

## **RiverCulture Steering Committee**

Thursday, February 19, 2026

Town Hall Annex, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls

Meeting Minutes

In attendance:

**Steering Committee:** Liz Walber, Jon Dobosz, Caitlin Kelly

**Staff:** Suzanne LoManto Director, Maureen Pollock Director of Planning and Conservation

**Members of the audience:** Marina Goldman (Selectboard), Kaia Jackson and Tom Taaffe (Brick House), John McNamara (LOOT), Christian LaPlante (Downtown District Coordinator), Sayre Anthony (Nova Motorcycles), Lachlan Thompson (Montague Public Libraries), Francia Wisnewski (Rendezvous, Finance Committee), Kenny Butler (Montague Shakespeare Festival)

Meeting opened 2:34pm

Roll Call

*Motion by C. Kelley to approve the meeting minutes of February 27, 2025. Seconded by J. Dobosz. VOTE: Liz Wabler (AYE), Jon Dobosz (AYE), Caitlin Kelly (AYE). MOTION PASSES 2:36pm.*

### *UPDATES FROM STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS*

*Liz Walber, Montague Community Television*

MCTV is very busy filming Town Government. At this time there are fewer projects being generated by MCTV staff. There is a push to regionalize community television which could lend some interesting results including shared content and equipment.

*Caitlin Kelley, Montague Public Libraries*

The new library building project is underway and consuming; there will be a public meeting on March 17, 2026, at 6pm at the Gill- Montague Senior Center.

*Jon Dobosz, Montague Parks and Recreation*

...at the tail end of their winter programming and preparing for spring programs.

*Maureen Pollock, Montague Director of Planning and Conservation*

Montague is updating the Open Space and Recreation Plan which will guide the Town in decision making for the next 7 years. Jon Dobosz is part of that project.

## PRESENTATION:

Suzanne LoManto, the Director of RiverCulture gives an overview of the impact of arts and culture in the Town of Montague between 2020 and 2025. (document attached) The presentation covers grants written and received, business sponsor donations, and a comparison of RiverCulture investment vs. return through in-kind donations.

The findings are conservative and only reflect in-kind donations from major partners with good reporting such as nonprofit agencies. This report does not show the impact of hundreds of other smaller events that happened from 2020-2025.

The report also shows grants related to the placemaking through the Planning Department which were written and facilitated by LoManto, who also serves as the Assistant Planner. This group of grants is related to infrastructure improvements to Peskeompskut Park and streetscape improvements.

Facilitated Grants through RiverCulture and the Planning Department **\$322,500**

Business support during the same period: **\$88,800**

In-kind Partnership Revenues: **\$434, 636**

**TOTAL: \$845, 936**

RiverCulture currently has about \$27,000 and a separate \$6800 which has been earmarked for a new website. \$15,000 will be spent/encumbered in the Turners Falls Cultural District by June 30, 2026.

The group is given a first look at the new website and updated logo, designed by Peter Chilton. The Town Planner requests that the logo includes a “tag line” to explain RiverCulture.

## AGENDA ITEMS:

The Director of RiverCulture announces to the group that there is a possibility that summer programming MIGHT be impacted by the final outcome of negotiations related to the Assistant Planner position. The Director of RiverCulture strongly emphasizes that she will always work within her job description, when that matter is finally settled by Town staff, officials and the Union. The Steering Committee and those present shows concern about this possibility, especially related to how events drive foot traffic to restaurants and retail shops.

The 2026 calendar is shown to the group; it's a google document shared between cultural organizations, town departments, performers and presenters for the benefit of planning. Currently listed are dates for summer movies, the Pocumtuck Homelands Festival, Abdul

Baki/reggae festival, Weathervane Montague World Music Mini-Festival, and a NEFA co-sponsored workshop with Indigenous artist, Elizabeth James Perry.

#### WORKING GROUP:

The Steering Group review and edit the draft Communication and Awareness survey. This survey is based on comments made in the Fall 2025 Business Group Survey related to communication and awareness. Additionally, the survey will be an opportunity to sign up for a number of newsletters from organizations like the Brick House, the Discovery Center and the Brick House. Caitlin Kelley requests that a number of questions are formatted to rank responses. Jon Dobosz will submit a question regarding the selection of movies. Janel Nockleby submitted questions from the Great Falls Discovery Center. The Brick House, Shea Theater and Heartwing Center are participating as well.

The survey will be released in early March 2026. Ads will be placed in the Montague Reporter, through the RC website and social media. One participant will receive \$50 gift certificate to attend shows at the Shea Theater.

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The Director shows the group the list of 2026 awards made by the Montague Cultural Council. This list is on the Mass Cultural Council website. Congratulations to the MCC!

Downtown District Coordinator Christian LaPlante is in attendance and shows the group the “Mud Season” Passport. The group likes the project which was conceived during the 2025 holiday season by LaPlante and the three downtown business districts he serves. \*It was determined at that time by the Turners Falls group that downtown needed a boost in foot traffic in March rather than December. The passport project will launch next month and invite the public to visit local stores to fill in their cards. Prizes for completed cards will be awarded.

*MOTION TO ADJUORN. MOTION PASSES (3-0) 3:55PM.*

<b>FACILITATED GRANTS THROUGH RIVERCULTURE AND THE ASSISTANT PLANNER POSITION 2019-2025</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>	
MCC Cultural District	5000	5000	7500	7500	15000	15000	15000	15000	85000
MCC Creative Expressions				1500					1500
MCC Festival grant			500	1500					2000
Cultural Sector Recovery Grant					6850				6850
Mass Humanities-Peskeompskut Audio Tour			20000						20000
Smithsonian -Crossroads				20000					20000
Mass Humanities- Food Farms and Factories					10000				10000
NEFA- Making it Public						15000			15000
MA Dhed- Millers on the Move	15000								15000
Rapid Recovery Grant through FRCOG			60,000						60000
Mass Development Resurgent Places			6400						6400
REDO Grant- Peskeompskut Park / Annex Plan			65000						80750
									<b>\$ 322,500.00</b>

<b>BUSINESS SUPPORT BY FISCAL YEAR</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>	
Republic Services		7000		5500	4000	10200			26700
Greenfield Cooprtative Bank		3400		1500	5000	5000			14900
253 Organic			1000	1000	10000	5000	2500	1000	20500
Judd Wire		2000							2000
Greenfield Savings Bank		2000	500		350	5000			7850
Northeast Solar			1000			1000			2000
Fastlights				3000					3000
Resident/Business donations-planters			1300						1300
Greenhouse Cannabis			2000						2000
Casella							5500		5500
New England Grassroots fund				1500					1500
MISC. Donation				300	500	500	250		1550
									<b>\$ 88,800.00</b>

**\$ 411,300.00**

**IN-KIND PARTNERSHIP REVENUES**

	Nolumbeka Project: Pocumtuck Homelands Festival		Musica Franklin: Funfest		Antenna Cloud Farm		Smithsonian Crossroads		Mass Humanities: Food Farms and Factories		Weathervane Arts		Montague Shakespeare Festival		Performance Project: Mother Tongue		
	EXP	IN-KIND	EXP	IN-KIND	EXP	IN-KIND	EXP	IN-KIND	EXP	IN-KIND	EXP	IN-KIND	EXP	IN-KIND	EXP	IN-KIND	
<b>2019</b>	1800	30,000															
<b>2020</b>		0															
<b>2021</b>	1800	30,000	625	6800	500	3500											
<b>2022</b>	1800	32,000	800	9200	5500	12000											
<b>2023</b>	1800	32,000	800	10500	3780	8000									700	7338	
<b>2024</b>	1800	32,000	800	14000	0	3500	1800	77653			800	3700	1000	16,000			
<b>2025</b>	1800	32,000	800	15000					600	51000	1800	5300	1400	28,000	700	5950	
		\$ 188,000.00		\$ 55,500.00		\$ 27,000.00		\$ 77,653.00		\$ 51,000.00		\$ 9,000.00		\$ 44,000.00		\$ 13,288.00	\$ 465,441.00
	10800		3825		9780		1800		600		2600				1400		\$ 30,805.00

**\$ 434,636.00**

**GRAND TOTAL  
845,936.00**