

## **MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING**

### **VIA ZOOM**

**Monday, August 28, 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 6:30 PM); Town Administrator Steve Ellis; Executive Assistant Wendy Bogusz; Assistant Town Administrator Walter Ramsey; Library Director Caitlin Kelley; Montague Retirement Board Member Carolyn Olsen; Treasurer/Collector Eileen Seymour; and Gill-Montague Representatives (Superintendent Brian Beck, Business Manager Joanne Blier, and School Committee Member Heather Katsoulis).

Selectboard Chair opens the meeting at 6:00 PM.

#### **Approve Selectboard Minutes from August 21, 2023**

*Boutwell makes the motion to approve the Selectboard Minutes from August 21, 2023 as presented. Seconded by Kuklewicz, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

**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

#### **Liquor License Hearing**

**El Nopalito Restaurant, LLC d/b/a El Nopalito, Jahmes Campos Peters as manager, has applied for an on premises, All Alcoholic Beverages Liquor License (Restaurant). The premise is located at 196 Turners Falls Road, Montague, MA**

- Kuklewicz calls Liquor License Hearing to order.
- An abutter expresses concern regarding customers drinking next-door. The owners respond that drinking will be done with the meals and that this will not be a bar atmosphere.
- *Kuklewicz makes the motion to approve the Special Liquor License for El Nopalito Restaurant, LLC d/b/a El Nopalito, 196 Turners Falls Road, Montague, MA as discussed; and send the paper work off for review by the ABCC. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Kuklewicz - Aye, Boutwell - Aye*

#### **Personnel Board**

- **Chris Boutwell Special Municipal Employee Financial Interest Disclosure**  
Postponed until September 11 meeting.
- **Appoint Gracen (Grae) McLaughlin, Montague Public Libraries Children's Program Assistant, 13.5 hrs/wk, NAGE Grade B, Step 1, effective August 29, 2023**  
*Boutwell makes the motion to appoint Gracen (Grae) McLaughlin, Montague Public Libraries Children's Program Assistant, 13.5 hrs/wk, NAGE Grade B, Step 1, effective August 29, 2023. Seconded by Kuklewicz, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

#### **Montague Retirement Board**

**Explanation of benefit and cost associated with proposal to increase retiree base for cost-of-living adjustments from \$18,000 to \$30,000**

- Olsen explains the benefit and cost associated with the proposal to increase retiree base for cost-of-living adjustments from \$18,000 to \$30,000.
- The Retirement Board feels that this increase is necessary to protect the standard of living for retirees and their well-being, and also that this will benefit the Town by securing a benefit that will aid in both staff recruitment and staff retention.
- *Boutwell makes the motion to endorse the proposal to increase the retiree base for cost-of-living adjustments from \$18,000 to \$30,000. Seconded by Kuklewicz, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

#### **Eileen Seymour, Treasurer/Collector**

##### **Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)**

Seymour reviews the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP):

- This program is through Community Action of Pioneer Valley and goes until the end of this year.
- Peter Wingate, the head of the program, had told Seymour that some taxpayers had reached out to them.
- The taxpayers pay for sewer and water bills that are in arrears.
- There is a requirement criteria; not everyone is eligible.

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- *Boutwell makes the motion to authorize the Treasurer/Collector to sign the contract with Community Action of Pioneer Valley and the Town of Montague for the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord- Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

#### **Gill Montague Regional School District**

- **Update on status of application to MA School Building Authority (MSBA)**
  - Beck discusses the intention to build a new elementary school to replace Hillcrest Elementary School. This project would involve building an expansion onto the existing Sheffield Elementary School.
  - The Statement of Interest has not been formally accepted by the MA School Building Authority (MSBA), but has not been rejected at this point in time.
  - The MSBA will conduct a senior study, which would involve meeting for several hours with Beck, the Principal, Blier, the Director of Facilities, and representatives from the Town.
  - According to the feedback from the meeting, anywhere from 25% to 50% of the school districts that had senior studies will be approved depending on the overall amount.
  - Blier states that we are meeting with the MSBA next month, and that the invitation period into the MSBA Program could be within the next six months.
  - If we are accepted, we would form a Building Committee and would need to request funds from the Town to do a feasibility study and design. Blier believes these funds would be 76% to 85% reimbursable.
- **Request for Affirmation of Selectboard Support of MSBA Application**  
*Boutwell makes the motion to affirm the request from the Gill-Montague School District to continue the MSBA Application. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord- Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

#### **Town Administrator Business**

- **Discuss schedule for September Meetings, schedule for finalizing Town Meeting Warrant and Recommendations**
  - The Special Town Meeting Warrant needs to be set by September 25.
  - The Selectboard meeting on September 11 will be via ZOOM. The Selectboard will review the Town Meeting Warrant during this meeting.
  - The meeting on September 18 will be in-person. The Selectboard will have the goal of approving the Town Meeting Warrant during this meeting.
- **Request that Chris Boutwell be named a Special Municipal Employee (*not on agenda*)**  
*Lord makes the motion to accept the request that Chris Boutwell be named a Special Municipal Employee, and authorize the Chair to sign it. Seconded by Kuklewicz, approved. Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye, Boutwell - Abstain*
- **Notice of Federal FY22-23 CDBG Grant Award of \$1,325,682**  
Ellis shares that he attended an event in Gardner in which he was informed that Montague has received a Federal FY22-23 CDBG Grant Award of \$1,325,682. Ellis also shares that he spoke with the new Chair of the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities and broached the idea of creating a Micro Entitlement Program for communities such as Montague. The Board approves Ellis's sending a letter to follow-up on that question.
- **Request authorization to contract for services up to \$10,174.88 to secure the Strathmore Mill Complex from unauthorized entry. Funds to be drawn from the Community Development Discretionary Unsafe/Unhealthy Buildings Account**  
*Boutwell makes the motion to authorize the DPW and the Town Administrator to enter into a contract for services up to \$10,174.88 to secure the Strathmore Mill Complex from unauthorized entry; funds to be drawn from the Community Development Discretionary Unsafe/Unhealthy Buildings Account. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord- Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*
- **Update on Farren Care Center Demolition Schedule and Process for Acceptance of Land**
  - The project is on track for a November completion.
  - The building demolition is not quite done.
  - Pulverizing of material on-site for processing and movement will continue into September.
  - The backfill, top soil, and seeding will take place in October.
  - Underground storage tanks have been removed.
  - There is an item on the Special Town Meeting Warrant that would give the Selectboard authorization to accept the property.

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- Ellis explains that we want a commitment from the company that they are going to fund and conduct a Phase II Environmental Study of the entire lot before we take the property. The Board approves the general direction that Ellis is planning to take regarding this issue.
- **Other/Disaster Relief**
  - Ellis shares that the State has opted not to submit an application for Federal disaster relief for storms that occurred in July.
  - Private homeowners or business owners that have had significant damage from the storm are encouraged to explore opportunities through a link on the website.

*Boutwell makes the motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:58 PM. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved.*

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