

**TOWN OF MONTAGUE
MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD
MONTAGUE BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING
MONTAGUE HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, February 7, 2022 at 5:30 p.m.

This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded: <https://vimeo.com/674771096>

PRESENT: Rich Kuklewicz, Chair; Chris Boutwell and Matt Lord, members; Wendy Bogusz, Executive Assistant; Steve Ellis, Town Administrator; Walter Ramsey, Town Planner.

OTHERS PRESENT: David Brule, Ed Gregory, Christopher Clawson and Suzanne LoManto, Montague Historical Commission; Jen Audley and John Hanold, Montague Finance Committee; Michael Nelson, BOH Chair; Tom Bergeron, Highway Superintendent; River Culture, Lee Wicks, EDG, Jinx, Peter Hudyma, Reenie Clancy, Chris Sawyer-Laucanno, Lilith Wolinsky, David Greenberg, Christina Trincherro, Dorinda Bell-Upp and Ariel Elan, residents; Jeff Singleton, Montague Reporter; Julian Mendonza, Greenfield Recorder; BettyLou Mallet, Scribe.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair, Rich Kuklewicz. The meeting is being held via Zoom due to the ongoing pandemic and is being aired and recorded by MCTV. Roll call vote taken and all members present.

The Montague Historical Commission called their meeting to order by Chair, David Brule. Ed Gregory, Christopher Clawson, Suzanne LoManto and David Brule present.

Future of the Farren Property Forum and Discussion

Walter Ramsey and Steve Ellis gave a PowerPoint presentation overview of the Farren property. It began with Steve discussing the timeline of engagement and the advocacy shown beginning in February 2018 with the State Bond Bill that included 30 million for the Farren Improvements placed on the bond bill. In November 2019, there was an initial meeting with the representatives of Health New England where they shared Trinity's plans. From that point on, the management team shifted over to iCares. The Town's meetings with iCares ended in March 2020 due to the pandemic. In July, the Town was notified of Trinity's intention to close the facility. The Town tried to develop a relationship with iCares and in July/August, a procedural process took place, discussion of funding a redevelopment study took place and asked not to leave the town. The following four months, the Town tried to avert closure as well as tried to get funding for the redevelopment study. The Town received assurance that the study funds were allocated but no other detail was obtained. There were multiple inquiries by the Town over the winter of 2021 with very little response. Trinity moved the current patients to St. Vincent's in Holyoke by April 16, 2021. At that time, Trinity was engaging in real estate officials and stated that it was very difficult to redevelop the building due to the initial assessment description of its current condition. The Town requested several times, copies of the assessment reports and as of this date, very little information has been shared.

Walter Ramsey took over the presentation and showed a map of the building and the central business zoning on 9 acres and 3 parcels. It was the Town's idea to zone it as central business in 2004. The core hospital was built in 1900, other outside buildings were built in 1937, the addi-

tion to the hospital known as the Farren Care Center was built in 1965 and additional administrative space was added in 1975. The Montague Historical Commission has done extensive studies of the building and their pictures were included in this presentation. The Trinity Facility Condition Assessment of August 31, 2021 showed "big ticket items" such as water damage, window replacements, roof replacement, flooring and mechanical upgrades. Trinity stated 27 million dollars is needed to bring the facility up to habitable condition. Walter stated there are municipal tools that can be used to influence the final outcomes to this building such as the national historic register which can enable future developers to apply for tax credits. The Town can also offload the property to a developer or multiple developers after it is demolished.

The forum was open to the public for questions and comments.

David Brule, Montague Historical Commission Chair, stated the importance of the history of this building to the people of Montague. He stated that the Town Architect has done an architectural assessment. It is important to continue to encourage town officials to have Trinity share their findings for demolitions or reuse. It is very important to work on registering the hospital in the national register of historical places.

Arial Elan stated that it was a stunning presentation on the Town's engagement with Trinity. It made a profound difference with her after learning this wealth of information and it would have been helpful if the town shared this information with the public earlier. She asked what kind of communication was engaged with Trinity. She also asked about the heirs of Bernard Farren and if the town knew if they were seeking to secure certain artifacts of the original hospital. Steve stated that Trinity's legal team may have had conversation with the heirs but his communication with heirs has been very brief.

Chris Sawyer-Laucanno strongly urges the Selectboard to push Trinity. He states that an adaptive reuse of a hospital is tricky but throughout the state, it has been done more and more for assisted living/nursing homes. Tax credits can be used after the building has been placed on the national historic register.

Peter Hudyma remembers when the Farren was a long-term care facility when he worked in maintenance and even at that time the building was in need of repairs. He does not think that Trinity is exaggerating with the estimate of bringing the building back to a habitable state. He would like the area to be turned into a park and small buildings for restrooms.

Janel Nockleby spoke about the history in town and her interest in an independent reuse study through the Mass Development Under-utilized Grant. She asked if Trinity would be using State or Federal monies to fund the demolition. She did some research and is aware of a will of Bernard Farren and pensions that were carried out over the years and wants to know how that applies to Trinity. In the 1990s, there was mention of a transition to long-term care to Franklin County residents in a trust fund for those struggling with poverty. Walter stated he is aware of the grant for under-utilized property. He also answered that Trinity should be paying for the re-development as they are a private company.

Chris Clawson stated that he understands his role is to advise and support the Selectboard. He feels that the Commission can communicate with Trinity directly however the Commission does not have all of the details. Janel stated she is aware that in the will it states the building must remain as a hospital or then revert back to the Town.

Lilith Wolinsky was thinking of Montague City as a whole distinct community and the historic part of the Farren redeveloped as housing is not necessary. There are other needs such as a meeting house for seniors, homeless people are in need of living space and a location for services for them.

Steve Ellis appreciates Chris Clawson's comments but states there are no secret negotiating with Trinity. He states this entire process has been in public conversation but it has been limited due to the way it has unfolded.

Roy Rosenblatt asks about the legal agreement that gives the Town the property. Steve stated there is no legal agreement but all previous communications suggest the Town would be given the structures but there has not been any formal commitment.

Jerry mentioned that there is a housing crisis in the area and that the building could be repurposed as a warming facility for homeless folks. He's aware there is at least 60 folks in the county as homeless. He also stated that the grant for under-utilized properties cannot be used as the Town needs to own the property.

Matt Lord stated he was pleased with all of the work the preservation advocates have done. He, too, would like to see the study that Trinity speaks of and he is pleased to see all the alternative ways that have been put in motion. As a Board member, he is in the position of what the Board can do right now as it is in the hands of the private owners. Chris Boutwell agrees with Matt in that it all depends on what direction Trinity is going to go.

Rich Kuklewicz has received several emails and has had several conversations with residents. Many are concerned with the issues with the buildings in town and knows that it will be ongoing in the town for years to come. He would like to see Trinity request funds to do a study of the site and how to best use the piece of property. He would like to be able to negotiate with Trinity through the years and receive some of the artifacts to be placed in a central location. He feels the town has no business to own the property and hopes that a developer will come forward. He feels that Trinity is doing the responsible thing by clearing the lot.

Rich asked Steve to notify Trinity of this public conversation and discussion of funds to redevelop the site as well as receiving assurance of the land being conveyed to the town and a discussion with the historic commission for the artifacts and to return to the Board with more information on the findings next week.

The Forum on the Farren Building ended at approximately 6:30 p.m.

Public Comment Period – There was no public comment

Approval of the Minutes of January 25 and 31, 2022

The Board received the minutes of January 25 and 31 for their review. **On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the minutes of January 25 and the minutes of January 31 were approved as presented. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**

COVID-19 Updates – Review of COVID Cases and Trends

Michael Nelson was present and spoke with the Board along with information on case updates that was shared on the screen by Wendy Bogusz. Steve ran through the data as Michael did not have the information available. Cases are on a downward trend for the past 2 weeks. It was

stated that it is still important for people to know that COVID as well as the Omnicron variant is still quite active within the community. Franklin County is in a delay from the rest of the state as counts lag but still showing concern in the area. The Emergency Management Team will meet and offer an opinion on February 22 after reviewing current data. Michael stated that hospital visits are subsiding and that there are actually beds available which is a huge change from a few weeks ago. The Selectboard will be discussing the mask mandate on February 28 and ask that the Board of Health to attend that meeting. Steve stated that testing kits have been distributed throughout Montague and test kits are still available to be picked up at the library, COA, Parks and Recreation and the Selectboard's Office. Michael also stated for those who are not comfortable leaving the residence, they can order test kits through the USPS and will be delivered to their door.

Walter Ramsey, Town Planner

Execute Addendum to services agreement with GZA Geo Environmental, Inc. Dated 04/23/2020 for engineering services required by MassDEP to obtain final closure certification for the Corrective Action Design of the Sandy Lane Burn Dump. Estimated value of contract addendum is \$52,000. To be funded by an existing appropriation.

Walter brought the Board up-to-date on this agreement which dates back to 2020. the \$52,000 is for the town to develop a closeout with levels of construction. The lease agreement has the Town paying for all the design construction. He is asking for the Town to cover the cost for design and oversight addressing erosion showing up on the NE area of the array and the design of a more robust design on the Burn Dump as well as address the area where the ground water is upwelling. The use of these funds are from an existing appropriation of a previous town meeting. **On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board gives the Chair permission to sign the addendum to the service agreement with GZA Geo Environmental, Inc dated April 23, 2020 for the engineering services required by MassDEP to obtain final closure certification for the Corrective Action Design of the Sandy Lane Burn Dump in the amount of \$52,000. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**

Authorize the Town Planner to submit a request to the EPA Brownfields Targeted Assessment Program for Phase II Environmental Site Assessment for 11 Power Street/Griswold Mill Site (Assessors Map 03 Lot 027).

Walter spoke of the application for funding to move on to Phase II at the Griswold Mill Site (Railroad Salvage). The site has been cleaned up but lacking in making it marketable. This assessment will allow more testing to confirm the underground soils are clean. Phase II had been complete in 2007 however it is outdated. The EPA will cover all aspects when they do the assessment and the funding of this is going through the regional Brownfield Program. Walter feels all of the preparatory work is to the Town's benefit. Rich asks where the town is for taking over this property and Steve stated that a case date has not been assigned in Land Court but feels there are no obstacles emerging presently. **On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board authorizes the Town Planner to submit a request to the EPA Brownfields Targeted Assessment Program for Phase II of the Environmental Site Assessment for 11 Power Street/Griswold Mill Site (Assessors Map 03, Lot 027). Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**

Present FERC First Light Recreation Agreement in Principle. Overview of AIP and Plan for Extended Discussion and Vote on February 14, 2022.

Steve spoke with the Board about this agreement. It has been a long and arduous process and now it is moving rather quickly. The Recreation Settlement Agreement and the stakeholders like

municipalities are trying to work towards a common agreement. Next Monday, February 14, 2022 is the deadline for everything to be presented in writing.

Steve stated this is not a contract but a statement on behalf of the Montague Acceptable Recreation Proposal. It is not about a water quality study, an ecological river or cultural heritage. If the Board agrees, it is relative to recreation and what the participating parties are willing to accept/not accept.

Steve showed a diagram of how Turners Falls connects with the Connecticut River and described all of the proposals that connect to the river. The agreement looks to have put ins for kayaks, canoes and non-motorized craft near Unity Park, behind the Discovery Center in an area that has not been well cared for and further down near the railroad there is talk about whitewater through the summer months. The Poplar Street area will have an access site where there will be a chute for craft to go up and down the steep embankment. A proactive stance on parking near this site will be taken. Cabot Camp is to be decommissioned and the company is looking for companies to take over the building in an agreement and hopefully preserve its location.

Jeri Moran asked that her statement be read into the record:

While the improvements at the Poplar St. river access as proposed by First Light are very welcome, they are incomplete without some assistance to the boater to get their kayak/canoe back UP the STEEP embankment. Since they are engineers, certainly they can come up with some simple pulley system that could be installed so a tired (perhaps aging) boater could pull their kayak/canoe back up the embankment. The boaters could provide their own ropes; they just need the pulley system in place. This access point is critical for people to be able to use one of the prettiest and most quiet parts of the river to enjoy nature, as there are no or very few power boats on the river from that point down to Sunderland, and no white water to negotiate. Please include this as a requirement for the recreation needs for Montague. Thank you, Jeri Moran

Rich appreciates the work that has been done. Jeff Singleton stated he wrote an article regarding the current meeting with Erving and asks the Board to refer to the article for most background information. Cabot Camp was mentioned and asked if it had been considered as a historic building. Steve stated that the Historical Commission may take interest further down the road in the process. Jeff also asked about parking on Poplar St. and Steve stated that no concrete changes are in the works and that people in the area will not be adversely affected. John Hanold asked about the initial phase and the costs to maintain. Steve state that it is all on First Light land and the FERC license will hold First Light accountable to maintain anything the promised to maintain.

ARPA Guidance, Public Input and Possible Immediate Expenses

Steve notified the Board of the use of ARPA funds up to 10 million dollars without declaring the purpose. He stated it is an interesting opportunity to consider and will dramatically help in reporting for the town. He's asking the Board's sense of how to use the funds before the April 1st deadline. Thoughts include the purchase of a Vactor truck due to the inability to hold prices, the Waste Water infrastructure and WPCF screw pumps. It is useful to spend the ARPA funds rather than going to town meetings.

Rich asks about the collection system engineering study. Tom Bergeron stated the study incorporates Turners Falls and Millers Falls. **On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board approves appropriating \$250,000 of ARPA monies for the purpose of**

funding a comprehensive engineering assessment of the sources of Inflow & Infiltration (I&I) in the Millers Falls Collection System and the Turners Falls Collection System. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.

Tom Bergeron stated he met with the sales company of the Vactor truck last week and they nailed down the costs. Tom was told that the build date of the new Vactor truck will be the middle or late part of the year in 2023. Tom is to send an email to the company, with no obligation, so that they will place his request in a slot prior to the approval at a town meeting. Tom stated that the costs of the truck will be going up approximately 15% by the time the Annual Town Meeting is scheduled. Tom is also obtaining pricing for a truck that is slightly used and if approved, can receive the following week. Steve mentioned the potential to lease to own the Vactor truck, place the request at the STM and pay from Capital Stabilization.

Rich asked about the screw pumps and was told that at this time, they are old and failing and consistently being "band aided".

Steve also asks the Board to rescind their allocation of the 5th Street Pedestrian Bridge which will allow more ARPA funds.

Jen Audley, Finance Committee Chair, asked the Board about the Vactor truck and how it will be financed; in other words, what is the funding source. Matt Lord stated Capital Stabilization Fund is doing well and is a reasonable source given this type of expenditure. Chris Boutwell also feels the same way as Matt. Jen also asks about leasing versus buying outright. Jen is asking these questions as she anticipates these questions will be brought up at the town meeting. It was suggested that the Vactor truck be placed on the STM warrant for at least 3 payments of the ARPA funds. Chris and Matt approve.

Regarding the screw pumps, the Board asked for it to be revisited next week after the CIC reviews as well as when Chelsea can come back to the Board with a more definitive figure.

**March 3, 2021 Special Town Meeting
Update on STM Logistics and Schedule**

Steve mentioned that the bill authorization for the STM to be held remotely through July 15, 2022 is through the Senate. He feels it will go through unchanged from the initial request. Steve spoke of the planning with Suzor IT last Wednesday and that there are a couple of training dates scheduled. February 24 will be the first session and March 1 will be the second session. These training sessions will begin at 6 p.m., have the staff log in and at 6:15 have the meeting members allowed into the meeting. This practice session will be approximately 1/2 to a full hour. Wendy will be emailing invitations as well as sending via USPS invitations she does not have email addresses for.

The Board voted to approve the Moderator's request to conduct the March 3, 2022 Special Town Meeting by remote video platform rather than in-person and that Town staff work with the Moderator, Town Clerk and Town Counsel to take all steps necessary to facilitate the remote meeting and to provide notice thereof.

On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board approved the Moderator's request to conduct the March 3, 2022 Special Town Meeting by remote video platform rather than in person. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.

The Board completed the overview of the Special Town Meeting Warrant

ARTICLE 1 – Steve read the vote to conduct the Special Town Meeting remotely with the aid of Zoom Webinar.

ARTICLE 2 – Steve read the article regarding the transfer of funds in the amount of \$10,000 for the purpose of making emergency repairs to the town cemeteries.

ARTICLE 3. - Steve read the article regarding the sum of \$10,000 for the purpose of repairing the retaining wall and other improvements at the Burnham Cemetery.

ARTICLE 4. - Steve read the article to provide the sum of \$20,377 for the purpose of increasing the Fiscal Year 2022 Airport Budget. Steve explained the purpose of making improvements to the house on the airport property and a new tenant put in place.

ARTICLE 5 – Steve read the article to appropriate funds in the amount of \$2,500 for a riding mower for Parks and Recreation.

ARTICLE 6 – Steve read the article to appropriate the sum of \$4,500 to purchase and install security cameras and updating the surveillance system at Unity Park. Rich feels there should be more information regarding this article. Steve also stated that the Finance Committee would like stronger plans. Rich asks for a broader discussion on this request such as other locations to place the surveillance system.

ARTICLE 7 – Steve read the article to appropriate the amount of \$10,616 in the Library Budget for the year FY2022. He stated this is to replenish retirement funds.

ARTICLE 8 – Steve read the article to appropriate the sum of \$5,270 for the purpose of obtaining an engineering plan for Carnegie Library's driveway as well as any other incidental costs. He described the moisture problem in the basement which is going to be utilized as more office space and that the work is already underway.

ARTICLE 9 – Steve read the article requesting the sum of \$25,100 for the purpose of upgrading the Board of Assessor's software and purchasing related computer equipment. Steve believes the software being used now is called Patriot and that it is no longer supported. At this time, the Assessor's Office is keeping an older operating system on a separate computer going in order to still utilize this program until a new program and equipment is purchased.

ARTICLE 10 – Steve read the article to appropriate the sum of \$15,463 for the purpose of providing tuition for a Montague student to attend Smith Vocational School. This student had already been enrolled in this program prior to moving to Montague. The Law Enforcement Program is not offered at Franklin County Tech School.

ARTICLE 11 – Steve read the article to appropriate the sum of \$315,000 for the purpose of abating, replacing and covering the existing flooring at Hillcrest Elementary School.

ARTICLE 12 – This article has been removed from the STM warrant.

ARTICLE 13 – Steve read the article requesting the sum of \$66,481 for the purpose of making improvements to reduce flooding along Montague City Road.

ARTICLE 14 – Steve discussed this article regarding the Bylaw for Battery Energy Storage Facilities.

Steve confirmed with the Board that the Vactor truck request will be placed on the STM warrant utilizing the Capital Stabilization Funds through a lease.

Town Administrator's Business

Next week, the Board will discuss their recommendations to be placed on each article for the warrant.

Next week, the Board would like to discuss any questions the departments have for the legislators, Senator Comerford and Representative Blais who will be meeting with the Selectboard on February 28th.

Steve also announced that the Governor has announced that there will be a bond put out in anticipating for funding of any bridge projects.

Other

The next anticipated meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 14, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom.

On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board adjourned the meeting at 8:53 p.m. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.

Respectfully submitted,

BettyLou Mallet
Scribe