in the building. The entire Colle Building operation is self funded through leases of the space.
- ARTICLE 10** **Airport Budget.** Article 10 funds the operations and maintenance budget of the Turners Falls airport. This budget will increase by \$2,534 or 5.5%.
- ARTICLE 11** **Airport Planning Project.** Article 11 would appropriate \$8,350 for the purpose of funding the town’s match of a Federal grant for an airport planning project that would include a Master Plan update and/or and Airport Layout Plan.
- ARTICLE 12** **Franklin County Technical School Assessment.** Article 8 would appropriate \$659,356 to fund the FY 2017 Franklin County Technical School assessment. This represents a significant reduction (\$101,259 or 13.3%) over FY2016. It is attributable to a major reduction in the number of Montague students (70 – 56) attending the school.
- ARTICLE 13** **Gill-Montague Regional School District Assessment.** In Article 13, the Gill-Montague Regional School District is requesting an appropriation of \$8,852,114 to fund its assessment to Montague. The Finance Committee is recommending that \$8,802,571 be appropriated. The latter number is the “affordable assessment”. Therefore there is a gap of \$49,543 between the two numbers.
- ARTICLE 14** **Hillcrest School Leaking Pipes.** This article asks for \$10,000 to repair leaking water pipes in the basement access tunnel at Hillcrest Elementary School. It is considered a safety issue.
- ARTICLE 15** **Computer Hardware and Software.** The IT Department is asking for an appropriation of \$24,000 to fund the purchase and installation of information technology equipment, parts, accessories and software. This amount is considerably more than the appropriation requested in recent years (\$8,200), but that amount was inadequate to keep up with the timely replacement of equipment. Warranties have also become expensive or non-existent for much of this equipment. Costs have also risen as more departments including the Libraries and Council on Aging have come under this appropriation. Additional information on this article is available in a handout.
- ARTICLE 16** **DPW Discretionary Account Appropriation.** Article 16 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 and Finance Committee recommend only \$75,000. The Capital Improvements Committee recommend only \$79,000.

ARTICLE 17 **Lease Payments for a Dump Truck by DPW.** This article would appropriate the sum of \$43,325 to fund the fifth year of a five year lease of a 2013 International dump truck by the DPW.

ARTICLE 18 **New Public Works Facility.** Article 18 is the next step in the process of reviewing the feasibility of constructing a new public works facility on Sandy Lane at the former landfill site. A previous town meeting approved a space needs assessment and feasibility study which has already been completed. Article 18 would fund pre-development assessments needed to evaluate site conditions and to fine tune the cost estimates for the construction of new facility. These assessments would be funded entirely out of Chapter 90 funds.

ARTICLE 19 **Upgrade and/or Replace Primary Sludge Pumps and Equipment.** Article 19 would appropriate \$100,000 from Sewer User Fees for the purpose of upgrading and/or replacing primary sludge pumps and equipment. The existing pumps will be replaced with double disc diaphragm pumps which require less maintenance, and have greater reliability. Variable frequency control drives, which result in finer less energy use and finer control, will also be installed. WWTP staff will install the new equipment with minimal outside support.

ARTICLE 20 **Increase the WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund.** Article 20 would appropriate the sum of \$200,000 from sewer user fees for the purpose of increasing the WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund.

ARTICLE 21 **Establish WPCF Discretionary Account.** Article 21 would appropriate the sum of \$20,000 from Sewer User Fees for the purpose of funding a WPCF vehicles and equipment account similar to discretionary accounts already in existing in the DPW and Police Department. This fund will be used to purchase and equip and make major repairs to WPCF vehicles and equipment, including any incidental and related costs.

ARTICLE 22 **Storm Drain/Siphon Repair.** Article 22 would authorize the borrowing of \$1 million, including \$100,000 of sewer borrowing, and \$900,000 of town borrowing, contingent upon the passage of a Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusion, for the purpose of repairing the combined sewer overflow and storm drain running from Avenue A under the canal to the Connecticut River. The brick arch, drain line, located on both sides of the canal, was built in the late 19th century and has fallen into serious repair. The Siphon line located under the canal was rebuilt in 1913 by the utility company as part of the canal lengthening and widening project. It is currently almost totally blocked by sediment deposition. It appears that the utility does have an obligation to pay a portion of the cost of sediment removal; and an effort will be made to involve them in the funding of the work and reduce the town's share accordingly.

- ARTICLE 23** **Roof Repair at the Carnegie Library.** Article 23 would appropriate the sum of \$14,000 for the purpose of repairing two sections of roofing at the Carnegie Library. This work will include the repair of the bump out roofs and replacement of flashing.
- ARTICLE 24** **Repair Slate Roofing at Montague Center Library.** Article 24 would appropriate the sum of \$20,000 for the purpose of repairing the slate roofing and fixing leaks around the chimney. Several roof slates are dangling over the edge of the roof and considered a safety hazard.
- ARTICLE 25** **Re-pointing of Masonry at Carnegie Library and Montague Center Library.** Article 25 would appropriate the sum of \$14,000 for the purpose of repairing and re-pointing masonry at the Carnegie and Montague Center Libraries. The repair work will include grinding out and pointing of defective mortar joints in miscellaneous areas around the buildings as needed up to five feet. The Carnegie front steps will be repaired and their granite cheek walls will be re-pointed. Polyurethane joint seals will be installed between the steps. Two 2 X 10 food concrete landings will be replaced. The work is considered necessary to correct drainage problems that have resulted in the creation of air quality issues in the library buildings.
- ARTICLE 26** **Upgrade the Police Department Radio System.** Article 26 would appropriate the sum of \$35,000 for the purpose of updating the Police Radio System and installing a transmitter antenna on an existing radio tower. The current system provides less than adequate radio coverage in some areas of town (dead spots) and directly impacts both the safety of officers and the department's ability to perform its public safety mission. The actual cost of this project may be less as the Chief believes that he may be able to secure donations of some parts, supplies and labor.
- ARTICLE 27** **Purchase Back Industrial Land Currently in Violation of Industrial Park Covenants.** Article 27 would appropriate the sum of \$132,000 from available funds for the purpose of buying back a parcel of land at the Montague Industrial Park (Map 17, Lot 58) that was previously sold to a developer for industrial development purposes. That owner is currently in default of the restrictive covenants for the industrial park. These covenants allow the Town to buy a parcel back when a person is unable to deliver on his/her promise to develop it within a prescribed time frame.
- ARTICLE 28** **Abatement of Hazardous and Asbestos Containing Materials within the Strathmore Mill Complex.** Article 28 would authorize the borrowing of \$385,000 contingent upon the passage of a Proposition 2 ½ Debt Exclusion Vote. This project would involve the abatement of asbestos and hazardous materials in the interior portions of the Strathmore Mill complex only. This would include two large, old steam boiler systems with extensive amounts of asbestos, pipe insulation which is located throughout the buildings, almost 24,000 sq. feet of asbestos transite panels in disrepair and some areas of asbestos floor tiles.
- ARTICLE 29** **Strathmore Mill Selective Demolition Plan and Feasibility Study.** Article 29 would appropriate the sum of \$6,500 for the purpose of conducting a feasibility

study for segmented demolition and a determination of probable demolition costs by a structural engineer.

ARTICLE 30 **Appropriation into OPEB Trust Fund.** Article 30 would appropriate the sum of \$50,574 into the OPEB (Other Post Employment Benefits) Account. This action has been recommended by the town’s auditors and the bond underwriter, Standard and Poor. Like most other communities in Massachusetts, Montague currently pays for its post retirement benefits, primarily retiree health insurance, on a pay-as-you-go basis. According to an actuarial study the town’s OPEB obligation as of June 30, 2015 was \$4,810,000 and Annual OPEB cost was \$1,140,000. The appropriation of funds into the trust is largely viewed as a symbolic gesture showing that the town recognizes its obligation and is beginning to address it. The town’s long term plan is to address the OPEB unfunded liability in the same way that it is currently addressing the town’s unfunded pension liability. Once the town’s pension fund is “fully funded” (in FY 2030) the money currently appropriated to fund the unfunded pension liability will be freed up for use, on annual basis, to fund the unfunded OPEB liability.

ARTICLE 31 **Appropriate Funds into Franklin County Technical School Stabilization Fund.** Article 31 would appropriate the sum of \$26,068 into the Franklin County Technical School Stabilization Fund. This action is consistent with an existing financial policy that is triggered when the Town experiences a major reduction in the annual education assessment levied by the FCTS. This is, in fact did occur in the FY 2017 budget due to declining enrollments by Montague students at the tech school. A portion of the savings resulting from the reduced assessment is voted into a stabilization fund and made available for future use when the Town experiences a major increase in assessments. This reduces the impact of fluctuating assessments on the town’s budget.

ARTICLE 32 **Shea Theater HVAC System.** This article would appropriate the sum of \$50,000 for the purpose of supplementing approximately \$75,000 in funds received for the same purpose under the Green Communities Grant Program. The current HVAC system at the Shea is seriously antiquated and highly inefficient.

ARTICLE 33 **Montague Intervention in DPU Deliberations on Proposed Natural Gas Pipeline.** A detailed explanation of this article is provided in a handout.

ARTICLE 34 **Transfer of Care and Custody of Railroad Salvage Annex Building to Board of Selectmen.** Article 34 would authorize the Board of Selectmen under MGL Chapter 40, section 15, to have care and custody of the Railroad Salvage annex building (15 Power Street). This would enable the Board to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the property seeking developers interested in developing the property under town’s Commercial Homesteading Program. The town’s ultimate goal is to stimulate private investment and job creation at the site which has a 10,000 square foot 2 story brick warehouse building.

ARTICLE 35 **Renaming a Segment of Greenfield Road.** Article 35 would change the name of that portion of Greenfield Road located between the road’s intersection with

Turners Falls Road and the Pan-AM Railway in Montague Center to “Old Greenfield Road” as provided for in Town By-Law Article 4, section 1.

ARTICLE 36 **Amend Section 6.3.3 of the Montague Zoning By-Law.** Article 36 would amend Section 6.3.3 of the Montague Zoning By-Law (**Vehicular Egress/Access to a lot**) for Residences with a setback of 500 or more from an accepted way. It would establish minimum guidelines with respect to **grade** (no more than 10%), **curve radius** (not less than 30 feet), **passing turnout** (with a width of 20 feet and length of 35 feet that are spaced no more than 300 feet between turnouts or terminus of the driveway), **turnaround area** (with a minimum 30 foot turn around radius), and **length** (no less than 16 feet in width over its entire length).The amendment would also allow the Planning Board to issue a **Special Permit** to allow relief for any of the requirements in this section. The Planning Board supports this zoning amendment.

ARTICLE 37 **Amend Montague Zoning By-Laws Pertaining to Solar Energy Facilities in the General Business District in sections 5.2.5 (b) and 7.9.4 (a).** Article 37 would amend the Town Zoning By-Law to allow solar energy facilities in the GB..General Business District on a Special Permit from the Board of Appeals (addition to Sections 5.2.5(b), subject to the condition that they would be limited to 20 years in duration (addition to Section 7.9.4, #11). This is a landowner petitioned article by Robert Daddario, owner of Assessors Map 14 Lots 24 and 191. The Planning Board supports this zoning amendment.

ARTICLE 38 **Establish Study Committee to Investigate the Potential of a Town wide Municipally-Owned Fiber Optic Cable System.** Article 38 is a petitioned article. A detailed description of the petition is included in a handout provided by the petitioners.

ARTICLE 39 **Establish a Committee to Encourage and Help Organize a Discussion of the Chapter 70 Education Formula.** Article 39 is a petitioned article. A detailed description of the petition is included in a handout provided by the petitioners.