

**Montague SELECTBOARD MEETING**  
**Town Hall, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376**  
**Monday, November 15, 2021**

Meeting was opened at 6:30 PM. Present were Selectboard Chris Boutwell and Matt Lord, Town Administrator Steve Ellis, Executive Assistant Wendy Bogusz, Airport Director Bryan Camden, RiverCulture Director Suzanne LoManto, Police Chief Chris Williams, and Finance Committee Chair Jen Audley.

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 8, 2021**

- *Lord makes the motion to approve the Minutes for October 25, 2021 as presented. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye*
- Bogusz requests that the approval for the November 8, 2021 minutes be postponed.

**Public Comment Period: Individuals will be limited to two (2) minutes each and the Selectboard will strictly adhere to time allotted for public comment**

Ariel Elan comments on Kuklewicz's absence.

**COVID Updates**

**Review of COVID Case Counts and Trends**

Ellis shares available data. The case count for the past 7-day period was 7. We remain in the gray zone.

**Discuss any other needed response to COVID situation**

None

**Bryan Camden**

**Airport Updates**

- We are seven months into the newly acquired property.
- The year-to-date revenues are where they were expected to be, just shy of \$80,000.
- Fuel sales are higher than expected.
- There have been property improvements made.
- Total based aircraft members has increased by 3.
- Ellis adds that we are in the process of going out for bonding.
- Ellis shares that he received a letter from an aviator praising the hospitality of the staff at the airport.

**Suzanne LoManto, RiverCulture**

**Use of Public Property: Spinner Park, It's a Wonderful Night in Turners Falls, December 10, 2021, 6:15 - 7:00 PM**

*Lord makes the motion to approve the Use of Public Property: Spinner Park, It's a Wonderful Night in Turners Falls, December 10, 2021, 6:15 - 7:00 PM, and authorize the Vice-Chair to sign the document. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye*

**Update on Holiday Season Business Marketing**

LoManto shares that she spoke with some of the business owners downtown, who plan to be open until 8:00 PM for holiday shopping on three Friday nights in December (3, 10, 17). There will be free movies at the Shea on December 3 and 17.

**Personnel**

**Cell Phone Stipend Request: \$5.77/week**

**Walter Ramsey, Town Planner**

*Lord makes the motion to approve the Cell Phone Stipend Request: \$5.77/week for Walter Ramsey effective November 8, 2021, and authorize the Vice-Chair to sign the document. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye*

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**John Dempsey, Police Sergeant**

*Lord makes the motion to approve the Cell Phone Stipend Request: \$5.77/week for John Dempsey effective November 8, 2021, and authorize the Vice-Chair to sign the document. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye*

**Discussion of increasing Selectboard Office Capacity**

Ellis summarizes his proposal with regard to the under-capacity of the Selectboard's Office:

- Increasing the capacity would allow us to seize and execute better opportunities (i.e., grants).
- This would have a budget impact of approximately \$117,000 a year.
- Hiring an Assistant Town Administrator would focus on development (community, economic, and grant-making), facilities (executing the procurements and executing the work for the different facilities), and infrastructure (i.e., we especially need to focus time and attention to our bridges).
- A Human Resources Study done by the UMass Collins Center concluded that we need to invest more energy and focus in a human resources staff.
- We have to be strong with our succession planning (more executive level capacity to support new people as they come in).
- The Collins Center report also observed that it is difficult for us to find the level of time and attention to put into the planning of the financial, the procurement, the technology infrastructure backbone support, financial administrative operations, etc.
- The proposal would also add a half-time clerk for the Selectboard's Office.

**Discussion:**

- Boutwell feels that this discussion should be postponed until the entire Selectboard is present.
- Ellis states that he needs to submit a budget in a few weeks.
- John Hanold agrees with the half-time clerical support, but feels that the Assistant Town Administrator decision will take more thought.
- In response to a question by Hanold, Ellis states that we do not have another member of staff who could become a facilities manager, a position which would require professional technical skills. With regard to grant-making, the departments don't have the time necessary to write, execute, and manage the grants. Human resources is not an effective, consolidated, or compliant approach to managing human resources. We need centralized expertise.
- Elan feels that the amount of additional personnel that Ellis is proposing is very minimalist.
- In response to a question by Lord, Ellis states that the Town Administrator and Assistant Town Administrator would be a leadership team that would have clear areas of responsibility, but would also be informing one another of their work on an ongoing basis.
- Boutwell expresses concern about the minimum of \$150,000 that this change would cost; Ellis responds that he feels this is the right strategic investment because of the ability to generate dollars and avoid expense.

**Other Expected Staffing Requests for FY23 Budget**

- Ellis reports that there could be an adjustment proposed for the budget relative to Airport Director Bryan Camden's compensation, as well as expanding the hours of a part-time staff person.
- Chief Williams is looking to add an additional dispatcher. He intends to provide the Board with a solid plan in two to three weeks.

**Six Town Regionalization Planning Board**

**Update on Regionalization Study Community Interviews**

- Ellis shares the STR Planning Board's meeting schedule.
- The Six Town Regionalization Planning Board have chosen to have two hybrid sessions this Thursday, November 18 to share some of the foundational findings that they have to date. There will also be sessions here at Town Hall at 5:15 and 6:30 PM, the first for the general public and the second for the Finance Committee and the Selectboard.
- On November 22 there will be focus groups at the high school.
- The intention of the STR Planning Board is to provide a first opportunity in community engagement.
- There is a plan for a zoom session on November 30th.
- Audley shares how important it is that as many Montague residents as possible who are interested in public education ask questions and learn about the project.

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- There is a Google site on the Six Town Regionalization Planning Board's website, which includes a survey for the public.

**Participation in Regionalization Stakeholder Meetings**

- The schedule for the public information sessions will be posted.
- Lord plans to attend and represent the Selectboard.

**Town Administrator's Business**

**Announce Grant from the MA DHCD's Rural and Small Town Grant Program to Support Rehabilitation of the Airport Industrial Park Pump Station, \$169,000**

Ellis announces receipt of a grant from the MA DHCD's Rural and Small Town Grant Program, which will pay for the replacement of parts of the pump at the Airport Industrial Park Pump Station and hopefully address some initial design issues.

**Review of Town Administrator's FY23 Budget Message**

Ellis mentions key points of the FY23 budget:

- Fundamentals of the Town and its finances look consistent relative to last year.
- We will need to be more conservative with regard to our meals tax revenue given what has happened with some of the downtown restaurants.
- Department heads have been authorized to move forward with submission of level-service budget requests. Any major changes need to be brought to Ellis by November 19.
- All department and committee budgets should be in by Monday, December 13 at 4 PM.

**Update on CIC Capital Planning Process**

- The CIC Chairman, Greg Garrison will make a presentation to the Finance Committee this Wednesday to discuss the list of capital requests.
- There will also be a discussion at the Finance Committee meeting of what we have learned about our data sources.
- We are anticipating bringing a full, six-year capital program to the Town shortly after we complete the FY23 capital project recommendations program.
- In response to a question by Audley, Ellis explains that residents are welcome to bring ideas and proposals with regard to the budget at the Selectboard meetings. They can also bring proposals to Ellis to present to the Selectboard and the Finance Committee. In addition, the Finance Committee will be sharing a calendar of dates for specific budget hearings.

**Topics not anticipated in 48 hours posting/BOH Meeting**

There will be a conversation at the BOH meeting this Wednesday relative to a DPH award of a grant to support contact tracing and case follow-up. There will also be some discussion relative to an opportunity for a DPH shared services grant.

**Executive Session in accordance with G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(2) to conduct negotiations with Police Chief, Chris Williams, votes may be taken**

Postponed until the full Board is present.

**Executive Session in accordance with G.L. c.30A, §21 (a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining (NEPBA, U.E. and NAGE), votes may be taken**

- The Vice-Chair deems that holding this discussion in open session would be detrimental to the Town's position.
- *Lord makes the motion to go into Executive Session in accordance with G.L. c.30A, §21 (a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining (NEPBA, U.E. and NAGE), votes may be taken. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye*