

**TOWN OF MONTAGUE
MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD
MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE
MONTAGUE BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING**

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, January 31, 2022 at 5:30 p.m.

This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded: <https://vimeo.com/672194502>

PRESENT: Rich Kuklewicz, Chair; Chris Boutwell and Matt Lord, Selectboard; Wendy Bogusz, Executive Assistant; Carolyn Olsen, Accountant; Steve Ellis, Town Administrator

OTHERS PRESENT –

Jen Audley, Chair; John Hanold, Fred Bowman, Francia Wisniewski, Montague Finance Committee; Michael Nelson, Melanie Zamojski, Board of Health; Charles Garbiel, Randy Crochier, Greg Snedeker, Gill Selectboard; Clair Chang, Tupper Brown, Sandy Brown, Peter Turban, Gill Finance Committee; Ray Purington, Gill Town Administrator; GMRSD: Brian Beck, Superintendent of Schools; Joanne Blier, Director of Buisness and Operations; Dianne Ellis, Director of Pupil Services, Jane Oakes, School Committee; Caitlin Kelley, Library Director; Dave Harmon, Library Trustee; Chelsey Little, WPCF Superintendent; Kwamane Harris, Executive Director of the Brick House; Stacy Langknecht, Parent and Family Program Director at the Brick House; Bob Rueter, Sally Pick, Jeff Clark and Ariel Elan, Energy Committee; Jeff Singleton, Montague Reporter;

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The Selectboard meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Chair, Rich Kuklewicz. The meeting is being recorded and held via Zoom. All members present. He stated that the meeting was a joint meeting with the Finance Committees of Montague and Gill as well as the Gill Selectboard.

Since there was a quorum, **the Montague Finance Committee called their meeting to order by Chair, Jen Audley: Fred Bowman, aye; John Hannold, aye; Francia Wisniewski, aye; Jen Audley, aye.**

The Gill Selectboard called their meeting to order: Randy Crochier, aye; Greg Snedeker, aye; Charles Garbiel, aye

The Gill Finance Committee called their meeting to order: Claire Chang, aye; Tupper Brown, aye; Sandy Brown, aye; Peter Turban, aye.

GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET PRESENTATION

Brian Beck, Superintendent of School for GMRSD began the presentation of the FY23 budget proposal with a PowerPoint presentation placed on the screen for all present to view. This presentation gave an introduction and explained in detail the program offerings, curriculum, instruction and assessment, enrollment, budget needs, revenue and expenses and then ended with

the summary, capital needs and opened for questions He stated that the School Committee had met and approved this preliminary budget. State aid numbers were out but received the day after so therefore on February 8, which is the public hearing, the state aid will be added. Gill has there Annual Town Meeting the first Monday in May and Montague will follow with their Annual Town Meeting the First Saturday in May.

Joanne Blier presented a PowerPoint slideshow describing the increase in enrollment, the increase in budget and calculations including state aid and stimulus funds.

Superintendent Beck continued the presentation discussing the 5-year Strategic and Development Plan and how it has been administered throughout the pandemic. He gave detailed information for elementary and secondary education and broke down the information even more with each individual school.

Joanne Blier continued her discussion on student enrollment data and explained the increase of choice-out and charter school enrollments which has been the largest the district has seen and it can be quite costly. She explained new positions that have been put in place funded by the ESSER Grant and Revolving Funds. These positions were mainly created due to the need of students resulting from the pandemic. She also spoke of large expenditure changes in the budget due to health insurance, the Town retirement assessment and the Custodial and Cafeteria Contracts. She explained to the audience that the food service program has been running in a deficit and the E & D (savings account) for FY23 has increased. Wrapping up her presentation, she described the capital needs of each school building in Gill and in Montague.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Rich Kuklewicz opened up the meeting for discussion regarding the GMRSD presentation. Matt Lord asked about the impact of the choice-out and charter school enrollment and if there had been any data collected via an exit interview to see what the instigating reason is for leaving. Superintendent Beck stated there is no formal process in place however he did state that many students have been transferring to the Tech School due to the programs offered there. He would like to have a survey created for students coming in to the district as well as choosing out.

Francia Wisniewski asked about the cost per pupil in Gill as well as the Charter School. She also asked about the costs of paraprofessionals. Joanne Blier gave the per pupil spending and rates.

Claire Chang asked about the opportunity to watch the "I'm Not a Racist" film. She was directed to contact the FRCOG for distribution. Claire was also pleased to hear there were no fees for athletics as well as equal access for boys and girls. Her last question was about the ESSER Grant and what happens to the positions when the grant funds run out. She was told that the positions will be eliminated. These positions were specifically filled due to the strong needs of the students due to the pandemic.

The Gill Selectboard left the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

Tupper Brown asked if the district will be strengthened somehow as he does not like seeing the trends of the choice-out. He felt that the budget is aimed at the high needs population and that other students are leaving the district. He would like to see the focus be on strengthening the academic excellence. Brian Beck stated it was rare to have the students leave the district due to the pandemic and that the positions that have been added were to elevate the growth due to the deficit that the district had been facing.

The Montague Finance Committee adjourned at 6:45 p.m. by Chair, Jen Audley.

The Gill Finance Committee adjourned at 6:47 p.m. by Chair, Claire Chang.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 24, 2022

The minutes of January 24, 2022 were distributed to the Board for their review. **On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the minutes were approved as presented. Chris Boutwell, aye; Matt Lord, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**

BOARD OF HEALTH CHAIR OPENS MEETING if quorum present - NO QUORUM COVID-19 Updates,

Review of COVID case counts and trends

Michael Nelson of the Board of Health spoke with the Board this evening and gave an update on the current COVID-19 cases and trends which Steve Ellis showed the current memo issued to the Board. Steve also stated that the mask mandate will be discussed at the next meeting held on the third week in February.

Update on Town Test Kit distribution

Test kits are still available for Montague residents and can be picked up at the Library, Senior Center and the Parks and Recreation Office.

CAITLIN KELLEY, LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Event Application: Use of Peskeompskut Park, Library Summer Kick-off Party, June 18, 2022 (rain date: 6/19/22), 2:30 PM to 8:00 PM

Caitlin gave information regarding the Libraries Summer kick-off party on June 19 from 2:30 – 8:00 p.m. at Peskeompskut Park. **On a motion by Matt Lord and seconded by Chris Boutwell, the Board approved the Use of Peskeompskut Park for the Library Summer Kick-off Party to be held on June 18, 2022 (rain date: 06/19/22), 2:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Matt Lord, aye; Chris Boutwell, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**

Request to accept Borrowing Policy Update and Justification for Eliminating Overdue Fines at the Montague Public Libraries

Caitlin also spoke to the Board about the new Borrowing Policy and gave information to justify the eliminatin of overdue fines at the Montague Public Libraries. She stated that many libraries have eliminated the fines as it is proportional to low income and people of color. There will still be fines for items that are damaged or lost but fines due to the pandemic will not be charged. **On a motion by Matt Lord and seconded by Chris Boutwell, the Board accepted the Request to accept the Borrowing Policy and Justifies the Eleminatin of Overdue Fines at the Montague Public Libraries. Matt Lord, aye; Chris Boutwell, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**

CHELSEY LITTLE – WPCF SUPERINTENDENT

Sewer Use Abatements Requests – FY22 First Half Billing Cycle

Chelsey spoke with the Board about several abatement requests which appear on the first half of the billing cycle for FY22. She gave specific explanations of the abatement requests and her recommendations. The addresses are as follows:

Boutwell makes the motion to approve the abatement request for 8 Bulkley Street, Turners Falls; Seconded by Lord. Boutwell – Nay, Lord – Nay, Kuklewicz - Nay DO NOT ABATE

Boutwell makes the motion to approve the \$420.22 abatement request the for 21 Bernardo Drive, Montague and remove the flat rate from the next bill, only billing for usage of 7,000 gallons. Seconded by Lord. Boutwell – Aye, Lord – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

Boutwell makes the motion to approve the \$318.99 abatement request for 15 North Taylor Hill Road and update usage to 74,000 gallons for next bill. Seconded by Lord. Boutwell – Aye, Lord – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

Boutwell makes the motion to approve the abatement request for 32 Turners Falls Road, Turners Falls; Seconded by Lord. Boutwell – Nay, Lord – Nay, Kuklewicz - Nay DO NOT ABATE (update usage to \$6,000 for next bill.)

Boutwell makes the motion to approve the abatement request for 123 Avenue A, Turners Falls; Seconded by Lord. Boutwell – Nay, Lord – Nay, Kuklewicz – Nay DO NOT ABATE – Request DOR for Abatement

Boutwell makes the motion to approve the abatement request for 14 Morris Avenue, Turners Falls; Seconded by Lord. Boutwell – Nay, Lord – Nay, Kuklewicz – Nay DO NOT ABATE 1st Half (Update usage to 29,000 for next bill)

Boutwell makes the motion to approve the \$1,417.73 abatement request for 58 & 62 L Street, Turners Falls and update usage to 61,000 for next bill. Seconded by Lord. Boutwell – Aye, Lord – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye

Boutwell makes the motion to approve the abatement request for 55 Randall Wood Drive, Montague; Seconded by Lord. Boutwell – Nay, Lord – Nay, Kuklewicz – Nay DO NOT ABATE

Boutwell makes the motion to approve the abatement request for 7 Park Street, Turners Falls; Seconded by Lord. Boutwell – Nay, Lord – Nay, Kuklewicz – Nay DO NOT ABATE 1st Half (Update usage to 29,000 for next bill)

Boutwell makes the motion to approve the abatement request for 54 Randall Wood Drive, Montague, Seconded by Lord. Boutwell – Nay, Lord – Nay, Kuklewicz – Nay DO NOT ABATE

SALLY PICK AND BOB REUTER, ENERGY COMMITTEE

Request to endorse the Massachusetts Act achieving a green future with infrastructure and workforce investments known as the Green Future Act, House Bill 3292

Sally Pick, Co-Chair of the Energy Committee described to the Board, House Bill 3292 and the fees it will raise for green infrastructure and workforce development. After the description of this Bill by Sally and Bob, Matt Lord raised several precise questions and then stated he did not feel prepared to make a decision tonight and is requesting more materials to review. Rich Kuklewicz feels the same as Matt and stated he is having a hard time deciphering the full impact this Bill will have on the residents of Montague. Rich would also like more information. Sally stated that the deadline for the Bill is Wednesday, February 2nd however it may be extended. She will notify the Board of the extension. Matt will study the materials, once they are received, and then come to a future meeting with additional information to share with the Board.

EXECUTE FY22 LOCAL CULTURAL COUNCIL ALLOCATION CONTRACT

Steve stated that this is procedural for the Cultural Council to receive the grant for an annual allocation of \$7,200. **On a motion by Matt Lord and seconded by Chris Boutwell, the Board authorized the Chair, Rich Kuklewicz to sign the contract with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts the Local Cultural Council Allocation Contract in the amount of \$7,200. Matt Lord, aye; Chris Boutwell, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**

CANNABIS IMPACT FEE FUNDED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Kwamane Harris gave a presentation to the Board of the Strengthening Families Program and described how they submitted an RFP for this program for the Brick House. In his description, he emphasized how this program builds on family strengths and not just with the youth. Features of this program includes preparing the families for transition to the teen years and parent/youth interactions. He also showed the session formats and the facilitators who the Brick House already have in place. Activities include lectures, videos and discussion. He also showed a graph which scaled the outcomes from using this program as it is evidence-based and is very strong.

On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board of Selectmen approved the presentation of Strengthening Families Program and approved the Chair to sign the contract with the Brick House in the amount of \$40,390. Matt Lord, aye; Chris Boutwell, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S BUSINESS

Town Moderator Request to Hold March 3, Special Town Meeting Remotely via Zoom

Steve stated that the Town Moderator, Chris Collins, has requested to hold the Special Town Meeting on March 3 remotely. The Town has met all of the requirements of the Governor's accommodations to operate during COVID. Rich asked for more discussion on how the voting will be done. A practice will be arranged as Wendy has sent out an email to all of Town Meeting Members and Suzor IT has been contacted to have a practice done a week ahead of the meeting.

Other Town Meeting Updates

Steve received word from Michael Nelson that he will serve as the Moderator in the absence of Chris Collins who is unable to attend on March 3rd.

Release of Deed of Trust held by U. S. Dept. Of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (DEA) re: 85 Avenue A (Colle Building).

Steve noticed a clause in the deed that is no longer necessary on this 15 year EDA covenant that was carried when the Town made use of the EDA funds to update the Colle Building. It has now passed the 15-year anniversary date. The EDA has been contacted and now released of the agreement so the Board and Chair are asked to release the trust held on behalf of the Town of Montague. **On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board approves to allow the Chair to sign the release of the deed of trust held by the U. S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (DEA) for the Colle Building at 85 Avenue A. Matt Lord, aye; Chris Boutwell, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.**

General Pierce Bridge Update

Steve has continued discussions with the Mass. DOT regarding the General Pierce Bridge. They are actively engaged in the decking and at the present, the project is scheduled for completion by May 2023. They are making some additional lower beam support adjustments. Steve would also like to advocate the DOT to paint the bridge. The Board also would like to have the bridge painted. The Board asked Steve to write to local legislators as well as the Governor on this request.

Topics not anticipated in the 48 hour posting – There was no additional information to report.

OTHER: Anticipated Next Meeting: Monday, February 7, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom. The discussion at this meeting will be the Farren.

On a motion by Chris Boutwell and seconded by Matt Lord, the Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m. Matt Lord, aye; Chris Boutwell, aye; Rich Kuklewicz, aye.

Respectfully submitted,

BettyLou Mallet
Scribe