

**TOWN OF MONTAGUE  
SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, January 25, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.**

**This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded: <https://vimeo.com/670155040>**

**PRESENT:** Rich Kuklewicz, Chair; Chris Boutwell and Matt Lord, members; Steve Ellis, Town Administrator, Wendy Bogusz, Executive Assistant; Carolyn Olsen, Accountant;

**OTHERS PRESENT** – John Hanold, Finance Committee member, Police Chief Chris Williams; Roberta Potter, COA; Jen Audley, Finance Committee Chair; Melanie Zamojski, Board of Health Secretary, Ariel Elan, resident: Jeff Singleton, Montague Reporter.

**1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

Chair, Rich Kuklewicz called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The meeting is being held remotely and being recorded as well as aired on MCTV. All members present.

**2. FY23 BUDGET/PERSONNEL PROPOSALS**

**Hear personnel and related budget requests** - Department requests not heard on January 18, 2022

**Police/Dispatch**

Chief Chris Williams discussed with the Board about the subject of dispatch. After last week's discussion, he would now like to ask for a 5<sup>th</sup> dispatcher to cover two shifts as it would be the easiest way to fill those shifts. He discussed the finances for covering vacation and sick days (he shared his budget proposing this position on the screen for the Board to review). The Board feels that it is a good proposal and shows flexibility of having someone to fill in in all aspects. No comments from the Board members.

The Town came very close to losing 911 this past year and after the recent adjustments in dispatcher pay the Chief feels we are in a good position to not go down that road again.

Steve mentioned that this is not a redundant model as this 5<sup>th</sup> dispatcher will be also available to work a number of meaningful duties.

Ellis also informed the Board about the process of hearing all of the proposals for these positions and at the end of this process, vote on the positions to be on the recommended budget to be further considered by the Finance Committee during the month of February.

The Chief spoke with the Board about the make-up of the force when he first started containing a detective, sergeant and officers. The addition of the staff sergeant took away a patrol officer. Now they have a Chief, staff sergeant, detective and patrol officers. In 2014, the Tech School paid for their resource officer. In 2016, a lieutenant position was added. Since he has been Chief,

there has not effectively been a detective sergeant for court days. In all of these changes and movement throughout the force, there is now a need for additional patrolmen for the size of the Town area covered and volume of calls. His request is for another sergeant/patrolman. At this time, the force is reactive and not proactive.

The Chief mentioned to the Board the time involved with the Resource Officer at the Tech School and GMRSD and that the department cannot count on the Resource Officers in a patrol function.

Chris Boutwell mentioned he had read that one of the schools may not continue with the Resource Officer in the future. The Chief said it will be up to the town if they want to continue financing the officer. Steve Ellis stated this information comes from the GMRSD who have been in conversation on the position being level-funded vs. Level-serviced.

Matt Lord reiterated the Chief's request where there are actually 3 positions needed and the comparison of Montague to other town's the same size and need. Chief also stated his force does not have the bodies for community outreach.

Kuklewicz discussed with the Board about the past requests of police presence in neighborhoods in all villages within Montague. Chief said by adding one more position, he will make sure part of this process is community outreach.

Ariel shared what she learned about administrative skills and the requirements. She is also aware that the Town appreciates the community outreach.

John Hannold asked about the movement from Civil Service and if it will be a difficult one? The Chief stated it will be up to the Union and the Town to work it out. Town Meeting would need to vote to keep it or let it go.

### **Council on Aging**

Roberta Potter is requesting her hours be increased from 17 to 21 hours per week. She has been in this position for 13 years and the work has increased. Over the years, the position has increased via social service related needs. She also feels she has no plans to retire but when she does, this position needs to include benefits.

Ellis stated succession planning is part of his position. He feels it will be a shallow pool of candidates should the position be part-time with no benefits.

R. Potter feels so fortunate to have the help she has received to keep the Center open and also concurs on Steve's comment on succession planning.

Kuklewicz spoke on behalf of the Board that they owe the Town a strong Council on Aging. M. Lord and C. Boutwell agrees with the COA request as it is a very small increase.

## Selectboard

Ellis spoke with the Board about the rationale of the Town's staff and their roles. The reality is the Selectboard's Office and its management and executive assistant position has underdevelopment resources such as Human Resources, information technology where bits and pieces of this time is being spent. This would be an Assistant Town Administrator and Facilities Manager. This is not an executive position but administrative support side. This budget proposes a full time and part time clerk in the Selectboard's Office.

Matt Lord is strongly in favor in creating the Assistant Town Administrator position. His hope is that creating this position will provide relief to the current staff.

Chris Boutwell, at first, wondered how it will fit into the budget but he is completely aware of the need but he is concerned on how the Town can afford the positions.

Carolyn Olsen showed the Board the impact on the Town should all of the positions be filled. The rough number would be \$168/resident per year should the level-service budget be approved.

Kuklewicz asks if there are other resources to fund these positions from and Carolyn stated she has used all of the sources. Jen Audley suggested for the Board not to worry too much about distributing a balanced budget but rather suggestions as to where to fund the items.

John Hannold mentioned to the Board about the separation of duties and adding an Assistant Town Administrator and how it will change Steve's position. John is also concerned about the grade level this position is being given. He has continued concern as to the direction this request is going. Matt Lord felt the positions and distribution of duties was well presented by Steve Ellis. John felt the Town Administrator's position would retreat from the day-to-day duties. He is trying to understand how the duties are justified with the Town Administrator and seems that the Assistant has been given a great deal of duties. Matt feels the distribution is reasonable.

Ellis stated the Assistant Town Administrator will have these duties under the management of the Town Administrator and what was proposed is not a job description. The grade level is because they are looking for a highly qualified candidate as they would have responsibility in financial implementation.

Jen Audley asked for Steve and the Board to give information on the distribution of duties for the Assistant Town Administrator. Steve stated portions of the Planning Department's position would be eased up with the Assistant Town Administrator's position. Also the Water Pollution Control Facility would benefit and be able to take on large strategic conversations on major projects. Steve finds it is an opportunity to provide help to many other departments.

Rich stated the Board has had meetings showing the number of tasks the Town Hall has and how staff is being over-taxed and that there is going to be some natural shifting of duties within the departments. The Town needs to have someone to handle Human Resources, policies and the administration of them. Also, there have been challenges in Capital Planning that have fallen

through the cracks and can cost the Town money so therefore more attention needs to be paid to grow the roles of the Town Hall to handle the needs.

Matt Lord asked if the Assistant Town Administrator position would be a union position. Steve stated it depends on negotiations. Steve also described job duties for the clerk position to take on which will free up the position of others within the Town Hall.

The Board does not have any other questions or discussions for these positions.

### **Discussion of All Requests, Tax Impacts and Selectboard Priorities**

Assistant Town Administrator – Rich feels this is a very important position.

Selectboard Administrative Assistant – Rich suggests to change the title of this position to Administrative Assistant so that this individual can not only assist the Selectboard but other departments as needed.

Police Sergeant – Rich feels it is important for the department and he supports this position and hopes it helps with community outreach and less overtime. Matt feels it is good for the town and the Chief and to have personnel available and the Chief's presentation showed it is a key component. Chris Boutwell feels this is an important position and that it will pay itself in the long run.

Dispatch to the 5<sup>th</sup> person – The Board supports this position.

Public Health Nurse – this was discussed last week. Matt saw the materials submitted and feels it is different from last year and there should be more discussion on this position. More data is needed and can be a future discussion. Melanie, BOH Secretary, spoke with the Board with her own opinion for the BOH nurse and yes, it can be discussed in the future. Rich feels more information is needed and not supporting the position.

Health Clerk Regrade – Rich feels it belongs in negotiations. The Board agrees.

Council on Aging Director – Chris Boutwell feels this request is reasonable. Rich supports as well as Matt Lord supports this increase request.

Parks and Recreation – Now a DPW request for summer help. Rich supports the additional summer help and belongs in the DPW. Matt and Chris Boutwell agrees.

Airport Operations – Rich feels it has been well presented and agrees with the request. Matt and Chris agrees.

WPCF Lab Position – Matt feels personnel provides flexibility and Chris agrees to have an increase in cost rather than fines. Rich supports.

**3. VOTE RECOMMENDED BUDGET FOR ADVANCEMENT TO THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

The Board feels it has set the direction for the Finance Committee to proceed. No vote taken. Matt Lord asked Jen Audley if the Board has accomplished the Finance Committee's request. She asks if there are any other issues in the budget as a whole that the Finance Committee needs to dig into. In terms of the personnel positions, the Finance Committee feels comfortable in what will be brought forward. Rich stated in a couple of weeks when the Board discusses ARPA, there are other items that may be up for discussion and brought to the Finance Committee's for review. Steve also showed on the screen highlighted items that may be up for future discussion on the FY23 budget.

**4. OTHER – Anticipated Next Meeting – Monday, January 31, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom**

Joint meeting with the Montague Finance Committee and the Montague Board of Health along with a presentation by the Gill-Montague Regional School District.

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

Chris Boutwell made the motion and seconded by Matt Lord to adjourn the meeting. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye. The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

BettyLou Mallet  
Scribe