

**MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**Wednesday, July 5, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.**  
**This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded:**  
<https://vimeo.com/842675811>

Finance Committee Chair Francia Wisnewski called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

**Finance Committee members present:** Chair Francia Wisnewski, Vice Chair Gregory Garrison, Clerk Dorinda Bell-Upp and members Fred Bowman, John Hanold, and Chris Menegoni

**Finance Committee members absent:** Jennifer Waryas

**Others present:** Town Administrator Steve Ellis and Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen

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

**Committee Reorganization**

Mr. Garrison made a motion to elect Francia Wisnewski as Chair, Dorinda Bell-Upp as Vice Chair, and Fred Bowman as Clerk. Seconded by Mr. Hanold and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, and Wisnewski – Aye

**Future meetings –**

- July 12<sup>th</sup> – end of year business/transfers, committee reorganization, stipend review process

**Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting –**

Ms. Olsen notified the committee that next week's agenda would include a Chapter 44 Section 33B transfer request from Town Health Insurance to the Airport Enterprise due to a delay in the solar lease payments. The request will go to the Selectboard for approval on July 10<sup>th</sup> as both groups must approve the transfer.

**Finance Committee Adjournment**

Mr. Bowman makes the motion to adjourn at 6:09 PM. Seconded by Mr. Hanold and approved.

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Carolyn Olsen

Documents and exhibits:

**Francia Wisnewski, 6.14.23**

**Montague Report on Stipend**

**Annual Report Pg 55 and 56**

**[1 FINAL Annual Town Meeting Report 2023.pdf \(montague-ma.gov\)](#)**

### **Arlington**

Arlington has had stipends for select board, assessors, moderator and has just voted for the school committee. The Board of Health gave theirs up and the FinCom only has stipends for the chair and vice chairs. We have no formal or informal policy. My guess is that very few towns have such a policy, dealing with each request individually.

### **Cambridge**

Cambridge approved some stipends for the first time... especially those like the Board of Zoning Appeals and the Planning Board which are enormous time commitments.

Below is link to the City Manager agenda item, Attachment E is some info. on other communities stipends.

We had received a legal opinion that we could have stipends for people serving, and now for some boards we do.

[https://cambridgema.igm2.com/Citizens/Detail\\_Legifile.aspx?Frame=&MeetingID=4181&MediaPosition=&ID=17188&CssClass=](https://cambridgema.igm2.com/Citizens/Detail_Legifile.aspx?Frame=&MeetingID=4181&MediaPosition=&ID=17188&CssClass=)

### **Reading**

I was on the Select Board in Reading and this topic has come up a few times informally. Personally, I love the idea of reimbursing childcare and transportation. The issue that was raised here regarding a stipend is that many of our volunteers work at companies where they cannot have a secondary source of income related to government work due to the regulatory nature of some industries (mainly those in financial services). Just something to consider, depending on the demographics of your community.

### **From a selectboard member**

An interesting implication of stipends is the local option to provide health insurance to elected officials that receive compensation. For example, if your Planning Board is elected and receives a stipend, Planning Board members may be eligible for the same health insurance as full-time employees. This is at the same split, so the city/town might pay 60-80% of the cost depending on your benefit agreements. This is a local option, by vote of the Select Board/City Council. On one hand this can provide health insurance savings to elected officials who have a hard time affording it other ways. On the other hand, it's a cost well in excess of most stipends. This is all from MGL Chapter 32B, Section 2. It may be worthwhile to determine if your Select Board/City Council has ever voted on this option to avoid surprises one way or the other.

I'm on a Select Board, and receive a stipend of around \$1500 per year. That's way too low if I wanted to be paid fairly for the time I put in. I look at this as a volunteer position so for me it's way too high. I donate the money back to local causes.

## **Malden**

I wish we had a solid policy -- we give stipends for some things that take an enormous time commitment, such as Planning Board, but not for others that also require a lot of time but maybe fly under the radar such as Community Preservation Committee. And, we give stipends to city staff for the time they spend staffing these boards, e.g. Traffic Commission and Cannabis Licensing Board, when in my opinion that falls under their job duties. For example the city planners do not get a stipend for attending Zoning Board, City Council, or Planning because it's considered part of their duties, but the police chief, parking director and fire chief get stipends for attending meetings (some of which aren't even after hours?!) Makes no sense to me. In practice, when we create a new body (for example the ARPA oversight committees) we are allowed to petition the Mayor to ask for stipends for the resident members and it is at his sole discretion as to whether we do them or not.

## **Cambridge City Council**

I just sent this to my friend Mark Sandeen in Lexington a few days ago, from the City Manager's response to our request (we subsequently changed the law to allow BZA stipends):

### **V. Stipends**

Exploring ways we can provide stipends to boards and commission members, particularly those who meet more regularly like the Planning Board and Board of Zoning Appeals.

The City acknowledges that members of the Planning Board (PB), Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA), and the Historical Commission provide substantial volunteer hours as compared to those on other boards and commissions. During the period from October 2021 through October 2022, PB held thirty-eight meetings, BZA held twenty-three meetings, and Historical Commission held fourteen meetings. Any of these meetings can last for 3-5 hours and include hours of advance preparation time. By comparison, many other boards and commissions meet for two hours or less, approximately ten times per year.

Things like childcare during meetings and travel to and from meetings can create a barrier for many residents when they consider whether to apply for the Planning Board or the Board of Zoning Appeal as well as other boards and commissions and could potentially limit board and commission member diversity.

A survey of other Massachusetts communities' approach to these types of stipends (Attachment E) indicates that the provision of stipends to Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeal members is uncommon but does occur. Perhaps the most relevant comparable community to focus on is Somerville, which provides its Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals members a stipend of \$5,943.96 annually.

Cambridge will begin to provide a \$6,000 annual stipend to all Planning Board members starting in January 2023. This stipend is intended to offset the annual out of pocket costs incurred by Board members in connection with participation on the Board.

Cambridge will begin to provide a \$2,500 annual stipend to all Cambridge Historical Commission Members starting in January 2023. This stipend is intended to offset the annual out of pocket costs incurred by Commission members in connection with participation on the Commission.

Cambridge also intends to provide a \$3,500 annual stipend to all full members of the BZA starting in January 2023, assuming the Municipal Code is amended to allow this. This stipend is intended to offset the annual out of pocket costs incurred by Board members in connection with participation on the Board.

Additionally, Cambridge intends to provide a \$2,000 stipend to all associate members of the BZA starting in January 2023 if the Municipal Code is amended accordingly. BZA associate members attend meetings on an as-needed basis when full-members are not available. Previous patterns of participation indicate that this could average 50% of meetings attended by full members.

Because Section 10.12 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance requires that BZA members serve without compensation, the Zoning Ordinance would need to be amended to remove that provision and to authorize providing a stipend to BZA members. The City Solicitor has prepared the attached proposed zoning amendment (Attachment F) to allow for the provision of stipends to BZA members. I recommend that the Council adopt it as a City Council zoning petition and refer it to the Ordinance Committee and Planning Board for hearing.

There are other City Boards and Commissions as to which certain statutes, special acts, or ordinances prohibit or limit the City's ability to provide stipends to their members. There is, however, no limitation on providing stipends to Planning Board members, so it is not necessary to amend the Zoning Ordinance or Municipal Code to do so.

The City will continue to evaluate the time involved and barriers to participation in volunteering for other City boards and commissions and may consider allowing for the provision of additional board or commission stipends in the future based on this evaluation.

### **Participant**

I suspect the differences among city staff are based on how good the negotiators for the police and firefighters unions are. AFSCME needs to start poaching some of those people to come work for them.

### **Sunderland**

I feel like a stipend should reflect the amount of work, which is a way to make the office available to someone who really needs their working hours to produce income. We don't want elected office to be available only to people who can afford to give their labor for free.

But it's also not like there's a set number of work hours; different people holding the same office can invest wildly different amounts of time in "executing" the same role, but to different levels. If someone did run for office just for the money and did a lousy job it's hard to hold them accountable before the next election.

Sunderland Selectboard is similar. School committee is zero, which is a choice my predecessors made during a brutal budget year. I don't know about BoH and Assessors.

### **Hatfield**

As an elected Planning Board member in Hatfield, we each get ~\$800 per year. I'm not doing it for the money so I'm not sure if it's the "right" amount but it's a nice "thank you." The other elected paid

positions in town: Selectboard members get ~\$2,300 per year, BoH members get ~\$5,000, Assessors ~\$2,000 and School Committee ~\$150. I'm not sure the reasoning behind these amounts.

### **Northampton**

[Advisory board presents salary proposal for elected officials in Northampton \(thereminder.com\)](#)

[Recommendations to streamline serving on boards and commissions presented \(thereminder.com\)](#)