



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

FY 23

Complete this form electronically! Be clear and concise!

Department: Police Submitted by: Chris Williams

1. Please describe and provide the rationale for any substantial changes in your FY23 line-item budget submission.

I spoke at a select board meeting about shortages within the police department. In my 29 years at Montague PD we have lost three positions. We gained two school resource officers that are partially funded by the school districts and they spend the majority of their time in the schools. The lost positions have affected the detective bureau and our patrol function. I feel there is a need for an additional sergeant and two patrol officers who would serve to bolster the detective bureau, direct supervision of the day shift and bring back the community/policing/resource officer.

Prior to July, 20216 the department was comprised of the Chief, Staff Sergeant, (3) sergeants, (3) detectives, (1) SRO and (7) patrol officers. One detective works part-time with the Northwestern District Anti-crime task force and spends the rest of his time in town on the 3-11 shifts. The other two detectives worked during the day and one covered adult court and investigations while the other handled juvenile court and investigations.

July 11, 2016 a sergeant was promoted to Lieutenant and for a while we ran with only the SSGT and (2) sergeants. Eventually a detective retired and that position went unfilled after they were replaced with a new hire. At this point a sergeant was promoted and the detective bureau ran with only two and never had a direct supervisor. One detective worked 3-11 and was two days a week with the task force and two days with our department. The day detective is responsible for all adult/juvenile court, evidence and all investigations.

It was clear to me that the detective bureau was under staffed, lacked supervision and needed a sergeant to be in charge. When I became chief in 2018/2019 I made a change and moved the day sergeant (who was formally a detective) into the role of Detective Sergeant. Normally, during the day shift there would be a detective, uniformed sergeant and patrol officer covering the town for calls of service. With this move there were now two uniformed patrol officers and the plain clothes detective sergeant on the day shift. Eventually the Det. Sergeant became overwhelmed with court cases and active investigations so I moved some personnel around (removed one of the three 11-7 patrol officers) and promoted a patrol officer to detective. This officer now works two day shifts as a detective and two days on patrol. This position covers the Det. Sergeants days off and assists with court and ongoing investigations. All three detectives are also on call on a rotating weekly basis.

For FY23 I am requesting we promote a sergeant and hire a new patrol officer to replace the promoted officer. The newly promoted sergeant will be assigned to the day shift. The day shift would now have a patrol sergeant and two patrol officers covering the town. The town of Montague is 32 square miles and has 109 road miles. Most often, depending on the nature of the call the two patrol officers would respond to said call. The Det. SGT will respond if available but most of the times they are not. If the officers were tied up on a call in Montague Center and had to respond to a call on Avenue A, their response would be delayed. With the addition of a sergeant, the sergeant and one officer would respond to a call requiring two officers and the other would be available for calls in other parts of town. Most often during the work day, one officer covers Turners Falls and the other officer is responsible for the other four villages while the sergeant would float between all areas of town.

Sergeants also perform a variety of administrative duties and those have been falling to the senior patrol officer during the day shift. Patrol officers are not trained in a supervisor capacity. Often questions will be asked and the officers do not have the proper knowledge or response and the Lieutenant or Chief when available will assist.

During past town meetings, members have asked how much funding was set aside for community outreach. I had to advise there was no extra funding available. I know it has been an issue in the past, residents and business owners have asked why there weren't more police officers engaging the community away from their patrol vehicles? We have lost three police officer positions over the years via budget cuts. The Montague Police has had to make adjustments and we are more of a reactive rather than a proactive police department. Calls are made and officers respond and investigate crimes, handle calls for service, serve summons, investigate motor vehicle accidents, make arrests and or file the appropriate charges. With the addition of a sergeant and replacement officer this will give the department additional help with community outreach during the day shift and can provide more positive interactions the community and police officers.

My overall goal within the course of the next few years it to try and replace the lost positions and be more proactive in community outreach and service. By adding a sergeant, they will be able to direct the patrol officers and engage the community on a more positive consistent basis.

With a level funded budget for FY23 there is a -4.98% decrease in 5112-Full Time Wages. With the addition of a new sergeant 5112-would increase 5.19%.

A level funded budget overall for FY23 with no changes there is a -2.7% decrease. With the addition of a new sergeant and other increases/decreases for FY23 there is only a 2.98% increase overall.

If the sergeant's position is granted I do not believe the overtime budget 5132 would be affected negatively or positively. There is not enough money in the budget to cover every vacation, personal, or sick day taken. Detective positions are not filled unless there is court scheduled that day, if there is, someone will cover court and that is usually a 3-4 hour charge to OT. We try and maintain at least three officers for the day and 3-11 shifts. If we are short on overtime funding the shift will go unfilled and the shift is covered with two officers. There are only two officers on the overnight (11-7) so when there is a vacant shift it must be filled and forced if necessary.

I am decreasing the funding in the 5114-line item (Part-Time Wages) by 47% due to the lack of available part-time officers. We currently have one active PT officer who normally works 16-20 hours a month. Within the last five years there have been fewer and fewer people showing up on the civil service list. The last list that was made available had three candidates and we were able to hire one of them who are currently in the academy. One could not complete the process and the other went to another town. The latest list has two candidates, one who is only 20 years old (Must Be 21) to become a police officer.

With the new "POST" regulations every officer who is working part-time with the part-time academy must complete the bridge academy (200 hours) and complete 2,400 hours of actual policing to become a certified police officer in Massachusetts. Once this is accomplished the officer will be considered full-time certified. This is a onetime deal and it is a three year process. Last name A-H have until June 30, 2022 to certify, if they do not they can no longer work as a police officer. Within the next two years after that the rest of the officers in the alphabet will have to be certified. Moving forward, any police officer who works full or part-time will have to complete the full-time academy.

We are currently a civil service police department. Several local area police departments have opted out of civil service. The State has commissioned a panel to look into civil service to see if it is still a viable option for Massachusetts. With the POST Commission in place, they have the overall say on discipline and termination. POST will be able to overturn a civil service ruling. The police union is going to start negotiating a new contract soon. Part of the discussion will be whether or not they want to remain in civil service. If the union opts out and town meeting

approves, the town will have a much broader pool of applicants to choose from for any new hire. Again, any part-time police officer is going to have to be full-time certified.

Based on the new requirements I would propose a change in the part-time police officer pay. The current pay range is from \$19-\$21.00 an hour. After conversation with then union the new pay range would be \$25.00 an hour for an officer with less than five years of experience and \$28.00 an hour for anyone with five or more years of experience. When we are no longer civil service I will be able to hire more part-time police officers and will have to increase line item-5114 at that point.

Line-item 5720 increased this year by 18% due to an officer being out for 18 months on Injured On Duty Status. The insurance cover \$1,000.00 a week of the officer's salary.

Line-item 5580 other supplies I decreased by \$1,500. I had increased it this year by \$2,000 for a one time purchase of software.

There are no other large increases in the other line items, just minor adjustments.

I have tentatively renegotiated compensation from the two school districts regarding their respective school resource officers. GMRSD was paying a flat fee of \$50,250.00 (for (3) years) and the FCTS was paying for the cost of the lowest paid officer.

The Gill Montague Regional School District's compensation was based on the officers pay for the time they spent in the school on a yearly basis. The town covers the remaining expenses. At the current rate of reimbursement GMRSD covers 53% of the officer's salary. We negotiated a new rate (tentative) of compensation for the next three years. For FY23 the compensation is \$65,000 with a 2% increase in FY24 (\$66,300) and FY25 (\$67,626). With the new rate the school districts compensation is 69%.

The Franklin County Technical School District's compensation was based on the lowest paid officer's overall base salary and benefits. FCTS reimbursement could change from year to year depending on whether or not we had a new hire. We have a tentative agreement in place regarding a flat fee. FY23 reimbursement would be \$77,000 and a 2% increase for FY24 (\$78,540) and FY25 (\$80,110). I feel a flat fee with incremental increases is beneficial to the town because the rate will not change when there is a new hire. The flat fee originally was the average of the (3) lowest paid officers which came out to \$80K. Through negotiation and the added 4% increase for the duration we came up with the base rate of \$77K.

GMRSD's compensation has always been lower than the FCTS. The rationale has been the town should absorb more of the cost for a SRO based on the amount of residents (students) attending GMRSD (76%) compared to the FCTS (20%) of Montague residents. Both School Resource Officers are very beneficial to the town and their respective school districts. By having the SRO actively engaged with staff and students it lessens the burden of the police department responding to calls for service and incidents.

The finance committee had recommended that each district pay 100% of the cost of each officer in their district. During negotiations both districts were concerned with this request. If they were forced to pay the entire costs they would not be able to afford a SRO or they would have to eliminate a teaching position. We concluded it would not benefit the town to eliminate either one and this is how we made our way to the tentative agreements.

The Dispatch Budget increased this year at annual town meeting. ATM voted to increase the pay grade of the dispatchers from "Grade B" to "Grade D". We lost two full-time dispatchers this year and were close to losing dispatch altogether due to the shortage. The grade increased to help recruit new dispatchers and to retain the ones we still have.

Montague has per diem dispatchers who work for other local dispatch centers. It was difficult to utilize them as they were being forced to work at their primary place of employment. Montague has four full-time dispatchers that cover the open shifts. The shifts are Overnight 11-7, Evening 3-11 and Days 7-3. One dispatcher works each line and the four works a split shift 11-7, 11-7, 3-11, 3-11 to cover the nights off of those respective shifts. Marsha Odle the dispatch supervisor can cover open shifts if they are not filled with the help of per diem dispatchers.

With this schedule it always left two shifts unfilled. Originally those two shifts were the overnights 11-7. When shifts cannot be filled dispatchers will be forced to work. Usually the on duty and incoming dispatchers are forced for four hours each. Occasionally dispatchers are forced for the full eight hour shift. When we were able to fill the two open positions I changed the schedule so the two open per diem shifts are now days 7-3. Day shifts are much easier to fill on a consistent basis. It is my intent to hire a "5th" dispatcher to cover the two open day shifts and to assist dispatch in general.

The added "New" dispatcher will dispatch two days a week on a four and two rotation and cover open (days-evenings) on the other two days if needed. This dispatcher will assist the dispatch manager (Administrative Assistant) with administrative duties to include but not be limited to:

1. Filing, entering and referring of all CJIS records, incident & accident reports, parking tickets and motor vehicle citations.
2. Process accounts payable, accounts receivable, payroll and bill in the absence of the Admin. Asst. The lieutenant as of now is the back up to the Admin Asst.
3. Prepare public records and accident reports as requested by the public and insurance companies.
4. Assist with CJIS validations and Duplicate names reporting in IMC (In-House Comp. Software)
5. Assume administrative duties pertaining to the application and information validation for all incoming Pistol Permit requests (New and Renewals). The Staff Sergeant currently preforms this administrative duty and is very time consuming. Relieving the SSGT of these duties will free up time so they can spend more time on the road supervising the 3-11 shift. The SSGT will continue to conduct the interviews and law officer review of each applicant.

I made adjustments to the 5114 & 5132 line items, part-time wages and overtime respectively in conjunction with the hiring of the "5th" dispatcher. I am positive there will be savings in both line items with the new hire but it is hard to predict the actual savings until the end of FY23. Further adjustments can be made at that time.

It is important to attract new per diem dispatchers and to retain the few that we have. The current pay for per diem dispatchers is \$19-\$21.00 per hour. I would like to set the new pay rate at \$22.00 an hour for any per diem with less than five years of experience and \$25.00 for anyone with more than five years of experience.

To show the past financial problems with dispatch the following are the amounts within the last ten years dispatch was short because of staffing shortages.

RESERVE FUND TRANSFERS

FY 11	\$17,000
FY 12	\$4,762
FY 14	\$2,000
FY 18	\$9,000
FY 19	\$6,000

TOWN MEETING SUPPLEMENTAL APPROVAL

FY 12	\$9,000
FY 13	\$2,190 9/10/12

FY 13 \$11,000 3/13/13
FY 20 \$12,000

To this point in FY22, has your department experienced any notable successes, such as improving or providing new programs or services, or implementing new technologies? If so, please describe.

N/A

- 2. Are there presently challenges to your department’s ability to meet its goals and objectives that are due to its FY22 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation(s) for improving the situation.**

Everything has been running smoothly here at the PD. No unusual bumps in the road. We are within budget: the PD is at 62.5 % and dispatch is right on the edge at 58.25%. With changes made in dispatch everything is properly running. There have been little to no forces and all of the shifts are being covered.

- 3. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY22? What is the status of those expenditures/investments? Does your department have any older special article appropriations that remain unspent?**

I did not receive funding for any special articles this year. I have a balance of \$7,101.41 which will be used to offset the costs of our new bullet resistant vests. We were awarded the grant for the vests replacement which covers 50% of the total costs. The town is responsible for the remaining 50%.

This will be my first special article request for the discretionary account. I will be requesting \$10,000 for FY23.