

MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, April 5, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

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

<https://vimeo.com/815328169>

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

Finance Committee members present: Chair Francia Wisnewski, Clerk Dorinda Bell-Upp and members John Hanold, Jennifer Waryas, and Fred Bowman

Finance Committee members absent: Vice Chair Gregory Garrison and Chris Menegoni

Others present: Town Administrator Steven Ellis and Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen

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

Meeting minutes:

Mr. Hanold makes the motion to approve the Finance Committee minutes from March 29, 2023 as presented. Seconded by Ms. Waryas and approved.

Bell-Up – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Waryas – Aye, and Wisnewski – Aye

Updates from Town Administrator

1. **Changes to Schedules I and II:** There is an update to Schedule I and II in the proposed town meeting warrant. During the town budget process, the Town Clerk announced her retirement effective June 30th. Mr. Ellis noted that since the Town Clerk is retiring midway through her term, her successor must be appointed, which is why the position is being added to Schedule II (Appointed Officials). We want to make sure that both schedules reflect both possibilities and that they reflect the expected grade and step of a successor.

The Selectboard has identified a very strong internal candidate for this position and Mr. Ellis thinks there is a strong sense that she is a strong potential heir to that title. We will continue with our review process, but have proposed a revised budget for that department To be transparent as possible with town meeting, the Selectboard anticipates a likelihood, if not a certainty, that the salary will transition from the current step 10 to step 5, so at this time this is our best estimate of a figure to include in both Schedule I and in Schedule II. Because we are midway through the current Town Clerk's term, we have to appoint the interim, if you will, and that appointment, depending on the outcome of the town election which occurs after town meeting, will be either an interim appointment until the town election in May 2024 or, if the election changes the position to appointed, a permanent appointment.

2. **Type of Town Meeting:** Montague Community Television (MCTV), the Gill-Montague Regional School District's Information Technology Director, and town staff did test runs for hosting a hybrid annual town meeting both yesterday and today. We don't want to proceed with the hybrid unless we're certain that we would be able to have a seamless meeting. While we're not sure that we've met that goal, it is up to the Moderator to request that the Selectboard hold a hybrid meeting. If the Moderator makes no request, the Selectboard has no authority to hold a hybrid meeting. Mr. Ellis can't speak specifically about the issues, but there was a concern with hearing remote participants without creating an echo chamber. It's important not to disenfranchise any voter who feels they would be able to participate remotely but then not

be able to be heard. The final warrant will be executed next Monday, and the decision on whether to hold a hybrid meeting will be made at that time.

3. **Pre-Town Meeting:** There were about 25 respondents to the poll about having a special town meeting on May 6th immediately prior to the Annual Town Meeting. If a remote pre-town meeting is desired, it should be held before May 6th.
4. **Confirm Start Time:** The start times will be 8:00 AM for the pre-town Meeting and 9 AM for the Annual Town Meeting. It was noted that Representative Natalie Blais will likely make an appearance.

Revote Schedules I and II

The changes discussed above change the Town Clerk's requested and recommended wage for FY24 from \$80,384 (Grade G, Step 10) to \$72,450 (Grade G, Step 5) on Schedule I and add the position of Town Clerk at Grade G to the "Non-Union Employees Not Shown Above" section of Schedule II.

Mr. Bowman makes the motion to approve the amended Schedules I and II. Seconded by Ms. Waryas and approved.

Bell-Up – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Hanold – Nay, Waryas – Aye, and Wisnewski – Aye

Final Review and Approval of the Finance Committee Report to Town Meeting

There were no additional changes to the report.

Future meetings –

- April 26th – Remote meeting for Town Meeting preparation, committee transition plan
- May 10th - Annual Town Meeting debrief, Reserve Fund Transfer, Ch 44 S33B Transfer

Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting –

Finance Committee Adjournment

Mr. Hanold makes the motion to adjourn at 6:28 PM. Seconded by Mr. Bowman and approved.

Bell-Up – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Waryas – Aye, and Wisnewski – Aye

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Olsen