

**Montague SELECTBOARD MEETING**  
**Town Hall, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376**  
**Monday, November 29, 2021**

Meeting was opened at 6:30 PM. Present were Selectboard Rich Kuklewicz, Chris Boutwell, and Matt Lord, Town Administrator Steve Ellis, Executive Assistant Wendy Bogusz, Director of Public Health Daniel Wasiuk, WPCF Director Chelsey Little, FCRHRA Director of Community Development Brian McHugh, Town Planner Walter Ramsey, and Finance Committee member John Hanold.

**Link to VIMEO recording:** <https://vimeo.com/651540263>

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

**Approve Minutes**

**Selectboard Meeting of November 22, 2021 if available**

*Boutwell makes the motion to approve the minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of November 22, 2021 as presented. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - 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**

Kuklewicz thanks Boutwell for covering for him during his absence.

**Request by St. Stanislaus B and M Society to change Sunday hours: open at 10:00 AM (previously NOON)**

*Boutwell makes the motion to approve the request by St. Stanislaus B and M Society to change Sunday hours: open at 10:00 AM (previously NOON). Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

**Om Shiv Shambhu, Inc. (Carroll's Market) transfer of license reconsideration (updated information to be submitted to ABCC once approved)**

*Lord makes the motion to approve the license modifications by Carroll's Market for the transfer of license reconsideration. Seconded by Kuklewicz, approved. Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye, Boutwell - Abstain*

**COVID Updates**

**Review of COVID Case Counts and Trends**

- Active cases from November 21 through November 27, 2021 equals 27; from November 14 through November 27 equals 39. Cumulative cases from March 1, 2020 through November 27, 2021 equals 470. The percentage of individuals 12 years and older that are fully vaccinated in Montague is 62%, and of all individuals with at least one dose is 72%. The vaccination breakdown of the 27 cases is as follows: fully vaccinated is 8, partially vaccinated is 0, not vaccinated is 19. The age group breakdown is as follows: 18-35, 2 cases; 36-49, 11 cases; 50-64, 3 cases; 65-80, 1 case; 81+, 0 cases; under 17, 10 cases.
- The Board of Health will be having a meeting this Thursday to discuss the trends.
- The Greenfield BOH has a meeting this Wednesday. Wasiuk will be in attendance.

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

- Kuklewicz suggests strongly recommending that residents wear masks and maintain social distancing.
- Ellis is making the same recommendation to Town staff.
- Kuklewicz suggests holding meetings remotely through January 3, 2022. Boutwell and Lord agree.

**Brian McHugh, FCRHRA**

**Recommendation to Award Hillcrest Neighborhood Playground Design Project to Berkshire Design Group**

*Boutwell makes the motion to award the Hillcrest Neighborhood Playground Design Project to Berkshire Design Group, to be funded by CDBG, with the award not to exceed \$9,000; and to authorize the Chair to sign the document. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

**Discussion of Farren Care Center Facility**

- Ellis reiterates Trinity's intention to demolish the building.
- Lilit Wolinsky shares her concern that the building will be demolished without a thorough and community-informed redevelopment study as was promised by Trinity Health last December. She reminds us that in the

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past 65 years, Montague City has lost a fishing rod factory, a post office, a grocer, a gas station, a diner, a two-story school house, a church, and a ball park. She feels that Montague City has become a "forgotten village" and that pulling resources out without replenishing them has precipitated its decline. She shares that the residents are asking for a serious study for the building's reuse to be conducted.

- Jeff Singleton reminds us that Trinity had "pledged to develop a comprehensive redevelopment study for the Farren Care Center in partnership with the Town of Montague." He feels the demolition of Farren bodes ill for all historic buildings in the Town and for how we act as a community.
- Elan feels that since Trinity made a commitment with the Town, a process needs to be engaged in that involves a comprehensive study.
- Ramsey states that Montague has done a lot of historic preservation planning. Farren is not identified in our existing plans as a historic building (the 1999 Comprehensive Plans, the 1976 Pictorial History of Montague, and the 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan).
- Ramsey feels there needs to be a redevelopment study, but will it be a study for the site or for the re-use of the building?
- Ramsey states that the multi-million dollar investment that Trinity is proposing is an opportunity to rebuild the village center and widens the amount of uses for that 7-acre site.
- Boutwell is not happy about the possibility of the building being demolished.
- Lord would like us to have a clear understanding regarding the difficulty with the building as the study implies.
- Ellis states that Jan Hamilton-Crawford states that she did not believe that Trinity's legal team would allow them to release the document. Ellis has followed up with a formal note requesting a copy of the study.
- Ellis echoes what Ramsey said: "They (Trinity) is proposing to make a massive commitment to create a space that might allow us real control and an opportunity to develop a heart of Montague City that could be built with real input and real control from public citizens in the Town. There are important opportunities no matter what."
- Kuklewicz does not want to leave the community with a building that we fight to gain control of, and then end up with a rod shop or a Strathmore or a Railroad Salvage. He feels Trinity Health is doing the responsible thing.
- Ellis will follow-up with our legislators to see if they can help us explore possibilities.

**Chelsey Little, WPCF Superintendent**

**WPCF Mural Project - Notification of Selection Committee's Chosen Design**

- Little reports that a call was put out to local artists with regard to the WPCF Mural Project, and 23 applications were received.
- A selection committee of four members decided on a design by Lake Pleasant resident Larry Bond.
- Little displays the design on the screen.
- The mural will be mounted by the front door of the administration building.
- The project is anticipated to be done around February or March of next year.

**Personnel Board**

**Expected Staffing Request for FY23 Budget - WPCF Laboratory Manager**

Little shares the need for a WPCF Laboratory Manager, partly as testing requirements are expected to increase. This position would increase the budget by approximately 2.4%.

**Follow-up Discussion to Town Administrator's request to increase Selectboard Office Capacity**

- Ellis reiterates the reasons why he is requesting the increase in the Selectboard Office Capacity.
- Ellis states that every time we lose a staff member, we lose responsibilities that they tended to hold that weren't necessarily part of their job description (i.e., Carolyn Olsen, who had Finance Director responsibilities; or Walter Ramsey, who does a lot of economic development functions).
- Kuklewicz comments on the following: (1) there are three bargaining units in Town that are all due for negotiation, (2) we have no HR Department, (3) there are buildings in Town that might be problematic or questioned; (4) the amount of work that both the Town Administrator and the Executive Assistant do may have caused us to miss opportunities (i.e., applying for certain grants) because we don't have the staff to handle them.
- Kuklewicz believes that considering Steve's request is long overdue and supports moving forward and putting it in the budget.

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- In response to a question by Hanold, Ellis shares that there is a long list of grant opportunities (i.e., for IT planning) that we could apply for if we have the available time. He states that "our goal is to take good time to strategically pursue those things in a logical order and sequence that get us to the best possible results."
- Hanold recommends that any effort in this direction proceed gradually so that we have a smooth transition.
- Lord is in favor of the proposal for many reasons, in particular improving the Town's ability to obtain Federal and State grant funding.

**Matt Lord**

**Proposal to create a temporary committee to research reasonable cannabis impact fee programs, as well as recommended guidelines for selecting programs**

- Lord states that Town Meeting has requested some clarity in terms of how the use for cannabis impact fee programs has been defined.
- Creating a small committee to try and request interest from specific areas (i.e., schools, social justice and equity, arts and culture) was suggested.
- Lord shares that a resident suggested that the committee be self-organized rather than be municipally deigned. As Lord has a background as a community organizer, he is open to this idea.
- Lord suggests two pathways: (1) ask for a call of interest for an ad hoc committee, and (2) create a committee and put some momentum behind it.
- Kuklewicz shares that he would like an advisory team to look at proposals. He points out that if a committee becomes more official, then it falls under an appointed body and is subject to the open meeting law criteria.
- Ellis states that the Connelly Exemption may allow for a decision-maker to receive counsel from many different voices outside the committee process.
- Ellis also suggests the option of having people bring proposals to Lord's attention, which he would then bring to the Board for consideration.
- Kuklewicz suggests doing more research and possibly talking to Counsel.
- This topic will be put in a future agenda.

**Town Administrator's Business**

**Request approval to submit proposal to Penguin Random House Grants for Small & Rural Libraries**

*Boutwell makes the motion to approve the proposal to Penguin Random House Grants for Small & Rural Libraries. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

**Topics not anticipated in 48 hour posting**

**Gap Funding**

Ellis mentions that he sent a note to the State Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development formally requesting that they consider providing gap funding to compensate the Town for the high bids that came in for the 5th Street Pedestrian Bridge.

**Winter Parking Ban**

Our Winter Parking Ban comes into effect on December 1. Permits for designated parking areas are available through the Town's website as well as the Treasurer's Office.

**Board of Health Meeting**

The BOH is meeting this Thursday to allow them the opportunity to hear what Greenfield might come up with relative to whether it is important to re-implement any requirements relative to COVID-19.

**Executive Session under G.L. c. 30A, s. 21(a)(2) to conduct negotiations with Police Chief, Christ Williams; votes may be taken**

- The Chair deems that holding this conversation in open session would be detrimental to the Town's position.
- *Boutwell makes the motion to go into Executive Session under G.L. c. 30A, s. 21(a)(2) to conduct negotiations with Police Chief, Christ Williams; votes may be taken. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*