

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING
In-Person at 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls and VIA ZOOM
Tuesday, January 22, 2024 at 6:30 PM

Meeting was opened at 6:30 PM. Present were Selectboard members Rich Kuklewicz, Chris Boutwell, Matt Lord; Town Administrator Steve Ellis; Assistant Town Administrator Walter Ramsey; CWF Superintendent Chelsey Little; Town Planner Maureen Pollock; RiverCulture Director Suzanne LoManto; and Montague Energy Commissioners Sally Pick, Tim Van Egmond, and Ariel Elan.

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

Approve Minutes of January 16, 2024

Postponed for now

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

Chelsey Little, CWF Superintendent

Execute Change Order 1003 with Collins Electrical Co. Inc, in the amount of \$15,099 to provide cold sequence metering per Eversource Requirements

Boutwell makes the motion to execute Change Order 1003 with Collins Electrical Co. Inc, in the amount of \$15,099 to provide cold sequence metering per Eversource Requirements. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved.

Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Execute Change Order 1004 with Collins Electrical Co. Inc., in the credit amount of \$4,490 for the reduction of generator feeder: conduit, wire, misc. materials and labor

Boutwell makes the motion to execute Change Order 1004 with Collins Electrical Co. Inc., in the credit amount of \$4,490 for the reduction of generator feeder: conduit, wire, misc. materials and labor. Seconded by Lord,

unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Meter Assembly FRP #2 - Meter Assembly Response

Little informs the Board that she wrote a letter to Collins to change the CT and PT of the cabinet for the transformer.

Maureen Pollock, Town Planner

Authorize Contract of Services with Commonwealth Murals, LLC for the Shea Mural Project. Contract value is \$30,510.00 to be funded from an existing ARPA appropriation

Boutwell makes the motion to authorize a Contract of Services with Commonwealth Murals, LLC for the Shea Mural Project, contract value is \$30,510.00 to be funded from an existing ARPA appropriation; and authorize the Chair

to sign any necessary documents. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Notice of grant application to the Community Foundation of Western MA Community Space Public Wi-Fi Program to expand public Wi-Fi to Peskeompskut Park (\$5,000)

Pollock gives the Board notice of a grant application to the Community Foundation of Western MA Community Space Public Wi-Fi Program to expand public Wi-Fi to Peskeompskut Park (\$5,000).

Brian McHugh, Director of Community Development - HRA

Authorize Payment #3 to Berkshire Design Group for Hillcrest Playground in the amount of \$2,720.00

- McHugh is not present.
- *Boutwell makes the motion to authorize Payment #3 to Berkshire Design Group for Hillcrest Playground in the amount of \$2,720.00. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

Personnel Board

Promote Elena Pepe-Salutric to the position of Library Assistant. She will work 13 hours/week at the Carnegie Library at A1 Step 1

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Boutwell makes the motion to promote Elena Pepe-Salutric to the position of Library Assistant, 13 hours/week at the Carnegie Library at A1 Step 1. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Easton Smith will change from Library Assistant to Substitute Library Assistant

Boutwell makes the motion to appoint Easton Smith as a Substitute Library Assistant effective 01-23-24. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

**Sally Pick, Montague Energy Community
Community Solar Action Plan**

- Pick presents and summarizes a draft for the Community Solar Action Plan for the Town of Montague:
 - Reasons the Town would likely see large expansion of solar
 - Intent of Solar Plan
 - Some Solar Preferences identified by respondents to UMass Community Solar Survey
 - Summary of Community Solar Survey Results
 - What's in the Community Solar Plan?
 - Table of Publicly Owned Property with Large Rooftops Good for Solar
 - Solar Forum offered by UMass Clean Energy Ext. Faculty
 - Selectboard Feedback on Town Participation in Solar Planning
- Discussion:
 - Lord encourages the Energy Committee to work with the Planning Board and the Capital Improvements Committee in order to make changes that both of the Boards feel are appropriate to expand the amount of solar that is present in Montague.
 - Boutwell feels that solar is obviously here for the future and the plan is a great opportunity.
 - Kuklewicz feels it is worth doing some planning on solar. He agrees that there are other departments that should be involved in the discussion.
 - Ramsey feels that the Selectboard should take some credit for the solar planning that has been done and implemented recently (i.e., solar on the old landfill, the development of a solar array at Town Hall, solar access and solar readiness for the DPW garage).
 - Ramsey states that we need to look into the zoning bylaws.
 - Pick states that the issue of zoning bylaws is in flux, so she does not feel it is the time to put new bylaws in place.
 - Ellis feels that we should not be afraid of taking some action toward reforming our rules in a direction that feels appropriate for our community.
 - Ellis feels that anything that a consultant could do to help clarify capacity and foresee likely interconnect issues would be really valuable.

Request to plan a Community Solar Forum

- A Community Solar Forum will be held in mid-May.
- Kuklewicz suggests looking at having a larger meeting.
- Ramsey and Ellis will help with the logistics.

Executive Assistant Business

Execute IT contract with Suzor IT

Boutwell makes the motion to execute the IT contract with Suzor IT in the amount of \$44,130.08. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Town Administrator's Business

Budget Notes and Next Steps

- Ellis, Ramsey, and Olsen met with the Finance Committee to discuss the situation with the airport.
- Ellis summarizes the reaction of the Finance Committee:
 - No member of the Finance Committee indicated a path forward other than maintaining a responsible budget from the standpoint of insuring the airport remains compliant with all regulations.
 - There was no specific call for drastic budget reductions.
 - There was an agreement that we should not look to ARPA as a source of funds for FY24 as taxation is not available.

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- For FY25, they feel that we need to recognize that this is part of our operation budget.
- Ellis summarizes scenarios he, Ramsey, and Olsen came up with that reflect the sensibilities that they heard from the Selectboard and the Finance Committee:
 - Funding options include Free Cash, RRA sale of Real Estate, and Capital Stabilization.
 - We have about a \$137,000 gap to make up; and if we take it all out of taxation, we have to compare that to what we look at as our present understanding of available taxation.
 - In response to a question by Jeff Singleton, Ellis states we are basically tapping a revenue source, which is Excess Capacity, which brings it into the calculation of the Affordable Assessment.
- The Airport will be at the Finance Committee on Wednesday, February 21. If the Board would like to attend, then the meeting will be posted as a Joint Meeting.
- The Airport Commission is looking at its budget to see if there are additional responsible cuts.

Execute Release for Insurance Compensation Related to On-Duty Injury of Former Montague Police Staff Sergeant Lee Laster in the Amount of \$34,827.36

Boutwell makes the motion to execute the Release for Insurance Compensation Related to On-Duty Injury of Former Montague Police Staff Sergeant Lee Laster in the Amount of \$34,827.36; and to authorize the Chair to sign it. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

MMA Meeting News/Governor's Announcements re: FY25 Budget

- Ellis shares that the Governor and Lieutenant Governor announced the Municipal Empowerment Act as part of their FY25 budget proposals.
- The act is available in full detail on mass.gov; it reflects the input of listening sessions that were conducted throughout the Commonwealth by the Lieutenant Governor.
- The Governor has pledged a 3% increase in unrestricted general government aid, which translates to about \$53,000 for the Town of Montague.
- The Governor specifically articulated the intent to fund using Fair Share Money a continuation of the expansion of Chapter 90 funds. They are funding \$100 million of additional funding. There is also an additional \$24 million being set aside specifically for rural communities. We would see an increase in the vicinity of \$775,000 in Chapter 90 State aid.
- There is full funding for the final year of the Student Opportunity Act, which would be very beneficial to the Gill-Montague School District; as well as a commitment to additional rural aid in that budget.
- They also highlighted new revenue tools that they hope the legislature will endorse and will become available to us. One of those is the option to increase the meals tax from .75 cent surcharge to a 1% of sales price. For Montague, that would have a beneficial effect in the \$25,000 range. Other options include the lodging tax on hotels, motels, and other rentals; a motor vehicle excise surcharge; and new property tax exemptions for seniors.
- There is an intention to make permanent the hybrid meeting rules that have been established under COVID.
- There is an intention to allow for permitting of outdoor dining and take away liquor sales as a permanent feature.
- There is some move to give communities more direct say over how many liquor licenses and what type to choose to grant, and removing the need for communities to constantly go to legislature with special legislation.
- They are including enforcement of double pole removal by utilities after 90 days.
- There are also some potentially helpful beneficial procurement changes.
- They want to update borrowing rules for school projects.

Topics not anticipated in the 48 hour posting/Republic Services

Ellis states that we are working with Republic Services to get them caught up. They fell behind by a day last week.

Boutwell makes the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 PM. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye