

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING  
February 22, 2012

Page 1 of 11

**Meeting Date:** February 22, 2012  
**Location:** 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls MA

**Called to Order:** 6:02 PM

**Finance Committee Members Present:** John Hanold, Michael Naughton, Andrew Killeen, Lynn Reynolds and Roy Rosenblatt

**Board of Selectmen Members Present:** Pat Allen, Chris Boutwell and Mark Fairbrother

**Others Present:** Frank Abbondanzio (Town Administrator), Carolyn Olsen (Town Accountant), Richard Lane (Franklin County Technical School Superintendent), Russ Kaubris (Franklin County Technical School Business Manager), Richard Kuklewicz (Montague representative to Franklin County Technical School Committee), Roberta Potter (Council on Aging Director), Jon Dobosz (Director of Parks and Recreation), Dennis Grader (Chairperson of Parks and Recreation Commission), Sue SanSoucie (Director of Libraries), Juanita Caldwell and Suzanne Kretzenger (Library Trustees)

### Minutes

Selectmen Moved:

To approve the minutes of February 8, 2012.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 1 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of February 15, 2012 as amended.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

### Franklin County Technical School

Mr. Lane, Mr. Kuklewicz and Mr. Kaubris presented the tech school budget and Montague's assessment for Fiscal Year 2013.

- Mr. Kaubris distributed a budget handout.
- Mr. Hanold asked about the differences in budget planning for a technical school. Superintendent. Mr. Lane stated that a main difference is that the tech school can't forecast the student population for a given year and that 13 vocational programs require different planning than general education. Mr. Kuklewicz added that the Gill-Montague Regional School District would not get a request to replace an automotive lift, lathe or similar item, some of which are quite expensive. Mr. Kaubris added that the tech school's busing component is much more involved than with a regular school district.
- The district is not at full capacity. At one point the district had over 800 students (which Mr. Lane suggest not happen again), but enrollment has recently settled at just over 500 students.
- The tuition revolving fund is used to offset operating costs and help with unforeseen projects. An example is the recent installation of a new gymnasium floor.

- Mr. Hanold asked the status of the budget. Mr. Lane said the budget presented is a tentative operating budget and will remain so until the school committee votes on March 14<sup>th</sup>.
- Mr. Lane reviewed the estimated changes in revenues and noted that there is a severe drop in the use of Excess and Deficiency funds towards the operating budget. The account was certified at \$285,000 and the school committee is planning to use \$280,000 of this towards the Fiscal Year 2013
- Mr. Lane reviewed the budgeted expenses and noted the following items:
  - Instructional services eliminated one position in the plumbing and heating program
  - The increase in transportation costs is a contractual increase tied to the Consumer Price Index
  - The increase in student activities increase is contractual
  - The main increase in plant maintenance is for salaries and utilities
  - Health insurance once again had 0 percent rate increase. The increases in this budget are due to coverage changes.
  - The district did a collaborative bid for non –employee insurance which resulted in significant savings.
  - The School Choice tuition is for in-district students attending a school choice tech school. The Franklin County Tech School is not a School Choice school
- Mr. Killeen asked if it was desirable to have students coming in from Halifax VT. Mr. Lane said that out of district students cannot be admitted until all in-district slots are filled so all out of district students have a positive financial impact. Tuition received from these students has been very helpful to fund certain expenses necessary to keep current technology for students.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> year of the new pre-engineering program was funded by a federal grant. None of the grant funding was used for salaries so there will be no sharp increase when the grant ends.
- The budget contains resizing with one new instructor in website design and one less in the plumbing and heating program. The district constantly looks at staffing for various programs, and the budget is not finalized until after January, when freshmen students pick their programs, so they can adjust staffing if necessary.
- Montague's assessment for Fiscal Year 2013 is \$741,687. This is \$63,385 higher than the Fiscal year 2012 assessment of \$678,302.
- The per-pupil cost average is about \$10,500. The per-pupil cost for Montague is \$9,889.
- The Fiscal Year 2013 budget reflects a 4% increase in enrollment.
- Mr. Kuklewicz sees a few capital issues in the future. The roof is over 15 years old and is beginning to have problems. The school is looking at various options to extend the life of the roof without doing a full replacement. The other potential project is some type of expansion in the future as there are space issues in the building due to program needs. Mr. Kaubris noted that he may propose budgeting \$100,000 to a capital stabilization fund to start saving for these projects. The

\$100,000 will be offset by using an additional \$100,000 as revenue from the tuition revolving fund so that the towns won't face a major assessment increase.

- Mr. Boutwell asked why payroll services cut in half. The district is changing vendors.
- Mr. Naughton asked if the chapter 70 reimbursement is based on in-district students – it is.

### **Police Insurance**

Mr. Abbondanzio reported that the increase in the Fiscal Year 2012 police insurance expense over the budgeted amount was due to the experience rating. Police officers are not covered under Worker's Compensation. When police officers can't work because of work related injuries, MGL Chapter 41 Section 111F requires the town to pay the officer's regular wages directly. This insurance pays the town a portion of the cost of for officers out due to work related injuries. The town had a significant increase in 111f costs in Fiscal Year 2011, resulting in a premium increase for Fiscal Year 2012.

### **Council on Aging**

Ms. Potter provided a quick overview of the services offered by the Council on Aging.

- There are two arms; the Montague Council on Aging and the Gill-Montague Senior Center.
- The goal is to help seniors age successfully in their own settings with as much independence as possible. The Council on Aging matches seniors with services, including various local agencies such as Franklin County Home Care, food banks and Community Action. They are getting more and more calls for resources and referrals every month.
- The senior center portion provides fitness, health, and recreation programs.
- Food for meals is provided by Franklin County Home Care.
- Most programming costs are covered by a state grant. The state recently reduced its funding from \$7 to \$6.25 per resident senior. Because the state also changed to the 2010 census for the calculation and Montague's senior population has increased, Montague receives virtually the same amount under the new formula.
- The senior center building is aging in place along with the seniors. The lease with Powertown expires in 2014 and there is a buyout clause in lease. The biggest challenge with the space is that there is a single space with multiple programs going on at the same time. Ms. Potter is concerned about both the lease running out and running out of space as senior population continues to increase.
- One of biggest problems with all senior centers is lack of public transportation.
- It is important to Ms. Potter to remain in the central business district. Most residents come to those central businesses, so the senior center is convenient, but not as visible as she would like.
- Mr. Naughton asked if the Capital Improvements Committee has the senior center on list. Ms. Allen said the senior center is on their list, but that it's below the highway department. The Capital Improvements Committee hasn't talked much about the senior center at this point.

### **Parks and Recreation**

Mr. Dobosz provided a handout listing departmental programs and services and staff functions.

- Mr. Hanold asked about program changes. Mr. Dobosz noted a loss of participation in adult fitness programs and believes this is due to an increase in competition from other adult recreation programs. Their primary focus is with youth, and participation remains strong.
- Mr. Killeen asked where the competition is coming from. Mr. Dobosz stated that it comes from both other towns' recreation programs and the Greenfield YMCA. Mr. Dobosz noted that several programs specific to our department are well known and well attended by residents of other towns as well as Montague residents.
- Mr. Naughton asked if the unity park improvements will impact his future budgets. Mr. Dobosz replied that with expansion of facilities comes eventual expansion of expenses. Mr. Dobosz also expects to see an increase in program revenue after improvements. The program revenue goes into a revolving fund which pays for programs and costs not covered by the operating budget.

### **Libraries**

Ms. SanSoucie provided an overview of library services. Ms. SanSoucie also provided and reviewed a handout showing the requirements for state Library Incentive Grants and Municipal Equalization Grants.

- Highlights of the requirements for state library grants are having a qualified Library Director, minimum hours of operation including evening hours, spending at least 19% of the budget on materials, and an annual operating budget that is at least 2.5% higher than the average of the previous three years.
- Failure to meet these requirements results in the library being de-certified. The library not only loses the state grant money, it can no longer participate in CWMARS and inter-library loans, and patrons can not receive materials from any other state certified library. The theory behind this is that a town that does not adequately fund their library should not benefit from other towns that do.
- Mr. Killeen asked how important it is to be certified and how long it takes to be recertified. It's a two year process to regain certification. Ms. SanSoucie said the grant brings not only the money and the patrons' ability to go elsewhere, but when a library is decertified, colleagues don't view your library business as being on the up and up, it brings out bad feelings.
- Inter-library loans are critical because it essentially increases the population of items available to patrons without having to purchase all of the items.
- Last year the libraries circulated over 105,000 items.
- Videos are very popular, particularly with patrons who can no longer afford to buy or rent videos.

- Mr. Hanold asked how the grants have been used. Ms. SanSoucie replied that that the town has consistently used some of the state grant to cover utility costs. Ms. SanSoucie has used the grant rather than asking for reserve fund transfers. Grant money is also used for most travel costs and beautification items.
- Mr. Boutwell asked about facility conditions.
  - The Millers Falls Library will need a new roof in a few years.
  - The Montague Center Library always has issues with bricks falling off the civil war era building.
  - The main issue at the Carnegie Library is moisture in one back corner of the basement. The building becoming less functional as a library space as years go on. The building is way too small, and the basement, where staff offices are located, is very cold and drafty.
- Mr. Hanold asked if the 2013 budget for travel and utilities is realistic. Ms. SanSoucie stated that the travel budget is not and the sufficiency of the utilities budget will depend on the winter.

### **Library Supplemental Requests**

The Libraries' first supplemental request is for \$4,000 for the long-time Music and Movement children's programming.

- This program has always been funded by the Family Network, but their funding has been cut and this program is in danger of going from weekly to monthly without supplemental funding by the town.
- This is a very popular program with 75-90 people there every week.
- This year Library will have to find \$1,500 to finish funding the program. The Library just received a \$250 grant which will help.
- Mr. Hanold asked to what extent grant and donations can be used to fund this. Ms. SanSoucie said that they can use the grant to fund it, but they already use the grant for other items so they don't have to requests funds from the Finance Committee or Capital Improvements Committee. The current balance in the grant account is approximately \$50,000.

The Libraries' second supplemental request is for \$1,000 for hiring a professional website designer to improve and update the Library website.

- This is to have assistance with updating the website and technical support. Ms. SanSoucie currently is the technical support, and she doesn't have time to keep up with things.
- Mr. Hanold asked if they've drawn on resources in police station or town hall. The Library just has a link on the town website to the Library's own website. Ms. Allen said the issue speaks to the eventual need for a town computer technician and having central computer support for all departments.

The Libraries' third supplemental request is for \$8,000 for technology, specifically 4 laptops for in-house use and four Kindle/Nooks for patrons to check out.

- Patrons are asking how to get books for Kindles and Nooks, but staff can't show how to use on a public computer because they're always in use. Ms. Allen sees this being a major change in future library services.

### **General Budget**

Mr. Hanold noted that some changes to departmental budget requests will be incorporated in the next budget file. For example, the legal budget request was increased, the veteran's budget was decreased, and we now have the final assessment from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments and an actual assessment from the tech school.

### **Supplemental Requests**

The committees reviewed and discussed all supplemental requests with the intention of determining which to recommend as part of the operating budget funded by taxation, which to recommend as special articles funded by taxation, which to recommend as special articles funded from reserves, and which not to recommend at this time for Fiscal Year 2013.

The Selectmen briefly went over what they voted when they met yesterday as the Personnel Board.

- They support the \$9,000 for the 10 hour per week position in the selectmen's office but not this year.
- They recommend the Computer Administrator stipend but only at \$2,000 because that's what it was several years ago before being eliminated during budget cuts.
- The items requesting reclassifying employees or otherwise altering current pay are to wait until a pay and classification study can be done.
- While they agree with the need for the new positions requested, they don't think any of them can be funded at this time.

Selectmen Moved:

To not recommend adding \$9,000 for a 10 hour per week clerk for the Board of Selectmen at this time.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend adding \$9,000 for a 10 hour per week clerk to the Board of Selectmen.

Vote:    In Favor 5 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend adding \$3,000 for seminars and travel to the Board of Selectmen's operating budget to be funded from taxation.

Vote:    In Favor 3 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

February 22, 2012

Page 7 of 11

To recommend adding \$3,000 for seminars and travel to the Board of Selectmen's operating budget to be funded from taxation.

Vote:    In Favor   5   Opposed   0   Abstained

Mr. Hanold noted that there is some flexibility in the Selectmen's budget and if they really need it perhaps they can reallocate their budget to support some of these costs.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend adding \$3,000 for technical assistance to the Board of Selectmen's operating budget to be funded from taxation.

Vote:    In Favor   3   Opposed   0   Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend adding \$3,000 for technical assistance to the Board of Selectmen's operating budget to be funded from taxation.

Vote:    In Favor   5   Opposed   0   Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend adding \$2,000 for streetscape maintenance to the Board of Selectmen's operating budget to be funded from taxation.

Vote:   2   In Favor   1   Opposed   0   Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend adding \$2,000 for streetscape maintenance to the Board of Selectmen's operating budget to be funded from taxation.

Vote:   5   In Favor   0   Opposed   0   Abstained

Mr. Naughton supports spending the money on streetscape but it seems like we're fragmenting the situation. If it makes sense for the highway department to do it but they don't, then budgeting it somewhere else to make sure it gets done is not the best solution.

Ms. Olsen rescinded the Town Accountant's requests.

Mr. Hanold stated that the storage situation should be approached on building wide basis so adequate storage location and facilities can be achieved as a whole.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend adding \$2,000 of the requested \$5,000 for the Computer Administrator Stipend to the Shared Costs operating budget to be funded from taxation.

Vote:   3   In Favor   0   Opposed   0   Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend adding \$2,000 of the requested \$5,000 for the Computer Administrator Stipend to the Shared Costs operating budget to be funded from taxation.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Mr. Rosenblatt noted that information technology is very scattered and needs a long-term proactive resolution. Mr. Rosenblatt asked how much the town spends in total on these costs. Mr. Olsen will find the annual cost town wide as well as the Fiscal Year 2013 requests for all departments.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend adding \$1,100 for a property card file to the Board of Assessors' operating budget to be funded from taxation.

Vote:    In Favor   3 Opposed   0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend adding \$1,100 for a property card file to the Board of Assessors' as special article funded from free cash.

Vote:   1 In Favor   4 Opposed   0 Abstained

Mr. Hanold noted that this department consistently under-spends their budget by more than \$1,100 and can probably pay for it out of the current budget. Both committees supported the idea, but feel there should be enough in the current budget to pay for this.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend \$14,872 for preservation of the Town Clerk's records though 1925 as a special article to be funded from taxation.

Vote:   3 In Favor   0 Opposed   0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$14,872 for preservation of the Town Clerk's records through 1925 as a special article to be funded from stabilization.

Vote:   5 In Favor   0 Opposed   0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To defer all supplemental requests for reclassifications until a pay and classification study has been completed. These include the requests for \$650 for Building Inspector's clerk, \$12,000 for license level stipends for Water Pollution Control Facility operators and \$51,014 to move all Water Pollution Control Facility operators up two grades.

Vote:   3 In Favor   0 Opposed   0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To defer all supplemental requests for reclassifications until a pay and classification study has been completed. These include the requests for \$650 for Building Inspector's clerk, \$12,000 for license level stipends for Water Pollution Control Facility operators and \$51,014 to move all Water Pollution Control Facility operators up two grades.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend adding \$800 for a scanner to the Building Inspector's operating budget to be funded from taxation.

Vote:    In Favor 3 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend adding \$800 for a scanner to the Building Inspector's operating budget to be funded from taxation.

Vote:    In Favor 5 Opposed 0 Abstained

Both committees supported the idea, but feel there should be enough in the current budget to pay for this.

Selectmen Moved:

To not recommend \$875 for the Building Inspector to purchase code books with the intent of reselling the books to contractors.

Vote:    In Favor 3 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To not recommend \$875 for the Building Inspector to purchase code books with the intent of reselling the books to contractors.

Vote:    In Favor 5 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend \$37,492 for a Lead Mechanic for the DPW, \$30,784 for a DPW Groundskeeper and \$22,041 for a part time health agent.

Vote:    In Favor 3 Opposed 0 Abstained

The Selectmen want to defer these additions until there are firmer budget numbers.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend adding \$37,492 for a DPW Lead Mechanic in the operating budget to be funded from taxation.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

It was noted that this is a very important position and that there could be cost savings long term.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$30,784 for a Groundskeeper for the DPW.

Vote:    In Favor 5 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$22,041 for a part time Health Agent for the Board of Health operating budget to be funded from taxation.

Vote: 2 In Favor 3 Opposed 0 Abstained

Mr. Hanold calculated a cost of \$17,000 for a half-time position with no benefits. Mr. Hanold feels that Ms. McNeely's main focus was to get some help, even at a lesser level. Mr. Naughton would have preferred the full amount.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$17,000 for a 18 hour per week part time Health Agent to be added to the Board of Health operating budget to be funded from taxation.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend adding \$4,000 for children's programs to the Libraries' operating budget to be funded from taxation.

Vote: 2 In Favor 1 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend adding \$4,000 for children's programs to the Libraries' as a special article to be funded from taxation.

Vote: 3 In Favor 2 Opposed 0 Abstained

Since there are state requirements for budget increases to be eligible for library grants, the Finance Committee recommended this as a special article so it is not built into the base budget.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend adding \$1,000 for updating the Library Web Site to the Libraries' operating budget to be funded from taxation.

Vote:    In Favor 3 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend adding \$1,000 for updating the Library Web Site to the Libraries' operating budget to be funded from taxation.

Vote:    In Favor 5 Opposed 0 Abstained

Mr. Naughton feels this should be coordinated with other town websites and technology issues.

Selectmen Moved:

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING  
February 22, 2012

Page 11 of 11

To recommend \$8,000 for Library Technology as a special article to be funded from taxation.

Vote: 2 In Favor 1 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$8,000 for Library Technology as a special article to be funded from stabilization.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

**List of Documents and Exhibits –**

- Minutes of February 8, 2012
- Minutes of February 15, 2012
- Franklin County Tech School Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2013
- Montague Parks and Recreation Department Programs and Services
- Requirements for State Library Grants

**Next Meetings**

- 6:00 PM February 29, 2012 Final Votes Schedules I and II  
prioritize supplemental requests  
Board of Health Budget Placement
- 6:00 PM March 7, 2012 Gill-Montague Regional School District

Adjourned 9:10 PM