

**SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
TOWN OF MONTAGUE
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
OCTOBER 2, 2019**

Background Information

ARTICLE 1. Approval of this appropriation is needed to settle the collective bargaining agreement with the New England Police Benevolent Association, which covers the patrolmen, detectives, sergeants and staff sergeant. The approved agreement would be for the period of July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2022. The new agreement includes general wage increases of 1.5% for FY20, 0% for FY21 and 1.5% for FY22, a new step at the top of the range beginning in FY21, as well as increases (25 to 30 cents per hour) to shift differentials and a \$1,500 annual stipend for the on-call detective. Once approved, payments would be made to employees retroactive to July 1, 2019.

ARTICLE 2. Approval of this appropriation is needed to settle the collective bargaining agreement with the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, Local 274, which covers most employees in our public works and water pollution control operations. The approved agreement would be for the period of July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2022. The new agreement includes general wage increases of 1.5% for FY20, FY21 and FY22, an increase in the grade of Truck Driver Laborers (B to C) and Heavy Equipment Operators (C to D), and adjustments to weekend call-in pay and work uniform allowances. Once approved, payments would be made to employees retroactive to July 1, 2019.

ARTICLE 3. Approval of this appropriation is needed to settle the collective bargaining agreement with the National Association of Government Employees, which covers most employees not in police or public works unions. The approved agreement would be for the period of July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2022. The new agreement includes general wage increases of 1.0% for FY20, 1.5% for FY21 and 1.5% for FY22, a new step at the top of the range beginning in FY20, and small increases (15 to 20 cents per hour) in shift differentials, a \$3,500 annual stipend for a library employee to assume management responsibilities, and an increase in the holiday for dispatchers actually working on Thanksgiving and Christmas. Once approved, payments would be made to employees retroactive to July 1, 2019.

ARTICLE 4-6. It has been the Town's practice to provide full-time elected officials and other non-union employees the same wage increases provided to members of the National Association of Government Employees. Because salaries of elected officials and wage ranges of other non-union employees are set by Town Meeting, a Town Meeting vote is needed to adjust these wages to reflect the increases granted to NAGE employees. The requested changes for FY20 are a 1.0% wage increase, and a new step 11. Articles 4 and 5 set these salaries and Article 6 appropriates the funding.

ARTICLE 7. The Town's cable contract provides for a payment of \$12,500 to be paid to the Town for capital/equipment expenses of MCTV. Because the money is paid directly to the Town, the Town is required to annually appropriate this amount in order to pay it to MCTV.

ARTICLE 8. The breakdown of these unpaid bills is \$429 for the Tree Warden, \$34 for the DPW, \$220 for the Building Inspector and \$1,138 for the Police department. These were all cases of bills not being received in time for payment in Fiscal Year 2019 and the staff responsible for paying bills not knowing the expenses had been incurred.

ARTICLE 9. It was discovered after the close of FY19 that the Town of Erving had only billed one quarter of Montague's annual assessment for treatment of wastewater from Millers Falls. Most of this article (\$156,596.79) is required to pay for the other three quarters of the assessment. The remainder (\$1,405.21) is to cover four other small bills.

ARTICLE 10. The inflow and infiltration of groundwater into the Millers Falls sewer system was identified as a major problem in FY19, leading to flow levels that exceed those in our contract with the Town of Erving, which treats this wastewater. This resulted in an additional \$52,000 in sewer overage fees in FY19, with additional overage charges anticipated in FY20. An engineering study of the problem was approved by Town Meeting in May 2019, revealing eight locations where existing PVC sewer pipes are failing. The study recommends lining of these locations with "short sleeves" that will permanently seal the cracked sections.

The study estimated a design and construction cost of \$75,000, but engineers believe the small work scope and urgency of getting it done immediately may drive the bid price up. The WPCF is asking for a larger appropriation to ensure work can be attended to in the event that bids come in high.

ARTICLE 11. This project would entail a complete replacement and the addition of venting to the roof of the Unity Park Fieldhouse. The existing shingles are failing badly, particularly on the easterly exposure. Deterioration of the shingles has accelerated in the past 18 months and leaks are increasing. Multiple quotes have been received and expected cost is \$80,000-\$90,000, plus contingency. This project would also include repointing and flashing of the chimney and either replacement or removal of the cupola.

ARTICLE 12. Montague owns two street sweepers, which are in constant use for a three month period each spring, with both day and evening shifts. The intensity is attributable to Montague's policy of sweeping all of its paved roads. The sweepers are use more sporadically later in the summer and fall. Two sweepers are necessary to maintain current levels of service to the community.

Our existing sweepers were purchased in 1997 and 2010. Based on a projected 20 year life expectancy, the goal is to replace one every 20 years, so we always have two functional sweepers. This purchase was to be proposed next May, but the 1997 required extensive and constant repair this past season and is no longer considered reliable or worth investing money in. Purchase now would ensure the sweeper is available next spring, whereas waiting to purchase at next May's ATM would likely mean it would arrive in early fall.

This appropriation would allow the DPW to purchase a new sweeper or a low hour demo model, should it still be available this fall. The article would also cover the cost of an extended 4 year warranty for the sweeper component of the truck (\$7,500).

ARTICLE 13. Town Meeting previously appropriated \$8,975 to cover the expense associated with restoration of the ornamental "lower skirt" of the historic front porch/awning of Montague Town Hall. This work is proceeding as expected; however, following removal of the skirt, the Town discovered substantial deterioration in the steel frame of the awning, posing a risk of collapse in the future. This warrant article would provide funds needed to address that problem prior to installation of the restored lower skirt feature, as well as repair of the copper roof, which is believed to have failed seams that are allowing water to infiltrate the structure.

ARTICLE 14. This article would allow the Assessors to negotiate and enter into a Tax Agreement with Solar Grid LLC for personal property related to a solar facility to be constructed on a parcel of land owned by Montague Real Estate Trust, Albert & Catherine Lichoulas, Trustees. Said parcel is located on Millers Falls Road and is shown on the attached assessors map as Parcel ID 23-0-67. The size of the facility is approximately 1Mw and the solar panels are expected to cover approximately 4 acres of the 15.9 acre parcel.

ARTICLE 15. This article would allow the Assessors to negotiate and enter into a Tax Agreement with Kearsarge Turners Falls RE LLC for personal property related to a solar facility to be constructed on a parcel of land owned by that entity and located on Turners Falls Road and shown on the attached assessors map as Parcel ID 14-0-214. The size of the facility is approximately 1.4 Mw and the solar panels are expected to cover approximately 4 acres of the 6.16 acre parcel.

ARTICLE 16. This article would allow the Assessors to enter into a Tax Agreement with FirstLight MA Hydro LLC f/k/a FirstLight Hydro Generating Company as part of a resolution of the ongoing litigation concerning contested tax assessments for three (3) taxable accounts owned by FirstLight that have been the subject of matters pending

before the Appellate Tax Board. The total agreed upon assessment for the three (3) parcels is \$125,000,000. This valuation would hold for Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021. While this figure reflects a substantial reduction in total valuation, it is part of an agreement that the Assessors and the Selectboard believe is beneficial to the Town; one that is part of a larger agreement that resolved several years (FY14-19) of disputed valuations that carried significant financial risk for the town.

ARTICLE 17. This article would allow the Town to receive an easement from the Turners Falls Fire District to allow for construction, maintenance, and utility and vehicle access over a shared common driveway. This driveway will serve the new DPW facility and the existing Public Safety Complex. Work is presently being performed under a license agreement with the Turners Falls Fire District, which would be made permanent through acceptance of this easement, which will be voted at the Annual Fire District Meeting later this fiscal year.