

**MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING  
VIA ZOOM  
Monday, March 13, 2023 at 6:00 PM**

Meeting was opened at 6:00 PM. Present were Selectboard members Rich Kuklewicz, Chris Boutwell, and Matt Lord (*joined at 6:40 PM*); Town Administrator Steve Ellis; Executive Assistant Wendy Bogusz; Assistant Town Administrator Walter Ramsey; CWF Superintendent Chelsey Little; FCRHA Director of Community Development Brian McHugh; and Finance Committee Member John Hanold.

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

**Approve Selectboard Minutes from March 6, 2023**

Postponed

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

Mark Fisk asks a question about running a three-phase power to the pump house. This would cost about \$70,000. The Board decides to postpone this issue until later in the meeting.

**Sewer Commission, Chelsey Little  
Discharge Permit Report Monthly Summary**

Little displays the summary for February and reviews our average monthly flow, our BOD, our TSS, and our pH.

**Execute EPA Permit Signatory Request, Tim Little**

*Boutwell makes the motion to execute the agreement to allow Tim Little to be a signator on EPA permit requests, and authorize the Chair to sign it. Seconded by Kuklewicz, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

**Execute MOU with Franklin County Solid Waste Management District (FCSWMD) Outside Sludge**

*Boutwell makes the motion to Execute MOU with Franklin County Solid Waste Management District (FCSWMD) Outside Sludge, and authorize the Chair to sign it. Seconded by Kuklewicz, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

**Consider rescinding American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds for Screw Pump Project - Total to date (\$800,000 - \$26,500 encumbered for engineering = \$773,500) update**

*Boutwell makes the motion to rescind its previous allocation on ARPA for the Screw Pump Project from \$8700,000 down to \$26,500, which would return \$773,500 into the general ARPA account. Seconded by Kuklewicz, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

**Authorization to apply for USDA Forest Service Grant: Wood Innovations Projects-CWF Boiler Replacement Project**

*Boutwell makes the motion to authorize the Clean Water Facility, with the assistance of the Assistant Town Administrator to apply for a USDA Forest Service Grant: Wood Innovations Projects-CWF Boiler Replacement Project. Seconded by Kuklewicz, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

**TPO Magazine Article Interview Update**

Little shares that TPO Magazine wants to do another interview on us, with a focus on how we do a lot of things in-house to save money. This should be coming out in October.

**Registration for Assembly: WPCF Third Annual Earth Day Celebration, Saturday, April 22, 2023, 10:00 AM -12:00 PM**

*Boutwell makes the motion to approve the request for Assembly for the WPCF Third Annual Earth Day Celebration, Saturday, April 22, 2023, 10:00 AM -12:00 PM. Seconded by Kuklewicz, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

**MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING**  
**VIA ZOOM**  
**Monday, March 13, 2023 at 6:00 PM**

**Senator Comerford, Discuss legislative priorities and request for 2023**

**Exit Civil Service**

- Comerford states that this issue is definitely on the radar.
- Comerford shares that they have gotten the Bridge Academy funding and are working on increasing graduates from the academy so that communities can hire them.

**Demolition Support - Strathmore Mill**

- Ramsey shares that we have just done the Canal District Master Plan, which calls for riverfront open space.
- Ramsey agrees with Comerford that we need to have a meeting with officials to tour the site and talk about specific issues.
- We will be looking at MassWorks for funding to advance the design.
- Ellis share his concern that taking an incremental approach may cause us to wind up with a building that starts to fail at some point, and once that happens, we will have a crisis. He urges us to think bigger and faster if there is a way to do that.
- Comerford asks Ramsey and Ellis to decide what the next step is so we can start extending invitations to the appropriate people.

**Continuation of Beneficial Municipal Grant Programs**

- Comerford suggests that the Town make connections with the Healey-Driscoll team and let them know which grants are good for the kinds of community projects that we need.
- Ramsey urges the State to continue to prioritize investing in Environmental Justice Communities.

**State-level incentives for professional municipal training and service**

- Ellis states that although we have an excellent candidate for the Board of Health Director, we would've loved someone local.
- Ellis feels we don't have strong enough college-level preparatory programs that are focused on turning out the kind of professionals that we need in order to have a succession pool for the next generation of municipal jobs.
- Comerford states that with regard to the State action for local public health excellence, she has her eye on public health funding for Montague. She will continue to advocate for having the State pay for our fair share of local public health work.

**Thoughtful approach to the expiration of the remote meeting allowance**

Comerford thanks everybody who responded to the survey and believes there will be a vote on the extension.

**Support the Cost of New Election Requirements**

- Kuklewicz informs Comerford of the changes in the Town Clerk's Office.
- Ellis states that there is a 25% increase in our budget this year to properly prepare to have the staff available in the Town Clerk's Office for the next election cycle.

**Enhance Support for Maintenance of Roads and Bridges**

- In response to a question by Ellis regarding Chapter 90, Comerford states she feels we need a new algorithm that takes into account road miles. She feels that there is a heightened awareness, but that the inequities are highlighted. She feels that there should be work with the Fair Share Dollars and is looking into the MBTA money.
- Comerford suggests that Montague write a strong, pointed, good, constructive letter talking about the Winter Road Assistance Program and the requested change to Chapter 90 in terms of the formula and the amount.
- Comerford states that they are working to get the Transportation Secretary out to Western Mass to look into various issues, including Chapter 90.

## **MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING**

### **VIA ZOOM**

**Monday, March 13, 2023 at 6:00 PM**

#### **Wastewater Infrastructure**

- Comerford states that Secretary Theoharides and Secretary Card both agree that the MVP (Municipal Vulnerability Program) should be expanded and expresses concern that communities should be able to go to MVP for water sewer. She suggests that as we communicate with the Healey-Driscoll team, we should continue to remind them that MVP (1) is a huge legislative priority, and (2) that it has to be open especially to Western Mass folks who don't have other capital sources.
- In response to a question by Jeff Singleton, Comerford states she has a bill that is looking at biosolids, which involves identifying, testing, and labeling solids; then making a plan in the Commonwealth to deal with this.

#### **Rachelle Ackerman, Associate Director, Musica Franklin**

##### **Request for Entertainment License at Unity Park, May 20, 2023, 12:00 PM to 6:00 PM**

*Boutwell makes the motion to approve the request for an Entertainment License at Unity Park, May 20, 2023, 12:00 PM to 6:00 PM. Seconded by Kuklewicz, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

#### **FCRHRA, Brian McHugh**

##### **Authorize Payment #7 to Berkshire Design Group, in the amount of \$2,926.00 for professional landscape architectural, civil engineering and land surveying services for the FY21 MONT CDBG Avenue A Streetscape Phase III Continuation Project**

*Boutwell makes the motion to authorize Payment #7 to Berkshire Design Group, in the amount of \$2,926.00 for professional landscape architectural, civil engineering and land surveying services for the FY21 MONT CDBG Avenue A Streetscape Phase III Continuation Project. Seconded by Kuklewicz, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

#### **Town Clerk Office and Staff Transition**

##### **Plan for Physical Space**

- Ellis states that the most effective plan for space seems to be to take the first-floor Selectboard Conference Room and build out two work stations for the Clerk's Office, and retain the existing office space. One of the work stations downstairs would be for the Town Clerk and the second one would be for the State computer to be available for any of the staff in the office.
- There are proposals for new carpeting in the Town Hall.
- There is a modest amount of funding for new desks for the Town Clerk's Office.
- In response to a question by Kuklewicz, Ramsey states that the preliminary design work for the large meeting room is essentially complete. The cost to build out the room and the required ADA restrooms comes in at about \$500,000.

#### **Discuss Town Clerk Hiring Process**

- We need a Town Clerk in place on July 1st.
- If the change from elected to appointed does not occur, this appointment would run through until the next Annual Town Election. If the change goes through, then the position would be a longer-term appointment.
- Our current Assistant Town Clerk would be a candidate. The Selectboard will have to consider the hiring process. Historically the Board has opted to have an open hiring process.
- Kuklewicz suggests establishing a "Town Clerk's Office Group" to look at both positions. This committee could first interview our current Assistant Town Clerk, then determine whether we should conduct a search. The committee can then help us find a new Assistant Town Clerk once the Town Clerk's position has been established. Lord and Boutwell agree with this process.
- Kuklewicz asks Ellis to put a group together, which would include a couple of long-term Town Meeting members or individuals that understand the Clerk's role.
- Ellis states we don't usually convene larger committees to hire union positions.
- Ariel Elan expresses interest in being in the committee.

## MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING

### VIA ZOOM

Monday, March 13, 2023 at 6:00 PM

#### Staffing Plan and Related Budget Impact/Request

Ellis notes that the Town Clerk would need a significant amount of on-call time during the transition. According to Town Account Carolyn Olsen, 10 hours a week for support has been budgeted.

#### Personnel Board

##### Proposed Final Collection System Lead Operator Position Description

- Ellis reviews changes in the updated Lead Operator Position Description.
- The next step would be working with the UE to develop a Memorandum of Agreement.
- Ellis reminds the Board that we have an obligation to develop a Heavy Equipment Lead Operator Position, which creates a team leader of heavy equipment operators. Ellis suggests the Memorandum of Agreement encapsulates both positions.
- *Boutwell makes the motion to approve the final draft of the Collection System Lead Operator as presented, and to authorize the Chair to sign it. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye.*

#### Update on Heavy Equipment Lead Operator Position Description

Postponed until we are given permission to create and fund the position at the May Town Meeting.

#### Signing of Integrated Collective Bargaining Agreements:

- **New England Police Benevolent Association Local 183 Patrol and Detectives**  
Postponed until after the Union and the Police Chief discuss one more change on the contracts.
- **New England Police Benevolent Association Local 184 Sergeants**  
Postponed until after the Union and the Police Chief discuss one more change on the contracts.
- **United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America Local 274**  
*Lord makes the motion to execute the integrated contract from United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America Local 274 effective July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2025. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*
- **National Association of Government Employees Local R1-325**  
*Boutwell makes the motion to execute the FY23 through FY25 Collective Bargaining Agreement with the National Association of Government Employees Local R1-325. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

#### Reminder: Employment Contract Renewals

##### Steven Ellis, Town Administrator

Kuklewicz will meet with the Town Administrator to discuss contract renewals.

##### Chris Bonnett, Police Lieutenant

Kuklewicz states he had a preliminary meeting with the Police Chief and Police Lieutenant.

##### Chelsey Little, CWF Superintendent

Kuklewicz will meet with the CWF Superintendent to discuss contract renewals.

#### Review of Capitol Requests, ARPA Commitments

- **Capitol Project Cost Updates**  
Ramsey displays and reviews the ARPA Spending Strategy.
- **Rescind library main branch feasibility planning appropriation \$32,250 (Otherwise appropriated at March STM)**  
*Boutwell makes the motion to rescind the previous vote to allocate \$23,250 to the library main branch feasibility plan appropriation as appropriated at the Special Town Meeting. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*
- **Montague Center Park Cost Estimate**  
Ramsey states that Jon Dobosz received an engineer's cost estimate for the Montague Center Park project. It will cost \$1.5 million to do the whole park. In light of that news, the request was

## **MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING**

### **VIA ZOOM**

**Monday, March 13, 2023 at 6:00 PM**

withdrawn. Dobosz will re-shape the project. Ramsey suggests that this could be an ARPA-eligible project.

- **11th Street Bridge Repairs**
  - A long-term repair would be repainting the bridge in the next five years.
  - Short-term repairs include repairing the concrete abutments and the bolts that anchor the span to the abutments, which would need to be done by a qualified contractor; and repairing the steel handrails on the bridge, which can be done by the DPW.
  - The short-term repairs can be done for \$600 to \$100,000.
  - The engineer is the process of drawing up a proposal to do the bid specs for the work.
- The Selectboard determines that following projects are priorities: Social Services, Cultural Council, Septage Receiving Station Upgrade, Parking Lot Reconstruction, Montague Center Town Hall Replacer, 11th Street Bridge Repair, Fall Festival, Town Hall Carpeting and Floor Replacement, and Demolish 38 Avenue A Structure.
- Ariel Elan expresses dismay at the process that the Selectboard is using to determine their choices.

#### **FY24 Budget Review, Steve Ellis**

##### **Review of Departmental Budget Requests**

Deferred to a future meeting.

##### **Review Finance Committee Recommendations Relative to Allocation of Overlay Surplus and Unused Free Cash**

- There is a total amount of \$250,000 that the Board of Assessors has voted to release from their Overlay Account back to the General Budget. There is also a considerable sum of Free Cash (approximately \$2 million) that is not presently accounted for as spending in the budget. The Finance Committee unanimously voted to request \$250,000 to the OPEB Account and voted to place \$1.5 million of Free Cash in Town Capital Stabilization and \$500,000 into the OPEB Trust.
- Hanold reviews the OPED appropriation, the Overlay Reserve, and Free Cash.
- Hanold states that the OPED appropriation is a one-time effort.
- After much discussion, Kuklewicz states that we should consider the amount of money in the GMRSD Stabilization Account.

#### **FirstLight Power FERC Relicensing Settlement Agreement**

##### **Update on Settlement Process outcomes and Timeline**

Ellis states that there is no progress that would allow him to bring anything new to the Board.

##### **Review of Currently Proposed Recreation, and Flows and Fish Passage Agreements**

- Ellis states that the Town was deeply involved in the Recreation Agreement, and not involved in preparation of the Flows and Fish Passage.
- The public position on Recreation is that we like what was in the AIP and we would like to see that come forward as an agreement.
- March 31st is the presented end date by FERC for the acceptance of any agreements.

#### **Assistant Town Administrator, Walter Ramsey**

##### **Consider Next Steps in Trinity Health New England Conveyance of the Farren Care Center Property**

Ramsey states we have been in discussion with Trinity Health, and we have indicated that we want them to do a Phase II Environmental Assessment.

#### **Town Administrator Report**

##### **Congressionally Directed Spending Award for Avenue A Streetscape Improvements**

- Ellis states that the project is activated.
- It appears we will get solid support from the US Housing and Urban Development.
- The end date for the grant is the year 2031.
- There are a lot of process steps that we will have to follow.

## **MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING**

### **VIA ZOOM**

**Monday, March 13, 2023 at 6:00 PM**

- We may be able to cover some of the design work under the grant. This has not been confirmed.

#### **Topics not anticipated within the 48 hour posting**

- **Weather response**  
Ellis is going to meet with the DPW Superintendent tomorrow morning to regarding the upcoming storm (such as closing of Town Hall)
- **Firstlight notification**  
Ellis states that he received a notification from FirstLight Power regarding a sheen in the water below the damn. They are engaged with DEP to contain the area.

*Boutwell makes the motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved.*

*Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*