

MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE
Draft Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 13, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded: <https://vimeo.com/699268242>

PRESENT: Chair Jen Audley; Vice-Chair Gregory Garrison; John Hanold, Chris Menegoni, Jennifer Waryas (arrived at 6:17 p.m.) and Francia Wisnewski (arrived at 6:04 p.m. and left at 7:00 p.m.)

OTHERS PRESENT: Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen; Town Administrator, Steve Ellis; Jeff Singleton, Montague Reporter; Ariel Elan, public; BettyLou Mallet, Scribe.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Jen Audley. The meeting is being aired and recorded by MCTV and the guidelines for public participation were given.

The items on the agenda were rearranged due to the time available for committee member participation.

4. PREPARE FOR ANNUAL TOWN MEETING (May 7, 2022 TFHS)

The FinCom received a final draft this morning of the Finance Committee Report to Town Meeting. Members were asked to review and submit any additional changes by the Thursday morning deadline. The Committee agreed to move ahead with the report and discuss changes made after last week's meeting. CO stated there were a few wording changes made in the background information for clarity as well as article renumbering due to the separation of items in Article 4 which adds 3 new positions to the classification system. While renumbering the articles, CO also placed the Finance Committee 3-3 recommendation under the ATA article and 6-0 Finance Committee recommendation under the Administrative Assistant (Article 5) and the WPCF Laboratory Manager (Article 6). GG raised concern for the documentation of the ATA Article 4 which said "Finance Committee does not recommend" after the 3-3 vote as well as the 3 listed documentations of reason for voting against. There should also be documentation for the 3 votes approving the article. CO understands that if the motion is 3-3, the motion to recommend does not pass but fails.

JW arrived at the meeting at 6:17 p.m. The committee is in agreement to have CO remove "the Finance Committee Does Not Recommend" on Article 4 and replace with "Finance Committee Vote: 3-3" with the concerns listed below. GG will submit a statement in support to be included in the mailing to Town Meeting Members, as he will not be able to attend the ATM. JA also stated that at Town Meeting, this article will be presented by the Selectboard and at that point, the Finance Committee has the opportunity to speak about the article. In this case, with split opinions on the committee, there will be speakers for each position, which she assumes will be herself and John Hanold. If other members wish to speak, they can be recognized by the Moderator.

Ariel Elan was concerned about the 3-3 vote and negative information that was documented but is in agreement with what has now been agreed upon which will neutralize the discussion. She also stated that anyone's opinion could change right up until Town Meeting where they are welcome to express it on Town Meeting floor.

Jeff Singleton has a concern as a reporter as well as a resident that the two new articles have not been actually voted on. The FinCom agreed to vote for the record on the new Article 5 and the new Article 6.

ARTICLE 5 – That the Town vote to amend the Classification Plan to add the position of Select-board Administrative Assistant at Grade B. JA made the motion and second by JH. No discussion. JH, aye; JW, aye; CM, aye; FW, aye; GG, aye; JA, aye.

ARTICLE 6 – That the Town vote to amend the Classification Plan to add the position of WPCF Laboratory Manager at Grade D. JA made the motion and second by JH. No discussion. JH, aye; JW, aye; CM, aye; FW, aye; GG, aye; JA, aye.

JA shared her screen for the FinCom to review of the report where she would suggest a change in the Goals section (page 3) regarding the financial policies. Her suggestions clarified that the FinCom updated the 2014 policies and followed the updated policies this year. The members agreed with her revisions. Other changes were on page 7 about the staffing changes to reflect that some members were concerned and lastly the correct spelling of Frederic Bowman's name on the last page.

After the changes discussed, the FinCom agreed to have CO finalize and print.

JA mentioned to the FinCom about participation before the Town Meeting when Town Meeting members receive their packets of information. They are able to participate in any pre-town meeting gatherings and discuss what the Finance Committee discussed as well as their own personal opinion. She encourages participation to help town meeting members to understand. JH agrees, stating what the Finance Committee decides and how they reached the decision should be discussed as well as at Town Meeting, personal opinions can be shared on Town Meeting floor. JA reminds the Committee it is wise to avoid a quorum of 4 at any pre-town meetings. JA will be at the Town Meeting and will speak on behalf of the Finance Committee and if any other members wish to speak on any specific article, let her know.

2. REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES: April 6, 2022

The members received the final draft of the April 6, 2022 meeting minutes for their review. No questions. **On a motion by GG and second by JH, the minutes of April 6, 2022 were approved as written. GG, aye; JH, aye; CM, aye; JW, aye; FW, aye; JA, aye.**

3. REVIEW OF SCRIBE ROLE, PROCESS AND EXPENSES TO DATE (with BettyLou Mallet)

JA stated this is an excellent time to discuss how the process of having an outside contractor produce the minutes of the Finance Committee meetings and to reflect on the process. She stated that BettyLou volunteered to support the Committee through budget season as well as asks that the Committee keep an eye out for any other notetakers in the future.

BettyLou spoke with the Committee and described the position as being similar to support staff to the FinCom. She has been attending meetings for approximately 9 months and has learned a great deal about Montague and municipal government. She explained her process of creating the draft minutes, receiving revisions and preparing the final draft for vote prior to the Wednesday meeting. She also spoke about the program used, which she believes most members are able to open, and creates a pdf version for others who use a different platform. Regarding expenses, she found that more time was needed during the budget process which increased expenses but hopes to now stay within the time that was initially discussed. She stated she will continue to support the Finance Committee as their scribe through FY22 or until someone else is available to continue.

The Finance Committee members each gave their thanks to BettyLou and spoke about the timeliness of the minutes, how helpful it has been to have an outside contractor, and their support to continue to finance the position.

JH asked about the expenses to date for the position. CO stated there is \$331.25 remaining in the budget for FY22, which will cover the ad as well as the minutes and in June, a reserve fund transfer for \$200-\$300 is likely. JA asked SE for an approximate cost per meeting for the Selectboard scribe and can discuss in a future meeting. JA also suggested for future reference that the town consider how to provide the committee members and support staff with the tools to complete their job such as MS Office products or to utilize the open platform of Google Doc option and upload, make revisions and then send back to the Scribe. JA also feels it would be helpful to have the minutes be less of a transcript and more of a summary and just capture the important points.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINANCE COMMITTEE SEATS AVAILABLE FOR FY23

JA stated an ad describing the openings available on the Finance Committee, has been placed in the Montague Reporter for this week and will run again next week. The cost is \$112 for the two placements. A flyer can also be created using similar content and displayed as a handout at Town Meeting. The Selectboard often announce openings on various committees and she thinks the Finance Committee should join forces in their efforts. JH agrees with creating a flyer as a handout for town meeting as meeting members are most likely to volunteer.

The position of Chair was also discussed. JA described the role of Chair and how it can be more narrowly defined and other tasks can be disseminated among the other members. The Committee can work collaboratively gathering the content of items on the agenda. JH stated tasks can be changed from year to year and the position of Chair can be down scoped to engage a level of comfort. JA described her positive experience as a Chair and encourages any member to give it a try.

6. TOPICS NOT ANTICIPATED

There were no additional topics to discuss.

7. FUTURE MEETING DATES AND AGENDA REQUESTS

The Committee discussed several dates in May and June to continue the discussion on the financial policies. BettyLou Mallet and John Hanold are unavailable to attend meetings throughout May. JA will check in with FW as well as CO and SE regarding availability for meeting dates in May and June and will check in with all members with possible future meeting dates.

8. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by JH and second by GG, the meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m. JH, aye; GG, aye; JW, aye; CM, aye; JA, aye. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

BettyLou Mallet
Scribe

Meeting materials: FC Report to Town Meeting Final Draft 04/13/22