

**MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING
VIA ZOOM
Monday, November 20, 2023 at 6:30 PM**

Meeting was opened at 6:30 PM. Present were Selectboard members Rich Kuklewicz, Chris Boutwell, and Matt Lord; Town Administrator Steve Ellis; Assistant Town Administrator Walter Ramsey; Executive Assistant Wendy Bogusz; Town Planner Maureen Pollock; Police Chief Chris Williams; RiverCulture Director Suzanne LoManto; and Six Town Regionalization Planning Board Member Dorinda Bell Upp.

Selectboard Chair opens the meeting, including announcing that the meeting is being recorded and roll call taken

Approve Selectboard Minutes from November 6 and 13, 2023, if available
Postponed for now

Public Comment Period: Individuals will be limited to two (2) minutes each and the Selectboard will strictly adhere to time allotted for public comment
None

Brian McHugh, FCRHRA, Director of Community Development

To authorize Payment #1 to Berkshire Design Group in the amount of \$1,275.00 for payment of FY22.23 Montague Hillcrest Park Construction Project

Boutwell makes the motion to authorize Payment #1 to Berkshire Design Group in the amount of \$1,275.00 for payment of FY22.23 Montague Hillcrest Park Construction Project. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Suzanne LoManto, Montague Assistant Planner

- **Discuss "Save the Date" Northeast Unity Car Show on First Street and around Unity Park. Sunday, September 22, 2024 (Full Application to follow)**

The Selectboard agree with the "Save the Date" Northeast Unity Car Show on First Street and around Unity Park; Sunday, September 22, 2024.

- **Request for Assembly for the Santa Parade hosted by The Montague Center Fire Association - 5 Village Santa Parade, Dec. 16, 2023, 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM**

Boutwell makes the motion to approve the Request for Assembly for the Santa Parade hosted by The Montague Center Fire Association - 5 Village Santa Parade, Dec. 16, 2023, 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

- **"Making it Public" NEFA Contract - Awarded to RiverCulture for professional training of three staff members and \$15,000 for a 2024 work of temporary public art**

Boutwell makes the motion to approve the "Making it Public" NEFA Contract - Awarded to RiverCulture for professional training of three staff members and \$15,000 for a 2024 work of temporary public art, and authorize the Chair to sign it. Seconded by Kuklewicz, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye, Lord - Aye

Chris Williams, Police Chief

Adopt Policy and Procedures/Traffic Enforcement 4.02

Boutwell makes the motion to adopt Traffic Enforcement Policy 4.02 effective 11/27/23 as discussed. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Maureen Pollock, Town Planner

- **Montague City Village Center Study - project update**

- Pollock attended a second public meeting last week regarding the Montague City Village Center Study, which was well-attended. There were a lot of good ideas put forward.
- The presentation slides can be accessed through the Planning Department's web page.
- The consultants from VHB will be providing a final plan sometime in January.
- Pollock hopes to present the findings and recommendations to the Planning Board and Selectboard sometime in February.

- **Mass DOT & MHP Thriving Communities Support Letter - Authorization to sign the letter of support**

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING

VIA ZOOM

Monday, November 20, 2023 at 6:30 PM

Boutwell makes the motion to approve the Letter of Support regarding the Mass DOT & MHP Thriving Communities Support, and authorize the Chair to sign it. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

- **Digital Equity Plan - project update**

The Planning Board is preparing a plan to help understand what our community needs are with regard to digital equity. Doing this plan will make the Town eligible for grant funding through the State and Federal government. The Planning Board and FRCOG will be holding community-wide meetings and focused groups with community members that may have the most difficulty with digital access and connectivity. The first community meeting will be on December 6th (hybrid meeting).

- **Mass DOT Intersection Improvements at Routes 63 and North Leverett Road - project update**

The Planning Board had a kick-off meeting with Mass DOT and their design consultants last week to discuss intersection improvements at Routes 63 and North Leverett. They will be seeking community input, are seeking funds through the TIP Program, and are hoping to start work in FY28.

Dorinda Bell Upp, Six Town Regionalization Planning Board Update

Briefing on STRPB Findings to Date and Next Steps Relative to Consideration of a Possible Merger of Gill-Montague and Pioneer Valley Regional Schools

- Bell Upp reviews the Briefing on STRPB Findings to Date and Next Steps Relative to Consideration of a Possible Merger of Gill-Montague and Pioneer Valley Regional Schools:
 - Work to Date
 - Summary Findings: Educational Benefits
 - Summary Findings: Potential Concerns
 - Abrahams Group Financial Presentation
 - Focusing on Statutory Assessment Methods
 - Assessment by Town with Pioneer Valley Health Insurance
 - Assessment by Town with Gill-Montague Health Insurance
 - Central Office
 - Next Steps
- **Discussion**
 - Kuklewicz and Ellis express confusion about the mechanics of the process (i.e., entering into an agreement). Bell Upp will check with the STRPB to get clarification of the steps.
 - Ellis comments that in just about every scenario, someone is paying more. He states that we need real incentives from the State to help change these equations. Is there a way to reset the status of all of the communities involved so they're all held harmless? Are there real and meaningful regionalization incentives that are guaranteed so that they are not subject to funding? There needs to be continued advocacy.
 - Kuklewicz agrees that we need to get the best education that we can, that we can afford.
 - Mike Naughton contributes the following feedback:
 - There are more concerns that have been brought up through the history of this project.
 - The non-statutory assessments were a waste of time. He thinks that going with some sort of statutory method is the way to go.
 - The fairest method should be a factor (i.e., equity) given the fact that Towns have different abilities to pay for education.
 - A combined district would be a hold-harmless district.

ATA Business

- **Issue Certificate of Completion to Nova Works LLC under Land Development Agreement issued 6/13/22 for 500 Avenue A (former DPW garage)**

Boutwell makes the motion to approve and execute the Certificate of Completion to Nova Works LLC under Land Development Agreement issued 6/13/22 for 500 Avenue A (former DPW garage) for recording. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

- **Change Order Request #1 Montague City Road Flooding Relief Project in the amount of \$28,567.50 for environmental controls required by Army Corps of Engineers General Permit**

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING
VIA ZOOM
Monday, November 20, 2023 at 6:30 PM

Boutwell makes the motion to authorize the Change Order Request #1 Montague City Road Flooding Relief Project in the amount of \$28,567.50 for environmental controls required by Army Corps of Engineers General Permit. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

TA Business

- **Review of FY2024 Tax Classification Hearing Process and Memo submitted by Karen Tonelli, Director of Assessing**
 - We will be having our Tax Classification Hearing next Monday evening.
 - Ellis displays a table of the residential and commercial split.
 - There was a significant increase in total taxable assessment in the Town in the past year. Montague has close to \$1.2 billion of total appraised value.
 - Ellis stresses the importance of being aware that the Assessor's Office is a data-driven office.
 - Ellis stresses that the Board over the course of the last several years has made slight tweaks in the residential factor, which have had real impacts.
 - Lord requests a breakdown of the change in residential values by quintile or quartile.
- **Execute Agreement with Wright-Pierce in the Amount of \$76,900 for Regulatory Compliance Assistance**

Boutwell makes the motion to execute the Agreement with Wright-Pierce in the Amount of \$76,900 for Regulatory Compliance Assistance; and authorize the Chair to sign it. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye
- **Execute a Purchasing Agreement between the Montague Public Libraries and Verizon to Establish a Discounted Distance Learning M2M account**

Boutwell makes the motion to execute a Purchasing Agreement between the Montague Public Libraries and Verizon to Establish a Discounted Distance Learning M2M account; and authorize the Library Director to sign it. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye
- **Execute Agreement with the Mass Cultural Council in the Amount of \$2,500 for Festival Grant Funds to Be Directed by the Montague Public Libraries**

Boutwell makes the motion to execute the Agreement with the Mass Cultural Council in the Amount of \$2,500 for Festival Grant Funds to Be Directed by the Montague Public Libraries. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye
- **Request to Issue Notice of Closure of Montague Town Hall and Other Town Offices, Applicable to Non-Essential Personnel, Effective at 4 PM on Wednesday, November 22**

Boutwell makes the motion to issue the Notice of Closure of Montague Town Hall and Other Town Offices, Applicable to Non-Essential Personnel, effective at 4 PM on Wednesday, November 22. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye
- **Topics not anticipated in the 48-hour posting/Budget Drafts**

Ellis states that he intends to bring drafts of all of the Town office budgets on December 4th for the Selectboard to review.

Next Meeting: Selectboard, Monday, November 27, 2023 at 6:30 PM, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls, via ZOOM

Boutwell makes the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 PM. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye