

MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE AND SELECTBOARD MEETING

Wednesday, March 22, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

This meeting was held both in person and via Zoom and recorded:

<https://vimeo.com/810748926>

Finance Committee Chair Francia Wisnewski called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Finance Committee members present: Chair Francia Wisnewski, Vice Chair Gregory Garrison, and members John Hanold, Chris Menegoni (arrived at 6:04) , and Fred Bowman

Finance Committee members absent: Clerk Dorinda Bell-Upp and member Jennifer Waryas

Selectboard Chair Richard Kuklewicz called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

Selectboard members present: Chair Richard Kuklewicz and member Christopher Boutwell

Selectboard members absent: Matthew Lord

Others present: Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen, FCTS Superintendent Rick Martin, FCTS Business Manager Russ Kaubris, FCTS Assistant Business Manager Liz Bouchard, and Ariel Elan

The meeting was recorded by MCTV as well as by Carolyn Olsen.

Meeting minutes:

Moved by Mr. Garrison to approve the Finance Committee minutes from March 15, 2023 as presented.

Seconded by Mr. Hanold and approved.

Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, and Wisnewski – Aye

Moved by Mr. Kuklewicz to approve the joint meeting minutes from March 15, 2023 as presented.

Seconded by Mr. Boutwell and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

Franklin County Tech School (FCTS) Presentation

Mr. Martin and Mr. Kaubris presented the FCTS's budget book.

- The FCTS has been able to maintain an average 3% increase in total assessments to member town for several years.
- The average per-pupil cost for FY24 is \$12,129, while Montague's is \$11,052.
- Montague's current enrollment is the same as last year, but the projection for next year is a drop from 93 to 75 students. This is based on graduations and the number of applications from 8th grade students. Mr. Martin attributes the decrease in applications to the inability to do normal outreach to 8th grade students in the GMRSD.
- The \$4.2M grant for an aviation program is in the process of getting equipment and building the hanger. This program is expected to draw both existing tech school students and students from other districts. There will also be programs to benefit adults in the aviation field for both obtaining and maintaining required licenses.
- The FCTS also received a \$500K grant for a welding simulator program in conjunction with the Franklin County House of Corrections.
- The overall enrollment has increased 21% in the last five years, and space is maxed out. This is being addressed by planning for future building needs. Beginning with FY24, the \$500K previously

budgeted for the Siemen's energy efficiency program leases, which have been paid off, will be transferred to their capital stabilization fund for use towards a feasibility study for expansion or a new building. This study is expected to cost between \$1M and \$1.5M and is a required step by the Massachusetts School Building Assistance program. It was also noted that the school must also budget for ongoing repairs and maintenance of an aging building.

- Mr. Hanold noted that contributions from Excess and Deficiency (E & D) are both fairly high and stable, and asked if the FCTS is in danger on not having enough in future years. Mr. Kaubris explained that the budget process is planned to create a stable amount of E & D each year.
- Ms. Wisnewski asked about collaboration with other districts. The most common is sharing sports teams when 2 districts lack enough students for their own teams. There is also a multiple-district hockey program.

Budget Reconciliation Between Selectboard and Finance Committee

- There were no major areas of disagreement between the Selectboard and Finance Committee.
- Mr. Kuklewicz discussed his original concern about putting so much into the Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Fund but was reassured by Mr. Hanold's rationale.
- Mr. Kuklewicz is concerned that the GMRSD used too much grant money to fund positions that they may not be able to eliminate when the grant runs out but recognizes that this is not yet a town problem.
- Mr. Hanold is still opposed to stipends being increased outside of the planned cycle. Ms. Wisnewski is concerned that the five-year cycle may be too long, noting that employees get annual cost of living increases.
- Mr. Kuklewicz stated his support for the new Farmer's Market department.
- Mr. Kuklewicz stated his support for the new Collections System Lead Operator position, noting that it will be an improvement to have dedicated staff monitoring and evaluating the system on a regular basis with an appropriate skill set rather than going catch as catch can. He hopes that this position will ultimately help the town avoid major emergencies in the future.

Final Votes for Financial Articles

Collection System Lead Operator

MOVED by Mr. Kuklewicz, That the Selectboard recommend the creation of a Collection System Lead Operator position at Grade E in the UE union. Seconded by Mr. Boutwell and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

MOVED by Mr. Garrison, That the Finance Committee recommend the creation of a Collection System Lead Operator position at Grade E in the UE union. Seconded by Mr. Hanold and approved.

Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, and Wisnewski – Aye

Town Clerk Administrative Assistant

MOVED by Mr. Kuklewicz, That the Selectboard recommend the creation of a Town Clerk Administrative position at Grade B in the NAGE union. Seconded by Mr. Boutwell and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

MOVED by Mr. Garrison, That the Finance Committee recommend the approval of a Town Clerk Administrative position at Grade B in the NAGE union. Seconded by Mr. Hanold and approved.
Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, and Wisnewski – Aye

Schedule I – Elected Officials Wages

MOVED by Mr. Kuklewicz, That the Selectboard recommend Schedule I as presented. Seconded by Mr. Boutwell and approved.
Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

Schedule II – Appointed Officials Wages

MOVED by Mr. Kuklewicz, That the Selectboard recommend Schedule II as presented. Seconded by Mr. Boutwell and approved.
Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

Town Operating Budget

MOVED by Mr. Kuklewicz, That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$11,961,596 for the Town Operating Budget, with \$6.80 to be raised from the Transportation Infrastructure Receipts Reserved for Appropriation and \$11,961,589.20 to be raised from Taxation. Seconded by Mr. Boutwell and approved.
Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

MOVED by Mr. Garrison, That the Finance Committee recommend the sum of \$11,961,596 for the Town Operating Budget, with \$6.80 to be raised from the Transportation Infrastructure Receipts Reserved for Appropriation and \$11,961,589.20 to be raised from Taxation. Seconded by Mr. Bowman and approved.
Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Nay, Menegoni – Aye, and Wisnewski – Aye

Clean Water Facility Operating Budget

MOVED by Mr. Kuklewicz, That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$3,006,124 for the Clean Water Facility Operating Budget, with \$286,900 to be raised from the Taxation and \$2,719,224 to be raised from Sewer User Fees. Seconded by Mr. Boutwell and approved.
Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

MOVED by Mr. Garrison, That the Finance Committee recommend the sum of \$3,006,124 for the Clean Water Facility Operating Budget, with \$286,900 to be raised from the Taxation and \$2,719,224 to be raised from Sewer User Fees. Seconded by Mr. Hanold and approved.
Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, and Wisnewski – Aye

Airport Operating Budget

MOVED by Mr. Kuklewicz, That the Selectboard recommend the sum \$426,965 for the Airport Operating, said sum to be raised from Airport User Fees. Seconded by Mr. Boutwell and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

MOVED by Mr. Garrison, That the Finance Committee recommend the sum of \$426,965 for the Airport Operating, said sum to be raised from Airport User Fees. Seconded by Mr. Hanold and approved.

Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, and Wisnewski – Aye

Colle Operating Budget

MOVED by Mr. Kuklewicz, That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$53,250 for the Colle Operating budget, said sum to be raised from Colle Receipts Reserved for Appropriation. Seconded by Mr. Boutwell and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

Franklin County Technical School Assessment

MOVED by Mr. Kuklewicz, That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$1,053,018 for the Franklin County Technical School assessment, said sum to be raised from Taxation. Seconded by Mr. Boutwell and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

Gill-Montague Regional School District Assessment

MOVED by Mr. Kuklewicz, That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$11,809,191 for the Gill-Montague Regional School District assessment, said sum to be raised from Taxation. Seconded by Mr. Boutwell and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

\$23,000 Smith Vocational Tuition

MOVED by Mr. Kuklewicz, That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$23,000 for tuition at Smith Vocational, said sum to be raised from Taxation. Seconded by Mr. Boutwell and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Grant Match

MOVED by Mr. Kuklewicz, That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$13,100 as a grant match for the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Comprehensive Plan Grant, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by Mr. Boutwell and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

MOVED by Mr. Garrison – noting that this was just a change in the funding source – That the Finance Committee recommend the sum of \$13,100 as a grant match for the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Comprehensive Plan Grant, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by Mr. Hanold and approved.

Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, and Wisnewski – Aye

Taxation to Reserves – from Financial Policies

MOVED by Mr. Kuklewicz, That the Selectboard recommend the following sums for the purpose of increasing the special purpose funds set forth below, said sum to be raised from Taxation. **Seconded** by Mr. Boutwell and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

Fund	Amount (\$)
Town General Stabilization Fund	37,388
Town Capital Stabilization Fund	134,891
OPEB Trust Fund	50,000
GMRSD Stabilization Fund	41,339
FCTS Stabilization Fund	21,940
Total:	285,558

Overlay Surplus to Other Post Employment Benefits

MOVED by Mr. Kuklewicz, That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$250,000 for the Other Post Employment Benefits Trust Fund, said sum to be raised from Overlay Surplus. Seconded by Mr. Boutwell and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

Free Cash to Reserves

MOVED by Mr. Kuklewicz, That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$500,000 to the Other Post Employment Benefits Trust Fund and \$1,500,000 to the Town Capital Stabilization Fund, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. **Seconded** by Mr. Boutwell and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

Updates from Town Administrator - none

Special Town Meeting Debrief and Preparation for Annual Town Meeting

Ms. Wisnewski asked how we can be more efficient in providing information prior to Annual Town Meeting.

- Ms. Olsen stated her intention of getting the packets for Town Meeting members out a week earlier than usual to allow more time for reading and review.
- Mr. Bowman added that people need to read the information in the packets.
- The subject of pre-town meetings was raised, including those held in individual precincts. The consensus was that they were helpful for those that attended, but they lacked adding any efficiency since the same questions and discussion always happened again at town meeting. It was suggested that Town Meeting members be polled to see if there is sufficient interest, and whether a virtual or in-person meeting was preferred. Mr. Kuklewicz noted that there was not much value to a pre-town meeting unless 30-40 Town Meeting members participated.
- Ms. Elan thinks pre-town meetings make sense around proposed policy changes, but not so much for spending issues.
- Ms. Wisnewski suggested adding the financial terms glossary to the Finance Committee Report to Town Meeting.

Future meeting topics - None

Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting –

Ms. Wisnewski noted that the Association of Town Finance Committees will hold their annual meeting in April. She will forward the information to committee members.

Selectboard Adjournment

Mr. Kuklewicz makes the motion to adjourn at 7:19 PM. Seconded by Mr. Boutwell and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

Finance Committee Adjournment

Mr. Bowman makes the motion to adjourn at 7:20 PM. Seconded by Mr. Hanold and approved.

Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, and Wisnewski – Aye

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Olsen