

**SELECTMEN'S MEETING MINUTES
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM
1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
MONDAY, March 25, 2013**

Meeting was opened at 7:00 PM in the Upstairs Meeting Room. Present were Selectpersons Mark Fairbrother and Chris Boutwell, Patricia Allen was participating via remote participation; Town Administrator Frank Abbondanzio; Administrative Secretary Wendy Bogusz; Town Planner Walter Ramsey; Police Chief Charles Dodge; DPW Superintendent Tom Bergeron Jeanne Golrick; John Reynolds

Meeting being taped

Ms. Allen was participating via remote participation due to geographical distance.

Mr. Fairbrother moved that the board approve the minutes of the Selectmen's meeting on January 28, 2013. Seconded by Mrs. Allen. Approved. Allen – Aye, Boutwell – Aye, Fairbrother - Aye

Mr. Fairbrother moved that the board approve the minutes of the Selectmen's meeting on February 4, 2013. Seconded by Mrs. Allen. Approved. Allen – Aye, Boutwell – Aye, Fairbrother - Aye

Walter Ramsey, Town Planner

Award Contract for functional and detailed design for Canalside Bike Path and pedestrian crossing improvements on Montague City Road at Solar Avenue and Depot Street. The design will include 2 crosswalk improvements as well as sidewalk improvements from Solar Avenue to Masonic Avenue. It will be designed to slow down traffic through that area of Montague City Road. One of the ideas is to put some kind of refuge island at the bike path crossing so that it's safer for pedestrians to cross. At a minimum it would be a pedestrian controlled crossing with a button to set off flashing lights. These are the recommendation of the engineers, we don't know what will actually be determined. Signage improvements will also be addressed. Ms. Allen noted that signage is needed because it's not even clear where the bike path is.

Ms. Golrick asked if there was going to be a public hearing routine with this where the public can have their say about what exactly gets done. The second is if there is a guarantee that this isn't going to run over the \$51,000.

Mr. Ramsey said the bid contract is not to exceed, so the cost won't go over that. Public hearings are a part of the DOT process, there will be at least one public hearing.

Mr. Fairbrother noted that, since the state's paying for the task control of the construction, they must also have input on the design. Mr. Ramsey confirmed this.

Mr. Reynolds asked if the public hearing would be held in the neighborhood affected. Mr. Ramsey said he'd be happy to have the hearing in Montague City.

Mr. Ramsey noted that the area is zoned central business, and this project will contribute to the atmosphere of a village center. The source for this project if federal funds, specifically an air emissions control project.

Mr. Fairbrother moved that the board award the contract for functional and detailed design for Canalside Bike Path and pedestrian crossing improvements on Montague City Road at Solar Avenue and Depot Street between the Town and StanTec Consulting Services of Northampton MA with a not to exceed amount of \$51,000 and in accordance with the proposal dated March 5, 2013 and the addendum dated March 13, 2013 and authorize the Chair to execute said contract. Seconded by Ms. Allen. Approved unanimously. Allen – Aye, Boutwell – Aye, Fairbrother - Aye

Nominate environmental consultant for MA Division of Environmental Protection Consent Order ACOP-WE-13 6W002-NT for bank restoration on the Sawmill River at South Street.

Mr. Ramsey noted that the Selectmen signed the Consent Order last week. This is work that the DPW had orders from the Conservation Commission to dredge from the South Street bridge using an excavator reaching over the bridge. The DPW exceeded what was allowed in that order and went on to private property and stabilized about 50 feet of bank. The property owner appealed through the state and the state has a Consent Order for the town to remediate that 50 feet of bank. Part of that order is that the town has 10 days to nominate an ecological consultant to

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prepare a striation plan. The town requested bids from local ecological restoration companies. We received 2 bids with very different prices. New England Environmental came in at \$13,100 to do the environmental consulting and Lattrell Ecological Consulting came in much lower at \$5,224 to do the work. Both firms are very qualified. The cost of plantings and the work itself is to be determined. Mr. Fairbrother asked for clarification of the term "nominate." The town will nominate a consultant, but the state will make the final decision. Mr. Abbondanzio said the board needs to be aware that we need to secure the permission of the owner to go on the property to do the work and this afternoon we received a "no trespassing" order. Mr. Ramsey noted that the town has not yet requested permission to go onto the property for this purpose. Mr. Ramsey spoke with the owner who verbally agreed that the "no trespassing" order would go into place after the remediation was complete. Mr. Reynolds asked who was responsible for making sure the remediation was done correctly and according to plan. The consultant will be ultimately responsible to ensure things are done properly. Mr. Ramsey said monitoring will be done over a two year period with reporting to DEP. DEP is withholding the fine from the town. If, after two years, the project has been done in accordance with the consent order, the fine will not have to be paid.

Mr. Fairbrother moved that the town nominate and send to the state our preferred choice of Lattrell Ecological Consulting LLC in the matter of Consent Order ACOP-WE-13 6W002-NT for bank restoration of the Sawmill River at South Street. Seconded by Ms. Allen. Approved unanimously. Allen – Aye, Boutwell – Aye, Fairbrother - Aye

Consider accepting a proposal made by Flight Patterns LLC to develop the Strathmore Mill Complex

Mr. Ramsey noted this reports been a long time coming. The town's received 2 proposals for this project. The staff review team have vetted and interviewed both respondents as provided in the Request For Proposal. The staff is recommending that the board consider the proposal made by Flight Patterns LLC. Their proposal is for the entire site and representatives from Flight Patterns are here to give you a talk about their plans to develop the complex into a mixed use eco-center to be developed in discrete phases. Flight Patterns has developed a strong team of technical advisors and they have a vision that's compatible with the town's goals for this site. We regretfully do not recommend accepting the proposal from Threshold Cooperative. They're based in Turners Falls and wanted to develop Building 11 into a studio space and the principle reason for not recommending them is that they have a lack of redevelopment experience and the capacity to get a major redevelopment project off the ground in the time frame we're looking at. Flight Patterns is asking for a twelve month assessment period or phase prior to purchasing the mill. This phase includes updating the Brownfield's assessment, doing structural engineering assessments and providing an accurate, thorough and dependable cost estimate of the project. This is an estimated \$40,000 to \$80,000 private investment. The staff will recommend that the proposal is worth considering, particularly if the board is willing to negotiate for several items which include access to this information as well as maintenance needed to the building. In the meantime, the town can have the partnership with Flight Patterns LLC that can be used to leverage improvements, namely to the pedestrian bridge, as well as to attract interest in the project.

Flight Patterns representatives BJ Warshaw, Marie Rondetti and Joel Ralston made a presentation.

- All three have experience living and working in renovated mill buildings.
- We're looking for a community and building that they can turn into a mixed use eco-center.
- Some of the proposed uses are artist's live/work spaces, an artist residency program, sound proof and climate controlled musician's studio, interior and exterior event spaces, public avenue spaces, educational facilities – possibly a homesteading school and possibly a place for teachers and craftspeople in the community come give workshops or classes, commercial opportunities, both for the artists who are living and working in the facility and eventually others, small artisanal shops, commercial office spaces and small business incubation spaces, cafes, restaurants, a climate-controlled warehousing storage units, and we are even open to idea of putting in light manufacturing.
- It's a massive space and one reason we haven't already subdivided it is because we want community input about what is needed. We also want to do more market research.
- We've been calling the designed facility an eco-center. We politically and pragmatically think that the best way to reuse spaces like the Strathmore is to pay close attention to the environmental footprint. We are dedicated to using green building techniques and sustainable redevelopments. Potentially, although we have not yet spoken with them, they can see a partnership with Swift River Hydro and the onsite hydroelectric turbine. We envision putting in solar and photovoltaic panels on the roof, possibly through the Solarize MA program. We envision using passive heating and cooling techniques. It's ideally situated

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on an island to heat itself in the winter and being cooled down in the summer. We envision grey water collection system and reducing the embodied energies in both the construction phase and when people will actually be living on the site.

- A key facet of the RFP and the town's concern is historic preservation. This building is a landmark and we are putting this at the top of our efforts. We think there is a great opportunity for historic tax credits to pay for a large share of the reconstruction effort. Ideally they would like to preserve the historic charm of the building. We love the brick, the beams inside, we don't want to see anything prefabricated thrown into these buildings or try to change the face of it. We do envision improvements that are environmentally conscious but we would like to strike a balance between keeping the outward appearance of the building as much as possible, but retrofitting it in a way that is going to last many years.
- We'd like to use the original building materials as much as possible, recycling what we can find in the building or using supplemental repurposed building materials from other sites that are similar to this one.
- A key piece of the proposal is that historic preservation is not opposed to environmental sustainability and green building techniques. One of our consultants has a Masters degree in architecture and historic preservation and he shares that ideal.
- Phase 1 would be Building 11. We believe that that is a small and most easily renovatable structure and can represent a pilot program for continuing organically into the rest of the mill.
- Phase 2 would be one half of what the town's called Development Segment 2. This would be Buildings 1 and 4. These are the buildings where the pedestrian bridge is directly going into from the other side of the canal. We view those as a key point that there's much work to be done before those can be developed, namely with the pedestrian bridge and issues related to ownership of the pedestrian bridge.
- We hope that doing Building 11 first can open up some government funding for the pedestrian bridge and make it more feasible to expand into Buildings 1 and 4.
- Phase 3 is the remaining half of Development Segment 2, which is represented by Buildings 2, 5 and 6.
- Phase 4 is Development Segment 3. At this point in time we do not have a concrete plan for what to do with that space. We're trying not to put the cart before the horse, but we do have long range visions that we'd be happy to share with you.
- The access issue and lack of parking on the island, not being able to support high density residential living have all been considered detriments to the site. We view them perhaps as assets. We're putting environmentalism first, so if we can create a community where we're encouraging bike transportation, and encouraging foot traffic to the site, and as much as possible allowing car access across the canal making use of parking lot there.
- We think that having this community that is adjacent to the town but separated is appealing to artists and craftspeople who want to live here to get away from their daily lives but be around other creative people. We view the natural beauty across the river as a huge asset to the site. If you have studios lining that side and there's greenery, that should be taken advantage of.
- We also view that while limited space is available, there's an opportunity to put a lot of public space on the land. There are great spaces for public gathering on the island, limited though they may be.
- The challenges are not going to be news to anyone in the room.
 - The major challenge to redevelopment right now is that the studies are outdated and in a lot of ways ill-suited to our proposal. They tend to focus on turning it into residential usage, which we don't see as feasible.
 - There's a lack of vehicular access, which even while we are promoting bike and pedestrian usage is still an issue.
 - The pedestrian bridge is currently condemned and needs work.
 - There are complications in restoring utilities.
 - There are structural deficiencies
 - There is further hazmat and environmental remediation that needs to happen. We will need further site analysis for the environmental perspective.
- Research we are proposing
 - Renewed environmental assessments, including hazmat issues and costs
 - A site-wide structural engineering survey
 - A full estimate of what it will take to get the buildings code compliant

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- A civil engineering study reassessing work that Fuss & O'Neill has already done. Focusing on the pedestrian bridge but also focusing on servicing plans for utilities and traffic plans
- Market analysis. We believe that Building 11, once renovated, will be very popular and easy to rent but we need more information.
- To summarize, in one year we would like to:
 - complete these additional assessments
 - continue our partnership with the town
 - do a lot of community outreach and see what people want
 - do some initial fundraising
 - start compiling submissions for federal, state and local grant programs to fund the final build out
 - try to secure funding for actual build out phase

A downside for the town is that you're committing the mill to Flight Patterns for one year, and at the end of the year they could walk away. The upside is we would have access to the studies and information, and we need this information no matter who is developing the project.

Mr. Abbondanzio said that as long as we address the maintenance issues the advantage of this study done is a plus because we're making a major step towards development of the site.

Ms. Golrick asked what experience Flight Patterns has in developing mills. They have not developed any other mills. They have experience working in similar buildings that have been developed. Their consultants have a ton of experience in converting old warehouses into useable and sustainable spaces.

Ms. Gorick asked if the board was considering selling the mill to any group, or go giving it away for a dollar after all the money the town's put into it. Mr. Boutwell is not in favor of selling the building for a dollar. Mr. Fairbrother said that will have to be determined as we go along, but the town needs to understand that, given the condition of the mill and what is going to be needed to rehab it, we're probably not going to get a lot of money for that building.

Maintenance issues would need to be negotiated.

The board will take the issue under advisement.

Mr. Walter asked the board to sign a letter thanking Threshold Cooperative for their proposal.

Mr. Fairbrother moved that the board sign a letter thanking Threshold Cooperative for their proposal. Seconded by Ms. Allen. Approved unanimously. Allen – Aye, Boutwell – Aye, Fairbrother – Aye

Town Administrator Report

Letter from Montague Business Association regarding street lights

The Montague Business Association's steering committee is requesting that the town deal with street lights that are either broken or just not working, and addressing the question of police presence in the downtown area. The Chief of Police and DPW Superintendent are here to address the issues of safety, security, and potential upgrades to lighting. Mr. Bergeron said the street lights were put in during the renovation in 1983. The lighting is through a transformer in each pole. To replace a single transformer is \$231. If there are 4 bulbs on a pole there are 4 transformers. One globe is a \$50 special order. One bulb is about \$25-30. These are very expensive to maintain, and the transformers are going faster than we can keep up. The DPW budget does not allow constant purchase of new transformers or globes. An estimate to replace all of the poles and lighting on the avenue with LED lights would run around \$100,000 and would last around 25 years. It cost over \$8,000 to replace the light pole in front of town hall, including over \$6,000 for a replacement post. It's a matter of funding and the money isn't there.

After a discussion of replacement options and issues, Mr. Abbondanzio suggested the board consider a wholesale replacement and to the extent possible trying to get block grant monies for it. Even if the town had to borrow the money, it would not be a lot of money compared to the cost of maintaining the current ones. Mr. Abbondanzio suggested there might be a market for the old cast iron posts.

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Mr. Fairbrother requested Mr. Bergeron do some fact finding and put together something that can be taken to town meeting. Mr. Bergeron will look into the cost of replacing what we have including the kind of fixtures, operational costs for new fixtures, and how long they'll last.

Items Not Anticipated Within the 48 Hour Posting Period

Mr. Abbondanzio noted there was a follow-up discussion on the broadband issue and he has an article to go on the Annual Town Meeting warrant that would call for the creation of a broadband committee appointed by the Moderator. Mr. Abbondanzio is suggesting a 7 member committee including the Town Planner, a representative from the Industrial Park, representatives from Chestnut Hill, Taylor Hill and Meadow Road, either the Town Accountant or Treasurer to deal with issues of setting up a district or betterments, and the Cable Advisory Committee.

Mr. Abbondanzio has had some calls from legislators around a town flag to be placed in a hall of flags to be installed at a June ceremony. There are now very few towns that don't have a town flag. Some are as simple as the town seal.

Registration for Assembly, Public Demonstration, or Use of Public Property

Mr. Fairbrother moved that the board issue a permit to the Montague Community Band via Lauren Clough of Second Street, Turners Falls, for a series of concerts at Peskeompskut Park on June 24, 2013, July 8, 2013, July 22, 2013 and August 5, 2013, all concerts to run from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM with setup from 6:00PM to 7:00 PM and cleanup from 9:00 PM to 10:00 PM, and waive the fee. Ms. Allen seconded. Approved unanimously. Fairbrother – Aye, Boutwell – Aye, Allen -Aye

Application to place sign, object, or other display or exhibit/vigil on public property

The Harmony Lodge of Masons is requesting permission to put an Open House sign from April 1, 2013 through April 6, 2013.

Mr. Fairbrother moved to issue a permit to the Harmony Lodge of Masons to place a 4 by 8 foot sign at the corner of Montague City Road and Masonic Avenue in Montague City from April 1, 2013 through April 6, 2013, for an Open House All are Welcome to Attend. With the caveat that the sign does not block the view of motorists. Ms. Allen seconded. Approved unanimously. Fairbrother – Aye, Boutwell – Aye, Allen –Aye

Upcoming Meetings

The next regularly scheduled Selectmen's meeting will be held on Monday, April 1, 2013 at 7:00 PM at the Montague Town Hall, upstairs meeting room, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls MA.

Mr. Fairbrother makes the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 PM. Seconded by Ms. Allen. Approved unanimously. Allen – Aye, Fairbrother – Aye, Boutwell- Aye