

**TOWN OF MONTAGUE
MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD
MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE
MONTAGUE BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING**

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, February 28, 2022 at 5:30 p.m.

This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded: <https://vimeo.com/683123387>

PRESENT: Rich Kuklewicz, Chair; Chris Boutwell and Matt Lord, members; Wendy Bogusz, Executive Assistant, Steve Ellis (absent)

OTHERS PRESENT: Walter Ramsey, Town Planner; Jeff Singleton, Montague Reporter; Janel Nockleby, public; Michael Nelson, Albert Cummings and Melanie Zamojski, Board of Health; Chris Williams, Chief of Police; Fred Bowman, Gregory Garrison, Jennifer Waryas and John Hanold (late 5:45 pm), Montague Finance Committee; Rick Martin, Superintendent Franklin County Technical School; Russ Kaubris, Director of Finance at Franklin County Technical School; Nate May, Director of Student Services, Franklin County Technical School; Greg Snedeker, Randy Crochier and Charles Gorbiel, Gill Selectboard members; Claire Chang, Sandy and Tupper Brown and Peter Turbin, Gill Finance Committee members; Jo Comerford, Senator; Natalie Blais, Representative; Corinne Coryat, Rep. Blais' Aide; Elena Cohen, Aide to Jo Comerford; Chris Janke of The Voo; Brian McHugh, Director of Community Development FCRHRA; Ariel Elan and Lilith Wolinsky, residents; Julian Mendosa, The Greenfield Recorder; David Brule, Montague Historical Commission; BettyLou Mallet Scribe.

1. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Rich Kuklewicz at 5:30 p.m. All Selectboard members present. Rich stated the meeting is being held remotely due to COVID restrictions as well as being recorded and aired by MCTV. The Gill Selectboard called their meeting to order with Greg Snedeker, Randy Crochier and Charles Gorbiel present. The Montague Finance Committee called their meeting to order with Gregory Garrison, Fred Bowman, Jennifer Waryas and Jen Audley present. Gill Finance Committee called their meeting to order with Claire Chang, Sandy and Tupper Brown and Peter Turbin present.

2. FRANKLIN COUNTY TECH SCHOOL

Budget Presentation

Superintendent Martin and Russ Kaubris, Business Manager gave their budget presentation to those present. The presentation began with Supt. Martin sharing a PowerPoint presentation on the screen of the FY23 Budget for all to follow. Supt. Martin explained how to maneuver around this presentation using the links provided through the Table of Contents.

Under the Source of Fundings, the Superintendent highlighted Gill and Montague and gave a brief descriptor of the Town's assessments and debt services which did not change much from FY22 to FY23. He also gave the breakdown of the Chapter 70/cherry sheet information from the DOR.

Russ Kaubris continued the conversation and described the E & D which is the school's free cash funding. Although FCTS came in over the 5% allowed through the State, he described how the town's will be receiving a refund.

Russ spoke of the uses of funding in the operating budget and how it has increased to 6.7% from the current year. The enrollment has increased 12.5% over the past 2 years. He stated there are 13 DESE uses of funding and are as follows: District Leadership and Administration, Instructional Services and Curriculum, Student Services, Pupil Transportation, Plant Operations and Maintenance, Retirement Contributions, Insurance Active Employees, Insurance Retirees, Non-Employee Insurance, Rental Lease Equipment, Capital Stabilization, Debt Service and School Choice Tuition. Also, due to the increase in enrollment, the school is looking to add pod classrooms.

Rick showed the enrollment chart and gave the enrollments and projections for both Gill and Montague. The current enrollment is 546 students with the current projection to be 566. He is projecting next year to be the peak of enrollment as all of the data is showing a gradual decrease for 8th graders with all of the towns that feed into the school system. The reasons being home schooling, charter schools, private schools and decrease in applications. For Gill, the enrollment is 19 and for Montague, 106. He also explained that they are keeping the student/teacher ratio pretty much the same as in years' past.

Russ showed a pie chart which projected the revenue to decrease to 46% due to the State aid coming in and helping to give relief to the Towns. On the expenditures (appropriations) portion of the chart, it does not show much fluctuation over the years.

Rick spoke about the capital planning for the school. The buildings are approaching 50 years in age. He showed the capital project and whether there were items that were purchased, leased, temporary, permanent and the estimated cost for the cafeteria, maintenance and vocational's capital plans.

Time for Questions to the FCTS Administration -

Matt Lord thanked them for a great presentation. He asked if the capital planning documentation could be shared which Rick stated he will send to the Board after more information is received from a meeting next week. Matt also asked what the final numbers will be for Montague which Russ stated the Treasurer will be receiving the operating assessment which will be on the warrant. His final question was regarding enrollment and Rick stated the decrease in applications is due to the lack in student interest although the new veterinarian clinic program is sparking a lot of interest.

Greg Sneker asked about the projections on the declining "catch area" for students. Rick stated that the information is shown on the DESE website under enrollment where students are opting more for homeschooling, school choice and charter schools starting in the 8th grade. Greg also asked how current the projections are on the capital budget and will the figures be going up due to inflation? Rick stated the projections are based on what is needed for each building however a lot of the items are not critical for survival. He stated he know, when ordering, that those items may or may not be able to be received.

John Hanold asked about Special Education, and does it continue to grow at the Tech School? Rick stated it has been pretty flat over the past several years; hovering at the 30% level. John also asked about the modular classrooms and was wondering if they were going to be temporary once the enrollment starts to decline. Rick stated no, they will not be temporary as they actually need the space back in their assembly hall where the overflow of students are now being housed. Rick stated the school is designed to hold 800 students but with the State laws of 1 teacher to 8 students per classroom, has changed the capacity of rooms.

Claire Chang asked about the E & D and the 5% allowed by the DOR and what will be done with the additional funds FCTS has and how will it be refunded back to the Towns. Russ described how before the E & D was certified, they kept a rate of 3%, however COVID hit which shut down much of a year and a half so with the savings, after the E & D is certified, the funds will be dispersed among the towns by reducing the final assessment for FY2023.

Jennifer Waryas was curious about the Ap classes in the school. Rick stated that technology has changed dramatically and what is required to be a programmer, there is a higher level of math so therefore, they are offering AP and honors level math. They are also offering AP classes to qualify for the Vet courses.

Jen Audley had two questions – 1. she asked what they anticipate happening once the Chapter 70 decreases? Rick stated based on the enrollment, they need to be more efficient and cut back on staffing. Question 2 was about the application process and how do students qualify to be accepted into the programs? Rick stated the criteria starts with passing the 8th grade and being put on a waiting list. The student's performance and school discipline and recommendations from the teachers is gathered before the student is interviewed. Each student is interviewed and then information is placed into a formula. Nate May described the formula being twofold; budget and students who apply. The acceptance rate of total applications has stayed around 90% plus or minus 2 points. It also depends on the spacing in each classroom; that indicates the number of students that can be brought in.

Tupper asked about the enrollment numbers for FY23. Rick gave the formula for enrollment/applications and explained they had an independent research company help with the projections of the enrollment. No other questions from the audience.

Request Funding from FY23 Cannabis Impact Fees for Licensed Substance Abuse Counselor

Nate May gave a quick overview of the cannabis impact which is now in its second year for a licensed drug and alcohol counselor. They are able to give direct support to 10 students for the drug and alcohol needs and also meet the requirements of increased mental health. He and Diane Ellis are seeing a lot more vaping use which is an increased reliance for coping. He stated they are able to streamline services within the schools and connecting families with the support outside of the school. He stated the areas of growth will be explained to the SB on the 7th. There will also be a collaborative meeting with Gill-Montague with a shared after-school program including transportation.

The Franklin County Technical School presentation ended at 6:43 pm. The Gill Finance Committee motioned to adjourn. The Montague Finance Committee motioned to adjourn. The Gill Selectboard left early as they had a meeting to attend.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – There were not public comments

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 14, 2022

The Selectboard members received and reviewed the draft minutes of the February 14, 2022 meeting. There were no questions. **On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Selectboard approved the minutes of February 14, 2022 as presented. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**

5/6. BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING/ COVID-19 Updates

Review of COVID Case Counts and Trends Mask Mandate Discussion

Al Cummings called the Board of Health meeting to order with Michael Nelson, Melanie Zamojski and Al Cummings present. Wendy Bogusz showed the memo on the screen showing the updated information on COVID projections. Al read that the two week rolling case count is down. The chart showed a trend spiking upwards then sharply down which is in the positive direction. The Board of Health had a meeting last week and recommends the release of the mask mandate. Michael Nelson also spoke on behalf of the BOH and stated the trend is dropping across the Commonwealth where there is less hospitalizations and positive cases. Melanie echoed Michael's feelings with the CDC, mask recommendations and Massachusetts in the decline fairly rapidly. Kimberly Williams from Ja'Duke also emailed in support of the lifting of the mask mandate. Both Chris Boutwell and Matt Lord do not feel the need to extend the mask mandate at this time.

Roberta Potter of the COA asked if she could continue to ask unvaccinated seniors to still wear a mask and Chief Williams also spoke in support of the lifting of the mandate. Rich stated to still request that those who are not vaccinated to kindly wear a mask.

On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Selectboard voted to not renew the mask mandate effective midnight March 1, 2022. Wendy asked about Town Buildings as the mandate is in place until April 4, 2022. On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the mask mandate for the Town will end at midnight on March 1, 2022. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.

On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, The Board removed the mask mandate for all town buildings and rescind the April 4, 2022 initial date and lift the mandate effective midnight March 1, 2022. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.

On a motion by Al Cummings and seconded by Michael Nelson, the Board of Health adjourned the meeting at 6:58 p.m. Michael Nelson, aye; Melanie Zamojski, aye; Al Cummings, aye.

7. STATE REPRESENTATIVE NATALIE BLAIS AND SENATOR JO COMERFORD

State Legislative Delegation Meeting

Steve Ellis worked with the Board to create the topics of tonight's discussion. The document was shared with the legislators prior to this meeting.

ROADS AND BRIDGES – Walter Ramsey began the conversation discussing the roads and bridges of Montague. As Town Planner, he has been looking into Chapter 90 appropriations regarding bridge maintenance and asks how municipalities can share their infrastructure with the DOT to get a more comprehensive plan. He stated that Mass DOT spends millions on bridges but does not spend any money on maintaining them. Matt Lord stated the Town of Montague has a lot of bridges which affects a lot of people. He'd like to understand how decisions are made and how can the Board play a role on how the priorities of bridge repairs can be determined. Walter stated there is a challenge in repairing the Montague Center bridge with the costs of the small bridge program.

Representative Blais felt this was an important opportunity to touch base with the Board and to show what is being done in Boston for towns like Montague. She feels that Montague has a great team and is doing incredible work with the infrastructure challenges. She states that bridges are at the top of the list and that the State has been called to task to invest in Montague as there are many bridges that connect the many villages and neighborhoods of the town. Senator Comerford and Representative Blais are raising awareness on funding on significant infrastructure tasks and they are both 100% in favor of increasing the Chapter 90 funds. Rep. Blais serves on the Transportation Committee and knows it will take multiple years of funds to complete a road project. She is also raising awareness of communities who are utilizing their Chapter 90 funds on equipment etc. Sen. Comerford also stated the increase of Chapter 90 funds along with a second ARPA fund, infrastructure money plus the FY23 supplemental budget are vehicles to move through Montague. They are in agreement on an increase in Chapter 90 as well as a multi-year Chapter 90 fund.

WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE- Rich stated this is a very critical concern for Montague as the wastewater treatment facility has aging equipment which brings up EPA issues. The Waste Water Superintendent has been doing a tremendous job to move the facility forward however the plant is 50-60 years old and is struggling to maintain. At the upcoming Special Town Meeting, one item on the warrant is for 3/4 of a million dollars in screw pumps which is a small piece of what the entire facility is about. There are fewer and fewer places for sludge to be disposed of but the department is working with the FCROG on a composting plan, The concern is how to maintain and keep the systems up and running. Sen. Comerford stated there are ARPA and MVP funds that can be expanded and used as a conduit for water/sewer infrastructure. She also understands that the workforce needs to be skilled workers who can be supported with the WET Center at UMASS which will offer trainings for the next generation of water/sewer operators. The FRCOG is thinking of offering job sharing due to the skills and high salary that will be significant to the towns.

GREENER FUTURE

Rich stated Montague supports the greener future and funding around the State pilot programs that benefit open spaces. It is critical for the Town of Montague for the thousands of acres it has that are state-owned. The Town will continue funding and supporting the pilot programs.

COVID MEASURES AND HYBRID REMOTE MEETINGS – Lastly in the discussion is the COVID measures and holding remote meetings. Rich stated the remote meetings have their pluses and

minuses. He stated it was difficult in the beginning but as time went on, has seen an increase in participation; more than in-person meetings. He'd like to strike a balance for remote and in-person meetings as it encourages the conversation and not discourages conversations. Sen. Comerford supports the continuation of remote meetings as well as both the Senator and the Representative will push to help support businesses with the COVID bill and outdoor dining. What Rich would like to see is to have the hybrid meeting model rolled into the Open Meeting Law.

THE FARREN – Although the Farren had been on the list to discuss, there is nothing concrete in communications or commitments since the documentation that has been submitted to the property owners. The Board does not want to be left with the property and have to devote the resources to the Town using Federal resources to deal with the clean-up such as the Railroad Salvage property. The Legislative meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

8. BRIAN MCHUGH – DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, FCRHRA

- **Authorize Disbursement #1 to Berkshire Design Group for FY20 Montague CDBG Hillcrest Neighborhood playground Design, \$684.00** – Brian McHugh joined the meeting at 7:35 p.m. and discussed the Hillside playground design. **On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board authorized the Chair to sign disbursement #1 in the amount of \$684.00 for the FY20 Montague CDBG Hillcrest Neighborhood playground design. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**
- **Authorize Signature on FY20 Montague Contract Amendment with DHCD to extend period of implementation from 6/30/22 to 6/30/24** – Brian explained that the contract is usually 3 years but would like to extend it two more years out. The contract that has been signed last year has been amended. **On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board authorizes the Chair to sign the amended contract for the FY20 Montague contract with DHCD from 6/30/22 to 6/30/24. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**
- **Authorize awarding of FY20 Montague Avenue A Streetscape Phase III construction contract to H. M. Nunes & Sons Construction based on the bid of \$172,800.** - Brian described the bidding process for this project with 8 bids received and H. M. Nunes & Sons Construction being the lowest bid at \$172,800. A list of items needed and a contract will be drawn in the upcoming weeks. **On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board authorizes the Chair to sign the award of the FY20 Montague Avenue A Streetscape Phase III construction contract to be awarded to H. M. Nunes & Sons Construction for \$172,800. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**
- **Authorize FY20 Montague CDBG Program Income Amendment to add the amount of \$41,184.70 to the Housing Rehabilitation Activity.** Brian stated this is money to the towns for community development. It has been earmarked to go into housing rehab. **On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board authorized the Chair to sign the amendment for the FY20 Montague CDBG Program Income Amendment to add the amount of \$41,184.70 to the Housing Rehabilitation Activity. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**

9. WALTER RAMSEY – TOWN PLANNER

- **Montague FY21 Complete Streets Grant**
 - **Project Closeout Review/ Authorize expenditure of up to \$21,587.25 from the Project Overrun account to the Montague Complete Streets FY21 project (Montague Street and Turnpike Road Sidewalks) per terms of contract with Baltazar Contractors –**

Walter spoke with the Board and gave an update on the sidewalks on Montague Street and Turnpike Road. He stated they started in September and wrapped up in November. The design was funded with Chapter 90 funds and the Complete Streets grant. The use of police details showed an increase in the budget but the majority of the work was within the scope of the contract. The grant as well as contribution from Judd Wire helped fund the project however he is meeting with the Board tonight to close the gap by reassigning the existing grant for the shared streets and receive permission from the State to re-program to the sidewalks as they want the town to spend the funds. Walter requests the Board to use the Overrun account to close the gap with \$21,587.25 out of the \$25,000 in the account.

On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board authorized the reallocation of funds to complete streets projects for \$52,200 shared streets to complete streets. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.

On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board authorized the expenditure of up to \$21,587.25 to the Montague Complete Streets Project. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.

- **Montague Comprehensive Plan**
 - **Project Updates/Amend Montague Comprehensive Plan Phase I grant agreement with State to reflect update project timeline ending 6/30/2023**

Walter stated there are 20 community members interested in the Comprehensive Plan. The organization is to establish a 20-30 person advisory group and receive reports from the Planning Board. The "kick-off" meeting will be on March 15 to see if this Comprehensive Model of 20-30 members will work. Walter stated the administrative request to amend the Phase I agreement with the State to now end on 6/30/2023 and move money from one fiscal year to the next so the contract will be amended and updated. **On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board moved to allow the Chair to sign the Standard Contract which is amended to reflect the project timeline now ending 6/30/2023. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**

- **Canal District Master Plan**
 - **Review Project scope of work**
 - **Community Development Discretionary Account Hearing Allocation \$8,000 toward the Canal District Master Plan to ensure a robust community engagement process. To be leveraged by \$135,000 in grant funding. Review of project scope.**
 - **Execute Memorandum of Agreement with Mass Development regarding project administration of the Canal District Master Plan**

Walter stated the Canal District Mast Plan is funded through separate grants. The purpose is to survey and evaluate the course of action for the canal district of Turners Falls. It is managed by Mass Development. It is to have consultants come and contract their coordinates with Walter's Office. He described

all of the steps for this plan and the timeline through October 2022. **On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board authorized the Community Development Discretionary Accounting Hearing to allocate \$8,000 towards the Canal District Master Plan. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**

On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board authorized the execution of a memorandum of agreement with Mass Development regarding the project administration of the Canal District Master Plan. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.

- **Authorize FY23 Battlefield Planning Grant – 1676 Battle of Great Falls Site Evaluation and Evaluation Phase III + Education. Total grant request \$83,300.**

Walter explained this is the fourth round for the grant application. He stated research began in 2013 with the reconciliation agreement between the town and tribes in the area. The next grant closes out the archeological portion of the grant. The Town continues to hold monthly meetings and has the Town Planner administer the grants. David Brule appreciates the work that has been done to bring together the number of tribes and Boards and the educational experience that is involved. Walter stated information regarding the Battlefield Grant is on the Town of Montague's website as well as hard copies are available at the Carnegie Library. **On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board authorized the Chair to sign the FY23 Battlefield Planning Grant and other forms associated with this grant. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**

10. EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT BUSINESS

- **Annual Town Meeting: Article submission deadline for May 7, 2022 Annual Town Meeting is March 17, 2022 by 4:00 p.m.**

Wendy Bogusz spoke to the Board and informed the audience of the deadline to submit articles for the May 7, 2022 Annual Town Meeting no later than March 17, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.

- **ABCC 2022 Seasonal Population Increase Estimation Form**

Wendy worked with Deb Bourbeau on the ABCC 2022 Seasonal Population Increase Estimation Form. The estimate summer population for Montague is 8,743. **On a motion by Matt Lord and seconded by Chris Boutwell, the Board authorized the submission of the ABCC 2022 Season Population Increase Estimation form as described. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**

- **Turners Falls Power Canal Service outage will take place September 19, 2022 through September 24, 2022**

Wendy announced the scheduled outage of the Power Canal to perform inspection along a number of locations.

OTHER TOPICS NOT ON THE AGENDA

- **Special Town Meeting on Thursday, March 3, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. The Zoom link will be sent out on Wednesday. Once registered, a link will be sent out to enter into the meeting.**

- **The mask mandate will be lifted effective March 1, 2022 at midnight. The next meeting scheduled for March 7, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. will be a hybrid meeting. At that time, the Board will set a possible schedule which will benefit everyone.**

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board adjourned the meeting at 8:25 p.m. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
BettyLou Mallet
Scribe