

**SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
TOWN OF MONTAGUE
OCTOBER 5, 2017**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

ARTICLE

- 1** **FLAIL MOWER** This was requested as part of the FY18 annual budget process, but was deferred until the fall in hopes that there would be sufficient Free Cash at that time to purchase the mower outright. The current flail mower is quite old and the cost of additional repairs is prohibitive. Since the amount of Certified Free Cash was not deemed sufficient for an outright purchase, the request is to lease the flail mower for five years, with the town owning the mower at the end of that period.
- 2** **RIVERCULTURE** Due to the discontinuation of the Adams Grant from the Mass Cultural Council, the town supported Turners Falls RiverCulture Program is experiencing a shortfall in funding. This shortfall is expected to be a one-time occurrence. Additional information is in the separate document.
- 3** **PARKS & RECREATION** A new addition to Unity Park is a portable toilet to provide facilities to park users when the office is closed. Unfortunately, program revenues are not enough to pay for this, so the appropriation is being moved to the Parks & Recreation operating budget. While there is currently a regular portable toilet, the appropriation requested would pay for a handicapped accessible toilet, in keeping with the accessibility goals of the park.
- 4** **LIBRARIES** An unexpected retirement required payment of \$5,900 in unused vacation and sick leave.
- 5** **VALUATION SERVICES** Past practice was for public utility companies to report values of the property they own to the Board of Assessors. Those amounts were used to determine their tax burden. Several recent court decisions have indicated that the valuation methodology used by these utility companies may not accurately represent the market value and the Board of Assessors is seeking expertise from an experienced consultant/appraiser to develop the fair market value based on Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practices requirements. The goal of our proposal is to build a valuation model specifically for Montague based on current information from the utility companies as well as the data relied upon in the NSTAR Electric and Boston Gas Appellate Tax Board cases to bring the assessments on an equal value footing with the fair market value.
- 6** **SHEA ROOF** \$17,500 remains in the appropriation from Article #17 of the May 2, 2015 Annual Town Meeting, which appropriated \$20,000 to repair the Shea roof. The Town was initially planning to replace the lower roof (816 square feet), but it has since become evident that the main roof (4,233 square feet) is also leaking and in need of repair. As an alternative to roof replacement, the Town recently received a quote to re-seal the flat rubber membrane roof with a 10 year warranty for \$24,985. The Town installed the HVAC rooftop unit last year and has Green Community grant funding to replace the

ductwork this year. The roof work is scheduled in coordination with the ductwork replacement in October.

- 7 **WPCF** The original FY18 WPCF budget was built assuming a 3.5% increase in the FY17 budgeted revenues. Final FY17 revenues came in significantly under the estimated amounts due in part, but not entirely, to \$150,000 of unpaid sewer bills for the Turners Falls Paper Company. Revised revenue estimates for FY18, assuming the same projected 3.5% sewer rate increase and more current projections of other revenues, resulted in a fairly significant shortfall. The intention is to cover this shortfall through both reducing expenditures and adding funding sources. Budget reductions include not filling a vacant position, reducing other various line items (see separate detail), reducing the benefits budget for the vacant position, eliminating the appropriation for unemployment expenses, eliminating the capital expense for the DPW Subsidiary Budget, and reducing expenses for the DPW Subsidiary Budget. Additionally, the following two articles rescind \$285,000 in appropriations from Sewer User Fees. On the revenue side, we are adding the use of ALL of the FY18 Certified Retained Earnings, transferring the unused balance of a legal settlement, and re-purposing Article #21 of the May 6, 2017 Annual Town Meeting, which appropriated \$50,000 from last year's retained earnings to the WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund.
- 8 **RESCIND #17 5/6/17** This article appropriated \$200,000 from Sewer User Fees to the WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund. There are no longer sufficient revenues to support this request, so we are asking that it be rescinded.
- 9 **RESCIND #16 5/6/17** This article appropriated \$85,000 from Sewer User Fees for a feasibility study. There are no longer sufficient revenues to support this request, so we are asking that it be rescinded.
- 10 **RESCIND BORROWING AUTHORITY** Article #26 of the May 3, 2014 Annual Town Meeting appropriated \$400,000 for the Skatepark. The project is complete and was primarily funded through grants, with the town paying \$97,000. Now the remaining borrowing authority of \$303,000 needs to be rescinded.
- 11 **RESCIND BORROWING AUTHORITY** Article #17 of the May 3, 2014 Annual Town Meeting appropriated \$3,000,000 to replace 2 pump stations. The project is complete and now the remaining borrowing authority \$957,310.03 needs to be rescinded.
- 12 **RESCIND BORROWING AUTHORITY** Article #22 of the May 7, 2016 Annual Town Meeting appropriated \$1,000,000 for repair or replacement of part of the combined sanitary sewer overflow and storm drain system. The project is complete and now the remaining borrowing authority of \$349,486.25 needs to be rescinded.
- 13 **AMEND ZONING MAP** Petition by Episcopal Church of Saints James and Andrew to redistrict a 0.3 acre parcel of land at 2 Prospect Street identified as Assessors Map 6 Lot 95 (former St. Andrews Church) from Public-Semi-Public to Neighborhood Business District. Planning Board recommends passing the map amendment. Additional information is in the separate document.
- 14 **AMEND ZONING MAP** Petition by Planning Board to redistrict two parcels of land off Millers Falls Road and East Mineral Road identified as Assessors Map 26 Lot 16 and

Map 25 Lot 14 from Agriculture-Forestry- 4 to General Business (10.5 acres total). This area was formerly proposed as the future site of the Montague Elks lodge. The Elks are currently proposing to construct a 3 acre solar array, which could be allowed by special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals if the amendment passes. Planning Board recommends passing the map amendment. Additional information is in the separate document.

- 15 **RESCIND #23 5/3/14** This is a housekeeping item. Article #23 of the May 3, 2014 Annual Town Meeting directed the Moderator to appoint a 3-member “Regional School District Planning Committee” to explore the possibility of having the Town of Erving join the Gill-Montague Regional School District. When contacted by the Moderator, the Town of Erving was no longer interested studying the merger. Since no committee is needed, the article should be rescinded.