

**MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING**  
**In-Person at 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls and VIA ZOOM**  
**Monday, November 6, 2023 at 6:30 PM**

Meeting was opened at 6:30 PM. Present were Selectboard members Rich Kuklewicz, Chris Boutwell, and Matt Lord; Town Administrator Steve Ellis; Assistant Town Administrator Walter Ramsey; Executive Assistant Wendy Bogusz; Police Chief Chris Williams; Animal Control Officer Calin Giurgiu; Airport Director Bryan Camden; RiverCulture Director Suzanne LoManto; and Board of Health Director Ryan Paxton.

**Selectboard Chair opens the meeting, including announcing that the meeting is being recorded and roll call taken**

**Dog Complaint Hearing, Kim James-Caron, 20 N Street, Turners Falls**

**Violation of Dangerous Dog Order as those terms are defined in said statute**

- Kuklewicz reads aloud the Notice of Hearing.
- Town Counsel Greg Corbo swears Giurgiu and Williams in.
- Giurgiu reports that when he went to 20 N Street on October 25, he heard that there were more dogs at the house. He informed James-Caron that he would be back on Tuesday to get some of the dogs. He then went to the shelter to inform them that they would need room for about 15 dogs. On November 1 he removed two adult dogs and six puppies. They had to leave the others as there was no room at the shelter. Today James-Caron signed the remaining dogs over (two adult dogs and nine puppies). There was no proof that any of the dogs were registered or vaccinated.
- Lord states there has been a violation as James-Caron had not made the necessary effort to cooperate to demonstrate that she was operating inside the direction of the order.
- *Lord makes the motion that the Selectboard finds that the order dated October 18 to Kim James-Caron has been violated. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye, Kuklewicz*
- *Lord makes the motion that the Selectboard prohibits Kim James-Caron from licensing any dogs in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the next five years based on the violation of the October 18 order. Seconded by Kuklewicz, approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Nay, Kuklewicz - Aye*
- Kuklewicz closes the hearing.

**Approve Selectboard Minutes from October 17, 23, and 30 if available**

*Lord makes the motion to approve the Selectboard Minutes from October 17, 23, and 30 excepting the comment from Selectperson Matt Lord regarding excess levy fees that is in the conversation regarding the tax rates that happened on the 23rd. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, 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

**Updates on Airport Solar Project, Bryan Camden**

- Camden goes over some challenges regarding the Airport Solar Project. There are some delayed payment phases due to the interconnect agreement with ISO New England and Eversource. The developer plans to resubmit a reduced capacity interconnect agreement with Eversource.
- In response to a question by Kuklewicz, Camden states that the best-case scenario would be to receive permission to do the interconnect and move forward, and we'll see that at least three of their quarterly payments will fall into FY24. We would be able to put about \$100,000 into our retained earnings. The worst-case scenario would be that Eversource will not allow the interconnect and they would have to do resubmit an additional study, and we would realize closer to \$110,000 to \$115,000 of the actual revenue in FY24.
- Lord suggests taking a more candid look at it for FY25.
- Ellis suggests that Camden go a little deeper into December before worrying about submitting the FY25 budget. He would like to take the submission on a delayed basis and communicate with Camden and Olsen, rather than having the hard December 11 deadline for getting the airport budget.

**Suzanne LoManto, RiverCulture Director**

**Use of Spinner Park and Sidewalks on Avenue A and Third Street: It's a Wonderful Night in Turners Falls, December 8, 2023, 6:15 PM to 8:15 PM**

*Boutwell makes the motion to approve the Use of Spinner Park and Sidewalks on Avenue A and Third Street: It's a Wonderful Night in Turners Falls, December 8, 2023, 6:15 PM to 8:15 PM. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

**Public Hearing - FY24 EPA Brownfield Clean-up Grant-Strathmore Mill - 20 Canal Road**

- We have an application put together for the FY24 EPA Brownfield Clean-up Grant for \$4,920,400. No match is required.

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- We were required to develop an analysis of Brownfields clean-up alternatives. Our alternatives are (1) Do nothing, (2) Remove the building and abate 10 feet deep of soils underneath the building, and (3) Remove the building and contaminate just the surface level soils down to 3 feet deep. The analysis recommends going ahead with Option #3, which is the most cost-effective.
- Ramsey reviews the proposal for the Cleanup Grant.
- The deadline for the application is Monday, November 13th.
- In response to a question by resident Janel Nockleby, Ramsey states that the intent of the project is to include Building 11 with the caveat of "as the budget allows."
- In response to a question by Jeff Singleton, Ramsey states that the soils element was included to make sure we were being thorough in addressing the grant criteria.
- In response to a question by Singleton, Ramsey confirms that the project will stabilize Turners Falls Hydro.
- The Selectboard approves the request for \$4.9 million.

**Board of Health Business, Ryan Paxton**

- **Update Regarding Naloxbox Installation in Montague in Montague**  
Paxton shares that there are some Naloxboxes that are in the process of being installed in the Town of Montague. They were purchased by the Opioid Task Force of Franklin County. They are going to be maintained by Tapestry Health.
- **Request Authorization to Join Opioid Settlement Agreement with McKinsey & Company, Inc.**  
The Board agrees to continue forward with the class action lawsuit. As of today, we have received \$15,122.30 as part of the various opioid settlements.

**Assistant Town Administrator Business**

- **Strathmore Mill short-term stabilization needs and financing**
  - Ramsey states that given the condition of the building, we need to consider whether as a community we should appropriate funds to prevent the building from becoming a safety hazard. Sections of the roof have completely failed and are not easy to fix. Portions of masonry are failing and gaps are emerging. Ramsey asks the Board to consider making a capital request to set up a fund to stabilize the mill on an as-needed basis. Another approach would be to get an emergency appropriation should the event happen.
  - Lord suggests the following approach: Comparing what the FY23 overall capital budget was. Reviewing what was projected for FY24 and asking how much of that we could reasonably delay. We may look at FY25 and see what we can push off for a year to make some room for the Strathmore Mill. If this process doesn't get us to where we can to be, then we can have a larger conversation about how urgent it is to allocate more funds.
  - Kuklewicz states that he would prefer doing our best to figure out a way to get rid of the mill. He suggests allocating some money from ARPA in the event that we need to do some very short-term work. We can also try to get some Federal funding.
  - We have \$227,000 in contingency that we can use as an emergency reserve account if necessary.
  - Kuklewicz comments on the importance of what triggers public safety.
- **Town Hall parking lot conditions and needs**  
Ramsey displays a photo of the Town Hall parking lot and discusses its poor condition and what repairs need to be done. We've estimated a budget of \$200,000. The Board gives unanimous consent for Ramsey to move forward.
- **Montague City Road Flooding Project updates**  
The contractors did not start last week as planned as there was a change in the work approach. They will start later this week. Once they start, we will have the road closed.
- **Burn Dump Closeout updates, additional design expense to address DEP Order**
  - We are in the process of developing the secondary storm water basin. The DEP order has been extended through the end of December.
  - Kearsarge is responsible for implementing the design that the Town has. They have three bids that they are going to be looking at and hope to make a selection later this week.
  - We had to use some of our existing engineering budget for the initial close-out design with GZA Environmental. Now we have a cost of \$35,000, which addresses the DEP order to design stormwater basins and includes construction admin. and oversight.
  - We have an existing appropriation of \$6,110. The Unexpected Engineering Account has \$25,000, which would not be enough to cover the design. The other potential funding source for this could be ARPA.
  - Ellis suggests placing this item on next week's agenda before making a final decision.

**Town Administrator's Business**

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- **Notice of Substantial Completion for Colle-Shea Roof Project**  
Ellis gives Notice of Substantial Completion for Colle-Shea Roof Project. We now have a fully warranted roof for 20 years for both buildings. The final cost was \$209,700. Most of the remainder of the appropriation will be placed in the Colle Reserve Fund.
- **TA's Input to Mass DOT Northern Tier East-West Rail Hearing of October 26**
  - Ellis reviews the Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study, which is a feasibility study of rail access between North Adams and Boston.
  - The discussion at the hearing included Public Workshop Feedback - Clarifications: Ridership; Overview of Travel Purpose in the Corridor and Station Catchment Areas for LBS Trips; Service Alternatives - Initial Evaluation; Proposed Phase 2 Service Alternatives, Alternative 3 - Electrified Service and Alternative 4- Full Local Services; and a rail link that would involve a changeover in Fitchburg.
  - Ellis reports that the general feedback of the group was that higher investment was better and electrified service would be preferable.
  - Shelburne Falls, Athol, and Gardner do not appear as stops in the electrified service.
  - The takeaways from Phase 2 was that every option would be better for Western Massachusetts.
  - All options would have long-term environment and economic benefits.
  - Ellis had offered the following feedback: (1) Equitable access to the opportunity associated with being able to access the primary job market, cultural centers, healthcare, and other resources is a critical issue for Northern Tier Western Mass. communities; (2) We are hopeful that it would be part of the long-term strategy the State should employ for countering the population decline and potential economic decline that may affect Western Mass. communities; (3) We see that it could potentially discourage outmigration; (4) Ellis encourages them to build the right system (building an infrastructure that is likely to serve for 50-100 years) and prefers more stops and no transfer in Fitchburg.
  - Ellis believes that there will be additional public hearings and the Board will have additional opportunities to weigh in.
  - Ramsey adds that the Montague EDIC have offered a statement of support for any of the outcomes, but they have a preference for Alternative 4.
- **October 31 Response to DEP Notice of Noncompliance Filed**  
Ellis shares his response to MassDEP's Notice of Noncompliance.
- **Tax Classification Hearing Date Planning**  
Ellis reminds the Selectboard that we are approaching the time where we would have the Tax Classification Hearing. All of the values submitted by the Assessor's Office have been approved by DOR. We would like the Selectboard's final determination of the Tax Classification process on November 27.
- **Personnel Update and Vacation Carryover Request**
  - *Boutwell makes the motion to grant the Town Administrator permission to roll over an additional week of vacation. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord- Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*
  - Ellis shares that he will be leaving Town service on June 30, 2024 for personal reasons. The members of the Board express their appreciation for Ellis's work over the past 7 years.

**Next Meeting:** Selectboard, Monday, November 13, 2023 at 6:00 PM, via ZOOM

**Reminders:**

- Public Meeting: Re-envisioning the Farren Property, **Wednesday, November 8th, 5:30 PM** at Great Falls Discovery Center
- Six Town Regionalization Planning Board Meeting, **November 14th, 6:30 PM** at Gill Town Hall

*Boutwell makes the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:28 PM. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord- Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*