

MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE
Final Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 1, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded: <https://vimeo.com/716228774>

PRESENT: Chair Jen Audley; Vice-Chair Gregory Garrison; Chris Menegoni and Jennifer Waryas.

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

ABSENT: John Hanold and Francina Wisnewski

- 1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER** – The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Chair Jen Audley. The meeting is being aired and recorded by MCTV and recorded by Carolyn Olsen at Town Hall.
- 2. REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES APRIL 13, 2022** – The members of the Finance Committee received and reviewed the draft minutes of April 13, 2022. No questions. **On a motion made by GG and seconded by JW, the committee approved the minutes of April 13, 2022 as written. GG, aye; JW, aye; CM, aye; JA, aye.**
- 3. RESERVE FUND TRANSFER REQUEST** – The Finance Committee received a copy of a request from the Parks and Recreation Department for the amount of \$3,900 to be transferred from the Reserve Fund to Parks & Recreation Facilities/Grounds Maintenance. This amount is to cover the daily cleaning of the Unity Park portable toilet from September through November 2021. Discussion clarified that Parks and Recreation no longer pays for daily cleanings; just long-term rental. **On a motion by GG and second by JW, the Committee approved the Request for Transfer from the Reserve Fund in the amount of \$3,900, to account number 001-5-630-5242 Rec Facilities/Grounds Maintenance. CM aye; JW, aye; GG, aye; JA, aye.** Chair Audley will stop by and sign the request.
- 4. DEBRIEF OF ANNUAL TOWN MEETING** – JA asked the committee what they took away from the ATM and how the information can be applied to future work of the Finance Committee.

JW feels that the ATM was very long and would like to figure out a better way to manage the time and topics of discussion. She'd like to engage the town meeting members in advance of the town meeting to discuss the challenging topics. She'd also like to find a way to encourage members to attend as this meeting was not well attended. JA encourages her to write down her thoughts and share with the newspaper or Selectboard.

CM stated he was able to attend the meeting for a brief time but also spoke with members after the meeting. He does not know of a way to get around the fact that a lot of questions are being asked even after receiving documentation which is clearly explained. He feels the FinCom did a great job.

JA summarized FW's comments regarding the ATM. FW was surprised as well as disappointed to not see more members of the school committee, especially with the Chair, in attendance. She felt the Superintendent focused on the positives which is great but also gave a feeling of avoiding issues. She

would like to have a joint meeting with the FinCom and School Committee in the future to avoid duplicate dialogue. FW also would like to consider having pre-meeting informational gatherings to address questions which may cut down on the length of ATM. FW also felt Superintendent Little had done a great job presenting her articles and the process ran smoothly.

JA feels residents may not have the time or motivation to come to the ATM prepared. Perhaps a pretown meeting starting in the Fall may help get the ball rolling. She mentioned that the Town of Conway offers a gathering including desserts for the residents to enjoy while discussing the items on their warrant.

GG stated town members are very passionate and do speak their mind which can make for a very long meeting.

JA observed that state law defines how a town meeting needs to be held and is convinced that the structure and process limit participation. She also felt that the hard work done by the CIC (Capital Improvements Committee) did not get its due to the fact that few CIC members were present.

CO stated it is the first time she remembers having to wait an hour for a quorum. It is very frustrating conducting the extensive preparation for the ATM and then having very low attendance. She is not sure if having a pre-town meeting would alleviate some of the questions being asked.

Ariel Elan has attended ATM since 2014 and this year's was the longest she has attended. She feels town members who have accepted the position should take the time to attend the meeting and participate. She noted the articles on town housing and demolition bylaw generated long discussions.

Steve Ellis gave kudos to the Finance Committee, Town Accountant, and other town staff. He feels the materials the Finance Committee worked on and ways the committees worked together have greatly improved. He said that the complex bylaws were placed on the annual town meeting warrant rather than a special town meeting warrant where would be more time for discussion due to deadlines. He suggests perhaps approaching the meeting members asking what would help lighten the load such as having more than one spring meeting. JW offered to help Steve in creating a survey for the town members both paper and through SurveyMonkey.

5. RESUME DISCUSSION OF DRAFT FINANCIAL POLICIES (A1 – Annual Budget Process, A2 – Capital Planning and A5 – Financial Reserves)

JA described the three financial policies that were held back for future discussion. In the past, Montague did not have an Annual Budget Process policy so therefore, one was created. JA feels this policy will require the most discussion. The Capital Planning and Financial Reserves policies have had a great deal of discussion and changes have been made but were held back as they intertwine with the other policies. JA would like to talk about the process to complete these three policies in order to turn them over to the Selectboard for their recommendation and adoption. She would also like JH and FW to weigh in on these policies; therefore, no discussion of details or votes planned for this evening.

GG discussed how the CIC is working on the 6-year plan which will inform the Annual Budget Process policy. He will bring the draft Capital Planning Policy to the CIC and other stakeholders for review.

JA proposes that Finance Committee focus first on Financial Reserves policy, and wait to finalize the CIC and Annual Budget Process policies after the CIC report is complete.

Steve feels the key stakeholders for the Annual Budget Process policy are the departments who have discretionary funded budgets such as the Highway Department with Chapter 90 money. Steve and GG feel it is better to finish the policies and then modify as needed, rather than waiting for the CIC report.

In reviewing all of the drafts, CO feels they do not require much more discussion and that the Finance Committee just has a couple decisions to make.

JW would like to review and discuss the three policies along with the inclusion of information from the CIC report.

JA suggested setting a target date for the policies to be complete such as October 2022. The Selectboard will need time to review and bring back any questions to the FinCom, so Fin Com could aim to deliver its recommendations to Selectboard in early Fall. She will provide the committee with a revision of the Annual Budget Process policy for consideration.

6. DISCUSSION OF FINANCE COMMITTEE SEATS AVAILABLE FOR FY23

JA asked the members if they knew of any residents interested in joining the Finance Committee. In her emailed comments, FW stated she had been unsuccessful in recruiting any individuals and would like to write an article in the newspaper.

JA has spoken with an individual who may be interested, but will not be able to attending meetings before July 2022.

GG stated the CIC is also recruiting along with the FinCom and it is posing a challenge.

7. TOPICS NOT ANTICIPATED

Steve thanked the community for supporting the increase in the Selectboard Office's capacity and is working on the job descriptions for the open positions. He also described changes in the cannabis legislation related to host community agreement. The proposed legislation may have an impact on the use of funds. He also spoke of federal funds that have been earmarked for the Avenue A streetscape and hopes it comes to fruition.

8. FUTURE MEETING DATES AND AGENDA REQUESTS

The next meeting will be on June 15, 2022. JA reserved the upstairs meeting room at the Town Hall for a hybrid meeting at 6:00 p.m.

9. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by GG and seconded by JW, the meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m. GG, aye; JW, aye; CM, aye; JA, aye.

Respectfully submitted,
BettyLou Mallet
Scribe

Meeting materials: - Request for Transfer from the Reserve Fund
- Email from Francia Wisnewski re: ATM and other agenda topics
- Draft Policies A-1 Annual Budget Process, A-2 Capital Planning and A-5 Financial Reserves

Finance Committee Approved – Vote June 15, 2022