

**SELECTBOARD MEETING
TOWN OF MONTAGUE
Town Hall, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376
MEETING MINUTES
Monday, March 7, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.**

**This meeting was held in person upstairs in the Conference Room with a Zoom hybrid option.
It was also recorded: <https://vimeo.com/685725285>
Access to Zoom Conferencing was also available**

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

OTHERS PRESENT: John Hanold, Gregory Garrison, Jennifer Waryas and Francia Wisniewski, Montague Finance Committee members; Dianne Ellis, Director of Pupil Services GMRSD; Nathan May, Director of Pupil and Personnel Services FCTS; Joanne Blier, Director of Business Operations, GMRSD; Brian Beck, Superintendent of Schools GMRSD; Stacey Langknecht, Parent and Family Program Director at the Brick House; Kwamane Harris, Executive Director of the Brick House; Mark Wisniewski, The Rendezvous; Ariel Elan, resident; Jeff Singleton, Montague Reporter; BettyLou Mallet, Scribe.

1. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Rich Kuklewicz. The meeting is being held via hybrid Zoom in the Montague Conference Room, is being recorded as well as taped on MCTV.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 28, 2022

The Board received the draft minutes of the February 28, 2022 meeting. No discussion. **Chris Boutwell made the motion to approve the minutes of February 28, 2022 as presented; seconded by Matt Lord. All in favor; approved 3 aye; 0 nay.**

3. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – There were no comments from the audience nor via email.

4. COVID-19 UPDATES

There were no Board of Health members this evening, therefore, Steve Ellis presented the memo dated March 7, 2022 to the Board. The data showed that cases were lower and most notably after school vacation week, there were no surges. The Town Hall is back to normal operations.

5. REQUESTS FOR FUNDING FROM CANNABIS IMPACT STABILIZATION FOR LICENSED SUBSTANCE ABUSE COUNSELORS FOR GMRSD AND FCTS

Dianne Ellis, Gill-Montague's Director of Pupil Services and Nathan May, the Director of Pupil and Personnel Services at Franklin County Tech School gave a presentation on the cannabis impact stabilization for the licensed substance abuse counselors. Dianne began by showing a PowerPoint presentation to the Board explaining the success of the first year having a 1.0FTE licensed alcohol and drug

counselor, who is shared with the FCTS. The numbers served were 20+ students providing direct ongoing weekly services and 12+ students received referrals for additional community-based services. It has been an effective collaboration with the school administration and the school counseling staff. In areas of growth, GMRSD expanded access to services through the development of an afterschool component.

The request and goals for FY23 is to fund the support of 2.0FTE Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselors; one for each school. This will increase the access to assessments and direct evidence-based treatment for students affected by substance use and at risk. Offering an afterschool program that expands options for service delivery and family engagement will be a benefit. Transportation will also be offered for afterschool programming for both schools.

Nathan May continued the presentation and shared his screen with his PowerPoint presentation for the request for proposal for the licensed alcohol and drug counselor. He gave the background of this program, stating it started on September 1st with a counselor for 2 days a week; 16 hours a week. FCTS has been able to address a number of needs including direct support of 10 students grades 9-12. He stated the school is integrating the LADC into advisories and classes where guidance counselors and health teachers are working with students on drug and alcohol awareness, social/emotional support and mental health resources. They are incorporating brief treatment interventions 2-3 times using a curriculum known as A-CRA (Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach). The utilization of the afterschool component for students including collaboration with G-M has been effective.

The goals for FY23 is to increase the direct counseling capacity, decrease office referrals for drug and alcohol use and increase care coordination including support of families. They'd like to increase opportunities for access to services for students and families in an afterschool program and groups. They'll collaborate with G-M with the care of shared and transitioning students.

Matt Lord stated he is proud of the funding being put into this position and asks if there had been any discussion of other towns in the FCTS district for contributions? Nate stated not so far as this program has only been in place for a few months but he will bring this question to the Superintendent.

John Hanold asks if the FTE's are funded, will there be a tendency to continue the positions year after year? Will this be permanent funding? His other question was how the services being funded would effect families who do not have children in the school district and how to draw boundaries. Dianne stated the FTE's are contracted services so can end at any time. Rich stated funds through the CDBG are for organizations such as the Brick House which will be discussed later in this agenda.

6. JOANNE BLIER – GMRSD

- **Preliminary Discussion of Elementary School Capital Needs and Possible School Building Project**

Joanne Blier and Brian Beck of the GMRSD gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding capital planning for the Montague elementary school buildings as a whole. Joanne first began the presentation with the enrollments of Hillcrest and Sheffield which are overall stable.

Joanne stated from her calculations, the first five years of capital repairs add up to 7 million which is a substantial amount to put into older buildings that are overcrowded.

Brian Beck gave the current conditions for Hillcrest which is PreK-1 and Sheffield which is grades 2-5. He stated these older buildings have major needs in heating and cooling and the facades and ceilings need work. The ARPA funds have been helpful but there is still not enough available space in each school for a single classroom for arts and music and science. He stated that Hillcrest does not have a library, storage space, conference room and fire doors. Sheffield does not have sinks or bathrooms in classrooms and the music room is currently on the stage. There is a need to provide gender neutral bathrooms, a kitchen for life skills, Makerspace, better regulated temperature controls, bathrooms in classrooms for 2nd grade students, sinks and water fountains in classroom and breakout rooms for therapeutic programming.

Joanne showed projected numbers from the MSBA (Massachusetts School Building Authority) and stated tonight is the beginning of the discussion with the Selectboard for possible projects. The application window for the MSBA opens in January and closes in April.

Chris Boutwell expressed his concern on what the taxpayers will think. Matt has concerns with the estimate given for the historical buildings and how it will be much higher with the current inflation and world issues. He feels it is important to obtain a real sense of what it will cost and Rich concurs. Rich also asked if the School Committee has discussed this request and their thoughts. Brian stated the school committee is aware the topic is being brought up to the Board for conversation. Rich suggests a feasibility study for this project as well as he knows the chances of receiving approval from the MSBA on the first application is slim. He is not opposed to the district engaging in conversation on this project and wished there was a school committee member present to advocate.

7. STACY LANGKNECHT, THE BRICK HOUSE

- **Update on Strengthening Families Program**

Stacey Langknecht, Parent and Family Program Director at the Brick House and Kwamane Harris, Executive Director of the Brick House spoke to the Board, giving them an update on the Strengthening Families Program. Stacey showed a flyer on the screen for the audience to see which described an upcoming program of 2 separate sessions being held this Spring. Each has 7 sessions for families with youth ages 10-14 for learning new ways to connect with each other. These will be held between March 22 and May 10, 2022. She and Kwamane shared how they will be spreading the word with the public to bring awareness of the upcoming sessions. There were no questions from the Board or audience.

8. LIQUOR LICENSE

- **Update on State allowance for outdoor dining and extension of licensed premises**

Steve spoke with the Board about the outdoor dining and extension of licensed premises where he stated there is no legislation to allow for outdoor table service beyond the April 1, 2022 expiration. Rich also stated this topic was discussed last week with the legislators so they are well aware.

- **Request from The Rendezvous, 78 Third Street to continue to use a portion of the Town parking lot adjacent to the Rendezvous from 4/1/22 to 11/30/22.**

This request was brought before the Board for the time period of April 1, 2022 through November 30, 2022. Wendy stated she has started the licensing process and would like a detailed plan submitted from Mark showing the use of the permanent space. Mark stated the first few years had been difficult through the COVID phase and hopes the additional seating outside will help to recoup the lost revenue. The Board would like to see a binding agreement to exercise an agreement year by year. Steve will work with Wendy and discuss with counsel and have a more informed discussion in the future. Steve asked Mark for a careful rendering of the area with measurements and if he needs assistance, to please call Steve's office. The Board is in favor to support town businesses and would like to obtain legal advice regarding the long-term use of this public space.

- **Request from El Nopalito Restaurant, 196 Turners Falls Road to petition State legislature for an all-alcohol liquor license.**

Two gentlemen from El Nopalito Restaurant (Jesus Ayala) were in the audience for this hearing. It is the former site of Athen Restaurant as well as Roberto's. The owners explained it will be a mexican restaurant and requesting a liquor license to make mexican drinks. Wendy stated she has gone through the process with the owners and the request should be placed on the Annual Town Meeting warrant as an article for discussion and vote. The owners were notified of this process and agreeable. They will continue with the business portion of starting a restaurant and work with the Town to place the request on the warrant.

9. DISCUSSION OF FY23 BUDGET

Steve opened the discussion stating there were two important dates with the Finance Committee and Capital Improvements Committee to hear all of the articles for capital projects for the Annual Town Meeting warrant in May. March 16 and 23 are scheduled meetings with the Finance Committee. The Board was given a document titled *Means of balancing budget, leaving varying amounts of available taxation* for their review as well as Steve shared this document on the screen. Accountant Carolyn Olsen provided this documentation showing different scenarios in creating ways to reduce taxation and provide important financial flexibility for the future. The Board is to review and discuss if wanting to build additional cushion or maybe reduce taxation. The Board reviewed and discussed line-by-line each item and came to the conclusion to leave all staffing items on the budget. The police discretionary item was discussed and stated it has not been used in past years. Steve stated the Finance Committee felt it should be available to build into their budget. Rich suggested \$5,000 for this line item. The Board agrees with the CIC on reducing the DPW discretionary to \$50,000. They recommend not making any changes to the Utilities Budget, reducing the SB, keeping travel, reduce dispatch wages PT to \$7,000 and then the rest of the line items to keep as documented.

10. EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT BUSINESS

- **Review Continuation of Remote Selectboard Meetings**

Wendy spoke with the Board about moving forward with meetings and asked their thoughts on the continuation of holding them remotely. Rich suggested to the Board a schedule of holding the first Monday of every month as an in-person meeting and the rest will be held remotely. This schedule is subject to change should there be any exceptions such as permitting or dog hearings etc. **The Board agreed to**

hold Montague Selectboard meetings in person on the first Monday of each month and the rest will be scheduled remotely via Zoom. The schedule will be revisited in July 2022.

- **Scheduling of ARPA Funding Discussion on 3/14/2022**

Wendy also discussed next week's meeting agenda and the discussion of ARPA funding as there are a few large requests forthcoming through the WWTP such as the screw pumps and projects for the plant. Steve would like to create a framework for specialized uses of the ARPA funds and then a list of general uses. A 30-minute discussion will be placed on the agenda for March 14, 2022 including public participation.

11. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S BUSINESS

- **DEP Standard Contract Form Renewal**

Steve discussed the DEP Standard Contract Form renewal which has been in a 7-year agreement with the MA DEP. This agreement allows the Town to receive recycling dividend funds for recycling practices. **On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board moves to authorize the Chair of the Selectboard to sign the new agreement with the DEP relative to recycling reimbursements. No discussion. All in favor – 3 aye; 0 nay.**

- **Establish Gift Account for Donations to the Wood Bank**

Steve discussed the excitement to have the community invest in helping elders have access to firewood. This is for the establishment of a gift account called the Montague Wood Bank. **On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board authorized the establishment of a gift account called the Montague Wood Bank. No discussion. All in favor – 3 aye; 0 nay.**

- **Final Judgement of Foreclosure, Town of Montague v. Solutions Consulting Group, LLC, 11 Power Street**

Steve described the receipt of the final judgement of foreclosure and the Town of Montague was awarded 11 Power Street which is the former Railroad Salvage property. The Town is now the owner of the parcel and all department heads and districts have been notified. Brownfield funds have been obtained for environmental assessments and will be brought to the Town Meeting for redevelopment of that lot.

- **Federal Street Property (28-0-0148) Auction, April 21, 2022 at Noon**

Steve stated this piece of property was originally in tax title and now the Selectboard have custodial partnership of this property which means the Board is now responsible for its disposal. An auction will be conducted at the Montague Town Hall by Sullivan and Sullivan on April 21, 2022 at noon. This is for the parcel between 507 and 517 Federal Street right near the Sawmill River. It is a desirable piece of property and all of the specifics will be posted on the Town's website.

- **Annual FY23 Chapter 90 Award and FY22 Supplemental Chapter 90**

Steve stated the FY23 Chapter 90 award remains level-funded. It is largely used for roadway projects but can also be used for certain vehicle maintenance. The Governor has filed for a supplemental bill which will allow a one-time allotment of Chapter 90 funds for winter road repair.

- **Opportunity to attend the MA Selectboard Association Western MA Municipal Conference**

Steve discussed the upcoming MA Selectboard Association Western MA Municipal Conference and stated he can facilitate registration for any member who wishes to attend. This year, the conference will be held in person.

- **Topics not anticipated in the 48 hour posting** – There were no other topics to discuss.

OTHER

Anticipated Next Meeting: Monday, March 14, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. via ZOOM

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board agreed to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m. All in favor. No discussion. 3 aye; 0 nay.

Respectfully submitted,

BettyLou Mallet
Scribe