



Town of Montague
Department, Board, Committee, Commission
BUDGET NARRATIVE

FY 22

Complete this form electronically! Be clear and concise!

Department: Assessing Department Submitted by: Karen Tonelli

1. Please describe and provide the rationale for any substantial changes in your FY22 line item budget submission.

I am seeking additional funds for the FY2022 revaluation program due to anticipated increase in our workload related to the recertification process as required by the Department of Revenue.

2. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY21? What is the status of those expenditures/investments?

Yes. I am requesting continued funding for the valuation of utility assets. The funding will be used to hire an outside appraiser who will value those properties in accordance with newly acceptable methods of value.

3. Did you receive funding for a discretionary account in FY21? What have you purchased to date, at what cost? Looking forward in FY22, what do you expect to purchase at what cost?

N/A

4. To-date in FY21, has your department experienced any notable successes, such as improving or providing new programs or services, or implementing new technologies? If so, please describe.

I've successfully negotiated with the Town of Gill Assessors for an equal split (50/50) of the appraisal cost of the hydroelectric facilities. The Department of Revenue requires an appraisal of the FirstLight & Turners Falls Hydro plants in each recertification year. The previous arrangement split the cost 90/10 with Montague paying 90% of the appraisal. Based upon the bid proposal recently accepted by the Board of Assessors, Montague's cost for both facilities will be \$21,000. I do not intend to seek a special article for this expense because the sum of \$50,000 was appropriated at a prior town meeting for this purpose and those funds remain in that account.

5. Are there challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and objectives that are due to its FY21 operating budget? If so, offer your recommendation(s) for improving the situation.

As previously discussed, we have a vacant position in our office due to a recent retirement. It remains to be seen what affect, if any, this has on our office operations especially in light of the additional tasks associated with the FY2022 revaluation but I intend to report back to the FinCom in the spring with a recommendation on how to best move forward relative to that position in the most efficient and cost effective way.

Technology issues remain a problem in our office. Older versions of software, lack of compatible software along with minimum support has presented delays and difficulties along with increased exposure to cyber threats and data security issues. I have no specific suggestions for improvement at this time other than to make you aware.

Lastly, the FinCom should be aware of circumstances surrounding the valuation of our number 1 taxpayer, FirstLight.

While it is much too early to determine whether we will see a dramatic change in its FY2022 valuation, I do want members to be aware of the aspects related to the FERC relicensing and the significant increase to the protection of the environment which may result in a diminishment of water flow. Other factors which may affect valuation have to do with a new conduit currently under construction in Maine which will eventually allow Canadian hydropower to flow into the New England power grid perhaps resulting in lower revenues. As a part of our settlement with FirstLight we did agree to meet in the spring of 2021 to discuss valuation and I will keep you posted as this matter progresses.