

**TOWN OF MONTAGUE
MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING
Remote Meeting via ZOOM
Monday, March 14, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.**

MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded:
<https://vimeo.com/688370469>

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Chelsey Little, WPCF Superintendent; Walter Ramsey, Town Planner; Jon Dobosz, Director of Parks and Recreation; Mark Wisnewski, The Rendezvous; Peter Wackernagel, Project Leader of The Brick House; Alice Armen, Maddox, Janet Nockleby, Emily Monosson, Leigh Rae, Jackie Stein, Lizbeth Irving, Ariel Elan, Lilith Wolinsky, Deborah Radway, Paule Lipke, residents; 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. All members present. The meeting is being held remotely via Zoom.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There were no public comments received via letter or email and no public present who wish to speak at this time.

3. REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 7, 2022

The draft minutes of March 7, 2022 were received and reviewed by the Board. After discussion, the minutes will be deferred for vote on a later date.

4. COVID-19 UPDATES

- **Review of COVID case counts and trends**
- **Discuss any related updates or priorities**

Steve showed the Health Department memo of March 14, 2022 regarding the COVID-19 update. The trend continues downward of 7 current cases from last week's 15 cases. The vaccination history is that of 4 not vaccinated, 2 fully vaccinated and 1 partially vaccinated. The age groups for COVID vary, the trend chart also shows the large spike in past months due to the Omicron variant during the month of January and the continued decline to date. There were no comments on this subject.

5. PERSONNEL BOARD

- **Appointment of Janel Nockleby to the Montague Historical Commission**

The Board received Janel Nockleby's request for appointment as well as letter of recommendation from David Brule to appoint Janel Nockleby to the Montague Historical Commission. There were no questions from the Board. Rich stated his concern about ethics and suggests the receipt of approval from the Attorney General's Office as Janel is a state employee with the Department of Conservation and Recreation and works at the Great Falls Discovery Center. Rich also asks Janel to speak with Town Clerk Deb Bourbeau as she would have more information regarding ethics and if it is recommended for Janel to contact the Attorney General's Office should there be a time when a situation would involve the DCR. **On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Rich Kuklewicz, the Board approves the appointment of Janel Nockleby to the Montague Historical Commission. Chris Boutwell aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**

- **WPCF Foreman position description, to replace the WPCF Chief Operator position**

Steve discussed the WPCF Foreman job description that was submitted to the Board by Superintendent Chelsey Little. The Board discussed this position a few weeks ago where the Town established this position as Chief Operator for WPCF. Montague now has a Grade 6 Superintendent and that the job of Chief Operator with a Grade 6 license was an impediment to filling the position. The position is being considered as a WPCF Foreman with the eligibility of a Grade 6 license and 7 years experience. This is a critical step in assuring that the WPCF is fully staffed with well qualified individual as a Foreman.

Matt stated in the requirement section it states 5 years' experience. Rich asked when Steve met with NAGE Union, was it stated as 5 or 7 years? Steve stated it was more a discussion of the Grade 6 eligibility rather than the 5 or 7 years of experience.

- **MOA with NAGE Union formally establishing revised title and job description**

Steve had a good and healthy conversation on the rationale and stated that the Union is invested in seeing this business function effectively. He stated the Union was amenable with the position which will stay at the same grade level of F. He stated the position of Chief Operator has been vacant for 18 months and explained the difference between Chief Operator and Foreman. Chelsey found under the description of Foreman through the DEP it is 7 years of experience. Rich stated it will be modified.

Rich entertained a motion to accept the job description of the Wastewater Pollution Control Facility Foreman at Grade F with the change of minimum qualifications from a minimum of 5 years to 7 years' experience. Chris Boutwell made the

motion and seconded by Matt Lord. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.

Rich entertained a motion to accept and approve the Memorandum of Agreement between the Town of Montague and the National Association of Government Employees (NAGE) regarding the Water Pollution Control Facility Foreman position. Chris Boutwell made the motion and seconded by Matt Lord. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.

Chris Boutwell asks if there is money in the budget for this year. Steve stated there is money in the budget as it was intended to fill this position however, it's been difficult to find a qualified individual. Also, contracted work by former employee Bob Trombley has been discontinued and the line item is under spent at this time.

6. LIQUOR LICENSE AND USE OF PUBLIC LAND

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

Steve revisited the discussion of the Board and Representative Blais and Senator Jo Comerford regarding the extension of remote meetings and outdoor dining which is to expire on April 1, 2022. House Bill 4479 contains a clause that contains an extension for COVID remediation now through April 2023. This bill will now move to the Senate and appears to not be controversial; from there, the Governor's Office.

- **Request from Rocket Science, dba The Rendezvous, 78 Third Street, for a license to use real property – of a portion of the Town parking lot adjacent to the Rendezvous from 04/01/22 to 12/31/22, with use ending at the time of the winter parking ban takes effect**

The Board is in possession of the license to be considered tonight which looks very much like licenses in the past. **Rich entertains the motion to approve the license request from Rocket Science, dba The Rendezvous for a license to use a portion of the Town parking lot from 04/01/22 to 12/31/22, with use ending at the time of the winter parking ban takes effect.** The Board also received a diagram showing the area of use of the parking lot which is the same information they have received in the past. **Chris Boutwell makes the motion and Matt Lord seconds.** Open for discussion. Mark Wisnewski is in attendance and does not have any information to add but available for questions. Rich stated that Steve met with Town Counsel, and it is a viable request to ask for an extension and the Selectboard can revisit on a year-by-year basis, the use of the parking lot area according to the receipt of an application. Counsel added to the conditions for the Board to rescind with the granting of permission should the conditions of the area would change. A diagram of the parking lot area was shown to the Board for their review. By approving this request, it grants the Rendezvous to have control to serve food as well as alcohol in the designed area of the parking lot after the approval of the Alcohol and Beverage Commission.

Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.

7. PUBLIC INPUT AND SELECTBOARD DISCUSSION OF PRIORITIES FOR SPENDING OF ARPA CORONAVIRUS STATE AND LOCAL FISCAL RELIEF FUNDS (CSLFRF)

- **Overview of CSLFRF program guidance**

Steve gave a brief PowerPoint presentation on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Community Input Session along with the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funding (CSLFRF). He explained that Montague received an allocation of under 2.45 million comprised of town and county allocations. Both allocations come in the form of a Federal grant from the U.S. Treasury. The first allocation received June 2021 was \$1,227.312 and the second payment is expected in June 2022.

The allowable uses were:

- Documenting the negative economic impact on small businesses, households, non-profits and industry sectors.
- To provide premium pay to workers designated as “essential” for work during the public health emergency.
- To provide replacement revenue to offset reductions in realized revenue due to the pandemic. Steve stated Carolyn Olsen, Accountant explained that Montague saw very minor impact and that the Town may not be able to apply for revenue under this allowable usage.
- To make necessary improvements in water, sewer and/or broadband infrastructure.

Steve stated the above allowable uses was discussed until January of 2022 when the final ruling came out and the big change is the revenue loss with the level of reporting and audit process. This final ruling stated a NEU is able to claim up to \$10 million dollars as a standard allowance and is very clear regardless if the Town received revenue loss.

Montague has flexibility in spending and reduce the reporting burden. The Board needs to make a one-time decision in April on claiming the standard allowance.

Matt and Chris did not have any questions at this point. Ariel Elan asked why wouldn't any NEU not take the standard allowance. Steve stated it is an assumption that all communities will take the standard allowance but depending on the amount of allowance, some smaller communities would find that the cost of reporting would be a challenge.

Rich asked if the Town claims the standard allowance, such as for premium pay or economic impacts to businesses, is that identified as the standard allowance? Steve feels if the Town takes a conservative approach is to think in terms of an amount that is not claimed as a standard deduction. It is still not clear at this time but if the Board would like to set aside a small percentage at this time, there is flexibility to spend those funds.

Questions from the public:

Lilith Wolinsky asks if the Finance Committee has been involved in this discussion. Steve stated the FinCom has not weighed in on this conversation. They have been informed of this discussion. He received an email from the Chair of the Finance Committee but as an individual resident of the town and not as a member of the Committee. The Selectboard has the ability to manage and spend from this grant as well as any other Federal grant.

- **Summary of existing project commitments requests received to date**

Next in the PowerPoint presentation is the commitments the Selectboard have made to date: Long Term CSO Control Plan (\$49,000), Montague Collection System Study (\$52,000 with a \$250k hold) and COVID Test Kits - 1000 kits (\$18,450). There is \$317,450 on hold of which \$250k is associated with Collection System Study of which the full \$250k had to be committed to in order to be eligible. A balance is \$2,335,173.

There have been other discussions such as the WPCF Screw Pump Replacement (\$730,000) and the DPW Vactor Truck lease balance (\$400,000) which subtotals \$1,130,000 of which the remainder would be \$1,205,173.

Other known requests that were presented to Steve were: Economic support for small businesses which were adversely affected by the pandemic conditions; a tent for outdoor programming at the Carnegie Library; a fund to facilitate production of affordable housing in Montague; targeted public health programming and interest in improvements at the Montague Center Library.

- **Public suggestions for funding priorities**

Walter Ramsey, Town Planner stated he is proposing that Montague establish an affordable housing fund like neighboring communities such as rentals and homeownership units. State Law states Montague is 30 units shy under the affordable housing requirements according to MGL 40B. He'd like to have such units constructed by third party developers such as Habitat For Humanity. This fund would complement the Community Planning Development areas in downtown and make a more welcoming community for all.

Matt Lord asked Walter what these funds could be used for. Walter stated they would be used to pre-develop certain sites such as a title search or underwrite costs for a development to a developer.

Deborah Radway stated that the Town of Montague has focused on sewers and roadways and school buildings for many years. She feels the libraries have been patiently waiting their turn and their turn is now coming up. She described the three libraries significant repair needs and asks the Board to please consider using ARPA funds for the three libraries to either repair or replace them as well as refurbish the old Montague Center Town Hall for a library or community center.

Maddox asks questions about Walter's proposal and how many of the 80 units would be low income and what prevents it to not go higher. Who also defines the requirements for qualifying for the housing. Walter stated 80 units is the maximum to fit on the two areas in town being considered. At least 20% needs to be affordable determined by the State which is up to 30% of income on housing costs. The Town is the owner of these two sites and can make the determination but needs to be at least the 20% and could actually be up to 100% of affordable housing.

Ariel Elan spoke about the large ticket items such as the screw pumps for the WPCF and how those items are essential in regulations through State and Federal and non-optional expenditures. She feels it is also untrue if it looks like only one library is being looked at and the others are not. All the needs of the building's maintenance is examined and tax payers at Town Meeting have made their voices heard and the Selectboard and Finance Committee works hard at making effective repairs to keep all libraries functioning. She suggests if residents would like to make a robust campaign to vote on a debt exclusion and what it will cost to have all 3 libraries up to code, she encourages it.

Steve read to the Board, a statement received from Jen Audley as a resident of Montague: ***I see this as a great opportunity for Montague to make headway on some significant needs that might otherwise be pretty major obstacles for the town's development. I'm especially interested in directing these funds towards addressing situations where the town is responsible for very costly things that contribute to the broader public good-such as wastewater management and affordable housing. I hope you agree!***

Janel Nockleby voiced her support of the use of ARPA funds for affordable housing as well as interested in hearing more ways to use the ARPA funds in support of the libraries.

Jackie Stein asked two questions regarding the affordable housing. One is when the money is allocated and secondly the process of determining how the funds are used and if there is a way for citizens to voice their thoughts on the next step. Walter stated the ARPA funds have a time frame in which they need to be spent; possibly 6 years. A plan to spend funds need to be set up in that time period. A committee could be set up or the Selectboard could make the decision, but oversight needs to be determined. Steve also said the Selectboard is empowered by the Town to spend the money under the Federal grant context and can decide to allocate funds.

Alice Armen is very much in favor of the housing initiative and described how Montague has started out with the 5 villages which have the "gift" of the libraries along with a "walkable" community. She would like to have it kept in thought not to decentralize and keep as a "walkable" community.

Lizbeth Irving described the many steps required to use these funds and that it is not just handed over to a developer. There will be many opportunities to weigh in on the use of these funds.

Jeff Singleton stated that 40B is not affordable at all. Walter stated it is the Town's goal to meet the State's goal of affordable housing but no, it is not locked in if voted on tonight.

- **Discussion of next steps**

Chris Boutwell stated he is taking what the residents have stated tonight under advisement; these are areas to be considered. Matt is pleased that the town is proactive with projects being planned. Rich Kuklewicz stated the Board has heard valuable pieces of input and that funding towards affordable housing makes sense. He feels 10% is a reasonable amount towards the sites chosen; 1st Street and Canal Street. Walter stated 1st street can happen sooner and the Old Griswold site would take approximately 3-5 years.

Chelsey Little updated information for the Board and the figure for the screw pumps is now \$745,000. This adjustment is due to the different types of steel.

Steve feels a decision does not need to be made tonight but that a lot of very important information was given and received tonight which may generate more questions. He feels if this topic was placed on the March 28, 2022 agenda where the Board can develop a strategy that aligns with the funds, it will give time to start the reporting which is due the second week of April. Rich feels the Town should set aside funds for businesses as well as possibly essential workers. He believes the libraries and affordable housing are very important topics and agrees with Ariel on the large costs to maintain three libraries which may cost far more than what ARPA funds are available. Rich and Steve also stated the Town is not obligated to have all the funds earmarked in April but a strong game plan is encouraged. This will be discussed on March 28, 2022.

8. UNITY PARK POLLINATOR GARDEN PROJECT (PETER WACKERNAGEL AND THE BRICK HOUSE)

Peter Wackernagel, who is a Project Manager at the Brick House, gave a presentation via PowerPoint on a pollinator garden project at Unity Park. He described that he works with teens on the climate action and community building and that this project will add habitat and green space to the Turners Falls Unity Park. He spoke with Jon and Walter about this program and received a grant from FirstLight on climate action. This would be installed on the paved walking route on 3rd street to 2nd street.

Peter stated the Brewery is on board with this project as they could use the picnic tables along the walking route. He also spoke with the owners of Nova who are in support of the project. Matt asked if the garden is in planters using annuals and not taking up the

concrete. Peter described what is already at the site and how this project will be just filling in the spaces available as a buffer.

Jon Dobosz stated this is a much larger project of Montague's part of FRCOG's pollinator project plan. The Parks and Recreation approved unanimously last month to have the pollinator plan at all of the parks. Walter stated this project fits in well with private businesses.

Jeff Singleton asked about the concern of attracting bees and any issues should there be a liability due to bee stings. Lilith stated there are numerous pollinating gardens and that the benefits outweigh the risks.

Steve asks to make sure there is a dialogue on maintenance around these pollinator gardens and to work with the DPW to maintain in the foreseeable future. Peter also mentioned that the program will be maintained in the future.

Peter mentioned the other two projects he has planned and Rich would like him to come back for a future meeting to discuss those other projects.

9. REQUESTS FOR USE OF CANNABIS IMPACT/MITIGATION FUNDS

Matt Lord spoke to the Board about two specific special article requests of non-capital financial means which will be placed on the Annual Town Meeting warrant regarding the use of cannabis impact funds.

- **\$40,000 for afterschool STEM enrichment programming**

This first article is for \$40,000 to be used for Science Technology, Engineering and Math afterschool enrichment programs to be held at the FCTS and GMRSD. He feels this will allow the continuance of the STEM enrichment program as the one currently being administered at the Brick House through a grant, will be ending soon. Both Steve and Matt have done research on this and it does fall within the guidelines to fund youth enrichment programs.

- **\$25,000 for design of sidewalks linking the FCTS and TFHS/GFMS**

The second article request is for \$25,000 designed for the use of roadway improvements on Millers Falls Road and the Industrial Boulevard which allows the students a walkway between both the FCTS and the TFHS/GFMS. This would be for a feasibility study to make improvements to the area between these schools as there has been increased traffic.

These allocations have been set up and requested to be placed on the warrant. The process is that since it is under \$40,000, a bid process will be put in place where a program can bid towards those specific purposes at these specific schools.

- **Discuss any other proposed uses**

The Board agrees with the two article requests and would like to have them placed on the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting.

10. AUTHORIZE SUBMISSION TO MUNICIPAL SMALL BRIDGE GRANT PROGRAM – SWAMP ROAD BRIDGE M28-036 BRIDGE PRESERVATION (Design Request)

Walter spoke with the Board on this grant which is specifically for bridges that are 10-20 feet in length. Montague currently has two bridges that fall within these criteria. The Chestnut Hill Loop Bridge has been currently funded for this grant and the other is the bridge over Goddard Brook. This bridge is not in critical condition but it is recommended the town proceed with these funds in advance to design the rehab of this bridge and begin the design of a new bridge. This grant uses in-house design engineers so the administrative side of this grant is easy for the Town.

Jeff mentioned the FRTA bus is crucial for the system and it goes over Swamp Road so therefore, Walter should know.

Rich entertains a motion for Walter to submit to the Municipal Small Bridge Grant Program, the design request for Swamp Road Bridge M28-036 Bridge Preservation. Chris Boutwell made the motion and seconded by Matt Lord. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.

11. COMMUNITY ONE-STOP FOR GROWTH GRANT PROGRAM – PRIORITIZE EXPRESSION OF INTEREST SUBMISSIONS

Steve started the conversation regarding the Community One-Stop for Growth Grant Program. There is a deadline of March 18 for initial submission. The Town believes these 5 ideas reflect with the needs and funding of this program.

- **Sludge Compost Facility Phase 2 Design Study and Community Engagement**

The costs and disposal of compost is going through the roof. The need from environmental standpoint to see what options are available. This is top on the priority list.

- **Town Hall Basement and Annex Re-Use Design Study**

Walter spoke about this open space in the Town Hall basement where the funds would be used to hire an architect and work with the community as to the best use of this space. There would be a feasibility study done and would need to see what the costs would be for this project.

- **Montague Comprehensive Plan – Phase II Implementation**

Walter stated this would be the next phase in the Montague Comprehensive Plan and while the group has the momentum, look to apply as the One-Stop is an advantageous source for this plan.

- **“Indeck Coal Silo” Public Art Project Feasibility Assessment**

Walter spoke of the art project of the Indeck Coal Silo in the Canal section of town. This was recommended in the Downtown Recovery Plan to take this abandoned piece and make it into a landmark. This is complicated as it is a 135 foot round tower but a feasibility project needs to be done.

- **Real Estate Technical Assistance for Griswold Mill Site (11 Power Street)**

Walter explained this parcel just became town ownership and so this parcel would be where housing would be developed and the funds would be used with developers and proposals as well as real estate expertise for this space.

The Town can only place in two at this time. Walter's request is for the sludge compost facility study as well as the town hall basement and annex re-use design study. Matt, Chris and Rich also agree of those two items of importance.

12. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S BUSINESS

- **FRCOG DLTA Support Commitments**

Steve explained that each year, FRCOG looks to commitments of staff to assist with projects and priorities. FERC relicensing is the first on their list and collaborate in that project. Local Officials Continuing Education Series helps with the workshops for individuals within municipal offices. Marijuana Impact Fee Tracking and Evaluation is where FRCOG is getting involved with communities and can be hosts in associated with programs. Montague Pavement Management study is one that Steve asked FRCOG to consider and he is gratified to see that they will consider it. Montague is actually first in line to have this study done. Regional Sludge Pressing and Composting Opportunities is the last of the DLTA project where FRCOG has been a real advocate to reach out regionally. Steve stated these commitments offer a tremendous value to the community.

- **Procurement Updates**

- **Republic Services Extension Proposal**

In November, the Board decided not to seek outside bids for trash and recycling but to continue to work with the current vendor. Therefore, an extension clause of a 2-year period with Republic Services which shows a 4.6% increase for manual disposal as well as a small shift in costs utilizing automated town carts. Steve and Tom will bring the proposal before the Board in the next coming weeks.

- **Unity Park Playground Sealing and Painting**

This is for the sealing and the painting of the basketball court as well as the walkways around the play structures, etc. Great time to maintain and fill some of the cracks. This is a current bid active and hope to bring a contract forward to the Selectboard.

- **Montague Center Library Moisture Remediation/HVAC**

Steve describes the investments the Town has made in the libraries such as the moisture remediation project at the Montague Center Library and hope to see the installation of 2 mini-splits which will greatly help with the moisture. This will also repair the duct and bring up to code and have a secondary source of heat. They have been working actively with Caitlin Kelley on this project. He hopes to receive bids by April 1st and bring to the Board by the middle of the month of April.

- **DEP Standard Contract Form Renewal**

This is a 7-year vendor agreement with the DEP to receive recycling dividends (Sustainable Recovery Materials Program). Steve is listed as the signatory. **Rich entertains the motion to authorize Steve Ellis to sign the standard contract form with the DEP for renewal of the 7-year vendor agreement to receive recycling dividends through the Sustainable Recovery Materials Program. Motion made by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**

Next Regular Meeting Date: Monday, March 21, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. Steve also mentioned that the Selectboard are meeting this Wednesday in a joint meeting with the Finance Committee to discuss capital improvement suggestions.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board adjourned the meeting at 8:42 p.m. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

BettyLou Mallet
Scribe