

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING
1 Avenue A, Turners Falls and VIA ZOOM
Monday, November 4, 2024 at 6:30 PM

Meeting was opened at 6:30 PM. Present were Selectboard members Rich Kuklewicz, Matt Lord, and Chris Boutwell; Town Administrator Walter Ramsey; Executive Assistant Wendy Bogusz; Assistant Town Administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller; and Police Chief Chris Williams; and Town Accountant Angela Desroches.

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

Approve Minutes: Selectboard Meeting October 28, 2024

Boutwell makes the motion to approve the Selectboard Meeting minutes for October 28, 2024. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - 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

Michael Perrault, Deputy Administrator Franklin Regional Transit Authority

Proposed bus stop and safety improvements at the intersection of Millers Falls Road and Industrial Boulevard

- Ramsey summarizes proposal for the bus stop and safety improvements at the intersection of Millers Falls Road and Industrial Boulevard.
- FRTA applied for a State grant.
- We have a complete design which entails putting bus stops on either side of the road, adding two crosswalks, and installing a rapid-flashing beacon across Millers Falls Road. Hopefully bus shelters can be installed at a later time.
- The cost estimate for construction is over budget by about \$57,000.
- Bogusz displays the design and Ramsey reviews it.
- This project would involve the need for an easement over Franklin County Regional Housing Authority land.
- FCRHA is supportive of this project and they are also considering if they have any funds in their operating budget to support it.
- Perrault states that the timeline for now is (1) finalizing the design, then (2) going out to bid in January.
- Perrault is looking at their FY Capital Improvements project to find funds.
- The Board members discuss the possibility of using the cannabis funds.
- The Selectboard is generally supportive of the project, but would like to meet again in a few weeks to see where we are.

Other relevant FRTA updates

- The Governor's Office announced that we received a grant award, which means that we can offer free fares for seniors from June of 2025.
- Last week the FRTA installed a bike repair station on Avenue A and Third Street next to the shelter.
- FRTA is working on a design to install solar panels at the new bus garage on Sandy Lane.

Personnel Board with Chris Williams, Chief of Police

Request to offer Conditional Offer of Employment to Carter Woodward for the position of Patrol Officer, effective 11/4/2024

Boutwell makes the motion to offer a Conditional Offer of Employment to Carter Woodward for the position of Patrol Officer, effective 11/4/2024, as discussed. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Walter Ramsey, Town Administrator and Angelica Desroches, Town Accountant

FY26 Budget Development: Review preliminary revenue projections and consider excess levy capacity options

- Later this week Ramsey will be sending out his budget message to department heads.
- Ramsey displays the preliminary revenue estimates and reviews it and calls attention to New Growth under Tax Levy, as well as the Excess Capacity figure.

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- Discussion ensues regarding the New Growth figure. Desroches states that the Assessor prefers that we keep it around the \$75,000 mark.
- Ramsey shares a sheet of Excess Capacity options and reviews three different scenarios.
- These discussions will be had with the Finance Committee.

Assistant Town Administrator's Business

Review of ARPA expenditures, remaining balances

Nolan-Zeller reviews ARPA expenditures. The total remaining unallocated is currently \$1,588. Ramsey and Nolan-Zeller feel that for the time being, we should hold that for a short-term contingency.

FY26 Capital Planning overview

- Nolan-Zeller has received capital requests from most departments.
- The schools have until November 27th to return theirs.
- The CIC plans to hold at least two more meetings to review the applications.
- We will determine a prioritized list in January.
- At least two joint meetings will be held between CIC and Finance Committee.
- The Selectboard has three possible capital requests: (1) the FRTA Bus Stop improvement, (2) the 11th Street Bridge Project, and (3) the Town Hall Annex Build-Out Project.
- Discussion ensues regarding the Town Hall Annex Build-Out Project.
 - Kuklewicz would like to see a better design.
 - Lord feels it is not a reasonable goal to do an \$880,000 renovation in this capital improvements cycle.
 - Lord asks Nolan-Zeller to look into needs-assessment consultants' cost and whether there are grants available for that.

11th Street Bridge: Discussion on preferred funding source for upcoming spring construction

There has been a question of how to fund the 11th Street Bridge project long-term. The CIC has advised that the Board opt to keep this as a partially ARPA-funded project. They are allowing for inter-agency agreements.

Other project updates

- The Sewer Manhole Rehabilitation Project is going out to bid next week. The design documents are being finalized by Wright-Pierce.
- Regarding the Screw Pump Project at the Clean Water Facility, the contractor is expected to mobilize by August of 2025 for a construction period of September through January 2026.
- The Mass DOT Public Information Meeting will be held via ZOOM on Wednesday from 6:00 to 7:30 PM. This meeting is being held to discuss the proposed intersection improvements at Route 47 and 63. All interested parties are encouraged to attend.

Town Administrator's Business

Discuss options to fill Tree Warden vacancy

- The Tree Warden position is an elected position, which means that it needs to be held by a Town resident. Since the next election is in May, the Board has the ability to appoint somebody in the interim.
- The interim period would be a good time for the Board to rethink the position.
- We are required by State law to have a Tree Warden, but we are not required to have it as an elected position. Via Town Meeting vote, we could make it an appointed position.
- An advantage to making it an appointed position is that the individual does not have to be a Town resident.
- Our previous Tree Warden, Mark Stevens was on the DPW grounds crew, which was very beneficial for us.
- There is one person on the DPW grounds staff that is willing to serve as the interim Tree Warden, but he is not a resident.
- Ramsey has asked members of the Tree Committee if anyone is interested. No one has come forward.
- The Selectboard is willing to appoint the interested individual from DPW as an interim Tree Warden.
- Ramsey will post an announcement about the vacancy on the website.

Execute FY25 Landfill Monitoring Agreement with Tighe and Bond in the amount of \$27,250. To be funded out of the Solid Waste operating budget

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*Boutwell makes the motion to execute the FY25 Landfill Monitoring Agreement with Tighe and Bond in the amount of \$27,250; to be funded out of the Solid Waste operating budget. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved.
Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting deadline

○ **Cultural District Grant**

Boutwell makes the motion to authorize the Chair to sign the Cultural District Grant. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

○ **Canal Update**

The canal is finally being re-watered. There is still going to be work done on the left dike, which means that the bike path still needs to remain closed.

Next Meeting:

Selectboard, Monday, November 18, 2024 at 6:00 PM, via ZOOM

*Boutwell makes the motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:54 PM. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved.
Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*