

# MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING

## VIA ZOOM

**Monday, January 27, 2025 at 6:30 PM**

Meeting was opened at 6:00 PM. Present were Selectboard members Rich Kuklewicz, Matt Lord, and Chris Boutwell; Town Administrator Walter Ramsey; Assistant Town Administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller; FCRHA Director of Community Development Brian McHugh; Turners Falls Airport Manager Bryan Camden; Town Planner Maureen Pollock; and RiverCulture Director Suzanne LoManto.

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

**Approve Minutes: January 13 2025, if available**

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

### **Pole Location Hearing**

- **Eversource and Verizon New England, Inc. are requesting to install one (1) jointly owned midspan pole (Pole #189/16M) to be located approximately one hundred thirty-four (134) feet southeasterly from exiting pole #189/16, to provide new riser service at 390 Millers Falls Road**  
*Boutwell makes the motion approve the request to install a new jointly owned midspan pole as described in the vicinity of 390 Millers Falls Road. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*
- **Eversource and Verizon New England Inc. are requesting permission to install 180/5MNew 40 CL2 midspan pole for a new service at 2 Foster Road**  
*Boutwell makes the motion to approve the request to install a 180/5MNew 40 CL2 midspan pole for a new service at 2 Foster Road. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

### **Brian McHugh, FCRHRA**

- **Preview of FY24-25 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program**
  - McHugh summarizes the CDBG Program.
  - McHugh gives a preview of the FY24-25 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program.
  - In response to a question by Lord, McHugh states that with the CDBG funds, we cannot create housing units, but we can build the infrastructure to a housing development.
  - In response to a comment by Kuklewicz with regard to the annex, McHugh states that Montague doesn't qualify for an area-wide benefit for low- to moderate-income people.
  - In response to a question by Jeff Singleton, McHugh states that the money is in place to do the Third Street and Fourth Street parking lots.
  - In response to question by Singleton, McHugh states that ramps to the sections that are remaining are being designed as part of the Streetscape Project.
- **Designation of Christopher Nolan-Zeller as Environmental Certifying Officer**  
*Boutwell makes the motion to appoint Christopher Nolan-Zeller as the Environmental Certifying Officer as discussed. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

### **Ted Harvey, FRCOG Senior Economic Development Planner**

- **Review of 1/14/25 Downtown Partnership Business Meeting**
  - Harvey states that FRCOG is in the final stages of wrapping up the report, which should be done by the end of this month.
  - Tomorrow is the final community meeting with Shelburne Falls.
  - There was a community business meeting recently. There were a lot of comments and questions.
  - They have grant funding for a downtown coordinator for the four communities.
  - They also have potential commitment depending on if the towns elect for the District Local Technical Assistance Funds to contribute.
  - Pollock states that she is working the **Anne Burke** on creating a scope of services for the next phase, which is determining what the particular needs of Turners Falls businesses and landowners are and what the priorities that they would like to focus on are.
- **Request for \$4,000 funds for shared downtown Business Coordinator Pilot. Potential funding source: Community development Discretionary Account**  
Kuklewicz would like to see what other towns are doing as we have some budget challenges ahead of us. Lord and Boutwell agree.

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### Winter Special Town Meeting

To review, make recommendations, approve, and execute February 12, 2025 Special Town Meeting Warrant, attached hereto, votes may be taken

Lord makes the motion to approve the following Town of Montague Special Town Meeting for February 12, 2025 Articles for the Town Meeting Warrant: (Lord reads aloud the Articles). Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Lord - Aye, Boutwell - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

### Personnel Board

- **Place Sgt. Jacob Dlugosz on 111F status effective January 1, 2025**  
*Boutwell makes the motion to place Sergeant Jacob Dlugosz on 111F status effective January 1, 2025. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*
- **Appoint Elizabeth Walber to RiverCulture Steering Committee, for a 3-year term effective January 28, 2025**  
*Boutwell makes the motion to appoint Elizabeth Walber to the RiverCulture Steering Committee, for a 3-year term effective January 28, 2025. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*
- **Establish Carnegie Library Building Steering Committee**  
*Boutwell makes the motion to establish a Carnegie Library Building Steering Committee. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*
- **Appoint Members to the Library Building Steering Committee as follows: Dorinda Bell-Upp, Ariel Elan, David Dempsey, Lydia Levins, Caitlin Kelley, Josh Lively, Christopher Nolan-Zeller, Patricia Perham, William Quale**  
*Boutwell makes the motion to appoint Members to the Library Building Steering Committee as follows: Dorinda Bell-Upp, Ariel Elan, David Dempsey, Lydia Levins, Caitlin Kelley, Josh Lively, Christopher Nolan-Zeller, Patricia Perham, and William Quale. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

### Assistant Town Administrator's Business

- **Authorize Montague Public Library to apply for LifePath's Age and Dementia-Friendly Community Grant**  
*Boutwell makes the motion to authorize the Montague Public Library to apply for LifePath's Age and Dementia-Friendly Community Grant. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*
- **Authorize Grant Agreement in the amount of \$100,000 with Mass Libraries Board of Library Commissioners for Planning and Design for Carnegie Library**  
*Boutwell makes the motion to authorize the Grant Agreement in the amount of \$100,000 with Mass Libraries Board of Library Commissioners for Planning and Design for Carnegie Library; and authorize the Selectboard Chair, Library Director, or Town Administrator to sign related documents. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*
- **Review Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) 2025 District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) requests**
  - Nolan-Zeller displays and reviews the FRCOG 2025 District Local Technical Assistance Request Form.
  - In response to a question by Lord re: FEMA maps, Ramsey states that we are expecting the draft maps to come in this year. Once they get adopted, they will go in effect. The Town is ultimately going to be asked to adopt new flood plain regulations.
  - Nolan and Ramsey feel that the top three priorities are Franklin County EMS Regionalization, Hazard Mitigation Plan, and Outdoor Recreation/Open Space Planning.
  - Lord agrees to be the liaison between the Selectboard and FRCOG regarding regionalized EMS services.
  - *Boutwell makes the motion to approve the application for the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) 2025 District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) requests as presented, with the ranking of the Board's three top choices as discussed. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*
- **Other Project updates**
  - The Unity Park field house's heating system is on its last leg. Nolan-Zeller, DPW Superintendent Sam Urkiel, and Parks and Recreation Director Jon Dobosz will be working on a solution.
  - Regarding the timing of the Capital Planning Cycle, CIC is going to be finalizing a report to Special Town Meeting this Wednesday and will be voting their recommendations for the Annual Town Meeting soon. Upcoming meetings include a tentative one with CIC and Finance Committee on February 26, and one with CIC and the Selectboard at the March 3rd meeting.

### Town Administrator's Business

- **Approve 2025 Annual Class II License for Gregory Precourt, Montague Garage, Inc.**

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*Boutwell makes the motion to authorize a 2025 Annual Class II License for Gregory Precourt, Montague Garage, Inc. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

- **Correspondence and discussion relating to the 2024 HERO Act local options for additional benefits to disabled veterans**
  - The Board received a letter from the Director of the Upper Pioneer Veterans Services District notifying towns of the new 2024 HERO Act and encouraging them to adopt it.
  - A local veteran and his partner sent letters asking the Town to adopt the HERO Act provisions.
  - We have a total of 65 beneficiaries.
  - Under the current existing State statute, the Town spends about \$61,000 on tax breaks for disabled veterans and their spouses, and gets reimbursed \$51,000 from the State.
  - Adopting the HERO Act could cost the Town between \$18,000 to \$50,000.
  - The Board would like more information before approving this option for the Annual Town Meeting Warrant.
- **MMA Meeting News: Governor's Announcements re: FY26 Budget**

Ramsey shares highlights from the MMA Meeting:

  - Chapter 90 transportation benefits are going to increase.
  - Chapter 70 aid is being increased to \$75/student. However, they didn't address the formula issue in Chapter 70 that left the school in a Hold-Harmless state last year. This year the Gill-Montague School District is going to be in Hold-Harmless again and is just receiving the minimum per-pupil rate (.9% increase), which puts the school in a tough budgetary place.
  - Insurance rates are generally going up. Our property insurance is going to be level next year. Montague is part of the Hampshire Group Insurance Trust for healthcare. Those rates are going to be announced on Wednesday.
  - Ramsey states that generally a lot of the discussion at MMA was about managing expectations and the outlook for the budget.
  - MMA will again push for the Municipal Modernization Act. This would include allowing hybrid meetings, putting in tighter restrictions around double poles, and improving State payments for land that the State owns (pilot programs).
- **FY26 Budget notes and next steps**
  - We are holding space in the budget for implementation of the union contracts.
  - We are looking at \$1.5 million for capital expenditures.
  - The I&I costs are going to be high again this year.
  - In response to a question by Lord regarding Chapter 70, Ramsey states that MMA acknowledged that there are problems with the formula, but for political reasons they could not fix it.
- **Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting/401 Water Quality Certificate draft license**

The 401 Water Quality Certificate draft license has been issued by Mass DEP. There will be a public hearing on that application on February 19th at GCC, and the comments are due January 24th.

**Executive Session in accordance with G.L. c. 30A, §21 (3) To discuss strategy with respect to litigation with FirstLight Power, Inc. if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public body and the Chair so declares**

- The Chair deems that holding this discussion in open meeting would be detrimental to the Town's position.
- *Boutwell makes the motion to go into Executive Session in accordance with G.L. c. 30A, §21 (3) To discuss strategy with respect to litigation with FirstLight Power, Inc. Seconded by Lord, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Lord - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*

**Next Meeting:**

**Selectboard, Monday, February 3, 2025 at 6:30 PM, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls and VIA ZOOM**