

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM
1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2018
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The Chair opens the meeting

- Meeting was opened at 6:00 PM in the Upstairs Meeting Room
- **Selectboard Members present:** Richard Kuklewicz. Christopher Boutwell and Michael Nelson arrived at (6:05 PM).
- **Finance Committee members present:** Michael Naughton, Jen Audley, Fred Bowman, Richard Widmer (left at 7:00 PM, returned at 7:30 PM) and John Hanold. Chris Menegoni and Greg Garrison were absent.
- **Others present:** Town Administrator Steve Ellis, Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen (left at PM), Airport Manager Bryan Camden, Airport Commissioner Peter Golrick, Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) Superintendent Richard Martin, and FCTS Business Manager Russ Kaubris. Lucia Mason and Chris Mason were also present.
- The Finance Committee Chair announced that the meeting is being recorded by MCCI and asked if anyone else was recording the meeting. No one else was recording the meeting.

Minutes –

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of February 14, 2018.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectboard Moved: tabled

To approve the minutes of February 14, 2018.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Airport Budget:

Previously submitted questions and answers:

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The expense section seems to be covered by your earlier material, except that the Clothing Allowance appears for the first time. Has the need and amount been discussed with the Selectboard and your Commission?

The clothing reimbursement question was one that I brought to the Commission. Unlike previous managers I spend a larger amount of my time outside working, which leads to worn out boots, jackets, pants, etc. I felt that since most similar department heads (DPW, WPCF, Water District) get a clothing reimbursement that I would like to include it in our budget. The Commission had discussed it in great detail at our budget meeting and decided to add it onto the budget. We have not talked to the Select Board about it; I was actually hoping to start any needed discussion during this meeting. With members of both the Finance Committee and Select Board present I felt that the time to allow or ax it would be during the meeting.

The request for an intern (co-op student from the FCTS) raises a number of questions, particularly since this represents an added function/expense when we expected the Airport to be moving toward self-sufficiency. We understand an internship would be good for the student and the Tech School, but not how the Airport benefits, overall.

The biggest benefit for the airport would be having additional help as needed. A lot of our projects are time consuming ones, such as checking runway lights and doing daily security and safety sweeps. With my limited hours I find myself spending about 3-5 hours per week just performing these tasks. These are just a few things that could be delegated to the co-op student to free up my time to focus on other tasks. Obviously in the summer months we spend a great deal of time maintaining grounds, and in the winter performing snow removal. Most of the tasks associated with each can be done by someone other than the airport manager, this is where we would pass them off to the student. I want to focus as much time in the future towards the growth of the airport and its revenue.

Are there liability and experience issues when an intern does mowing, weed-whacking, etc.?

There are a number of jobs / tasks that a co-op student can and can't do. They can mow, weed whack, cut brush, etc. I will have a list and more information at the meeting.

Can an intern realistically contribute to contract review, bookkeeping, and tenant communications beyond your own responsibility for these tasks?

To expect someone of high school age to contribute towards contract negotiation is probably unrealistic, however to have them assist with bookkeeping, and some daily office reporting

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tasks is not too farfetched. I would not expect them to be responsible for the financial future of the airport but would ask them to help with billing from time to time.

How are the listed tasks performed now, and how will your hours or duties change if the intern relieves you of them? Will the supervision needed be offset by some benefit elsewhere?

Most of the listed tasks are performed by myself. Some weeks everything can be performed in the time allowed, and other weeks it will take additional hours. My duties, if help is allocated, would change from some of the more time consuming daily tasks to allow for in depth work directly related to increasing income and reducing operational expenses.

Is the request a one-time situation, or might this be an ongoing request? If a one-timer, what is changing from FY2018 to FY2019, and then from FY2019 to FY2020, to make this desirable?

At this time we are hoping to make this annual program / expense. I hope to have the airport in a self-sustaining level within 3 years or less, and I think having help, however limited it might be, will push us in that direction.

Additional discussion:

Mr. Hanold noted that the clothing allowance for the Airport Manager has been approved by the Airport Commission. Mr. Ellis asked if the work of the intern would reduce wear and tear on the manager's clothing, and it would not.

Mr. Golrick noted that to offset the increased costs, they have implemented landing fees, and expect about \$3,200 annually.

Changing to LED lights and reducing other costs to only required items have allowed the Airport to move towards being self-supporting. The budget, net of the intern, dropped about \$1,300.

The airport is also expecting significant savings in snow removal in future budgets after they obtain snow removal equipment.

The long-term plans for the intern will be somewhat dependent on the will of Town Meeting, and their willingness to fund the position.

Mr. Camden would like to spend more time on increasing revenues, making the airport self-supporting, and long-range planning. Daily operations are changing with more activity and a

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slightly larger office workload. An intern could do a lot of the basic daily and weekly activities, allowing Mr. Camden to do the heavier duties, such as runway maintenance and planning for future projects. Some daily tasks, such as foreign object & debris inspections, take about an hour. Mr. Hanold asked what the impact on the airport would be if the intern is not funded. Minimum standards would still be met, but future developments in revenue increases and long term planning would be delayed. Mr. Naughton asked why an intern is a better choice than increasing the Airport Manager's hours. Increasing the hours for the Airport Manager would make it a benefited position, and therefore more costly. Mr. Golrick noted that some tasks involve two people, and in others a second person provides needed safety. Currently volunteers frequently act as the second person, but they are not always available for this type of work. Mr. Golrick said that this is a great opportunity for student, and his only concern is whether they have enough hours for the intern.

Mr. Naughton asked how much supervision is needed. Camden – intern would not be doing dangerous work. Interns normally have a set of tasks, such as inspections of runway and lights, and checking security cameras that require minimal supervision. The intern would likely be working off a list rather than requiring supervision.

Mr. Ellis asked how many hours, and when during the year and work week the intern would work. The intern would not be on site without the manager or a commissioner. The program runs on alternate weeks. This is a bare minimum request for ten weeks prior to graduation for about 10 hours a week. The Intern program requires 30 hours/week. The hope is to find someone who can do 10-12 hours at the airport and fill the other hours with another intern opportunity within the program. The intern program could be expanded to the full 30 hours in the future if manager working 30-40 hours. Ms. Audley asked about the alternate week schedule, whether this would work well for airport, and whether the airport has looked at other options. Mr. Camden is exploring other options as well. Bi-weekly has downside of requiring additional planning time to ensure proper task management. Mr. Hanold asked if the benefit was more to airport or tech school. Mr. Camden said the benefit is to the airport.

The Airport Manager's job description provides enough to keep someone busy for 40 hours, and manager must always prioritize to get required tasks done. Minor things get put off, putting the airport behind on things as basic as replacing light bulbs.

Mr. Ellis asked which insurance was cancelled and when that took effect. This was an additional policy covering the airport and facility users, but it is duplicate coverage that was terminated in August of 2017.

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Mr. Hanold asked if the FCTS representatives had any comments about the coop internship. Superintendent Martin said that the program is very important for students, not uncommon for students to go out every other week. The school has ongoing monitoring for the intern program.

Mr. Naughton asked about the clothing allowance, and if there was any rule of thumb or more formal way of determining the value of a clothing allowance for different individuals. The DPW and WPCF Superintendents receive an allowance comparable to union members in those departments.

Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) Budget

Highlights of the budget:

- The total operating budget is \$10,992,500, a 4.85% increase from Fiscal Year 2018.
- Financial reserves to balance the budget are no longer available and state aid funding remains stagnant. The district is forced to rely more heavily on squeezing efficiencies from the educational structure and increasing assessments.
- Total operating assessments for Fiscal Year 2019 are \$5,999,100, which is a 3% increase from Fiscal Year 2018.
- This budget adds student support in the Special Education department with the addition of a behavior specialist.
- The largest revenue increases are appropriation from Excess & Deficiency (\$200,000), assessments (\$174,700), and tuition from non-member towns (\$100,000).
- The operating assessment for Montague will be \$951,505, an increase of \$204,165 or 27.32%. This is primarily due to an additional 17 students from Montague (and increase of 28.81%) who will be attending the FCTS during Fiscal Year 2019.
- Fiscal Year 2019 will be the first year of a capital assessment for the \$4 million in school improvement projects. The total capital assessment is \$185,000. Montague's share is \$22,833.

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- The total of Montague's operating and capital assessments for Fiscal Year 2019 will be \$974,338. This total is \$227,048 more than the Fiscal Year 2018 operating assessment.
- Of the \$508,100 increase in the operating budget, the largest increases are in Classroom Teachers (\$179,669), Guidance Counseling (\$100,977), and Health Insurance for Active Employees (\$154,100).

Superintendent Martin had a slide presentation highlighting several specific areas of savings.

- There is a shared initiative with Erving to share a music teacher, and a part time Spanish instructor from the savings from the retirement of a full time music teacher.
- Enrollment went up by 9 in total to 446, but this is unlikely to increase any further due to current population statistics. For Montague, there was a dip for a few years in a row but enrollment is now up to the previous average. Montague's enrollment is projected to increase another 8 students for Fiscal Year 2020. (84 up from 76 for FY2019)
- Mr. Kaubris noted that the cuts made in staff and budget did not get splashed in the paper because Superintendent Martin was very open with staff about the long-term process of right-sizing programs and the school for our population. Because Western Massachusetts as a whole is not growing in population, there isn't the option of pulling in students from out of district to increase our enrollment numbers.
- All rural schools have issues with stagnate state aid, and need to rely more on member towns. Montague gets about 50% of the costs of FCTS from state aid, and the rest is from the assessment to the town. Since we are held harmless for chapter 70, Eastern Massachusetts considers us as getting more aid per student. A pending lawsuit could significantly impact how Chapter 70 aid is allocated. The hold harmless practice is not written in law; if this goes away, we'll have a major financial crisis in area schools.
- One way to maintain funds in the Excess & Deficiency account is to budget revenues conservatively, and NOT spend any additional revenues that come in. This can be difficult when superintendents and school committees are pressured to restore cuts when revenues such as state aid come in higher than the amount budgeted.
- The FCTS is in the final year of a teachers' contract which has a 3% Cost of Living Adjustment.

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- Employee insurances are going up about 15%. The premiums are only going up 5%, but additional employees are migrating to school's plan.
- The average per pupil cost is a little over \$13,000, while Montague's is \$12,520. This average cost is driven by each town's minimum contribution as determined by the state.
- The capital assessment is the first one in 40 years. Recommend rounding up the capital assessment number since it's an estimate. Russ to provide info on information used to prepare estimate.
- Montague's enrollment figure for Fiscal Year 2020 could increase that year's assessment by \$100,000. This is based on an estimated enrollment number of 84. Superintendent Martin doesn't see enrollment going below 80, and it will probably not be as high as 88.
- Ms. Audley asked about enrollment, and on what enrollment numbers are counted. State aid is based on enrollment and where each student is living as of October 1st of the previous year.
- The new behavior specialist position will be dealing with Individual Education Plans (IEPs). The FCTS has 41% of students with IEPs, compared to an state average of 11%. Over the last two years, the special education population has shot up. That population used to be 27% while the incoming class is at 40%.
- Ms. Audley is interested in how FCTS's physical location in Montague affects Montague enrollment. This is unknown.

Ms. Olsen left at 7:30 as Mr. Widmer returned to the meeting.

March 29, 2018 Special Town Meeting Warrant Article: \$11,146,762 for a new DPW facility

This proposal has been presented at a previous Finance Committee, as well as at several public forums.

At this point Mr. Hanold asked the audience members if they had anything to add to previous presentations. Mr. Mason said he was interested in how the Finance Committee and Selectmen feel about the financial impact of the project, and whether they were supportive.

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- Mr. Bowman expressed all of the reasons that the town needs a new DPW facility. Furthermore, a further delay would result in higher construction costs, estimated at 6 % per year by the Design Committee.
- Mr. Kuklewicz noted that many people are interested in why the project costs so much. The committee has been asked how to reduce the cost of the project, and the answer is that they've sized it as they think best, and have done their best to keep the costs down. Unfortunately the cost of construction and other factors make it a big ticket item. The questions remaining are does the town really need this and are the taxpayers willing to support it.
- Mr. Mason asked about operating costs and what internal systems are being planned to minimize those costs. These questions cannot be answered by the Finance Committee or Selectboard, and Mr. Ellis noted that it is not a fully designed building at this time.
- Ms. Audley is noted that as a result of the time it takes to get through the committee process, we're now looking at a slightly smaller building for the same cost as the earlier version. Wants to be able to help town meeting make a solid decision at this town meeting rather than having to wait to go through another process and delaying the project for another 2-5 years.
- Mr. Widmer asked if how project would affect any replacement or major change to the Library or Senior Center, why this project was selected to be first, and what the strategy was for the future projects.
- Mr. Ellis noted that the Garage debt service would about equal to the total debt service for the Turners Falls High School and Montague Public Safety Facility, which end roughly in 2025 and 2029 respectively. The reality is that this is will make it difficult to make additional significant capital projects. The question to ask is whether, if we delay this, it will change that scenario. In looking at the Senior Center, Carnegie Library and DPW Facility, it was determined that the DPW was the most pressing need. Mr. Ellis noted that the need to replace the Senior Center has been mitigated by the extraordinary work done on the current building. If, as a community, we say that the DPW Facility is where we're placing our resources, we will be deciding to delay other projects, including repairs on a major scale. This does not mean we can't continue to make incremental improvements to other buildings.

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- Discussion followed of what a pending Library study might include, without affecting the Garage discussion.
- Mr. Naughton continues to have reservations about whether this is the right building, with the best space allocations, but not whether there is a need or a reason to delay action.
- Mr. Hanold reminded members and viewers that the present decision is whether to proceed to a construction phase, not to endorse a specific building plan. If the Public Safety Facility project is a guide, additions and re-arrangements are likely during any construction phase and completion within budget was accomplished in that case. He also observed that the discussion was intended to allow each member to describe his or her thinking and current position, not to rebut or counter it.

Topics not anticipated within in the 48 hour posting requirements -none

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM

List of Documents and Exhibits:

- Minutes of February 14, 2017
- 482 Department Budget

Next Meeting Dates:

February 28, 2018	Map Storage Article, Final New Growth, Revenue Estimates, Affordable Assessment
March 7, 2018	Libraries, RiverCulture, and IT Budgets
March 14, 2018	Preliminary budget recommendations
March 21, 2018	CIC Recommendations
March 28, 2018	Final Budget Recommendations

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April 4, 2018	Draft FC Report, Policy actions
April 11, 2018	Revise FC Report, vote on articles
April 18, 218	final re-votes, if required, approve FC Report
EOY Recap	How beneficial/useful were the department narratives?