

**MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING
VIA ZOOM
Monday, November 14, 2022 at 6:00 PM**

PRESENT:

Selectboard: Rich Kuklewicz (Chair), Chris Boutwell, Matt Lord
Town Administrator Steve Ellis

Assistant Town Administrator Walter Ramsey

Executive Assistant Wendy Bogusz

Montague Finance Committee Member Dorinda Bell-Upp

RiverCulture Director Suzanne LoManto

Parks and Recreation Director Jon Dobosz

Gill Selectboard: Charles Garbiel (Chair), Randy Crochier, Greg Snedeker

Gill-Montague School Committee: Jane Oakes and Bill Tomb

Six-Town Regionalization Planning Board: Alan Genovese (Chair), Mike Naughton, Lynn Reynolds, Bill Tomb, Greg Snedeker

Gill Finance Committee: Tupper Brown, Sandy Brown, Peter Turban

Gill-Montague School District Superintendent Brian Beck

Selectboard Chair opens the meeting at 6:00 PM, including announcing that the meeting is being recorded and roll call taken

Approve minutes of November 1 and 7, 2022

Postponed until next week

Public Comment Period: Individuals will be limited to two (2) minutes each and the Selectboard will strictly adhere to time allotted for public comment

None

Six-Town Regionalization Planning Board (STRPB)

Benefits and Challenges of a Possible Merger of GMRSD and PVRSD

The STRPB makes a slideshow presentation:

- Investigate the Possible Merger of GMRSD and PVRSD
- STRPB Members
- Who is the STRPB?
- Our Process
- Summary of Educational Findings
- Benefits of Expanding Enrollment
- Specific Educational Opportunities
- Expanded Community Outreach & Partnering Opportunities
- Student Services
- Athletics
- Opportunities for Staff
- Attending Enrollments - Actual & Projections
- Financial Findings
- Foundation Enrollments - Actual & Projections
- Foundation Enrollments - including FCTS
- Choice In/Out Comparisons
- Estimated Assessments Comparisons - FY23 Data
- Chapter 70 History
- Transportation Findings
- Facilities Findings
- Challenges

Community Questions & Comments

- In response to a question by Ariel Elan, Genovese states that the elementary schools continue to operate as they would in each community. However, working as a team over the K-12 district, the

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theater programs will move in from the elementary to middle schools. The middle schools will be housed in the Pioneer district and the high school students will be housed in the Montague campus.

- In response to a question by Elan, Genovese reviews the results of research into transportation. The STRPB does not see that the children will be on the buses for long amounts of time. Any exceptions can be mitigated by using transition buses.
- Naughton states it is hard to plot exactly what new routes may look like as it is dependent on where the children are, which could change from year to year.
- Lord comments that when understanding the effects that assessments would have on different towns, it would potentially be more effective to use ratios rather than numbers.
- Naughton states that the slide to which Lord was referring does reference the underlying spreadsheet from which the data comes. He suggests that the STRPB could try to come up with enough different slides to answer everyone's questions.
- In response to a question by Lord, Genovese states that the expanded educational opportunities would give the students more attractive options and offer them the skills and tools they need for their specific activities.
- Tomb responds to Lord's question by stating that the combined school districts would create efficiencies that would allow sections to be filled with interested students; for example, annually instead of biannually. He also states that the total number of offerings that we would be able to provide would serve the students better.
- In response to a question by Kuklewicz, Genovese states that elementary school students would remain in the communities that they are in.
- In response to a comment by Singleton, Genovese states that the STRPB understands that the heart and soul of the communities is their elementary schools. They want to make sure that the children are prepared for the programs in the middle and high school levels. This would involve coordination in the curriculum and professional development in order for smooth transitions.
- Beck responds to Singleton's question that the issue with the elementary schools was not to change anything as it exists today.
- Naughton states that the question of how a school would be closed would be covered in a regional agreement for a proposed district. There are a number of several important questions that would need to be covered in a regional agreement.
- In response to a question by Lord, Beck states that Turners High School can handle about 125-150 students per graduating class. There were 36 students in 2022.
- Kuklewicz states that he hopes that by creating a stronger district that has more opportunities, we will start attracting students and at least slow the decreasing numbers from multiples of 100s to much smaller numbers.
- In response to a question by Ellis, Naughton shares that we never got estimates that were solid enough to do any kind of projections.
- Snedeker responds to Ellis by commenting that since it has taken us this long to get to this point with six towns, how much longer would it take to get even bigger, and what would be the political realities to get to that point?

Wrap-up and Closing Remarks:

- Genovese states "If you build something, they will come. If there are more opportunities for students and the value of that for the communities is something that they are behind, that has some value of its own. We're trying to do something for all our kids in the districts now, and we don't know the demographics of what's going to happen in 10 years. We may find ourselves looking at the same challenge in 10 years. In the meantime, what are we offering to the kids in our school system is now?"
- The information is on the STRPB website.
- There will be follow-up public forums and surveys as the Board would like a sense from the community and different stakeholders of how they feel.
- The STRPB Board wrote an efficiency and regionalization grant.

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- Naughton states that they are looking for feedback. Comments, reactions, and questions will be responded to as quickly and efficiently and completely as possible.
- Reynolds asks that everyone present at tonight's meeting spread the word and get the interest going.

Snedeker makes a motion to adjourn the Gill Selectboard. Seconded by Crochier, unanimously approved. Snedeker - Aye, Crochier - Aye, Garbiel - Aye

Jon Dobosz, Parks and Recreation Director

Discuss possible continuation of The Great Falls Fest

- Following Mike Nelson's announcement that he will no longer be keeping the Great Falls Fest going, Dobosz feels that continuing the festival can be done on a much smaller scale, possibly at Unity Park on the lower end of Second Street. Moving on with a different title but keeping with the same themes is something that can possibly be pulled off successfully.
- Kuklewicz and Ellis met with Nelson to get an idea of the logistics. The Town may be able to find some seed money to help with planning and organization.
- LoManto is in favor of this concept and states she is always trying to figure out different ways to get different groups of people to enjoy downtown, Unity Park, and Avenue A.
- Kuklewicz suggests that Dobosz and LoManto have a discussion with Ellis and Ramsey and see what kind of ideas we can come up with.

Execute contract with Scott Dixon, Tailblock Coping Company, Unity Skate Park Caulking Repairs, \$1,500

Boutwell makes the motion to execute the contract with Scott Dixon, Tailblock Coping Company, Unity Skate Park Caulking Repairs, \$1,500. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Town Administrator's Business

Hiring Committee Updates

- The hiring committees for both the Town Planner position and the Health Director position have been actively meeting. They have had solid pools of candidates, are in the process of conducting interviews, and feel that they may be in position to bring recommendations to the Selectboard by November 28.
- In response to a question by Ellis, Boutwell states he was comfortable with the hiring boards bringing a recommendation for just one candidate - i.e., a "breakaway leader."
- Lord and Kuklewicz feel that they would rather see multiple candidates brought to the Board as opposed to one breakaway leader.

Financial Policies Update

The new set of financial policies contained three policies that the Finance Committee wanted to hold making recommendations on for the Board: the Annual Budget process, the Capital Improvement Planning process, and the Town Reserve Fund policies. The Finance Committee has completed its process on a couple of those policies. The previous Chair (Jen Audley) and current Chair (Fran Wisniewski) will be here on November 28 to answer any questions the Board has specific to the policies.

Discussion of Special Town Meeting

- Ellis suggests that the Special Town Meeting be held on Tuesday, February 28 or Thursday, March 2.
- Kuklewicz, Lord, and Boutwell would prefer to have the meeting on Thursday, March 2.
- Kuklewicz recommends being as ready as possible by the end of January in order to prevent having two meetings.

MIIA 2-year Rate Guarantee Proposal

- *Boutwell makes the motion to authorize the Chair to sign the 2-year Guarantee Proposal with MIIA as presented for FY24-25. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

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- Kuklewicz suggests doing an RFP for FY26.

Topics not anticipated in the 48 hours posting/Montague City Road Sewer Update

Ramsey states that the sewer line project is approximately one week behind schedule due to a high water table. Two pumps are running to keep the trench clear of water. The contractor is running into some additional infrastructure (an old storm drain line and some gas lines). Ramsey forecasts that there may be some cost overruns (approximately 20-25% according to the contractor). Ramsey reminds the Board that we appropriated a 25% contingency last week.

Anticipated Executive Session in accordance with G. L. c.30A, §21(a)(6) to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real estate, Kearsarge

The Chair deems that holding this discussion in open session would be detrimental to the Town's position.

Boutwell makes the motion to go into Executive Session in accordance with G. L. c.30A, §21(a)(6) to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real estate, Kearsarge. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Boutwell makes the motion to go into Executive Session. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye