

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
MAY 4, 2013
BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

ARTICLES

1-4

Consent Agenda for More Routine Articles

This year the Town Moderator is continuing a practice introduced a couple of years ago, in which articles that have traditionally evoked little discussion or debate on town meeting floor will be voted as a block, without a full reading by the Town Moderator. Town meeting members will, however, be permitted to put a hold on any or all of these consent articles, in which case the article subject to the hold will be subject to a full reading and debate. The purpose of the consent agenda is to expedite consideration of routine town meeting articles. The first five articles fall into this category.

Consent agenda articles include:

- Receipt of annual reports
- Authority to apply for, receive and expend grants
- Annual authorization of hazmat revolving funds
- Annual authorization of recycling revolving funds

ARTICLE 5

Fix the Salaries of Elected Officials. This article appears regularly on the annual warrant. The recommended wage increases for the Town Clerk and Treasurer/Tax Collector are comparable to increases provided to other full-time employees. Both the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee recommend modest increases in all of the stipends for part-time officials, but especially for Selectmen, Assessors, and Board of Health members whose stipends were significantly reduced in Fiscal Year 2008. While the Finance Committee has recommended the requested increase to \$1,368.75 for the Tree Warden, the Selectmen recommend a slightly smaller increase to \$1,300.

ARTICLE 6

Fix the Salaries of Appointed Officials. This article appears regularly on the annual warrant. Recommended salary ranges for full-time appointed officials reflect the implementation of existing collective bargaining agreements, individual employment contracts authorized by law (i.e. Town Administrator, Police Chief), stipends and wage/salary ranges established by the Personnel Board for various part-time employees.

ARTICLE 7

Departmental Appropriation Article. This article includes the FY 2014 operating budget for the town departments, except for the Water Pollution Control Facility, the Airport (both of which are enterprise funds) and the Colle Building, which is funded through receipts reserved for appropriation. Budgets for these items are shown in Articles 8, 10 and 9 respectively. It also does not include funds required to meet the town's assessments to the Gill-Montague Regional School District and Franklin County Technical School District which are addressed in Articles 12 and 11.

Conservative revenue assumptions continued to drive the budget preparation process this year, although the health of the state economy is certainly trending in a positive direction. The FY 2014 budget was prepared with the expectation that state aid will be level funded with the FY 2013 number. There is a possibility that the town could see a modest increase in state aid in FY 2014 if state receipts continue to grow at higher than anticipated rates. It is certainly encouraging to note that the health of the economy is finally improving after five years of deep recession that has seen Montague losing nearly \$600,000 or one third of its state aid through budget cuts. These were in addition to those cuts experienced by the Gill-Montague and Franklin County Technical School District

The amount requested under the Selectmen's budget in Article 7 (\$7,745,203) represents a \$256,993 or 3.43% increase over FY 2013. Increases in **Personnel Costs** account for \$94,110 or 36.6% of these costs. Personnel increases in the Police and Dispatch departments alone account for \$49,349 or 52.4% of all increases in personnel, and are mainly attributable to adjustments in salaries/wages ordered under an arbitration agreement and new training requirements in the Police Department and overtime costs in the Dispatch Department. The budget also includes an increase of \$500 in the annual stipends for each member of the Boards of Selectmen, Health and Assessors. It should be pointed out that the increase in personnel costs includes increased hours for the Airport Manager and the part time health agent which together cost an additional \$8,022 and the addition of a \$2,000 stipend for the IT Administrator. **Step Increases**, for those employees who are eligible, account for the balance of increase personnel costs. It should be pointed out that none of the three collective bargaining units (TOMEA, UE and the IBPO) have settled for FY 2014, and the cost of implementing the pay and classification study is not included in this budget.

Total expenses for the general fund will increase by \$175,542 or 7.13% in FY 2014. Notable changes in this budget include the following: **Public Works** (+\$59,800) driven largely by increases in Solid Waste Disposal (+\$16,050), Snow and Ice Removal (+\$12,400), Gasoline (+\$6,000), Diesel (+\$4,000), Public Works Supplies (+\$5,000), Building/Vehicles Repairs and Maintenance (+\$7,000.), **Public Safety** (+36,216) mainly driven by increases in police and dispatch budgets associated with new training requirements and overtime coverage, **Human Services** (+45,000) reflecting increased Veterans Benefits costs, and modest increases in **Recreation and Culture** (+7,052) mainly reflecting costs of children's program and media acquisitions in the Libraries. (**Retirement Assessment** (+\$37,419 or 5.0%); and **General Government**, where increases in the Legal budget (+\$15,000) and Shared Expenses (+\$6,982 or 9.8%), which include a \$2,000 stipend cost for IT Administrator, were largely offset by a significant reduction in Utilities (-\$14,080 or -12.0%) costs.

Another significant change in the FY 2014 operating budget was a \$15,000 or 1.6% reduction in the Health Insurance budget. This is the sixth year in succession that our health provider – Hampshire Health Insurance Group has delivered premium increases that are well below the state average, without having to resort to movement to the Group Insurance Commission or to alter benefit levels. Overall, the category of **Employee Benefits**, which includes large

ticket budget line items such as health insurance, pensions and workers compensation, will increased by only \$26,421 or 1.46%.

ARTICLE 8

Enterprise Fund Operating Budget of Montague Water Pollution Control Facility. This article contains the FY 2014 budget for the Montague Water Pollution Control Facility, 90.8% of which is funded out of sewer user fees. The balance (\$180,000 or 9.2%) is funded out of taxation and reflects the cost of treating infiltration and inflow at both the Montague WPCF and Town of Erving WWTP.

The amount requested in the Selectmen's Budget (\$1,953,363) represents a \$145,000 or 8.0% increase over FY 2013. The **Operations and Maintenance** budget for the WPCF will increase by \$136,366 or 11.21% over FY 2013. This budget is driven by the same personnel assumptions described with regard to the Town Operating Budget in Article 6 above. Notable changes in this budget include a \$45,818 or 51% increase in electricity costs reflecting new process requirements, a \$25,000 or 14.3% increase in sludge handling costs, and a new cost of \$28,606 associated with a recently installed Combined Sewer Overflow System. These three budget line items alone account for \$99,424 or 72.9% of all the increase in the operation and maintenance of the water pollution control facility. **WPCF Debt** costs would decline by \$10,406 or 2.8% in FY 2014. Finally, **Employee Benefits** will increase by \$19,036 or 11.5%. The increase required by the WPCF reflects higher Retirement Costs, due to the addition of a new employee at the WPCF, offset to some extent by cost containment in the areas of Health Insurance and Workers Compensation

ARTICLE 9

Colle Receipts Reserved for Appropriation. Article 9 appropriates \$88,088 for the operation and maintenance of the Colle Building, a town owned facility. The Colle is a discrete cost center that is currently funded from receipts reserved for appropriation, without a subsidy from taxpayers. Although not actually referred to as such, this type of account is very similar to an enterprise fund, meaning that the operation is self-funded. Colle receipts are earned from lease payments that are made by tenants of the building, which is currently 100% leased up. The FY 2014 budget for the Colle is slightly lower than that of FY 2013, reflecting a modest decline in the annual debt service requirement.

ARTICLE 10

Airport Enterprise Fund Operating Budget. The FY 2014 Airport operating budget (\$42,000) represents a \$4,375 or 11.63% increase over FY 2013. The budget is financed through a combination of airport user fees and taxation. Under the proposed FY 2014 budget, user fees (including use of Retained Earnings) will comprise 78% (\$32,500) of the total airport operating budget. The remainder (\$9,500) is funded out of taxation. The ultimate goal of the Airport Commission is to make the airport a fully self supporting operation. User fees are generated though PILOT fees and leasing of airport property, including a residence that is located on the corner of Millers Falls Road and West Mineral Road. This year's budget includes a modest increase in the Airport Manager's hours to nineteen hours per week. This adds \$3,086 to the airport budget.

ARTICLE 11

Franklin County Technical School District Assessment. This article funds Montague's share of the cost of operating the Franklin County Technical School (FCTS). It also includes Montague's capital assessment. The amount requested

(\$731,659) represents a \$6,206 or .008% reduction over FY 2013. Montague's assessment declined because there were two fewer Montague students attending FCTS this year. This caused Montague's share of district spending to fall from 15.99% to 15.47%.

ARTICLE 12

Gill-Montague Regional School District Assessment. Article 12 funds Montague's share of the cost of operating the Gill Montague Regional School District (GMRSD). This year the District approved a budget of \$16,935,893, which represents a \$368,253 or 2.22% increase. The District has requested an assessment of \$7,965,557. This represents an increase of \$115,000 or 1.46% from FY 2013. The Finance Committee is recommending this assessment even though it exceeds the town's affordable assessment by \$40,616. The latter amount is being recommended for funding out of town stabilization.

ARTICLE 13

Replace Windows at Unity Park. This article would appropriate \$8,000 out of taxation to fund the replacement of four windows at the Unity Park field house. The current windows were made by the Highway department several years ago. The framing of these units is constructed of wood, and they provide little to no insulation of heat and cold.

ARTICLE 14

Authorize Board of Assessors to Negotiate Property Values with Utilities. Article 14 would authorize the Assessors to negotiate real and personal property values with First Light Hydro Generating Company and Turners Falls Hydro LLC for the year 2014 triennial revaluation. After the agreement has been negotiated it must be approved by town meeting.

ARTICLE 15

Funding for Information Technology, Equipment, Parts, Accessories etc. Article 15 would appropriate the sum of \$8,200 to fund information technology equipment, parts, accessories, software and installation.

ARTICLE 16

Funding for Purchase of Police Equipment. Article 15 would appropriate \$20,000 to purchase police equipment such as firearms and accessories, computers and accessories, police cruiser equipment, department furniture, bullet-proof vests, tasers, radios or any similar items as well as extraordinary repairs to same.

ARTICLE 17

Purchase of One Ton Dump Truck by DPW. This article would fund the purchase and installation of a one ton dump truck by the DPW. new flooring in four offices at the Town Hall and to cover up old asbestos flooring.

ARTICLE 18

DPW Discretionary Account Appropriation. Article 18 would appropriate \$75,000 for the purpose of funding the DPW Discretionary Account. The purpose of this account is to enable the DPW Superintendent to fund purchases of and/or major repairs to DPW vehicles and equipment. This account addresses unforeseen expenditures where timeliness is important, it is not possible to secure town meeting appropriation, and the magnitude of such expenditures would quickly exhaust the Finance Committee reserve fund. \$100,000 was requested by the DPW but the Capital Improvements Committee is recommending only \$75,000.

ARTICLE 19

Lease Payments for Two DPW Dump Trucks. Article 19 would appropriate \$54,055 to fund the fifth and final year of a five year lease on two dump trucks. The two trucks are both six wheel dumps with plow. One of the vehicles is equipped with a sander. The Capital Improvements Committee recommends funding of this article.

ARTICLE 20

Lease Payments for a New Six Wheel Dump Truck. Article 20 would appropriate \$44,000 for the purpose of funding the second year of a five year lease of a six wheel dump truck that was purchased last year. The Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen and Capital Improvements Committee have all recommended the approval of this lease payment.

ARTICLE 21

Purchase a Bucket Truck for the DPW. Article 21 would appropriate \$95,000 for the purpose of purchasing a bucket truck for the DPW. The vehicle to be purchased - 2013 aerial lift bucket truck – would replace a 1991 GMC bucket truck. This vehicle is used by the department to perform tree work, to do maintenance of town buildings and to install holiday lights, flags etc.

ARTICLE 22

Appropriate Funds for the Operation and Maintenance of the Montague Center School Building. Article 22 would appropriate \$10,000 for the purpose of funding maintenance costs, security, and utility costs associated with the town ownership of the Montague Center School property. It is possible that the town may avoid the use of some or all of this appropriation if the property is sold before the end of FY 2014.

ARTICLE 23

Replace Furnace at Montague Center Library. This article would appropriate \$10,000 for the purpose of replacing the furnace at the Montague Center Library Building. The furnace is very old and the heat exchanger has burned almost all of the way through. The furnace smells and pollutes the air in the building and it is considered dangerous.

ARTICLE 24

Right of Way Acquisitions for Greenfield Road Project. Article 24 would authorize and appropriate the necessary funds for the taking of land for the purpose of securing right of way acquisitions for the Greenfield Road reconstruction. This project, estimated to cost in excess of \$6 million, is scheduled to be advertised in November, 2013 and be constructed in 2014. Construction costs for this project will be funded using state and federal grant funds. Article 24 would require a town appropriation to cover the costs of property appraisals and acquisitions because municipalities are responsible for right of way acquisitions.

ARTICLE 25

Adoption of G.L. c 39, Section 23D – the so-called “Mullen Rule” – for use by the Planning Board. This article would provide for the town’s acceptance of G.L. c. 39, Section 23D, the Mullen Rule. Accepting this provision would allow Planning Board members to miss a hearing and still participate in a vote provided that they certify under penalty and pains of perjury that they watched a video recording, listened to audio, or read a transcript. It is standard practice of the Planning Board to record audio of its meetings. This rule would apply to situations where hearings are continued to one or more sessions, which is a common occurrence.

ARTICLE 26 **Amend Montague Zoning Map to Redistrict Assessors Map 25, Lots 01, 02, 22; and Assessors Map 18, Lots 6 and 7 from (ID) Industrial to (AF-4) Agricultural Forestry-4.** This amendment would rezone 74 acres of land on West Mineral Road to a zoning that is more compatible with its current and intended use.

ARTICLE 27 **Amend the Montague Zoning Bylaws Section 5.4.7 Minimum Floor Area.** Article 26 would amend the Montague Zoning Bylaws Section 5.4.7 Minimum Floor Area. The proposed amendment would result in less restrictive minimum dwelling unit size regulations. The zoning would no longer regulate the minimum dwelling unit size of single or two family dwellings. The zoning would reduce the minimum size of multi-family dwelling units from 700 square feet to 500 square feet. Relief to the proposed minimum may be allowed by Special Permit from the Zoning Board, whereas relief below the minimum is currently prohibited. Areas devoted to home occupation would not be excluded from the dwelling unit size. In addition, the proposed zoning amendment will bring Montague's Zoning Bylaws into compliance with MGL Ch. 40A, Section 3 which states that "...No zoning ordinance or by-law shall regulate or restrict the interior area of a single family residential building..."

ARTICLE 28 **Petitioned Article Supporting the Continued Provision of Important Medical Services at the Franklin Medical Center.** The petition seeks to secure town support for an initiative the purpose of which is to prevent the perceived transfer of important medical services from the Franklin Medical Center to the Bay State Medical Center in Springfield. and criminal complaints. A copy of the proposed by-law is attached.

ARTICLE 29 **Acceptance by the Town of Sections 19K and 108P of Chapter 41 of the Massachusetts General Laws.** Article 29 asks that the town accept Sections 19K and 108P of Chapter 41 MGL. If the town accepts these provisions it would be required to pay the Town Clerk and Treasurer a \$1,000 annual stipend if the latter individuals succeed in obtaining and maintaining state certification in their respective professions.

ARTICLE 30 **Creation of Broad Band Committee to Investigate the Potential for Expanding Broadband Coverage to Currently Underserved Areas of Montague.** This article would authorize the Moderator to appoint a seven member committee to identify ways to expand broad band coverage to currently underserved areas of the town. This could possibly include a recommendation for the creation of a special purpose district to implement such an expansion, the identification of costs associated with such an expansion, and the methods of funding it.