

**MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING
VIA ZOOM
Monday, December 11, 2023 at 6:00 PM**

Meeting was opened at 6:00 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; Treasurer/Collector Eileen Seymour; CWF Superintendent Chelsey Little; DPW Superintendent Tom Bergeron; Parks and Recreation Director Jon Dobosz; Town Planner Maureen Pollock; and Assistant Town Planner and RiverCulture Director Suzanne LoManto.

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

Approve Minutes:

- **Selectboard Minutes from November 27 and December 4, 2023**
Boutwell makes the motion to approve the Selectboard Minutes from November 27 and December 4, 2023. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye
- **Six Town Regionalization Planning Board, November 14, 2023**
Boutwell makes the motion to approve the Minutes from the Six Town Regionalization Planning Board, November 14, 2023. Seconded by Lord, approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Abstain, 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

Sewer Commissions

Sewer Abatements for First Half FY24 Billing

- *Boutwell makes the motion to abate the sewer bill for 128 7th Street, Turners Falls as described. Seconded by Lord, unanimously unapproved. Boutwell - Nay, Lord - Nay, Kuklewicz - Nay*
- *Boutwell makes the motion to amend the second half of the sewer bill for 128 7th Street, Turners Falls to reflect a usage of 35,000G. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*
- *Boutwell makes the motion to abate the sewer bill for 100 K St., Turners Falls. Seconded by Lord, unanimously unapproved. Boutwell - Nay, Lord - Nay, Kuklewicz - Nay*
- *Boutwell makes the motion to abate the sewer bill for 8 Wentworth Ave, Turners Falls as described. Seconded by Lord, unanimously unapproved. Boutwell - Nay, Lord - Nay, Kuklewicz - Nay*
- *Boutwell makes the motion to abate the sewer bill for 20 Bridge St., Millers Falls as described. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*
- *Boutwell makes the motion to abate the sewer bill of 34 Main St., Montague, MA. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*
- *Boutwell makes the motion to adjust the second half of the sewer bill of 34 Main St., Montague, MA to reflect a usage of 10,000G. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*
- *Boutwell makes the motion to abate the sewer bill of 24 Avenue C., Turners Falls as described. Seconded by Lord, unanimously unapproved. Boutwell - Nay, Lord - Nay, Kuklewicz - Nay*
- *Boutwell makes the motion to adjust the second half of the sewer bill for 24 Avenue C., Turners Falls to reflect 27,000G. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*
- *Boutwell makes the motion to abate the sewer bill of 24 Highland St., Millers Falls as described. Seconded by Lord, unanimously unapproved. Boutwell - Nay, Lord - Nay, Kuklewicz - Nay*

Discuss HVAC/Operations Building Report and Next Steps

- Little summarizes the HVAC/Operations Building Report by Wright Pierce:
 - The heating system is in very poor condition and prone to failure.
 - The ventilation system is in very poor condition and prone to failure.
 - Generation of methane gas in explosive concentrations is possible.
 - The chlorine room does not meet code requirements.
 - The dehumidifier is nonoperational.
 - Options for construction costs range from \$872,000 to \$1.5 million.
- Little thinks it makes more sense to stabilize things by focusing our efforts on the most critical areas:

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- Repair the replace the louvers and vents and heating coil for air exchange.
- Replace the dehumidifying unit.
- Replace the heating system with liquid propane.
- Move staff and movable equipment out of that building.
- Discussion:
 - Boutwell feels that Little is on the right track regarding repairs.
 - Lord feels that the materials he is looking at does not reflect cost estimates for \$1.5 million.
 - Kuklewicz feels that the issue with the facility goes beyond HVAC, and goes into structural and overall facility fitness.
 - Kuklewicz suggests revisiting this issue in the next week or two.

Bike Path Mural

- Bogusz displays the Bike Path Mural on screen.
- Little describes the mural and Mary Chicoine's design for the ecosystem and plants and wildlife. There is also information on the facility on the sign, as well as an interactive section for children.
- In response to a question by Kuklewicz, Little explains that the sign would come out of the CWF's Professional Services line item.
- *Boutwell makes the motion to endorse the Bike Path Sign Project as discussed. **Seconded by Lord**, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

Surplus Equipment Authorization (list as attached)

- Little shares the list of Surplus Equipment.
- Bergeron explains that the list needs to be posted in the newspaper, then put out for bid.
- In response to a suggestion by Kuklewicz about the Dewatering Press, Little shares that there is an agency used by the State Procurement that would come in, take photos, list the item, etc. In addition, the vendor of our new screw press is putting his feelers out to who might be interested in the press.
- *Boutwell makes the motion to declare the Ford F350 Truck, the Ford Single Axle Truck, and the Shaker with John Deer Engine, and the Fornier Dewatering Press as Surplus from the Clean Water Facility, and authorize the Superintendent to dispose of those items. **Seconded by Lord**, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

FY25 Budget Update

With regard to the budget, Little explains that she is only looking at level-funding most items. There aren't any major changes.

Monthly Discharge Summary for November 2023

Bogusz displays the Monthly Discharge Summary, and Little states that everything looks great and there are no issues.

Sewer Commission Retreat Scheduling

- Little explains that for the Sewer Commission Retreat in late winter/early spring, we will be looking at starting the process to operations end-of-the facility upgrades and the rate structure analysis.
- The Retreat is scheduled for March 7 from 1:00 to 4:00.
- Ellis suggests having another meeting in July to talk about the facility, the Enterprise Fund, and the collection system.
- Lord shares that he is not enthusiastic about spending a second day on the Clean Water Facility issues.
- Boutwell states that a meeting in July would be in the next fiscal year.

Tom Bergeron, DPW Superintendent

Request to spend Discretionary Funds over \$25,000 to purchase a new 2023 Kubota tractor to replace a 2001 John Deere that has reached its replacement cycle

*Boutwell makes the motion to authorize spending Discretionary Funds over \$25,000 to purchase a new 2023 Kubota tractor to replace a 2001 John Deere that has reached its replacement cycle. **Seconded by Lord**, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

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Boutwell makes the motion to declare the 2001 John Deere Tractor as surplus, and authorize the Superintendent to dispose of it as appropriate. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Steven Ellis, Eileen Seymour, Tom Bergeron

- **FY25 Curbside Trash & Recycling**
- **Trash Sticker Revenue**
- **Preliminary Thoughts on New Trash Sticker Rules**
- Bergeron has had meetings with Casella about the transition and shares that they have been discussing possible changes in the routes.
- Ellis has been in ongoing contact with Republic Services, who have been nothing but professional as they wind up their work with us.
- Ellis, Seymour, and Bergeron review Curbside Trash and Recycling cost and Sticker Price scenarios.
- Discussion ensues regarding raising rates for stickers and barrels to increase revenue to help cover cost of Trash and Recycling.
- The Selectboard decides to leave things as they are for this year, then revisit this issue next year.

Jon Dobosz, Parks and Rec Director

Execute PARC Grant agreement and associated documents for the Montague Center Playscape Improvement Project

Boutwell makes the motion to execute the PARC Grant agreement and authorize the Chair to sign any associated documents for the Montague Center Playscape Improvement Project. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Ed Gregory, Historical Society

Historical Society Request to Take Possession of Farren Architectural Plans

The Selectboard approves the Historical Society taking possession of the Farren architectural plans. Ramsey will communicate with the Farren to help facilitate transferring the documents.

Maureen Pollock, Town Planner & Suzanne LoManto, Assistant Planner

Planning Department and RiverCulture seek ARPA Expenditure Request for \$22,450 to partially fund a Shea Theater Mural Project

Boutwell makes the motion to authorize the use of \$25,000 of ARPA funds, \$22,450 of which had previously been set aside, to fund the Shea Theater Mural Project. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Assistant Town Administrator's Business

FY25 Planning Cycle: Timeline and overview of capital requests

- All of the capital requests from departments have been received and are being reviewed by the Capital Improvements Committee. They hope to come to the Selectboard with a slate of capital projects that are tentatively recommended for the Annual Town Meeting.
- Thus far we have received 12 projects totaling about \$1.7 million.
- Ramsey reviews the projects.
- Two projects will likely be expedited to the Winter Special Town Meeting: The skid steer for the DPW and the South Ferry Road culvert.

Updates on Burn Dump drainage and Montague City Road Flooding relief projects

- Kearsarge Solar has hired Collins Construction to execute the final burn dump closeout work.
- The Town has already hired GZA to oversee the construction.
- Ramsey will be attending a project kickoff meeting this Wednesday.
- The contractor is mobilizing this week.
- The Montague City Road project has been moving along well. The bulk of the in-stream work is complete. We will have to come back and do some touch-up work in the spring.

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Cable television license renewal process

- The current license expires August 25, 2025. Mass Department of Telecommunications recommends that the renewal process start at least a year out.
- The Board needs to reinvigorate the Cable Advisory Committee. At least three people have to be recruited.
- The committee would need to do an annual review of MCTV.
- The Board received notice from Comcast saying that they are going to be increasing their prices effective December 20, 2023.

Town Administrator's Business

Review Economic Development Plan

- The Governor's Office has put out its final Economic Development Plan.
- Ellis gives a rough overview of the plan (Fundamentals, Talents, and Sectors)
- Ellis touches on some of the things he highlighted: Job Recovery Rates, Rural Communities in the context of the Fundamental section, Unlocking Funding to improve Rural Infrastructure, Rural Designation to Funnel Resources, Reducing Burden to access Funds, Championing Businesses and Key Rural Projects that Grow Jobs; Targeted Support for Space Utilization, Relationship-building; and Information.

Six Town Regionalization Planning Board Update

Ellis received a memo from the STRPB and goes over what he highlighted:

- An 18-month grant was awarded by Mass Dept. of Revenue, which includes money that they have not yet spent to hire consultants/attorneys to work with town officials on developing a new regional agreement. The STRPB has to deliberate on whether to proceed in that direction and are looking for the Selectboard's feedback.
- The last meeting was focused on the cost analysis under different scenarios.
- The STRPB voted to acknowledge what they saw as educational opportunities for merging the schools together.
- They addressed what they considered unsupported assumptions.
- They did two studies that revealed minimal impact on bus ride lengths for students.
- They want to clarify that regionalization is not driven by town finances.
 - Boutwell would prefer to have the STRPB attend a Board meeting.
 - Lord is in favor of the regional agreement, but emphasizes that if the STRPB wants something from the Selectboard, he would like to be clear as to what exactly they want.
 - Kuklewicz would like Ellis to inform the STRPB that the Board endorses their moving forward, then invite them to a meeting in January.
- **Comcast Letter of Support**

Ellis provides to the Selectboard a copy of the letter for the GAP Networks Grant Program application that Comcast is submitting. He states that there could be some lobbying to make changes in the eligibility definitions.
- **Topics not anticipated in the 48 hour posting/Transition to New Town Administrator**
 - Ellis shares that he will be available for the discussion of the preliminary transition plan.
 - The Board members are comfortable with having this discussion with just Ramsey.
 - There will be an item on the agenda that formalizes the Board's decision.

Boutwell makes the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 PM. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved.

Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye