

SOUTH HADLEY SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
NOVEMBER 15, 2023

BACKGROUND AND QUESTIONS FROM TOWN MEETING MEMBERS

ARTICLE 1. To see if the Town will hear the report of the Town Meeting Review Committee, or take any other action relative thereto.

Background: The Town Meeting Review Committee began their work after the 2023 May Annual Town Meeting. The committee plans to produce a report for the 2024 Annual Town Meeting, and an update at this meeting.

ARTICLE 2. To see if the Town will vote to amend the FY24 Operating Budget by raising and appropriating or transferring available funds to increase the FY24 Operating budget in the amount of \$61,000 to account for an assistant principal in the school department, or take any other action relative thereto.

Background: Additional funds are being requested for a second Assistant Principal position that has been vacant for many years. The \$61k reflects 7 months to cover the position starting as soon as December with an annual cost of \$105k. The funding is from the difference between the revenue projected for state aid in the budget approved by Town Meeting in May 2023 and the actual state aid approved by the Legislature and the Governor in July 2023. The "net" increase in State Aid revenue totals \$110,748.

Background Document: Joint SC/SB Meeting memo October 2023

Q: What is the job description for the second additional principal?

A: The School Human Resources Department has the job description. The primary duties and responsibilities are the general supervision of staff and programs, the implementation of procedures and practices related to student services and building security and building operations. Day to day oversight ranging from academics to discipline including hearings, observations, and parent engagement. The position covers any principal duties in the principal's absence.

Q: How will the performance of the new vice principal be evaluated?

A: The performance will be evaluated on an annual basis in accordance with the Massachusetts Educator Evaluator Regulation 603 CMR 35.00

Q: How has the population of the high school changed?

A: There are currently 516 students. Over the past decade, the high school has added therapeutic, vocational and behavioral services that allow South Hadley youth to attend the high school rather than being placed in outside programs that come at a cost to the budget.

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Q: Related to mental health and behavioral incidents, what thought was given to solutions related to building redesign, training for staff, and school policies and procedures for additional safety or quiet time practices?

A: Space at the High School have been repurposed for specialty spaces including therapeutic classrooms, a sensory room, and a staffed “zen den”. Staff training is ongoing and includes verbal and physical de-escalation, crisis prevention, and trauma informed instruction. School policies and procedures are continuously evaluated and updated, most recently to adapt to state law changes last year for disciplinary action, including suspension and expulsion rules, and mandates additional supports that schools must implement (note that no additional funding has been provided by the state to accommodate this specifically).

Q: Is the need due to special education students and how does an AP help with that?

A: Dysregulation and behavior issues are not just experienced by Special Education students. An Assistant Principal is a resource to all students at all times. This enables the team of administrators, staff, parents and students to work together to ensure success academically and socially.

Q: Does this include benefits?

A: The Articles does not include any benefits that the new hire may or may not choose to receive. That is covered in the general budget and there is sufficient funding to cover any potential cost.

Q: Is the SRO a full time position? What can the SRO do or not do in a situation with a student?

A: The School Resource Officer is a full time position, but not an employee of the school so therefore the SRO has limitations to get involved in disciplinary actions involving students. The SRO is based in the high school but responds to where the needs are in every school.

ARTICLE 3. To see if the Town will vote to transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$35,000 to pay the following bills incurred in prior fiscal years:

School	Eversource	\$35,000
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, or take any other action relative thereto.

Background: The natural gas provider Eversource informed the school district in October 2023 that some of the meters have not been working and produced a statement dated 9/28/23 for \$34,662.08.

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ARTICLE 4. To see if the Town will transfer from Unreserved Free Cash or other Available Funds the sum of \$461,000 to make the following capital purchases, repairs, or replacements:

Town	Street Sweeper	\$385,000
Town/School	Scoreboard	\$46,000
Town/School	Elevators	\$15,000
Town	Historic Commission Study	\$15,000

, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Background: The street sweeper caught on fire last spring and the insurance company is not providing sufficient funds (~71k) to replace the sweeper. This equipment is needed now and also for the spring season, and thus cannot wait until the annual town meeting. This had initially been proposed for the 2023 May meeting but the Town wanted to continue to work with the insurance company.

The scoreboard at the high school field is not functioning. The Town has sought quotes for a 26 foot, 32 foot and a 36 foot board, settling on 32 feet. The current existing board is 20 feet long, while the one on the baseball field is 28 feet long.

Q: Why wasn't this request part of the whole budget for the school system?

A: Capital items over \$25,000 are under the purview of the Capital Planning Committee. Many one-time capital items of this cost have historically been funded by Free Cash.

The state Office of Public Safety and Inspections recently informed the Town that it needs to have a Firefighter Service Phase II Stop Switch at Town Hall and the Middle School. The Library already had this done. This needs to be done prior to their 2024 inspection or it will result in a placard. The lowest quote is around \$6k for each with a contingency recommended.

The Historical Commission met on October 19 and voted to recommend that the Town submit a letter of intent for a Historic District Study grant. The last survey and planning grant work was done around 2007 to create an inventory of historic houses in South Hadley Falls. The warrant would ask Town Meeting for \$15,000 for the grant work. If Town Meeting approves the article, and if the MAHC approves a grant for South Hadley, the SHHC will go ahead with the work, with the understanding that the SHHC will complete the work satisfactorily. At that time, as described in the MAHC announcement, the MAHC will reimburse the Town for 50% (or, \$7,500) of the money allocated by the Town.

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ARTICLE 5. To see if the Town will transfer from WWTP Retained Earnings the sum of \$340,000 to make the following purchases, repairs, or replacements:

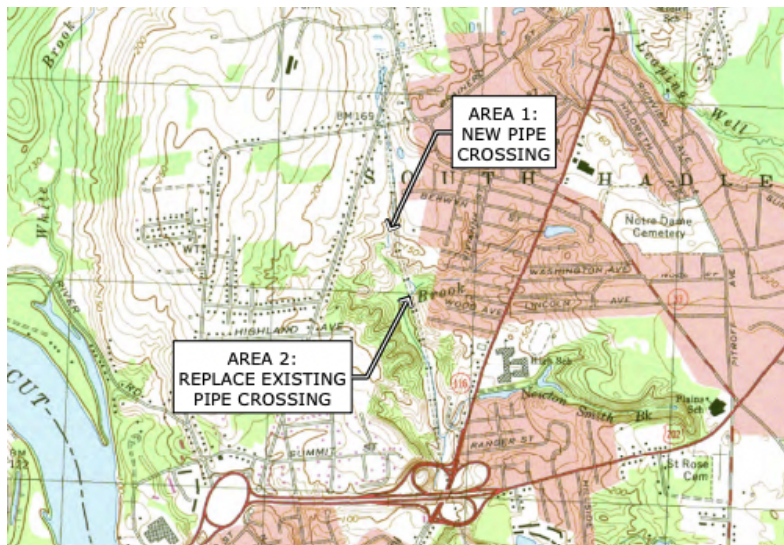
Town	Judd Brook	\$300,000
WWTP	Main Street Pump Station Channel Grinder	\$40,000

, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Background: The Judd Brook project is expected to cost around \$3 million or more including design, engineering, bidding, construction, and project oversight. Due to its location, the Judd Brook Interceptor (circa early 1950's) is highly susceptible to inflow and Infiltration, which has been well documented in several studies over the past 20+ years. The project is part of a consent order signed with MassDEP in 2021 and must be completed. Town recommends a \$800,000 contingency - \$500k of the contingency has been approved by the Selectboard to come from American Rescue Plan Act funds, which is also funding the bulk of the project. The remaining \$300k in contingency funds is being requested in this article and will only be spent after all ARPA funds have been expended. The funds are being requested now because the project is slated to be completed prior to the next Annual Town Meeting.

Background Document: Notice of Intent -

www.southhadley.org/DocumentCenter/View/5277/Judd-Brook-Sewer-NOI?bidId=



Background: The role of a Channel Grinder is to reduce clogging and thus keep the wastewater process running smoothly. \$40k will be for refurbishing one of the Channel Grinder currently off-line at Main Street Pump Station.

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ARTICLE 6. To see if the Town will transfer from Unreserved Free Cash or other Available Funds the sum of \$550,000 to the Mosier Stabilization Fund from the following sources:

Town	Unreserved Free Cash	\$550,000
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, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Background: On November 7, 2018, Town Meeting voted in favor of establishing the Mosier School Stabilization Fund for the purpose of improving, repairing, or replacing the Mosier School. The Town has recently submitted a request to enter the state process to receive partial funding for the project. If the Town is accepted into the process, one of the first steps will be to conduct a feasibility study and to convene a building committee. The balance is \$850k and it is estimated that about \$1.5 - \$2m is needed for the Feasibility Study depending on the scope and when the project is bid. The source of funds is the portion of Free Cash that was certified that is higher than budgeted for investment income. Due to higher interest rates and moving town investment funds into higher yielding accounts, the Town will realize almost \$600k in interest funding in FY23 from a line item that is typically budgeted at \$50k. This article will bring the fund to a balance of over \$1.4million and will make the South Hadley project more favorable when the Massachusetts School Building Authority votes in December 2023 on which projects will move forward. If invited into the process, the Town will have to demonstrate that it has the funding in FY25 (to be voted on at the May 2024 meeting).

ARTICLE 7. To see if the Town will transfer from Unreserved Free Cash or other Available Funds the sum of \$145,453.94 to the Opioid Stabilization Fund, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Background: Funding was received to the General Fund and realized as Free Cash prior to the start date of the new Opioid Stabilization Fund approved at the May 2023 Town Meeting. This article moves those funds into the new Stabilization Fund. The Town is expected to receive about \$1.3 in various settlements between now and the year 2038. There may be new settlements in the near future and the funds would also go into this stabilization fund.

The expenditures can be used for a variety of treatment, support and prevention activities. The Town is working on a survey to collect community input as well as hosting future forums and focus groups in order to determine the best strategies for the funds. Town Meeting must have a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote to approve any expenditures from this account.

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ARTICLE 8. To see if the Town will impose the local room occupancy excise under G.L.c. 64G, § 3A at the rate of 4 percent, or take any other action relative thereto.

Background: This article is the vote to accept the Mass General Law allowing for the excise tax. If a city/town has not yet adopted a local room occupancy excise, it may do so at any time by voting to accept G.L. c. 64G, § 3A and establishing the rate for its local room occupancy excise. The maximum local rate is 6% (6.5% in Boston). Town meeting will need to approve this by majority vote of the annual or special town meeting. The local excise automatically applies to a short-term rental starting July 1, 2019. No further action is required for the local excise to apply to short-term rentals. The local excise applies to the same occupancies as the state excise.

Selectboard voted on 4% and Appropriations recommends 6%. The state estimates that the town will receive \$7800 for each 1%. So 4% is \$31,200 annually and 6% is \$46,800 per year. This revenue will go into the General Fund and be used to support enforcement efforts within the budget.

ARTICLE 9. To see if the Town will impose the First Local Option Community Impact Fee under G.L. c. 64G, § 3D(a) at the rate of 3 percent, or take any other action relative thereto, and when received it shall be appropriated as follows: 100% to affordable housing and public infrastructure.

Background: This Local Option in addition to the room tax above refers to short term room occupancies in PROFESSIONALLY MANAGED BUILDINGS. No properties fall into this category as this was not part of the Short Term Rental Bylaw passed at the last Town Meeting but this has to be approved in order to approve Article 10.

ARTICLE 10. To see if the Town will impose the Second Local Option Community Impact Fee under G.L. c. 64G, § 3D(b) at the rate of 3 percent, or take any other action relative thereto, and when received it shall be appropriated as follows: 100% to affordable housing and public infrastructure.

Background: This refers to room rentals in private homes. This will include the short term rentals approved at the last Town meeting. At least 35% of the revenues must go to affordable housing/public infrastructure projects. The Selectboard voted on 100%. No discussion has been made on how the fund will be spent yet.

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ARTICLE 11. To see if the Town will accept G.L. c. 59 sec. 5(K) to allow for the Selectboard to establish a senior tax work off program effective for fiscal year 2025 which begins on July 1, 2024, and further that the Town adjust the exemption and; (1) allow an approved representative, for persons physically unable, to provide such services to the town; and (2) allowing the maximum reduction of the real property tax bill to be \$2,000, or take any other action related thereto. .

Background: If Town Meeting accepts the statute, the Selectboard, may further establish any local rules and procedures for the program. The Town should anticipate coordination of the assignment of program participants to the various municipal departments where they will perform their volunteer services. All program expenses are budgeted in the Overlay Account rather than through appropriations. Therefore, the amounts needed to operate the programs should be considered when the municipal budget is developed. The assessors should factor in the amounts needed to fund the programs when determining overlay needs each year. The Town has been soliciting public input and discussed at several Selectboard meetings. The state also recently increased the maximum amount from \$1500 to \$2000. The Selectboard is also reviewing other exemptions allowed by State Law that could be considered at future Town Meetings.

Q: Will this program be available to all seniors in town or just to select people?

A: The Selectboard will determine many of the program requirements such as the minimum age (most commonly 60 or 65), how many spots are open, and how participants are selected based on openings available. For example the Selectboard could limit the participants to those that have not participated before, thus ensuring a more open process.

Q: How will transportation to work jobs be provided with transportation if they need transportation?

A: The transportation program run by the Council on Aging has been greatly expanded and is also FREE. The Town would work with the COA on assisting participants who require transportation to their assigned location.

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ARTICLE 12. To see if the Town will vote to amend section 7-20 of the General Bylaws by deleting the current language of section 7-20 and replacing it as follows:

Section 7-20 Master Plan Implementation Committee (“MPIC”)

A. Purpose

The purpose of the MPIC is to serve as an advisory body to town officials and the community on current and future projects as they pertain to implementation of the Master Plan in accordance with the Master Plan goals and activities. The MPIC assists with coordination and implementation of Town activities that are consistent with the Master Plan.

B. Membership and Organization

(1) Appointment: The Selectboard and the Planning Board shall appoint the members of the MPIC. There shall be no fewer than five members and no more than nine members. All members shall be residents of South Hadley. The initial members shall be appointed for staggered terms no longer than three years each. After the expiration of the first term, the ongoing appointments shall be for three year terms. Jointly, the Planning Board and Selectboard shall fill vacancies on the MPIC.

(2) Liaisons: The Planning Board and Selectboard shall each appoint one member of their respective boards to act as a board liaison with the MPIC.

(3) Officers: The MPIC shall annually elect a chair and a vice chair and clerk.

(4) Quorum: A majority of those members of the MPIC then in office shall constitute a quorum. Actions by the MPIC shall be taken by a majority of those members present at a meeting of the MPIC.

C. Tasks and Responsibilities

The Committee shall meet at the call of the Chair in order to effectuate the Purpose of this bylaw. Such work may include:

(1) Monitoring progress towards goals of the master plan by coordinating with and regularly meeting with entities assigned tasks in the Master Plan.

(2) Identifying successes, progress, and barriers to Master Plan implementation.

(3) Assisting entities to the extent possible in overcoming barriers and addressing challenges, including reporting the same to the Planning Board and Selectboard.

(4) Assist in measuring progress including collecting and reporting data.

(5) Update Master Plan task matrices on a regular basis and report to stakeholders.

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(6) Coordinate with the Planning Department and Administration, an annual update, discussion and examination of Master Plan activities and goals.

(7) Encourage outreach and communication with the public to create awareness and provide information and status of MPIC activities.

(8) Undertake other activities relating to the Master Plan at the request of the Planning Board, Selectboard, or Town Administrator.

D. Reporting

MPIC shall:

(1) Meet at least once per year jointly with the Planning Board, Selectboard, and Town Administrator.

(2) Submit written reports at least once per year to the Planning Board and Selectboard.

(3) Submit a report to the Annual Town Meeting covering the immediate prior year's activities and upcoming year's plans.

(4) Submit a brief report as part of the annual Town Report.

Background: The Master Plan Implementation Committee is recommending changes to the bylaw to be more clear about membership and reporting. The Planning Board approved those changes.