

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING
Due to COVID-19 Public Participation is by Zoom
Monday, January 3, 2022

Meeting was opened at 6:30 PM. Present were Selectboard members Rich Kuklewicz, Chris Boutwell, and Matt Lord; Town Administrator Steve Ellis; Executive Assistant Wendy Bogusz; Finance Committee members Jen Audley, John Hanold, Gregory Garrison, Francia Wisnewski, and Fred Bowman; Director of Public Health Daniel Wasiuk, Council on Aging Director Roberta Potter, EMT Director Chief John Zellman, WPCF Superintendent Chelsey Little, and FRTA Representative Jeff Singleton.

MCTV Vimeo recording: <https://vimeo.com/662146229>

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

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

- Lilith Wolinsky, Ariel Elan, and Janel Nockleby request that a meeting be placed on next week's agenda to have a community discussion about what to do with the Farren building.
- Elan wants to ask decision-makers at Trinity directly how and why the Comprehensive Redevelopment Study that the company promised "evaporated without a word of warning to the public who were waiting for it."
- Kuklewicz states that this topic will be added to a future agenda, and hopefully some representatives from Trinity Health will be present. He feels that Trinity has tried to act as a responsible private owner.
- In response to questions by Nockleby, Ellis states that (1) a copy of the original MCTV recording from our own records will be sent to MCTV; (2) all Selectboard minutes have been provided; and (3) the Building Department did get a request for information related to demolition permits.

Finance Committee Chair Audley opens the meeting, roll call taken

Present: Jen Audley, John Hanold, Gregg Garrison, Francia Wisnewski, Frederic Bowman. Absent: Jennifer Waryas, Chris Menegoni

Discuss and establish plan for Selectboard/Finance Committee collaboration during the FY23 process

Audley prefaces discussion by explaining that the Finance Committee is in the process of creating the Annual Budget for the Town of Montague, which they will present to the Town Meeting in May. The Committee would like to employ a different, less time-consuming way of collaborating with the Selectboard this time around, which would allow more participation from the public. Audley presents and reviews the FC's proposal for the Budget Development Process.

Discussion:

- In response to a question by Garrison, Ellis explains that the January timeline will be sufficient for the Selectboard to come together with a preliminary budget. He will focus on helping department heads prepare to bring their personnel-related proposals to the Selectboard.
- In response to a question by Garrison with regard to personnel changes, Audley states that she thinks the FC has an obligation to think about what is in the best interest of the Town in terms of its financial resources in the long run.
- In response to a question by Lord, Audley states that requests came from the Town's departments and the Town's enterprise funds (Airport and WPCF). The FC has some policies that say they look at revenue estimates and free cash and various other resources, and that determines what they will contribute to those funds.
- Hanold states that the main change is that things are done sequentially as opposed to concurrently. This will put a sense of urgency on the Selectboard for the first month. This would give the FC the advantage of having the Selectboard's decisions already in hand. His only reservation is that this plan relies on everybody getting their piece done on time. For this to be effective, we need more involvement of Town's people.
- In response to a comment by Singleton, Kuklewicz clarifies that this new process is something that has been discussed previously. In addition, Lord thanks the FC for providing a reasonable division of the work that is going to be happening.

Garrison makes the motion to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting at 7:05 PM. Seconded by Bowman, unanimously approved. Garrison - Aye, Bowman - Aye, Hanold - Aye, Wisnewski - Aye, Audley - Aye

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COVID-10 Updates

Review of COVID case counts and trends

- Case counts are as follows: December 26, 2021 through January 1, 2022 equals 84; December 19, 2021 through January 1, 2022 equals 117; March 1, 2020 through January 1, 2022 equals 721. Percentage of individuals vaccinated are as follows: fully vaccinated equals 64%; partially vaccinated equals 74%. Breakdown for the week of December 26, 2021 through January 1, 2022 is as follows: fully vaccinated, 46; partially vaccinated, 4; not vaccinated, 34. Age groups are as follows: 18-35 equals 37, 36-49 equals 16, 50-64 equals 16, 65-80 equals 5, 81+ equals 1, 17 and under equals 9.
- In response to a question by Kuklewicz, Wasiuk states that there has been an increase of symptomatic people going to the ER, there has been an increase in hospitalizations, and there has been an influx of people going in for testing. Symptoms are similar to cold symptoms.

Update on distribution of state-provided test kits

- Targets for distribution of test kits are agencies/organizations that work with economically challenged individuals. A list of agencies has been compiled and emails have been sent to them.
- The BOH has given Town Departments an allotment of tests to provide for internal (staff) and external distribution.
- A lot of calls have been received from the public requesting kits.
- Ellis reports that the Commonwealth has posted a list of vendors who have provided specific price charts for various types of tests. If the Selectboard chooses to purchase some of these tests, ARPA funding may be used.
- Ellis reports that there is a lot of uncertainty (i.e., we don't know what the exact price will be as it has been continuously increasing, we don't know where the pandemic will be in a few weeks, and we don't know what the demand for the kits will be).
- The State sent us 2,700 kits. Most have been distributed or packaged for distribution.
- Potter reports that all of the kits (60) she has been given have been distributed through the senior center, and she is still getting a lot of calls for people that want tests.
- Zellman states that due to the continual changes (i.e., new variants), this situation needs to be evaluated weekly. He suggests starting slowly.
- Lord expresses wariness with regard to putting staff resources into something that may never get fulfilled, and of raising community expectations when our ability to "push the needle" is very limited.
- Lilith Wolinsky would like the Town to get as many testing kits as it can.
- Ellis states that we would need to build a structure for distribution (paid, organized staff).

Lord makes the motion to approve a budget of \$25,000 to be used from ARPA funds in order to procure 1,000 test kits to be used primarily for continuity of municipal government services, and for any further usage aside from that to be discussed by the Selectboard at a future date in order to determine how distribution and priority would be performed. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Review any recent changes to state or federal COVID guidance

- Updated guidelines will be posted on the Board of Health's web page

Discuss any necessary response to the evolving COVID situation

- Kuklewicz feels that the Board of Health should be having these discussions with the Selectboard on a weekly basis.

WPCF Operations Update and Business

Long Term Control Plan for Combined Stormwater Overflows (CSOs) completed

- Little states that the Long Term Control Plan for CSOs is an ever-evolving document that constantly needs revision and updates. The last update was in 2005. The original deadline for this document was December 31, 2021, but because we were pursuing an Asset Management Grant, we requested an extension, which EPA approved. The new deadline is June 2023.
- The update was broken down into two phases of the plan, the first of which was appropriated from ARPA funding by the Selectboard. This document looks at what we've done since 2005 and what we haven't accomplished, and provides recommendations for next steps (i.e., field investigations and hydraulic modeling).

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- Phase 2 involves the Asset Management Grant. The work that will be conducted is field investigation, CCTV, flow monitoring, night flow isolation, smoke testing, and manhole inspections. It will also look at I&I investigations in Millers Falls.
- In response to a question by Lord, Little states that according to Great Falls, their revenues have been down due to COVID, so they have not been focused on the digester budget.
- Lord and Hanold ask questions with regard to the collection system, which Little defers to Tom Bergeron.

Other/Sludge Presser

- The sludge presser arrived in November and has been installed. All the work involved (i.e., conduit, plumbing, piping, flow meters, etc.) has been done by staff, which Little publicly acknowledges and thanks. Sludge will start being fed into the presser by Wednesday.
- Ellis expresses his amazement with the staff and states they have saved the Town six figures in terms of the labor costs.

Chlorination system conversion process update

- Phase 1 (converting old equipment that was used for chlorine gas into equipment that can handle liquid sodium hypochlorite) has been completed.
- We are in the process of Phase 2, which involves converting the gas storage tank room into two hypo storage tank rooms.
- This will fulfill the EPA Clean Air Act administrative order.
- The chlorination season starts April 1.
- Little also reports that we are on track for coming extremely under-budget, which she credits staff for.

Aeration blower project update

- The original blowers from the 1980s are being replaced with high-efficiency blowers.
- We are waiting for the Gap 3 grant to come out for the fine bubble diffusion piece.
- Wright-Pierce is assisting with both of these projects.
- We are hoping to get these projects done by June 2023.

Execute contract amendment for engineering services with Wright-Pierce for additional engineering and grant-related services associated with the aeration blower upgrade project. Contract value amended from \$24,700 to \$31,700.

Boutwell makes the motion to execute the contract amendment for engineering services with Wright-Pierce for additional engineering and grant-related services associated with the aeration blower upgrade project, and to authorize the Chair to sign the document; contract value amended from \$24,700 to \$31,700. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Personnel Board

Consider revision of WPCF Chief Operator position title and minimum requirements

Boutwell makes the motion to authorize the revision to the job description of the WPCF Chief Operator position as reviewed, and to authorize the Chair to sign the document. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

FRTA - Update on long-term transit planning for Franklin County

- Singleton reports that FRTA has added some goals to their five-year plan: (1) to look at weekend fixed-route service; and (2) come up with a way to increase ridership. They have created a committee to come up with some proposals for the March Board meeting.
- Work has begun on the Sandy Lane bus facility project.
- Singleton also reports on having reviewed a meeting for East-West Rail; they are starting an evaluation of whether we can use the current freight rail for some sort of commuter rail.

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Town Administrator's Business

Kearsarge burn dump solar project update

- Kearsarge has a date of commercial operation. They are waiting to actually go live and generate electricity until the SMART Program incentive is approved by the State. We are still working with DEP to evaluate the cap and make sure there are not any other clean-up issues that are required.

Execute DHCD Rural and Small Town Grant contract for \$169,000 to fund improvements to the Industrial Park Pump Station

Boutwell makes the motion to execute the DHCD Rural and Small Town Grant contract for \$169,000 to fund improvements to the Industrial Park Pump Station. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

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