

Montague SELECTBOARD MEETING
Town Hall, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376
Monday, November 8, 2021

Meeting was opened at 6:30 PM. Present were Selectpersons Chris Boutwell and Matt Lord, Town Administrator Steve Ellis, Executive Assistant Wendy Bogusz, and Town Planner Walter Ramsey.

VIMEO Link: <https://vimeo.com/643782336>

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

Approve Minutes

Selectboard Meeting October 25 and November 1, 2021

- Approval of October 25 minutes postponed
- *Lord makes the motion to approve the minutes of November 1, 2021 as presented. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye*

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

Personnel Board

- **Appoint Bob Rueter to Energy Committee until 6/30/2022**
Lord makes the motion to appoint Bob Rueter to the Energy Committee until 6/30/2022. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye
- **Cell Phone Stipend for Brandy Patch, \$5.77/week**
Lord makes the motion to authorize the Cell Phone Stipend for Brandy Patch, \$5.77/week. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye

Use of Peskeompskut Park

Leah Plath, Four Rivers Charter Public School Drama Club, May 2022, show and rehearsal dates and times as noted on application

- Boutwell reviews the application.
- Plath will remind her office manager to send the insurance certificate.
- Ellis makes Plath aware that the Farmer's Market will also be present in the area.
- Ellis suggests notifying the libraries, Parks and Recreation, and RiverCulture of this event.
- *Lord makes the motion to approve the Use of Peskeompskut Park to Leah Plath, Four Rivers Charter Public School Drama Club as noted on application, contingent upon the receipt of the insurance certificate and for fees for 12 days including rain date in the amount of \$300. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye*

Tom Bergeron, DPW Superintendent

Execute FY2022 Engineering Agreement Landfill Monitoring Service \$19,000

Lord makes the motion to Execute FY2022 Engineering Agreement Landfill Monitoring Service \$19,000. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye

Montague Board of Health

Review of Montague COVID Case Counts and Trends

- Ellis reports that there is a continued decline in the last two-week case count. There were no additional cases in the last seven days; thus the cumulative case count for the last two weeks equals 3.
- Ellis shares data regarding testing and average daily cases.

Discuss any other needed response to COVID situation

None

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**Six Town Regionalization Planning Board
Regionalization Stakeholder Meetings**

Lynne Reynolds, Representative for the Six Town Regionalization Planning Board, states that the Board is looking at a possible merger between the Gill-Montague school system and the Pioneer school system. The Board has received a number of grants, which has allowed them to analyze the financial aspects. The Education Subcommittee has been working on what could be done to flesh out their programs. The committee has hired a facilitator/consultant, Mary Broderick, and would like to schedule a number of meetings to inform the community what the results are of the work the Board has done over a number of years. A schedule of Broderick's availability has been published, and Reynolds asks the Town of Montague to choose some dates. Broderick is available for in-person focus groups on the dates provided. In addition, she will schedule zoom meetings. Each presentation will last no more than 15 minutes, followed by 45 minutes of public input.

Discussion:

- Ellis states that large groups would require larger forums. He suggests sending a zoom invitation out to Town Meeting members.
- Reynolds states that Reynolds wants to do as much in-person as she can because of the rapport.
- Groups with the Selectboard would need to be made public, as is the case with the School Committee.
- Because of their weekly meetings, the Selectboard and the Finance Committee should meet with Broderick on a Tuesday or a Thursday.
- Reynolds would like to schedule several meetings in one day.
- In response to a question by Lord, Reynolds states that an ideal size would be around 20 for a general public meeting.
- None of the focus groups will be recorded.
- Ellis states that there are two ways that the Finance Committee and the Selectboard can contribute to a dialogue: (1) an appointed representative from each group can attend a focus group, or (2) a public meeting time can be held for both boards. For the latter, a hybrid meeting would be appropriate.
- Different venues are discussed, taking into account the need for technical equipment for hybrid meetings.
- Ellis suggests having a November 18 meeting for Town Meeting members.
- In response to a question by Ellis, Lord and Boutwell state that they feel comfortable having an appointed delegate attend a focus group.
- Ellis suggests that the Six Town Regionalization Planning Board and Broderick select a date for the general public meeting. Representatives will be on-line and in the room from the Greenfield Recorder and the Montague Reporter.

**Janice Hamilton-Crawford and Eric Dana, Trinity Health of New England
Farren Care Center Facility Update**

Hamilton-Crawford: I just simply want to share a few updates of where we are and how we got here. As you know, or may not know Farren Care Center is the first part of the construction actually started in 1900, its gross square footage is 125,000 square feet and it's five floors. With the closure of the Farren one of the things Trinity Real Estate department does is do an analysis of the building to make determinations, do we sell the building or repurpose the building, what will happen with the building. That was where the process started with this and we started this back in the summer, we had to do a facility assessment and that was completed as of August 31st. That scope of work for that facility assessment was actually looking at the owned and assigned current replacement value of the building; to identify what the current state of condition was and to identify the estimated cost to maintain the building and provide a strategic opinion or plan as to what the future needs of the building would be. Through those findings we received the primary cost estimate that came back at roughly \$24 million that we would need to invest in this building just to bring this building up to code within the first year. Several things have been going on with this building such as flooding and things of that nature and I won't really go through all of the items that equates to, but that's just for the first year (\$23.8 million). Year two, \$260,000, Year three about another \$3 million and then year four another \$130,000 would need to be invested in that building to maintain and/or bring it up to code or just make it workable going into the future. As you could imagine, given the significant capital investment required to bring this building up to proper condition to house residents, patients etc. the recommendation is that we demo the building. Certainly there's additional capital costs above and beyond what we might need to renovate this for new

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use. With the recommendation to demo the building, we're starting to get bids and just for demolition of the building bids are coming in at about \$6.8 million; The asbestos abatement is estimated at \$2 million and another \$2.3 million for demo, backfill, construction drawings all of those type of things. With a building this size, we literally have to go in and it's almost like reverse of rebuilding the building. We're actually waiting on construction drawings now; architects have to go in and redo the construction drawings to remove the electrical pieces and all those types of things. The recommendation is that we demo the building, we would clean the site, leave the building the condition of the future development of the land and then we would gift the land back to the city as they would like to do with it going forward. That's where we are right now, again we just probably seeing a lot of different types of surveyors and construction people still coming in the community so we're getting bids and still just doing a lot of due diligence in order to present this to Trinity Health that this is the recommendation, and you know look at a start date.

- Ellis reminds the Board that he and Ramsey had spoken with officials at Mass Development, who advised them that this was not a good redevelopment prospect as medical facilities are difficult to redevelop.
- Ellis also notes Trinity is making certain that they maintain surveillance and the security of the building, as well as snow removal of the sidewalks.
- The Montague City Beautification Association has an interest in how this property will fit into the community that they are trying to nurture.
- Lilith of the Montague City Beautification Association wonders if any thought has been given to preserving any part of the older historic structure, especially the chapel. Ellis responds that he believes it would require a substantial investment.
- Hamilton-Crawford states its their recommendation to demo the building, it's the surveyors recommendation that's why they are bringing it to the Selectboard tonight, the Board could say, no they don't want to do that that's why a decision has not been made.
- Jeff Singleton suggests that the Board hold off on a decision until different options have been explored, the Historical Commission has not been informed (*they have been notified*), and more details have been discussed with the general public.
- Ellis was surprised by some of what has been said, including that a decision was made that the land would be gifted to the Town. His understanding was that at this meeting as they were informing us of their process and what they were recommending to their board, and he had no sense coming into this conversation that the Montague Selectboard had any ability to veto their private organization's decision.
- Ellis assumes the choices being given to the Town is you can take the building or you can have them demolish it and they will invest the \$7 million in demo and give the Town a developable lot. The efficacy of this (Select board to make this decision was not suggested to him previously. So before getting ahead of ourselves on any insufficient process on the Town's side, Ellis would state there were a couple statements that were surprises to him and would put more pressure on this board, probably pressure we wouldn't want in this context, making a decision like this in what is supposed to be a 10 minute agenda item.
- Hamilton-Crawford apologies as she had heard the statement of gifting the land to the Town in one of the conference calls and thought Steve was apart of that conversation. She stated Ellis was correct when she said the Board could say no and the Town could take the building back. This has been a long journey, we've been working on this for a long, long time and Trinity wants to do the right thing and move forward. They want to take the town into consideration, they have been working with Steve very closely through the process and keeping him apprised where they were in the process.
- Lord expresses his appreciation for working with the Town on this.
- Ariel Elan expresses her hope that if the buildings get demolished, some of the materials may be given to suppliers and vendors who can salvage them and use them for other purposes.
- A Leyden resident asks if it is possible to temporarily use the building as shelter for the homeless during the winter.
- In response to a question by Lilith, Hamilton-Crawford states that the target for demolition is June 30th.

Walter Ramsey, Town Planner

Planning Department Recommendation for FirstLight Municipal Grant Program: Interpretive Elements for the Peskeompskut Audio Walking Tour

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Lord makes the motion to authorize the submission of a grant for an Interpretive Elements for the Peskeompskut Audio Walking Tour to the FirstLight Municipal Grant Program. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye

Execute agreement with SVE Associates for design and engineering in support of replacement of culvert near 29 South Ferry Rd. Contract value of \$20,980.00 to be funded by DER Municipal Culvert Replacement Grant.

Lord makes the motion to execute the agreement with SVE Associates for design and engineering in support of replacement of culvert near 29 South Ferry Rd; Contract value of \$20,980.00 to be funded by DER Municipal Culvert Replacement Grant. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye

Execute contract for 5th Street Pedestrian Bridge project with David G. Roach and infrastructure Grant and Town meeting appropriation for the sum of \$2,338,664.50.

Lord makes the motion to execute the contract for 5th Street Pedestrian Bridge project with David G. Roach and infrastructure Grant and Town meeting appropriation for the sum of \$2,338,664.50. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye

Town Administrator's Business

Substance Abuse Prevention support - Cannabis Fees

Execute Agreement with Communities that Care Coalition and FRCOG \$12,000

Lord makes the motion to execute the Agreement with Communities that Care Coalition and FRCOG in the amount of \$12,000, and to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the document. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye

Overview of Special Accounts Available for Town use

Ellis presents an overview of Special Accounts available for Town use (General Stabilization, Capital Stabilization, ARPA funding, receipts reserved for appropriation through the sale of real property, the Colle Building Special Reserve Fund, the FirstLight payment for an offset for future investment and utilities, and CDBG funding that comes back to the Town through loan repayment).

Notice of appointment of John Martineau to Capital Improvements Committee

The Capital Improvements Committee feels it is important to welcome John Martineau, an individual who has a strong background in the construction trades, into the committee.

Topics not anticipated in 48 hours posting

None

Lord makes the motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye