

Selectboard Executive Session
Via ZOOM
1 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA
Monday, May 4, 2020

RE: Executive Session in accordance with G.L. C. 30A, §21(a)(6), to consider the possible purchase, exchange, taking, lease or value of real property - First Light Power, votes may be taken

Present: Selectpersons Richard Kuklewicz, Christopher Boutwell, and Michael Nelson, Town Administrator Steve Ellis, Executive Assistant Wendy Bogusz, and Town Planner Walter Ramsey

Documents: Letter from FirstLight to Steve Ellis, Dated April 30, 2020

RE: Replacement of the 5th Street Pedestrian Bridge as part of the planned redevelopment of the former mill properties along the Power Canal

A letter was received from Donald Traester of Firstlight Power Services. Ellis states that Firstlight is willing to provide some money to assist in the relocation of the utilities and the removal of the old bridge.

Discussion:

- There is a question of whether the Town is willing to give up the Strathmore footbridge as part of the redevelopment of the Strathmore Mill.
- Ellis notes that this Town has a habit of fighting for buildings and structures that many people say can't be and shouldn't be saved. By relocating the utilities, we are signaling the end of any hope of maintaining that bridge.
- Ramsey states that an 800-foot run between the new pedestrian bridge and the Strathmore pedestrian bridge would cost between \$320,000 and \$400,000 for a single line. For all the lines, it would be closer to \$1 million.
- Our grant is committed to \$240,000 worth of sewer improvements (new lines over the new bridge).
- Ellis reminds the Board that we received money from the State for the abatement with the assumption that we were at least considering redevelopment and not purely demolition of that portion of the Strathmore.
- There is no way of making the existing bridge ADA accessible.
- Ramsey suggests including in the negotiations the request to have Air Rights (the right to pull down the existing bridge).
- Ellis states that one of the reasons this discussion is being held in Executive Session is we are negotiating relative to being able to get an easement to allow the new bridge to be built.
- Ellis: With reasonable cost estimates and with a signal from the Selectboard, Walter and I can go to Firstlight and tell them that the Board sees the strategic value and the win-win possibility in this, notwithstanding the potential loss of historical character that losing that bridge would entail.

- Once we have a proposition, the next step would be to ask ourselves whether the Town is willing to put up ½ to ¾ of a million dollars into moving the lines, taking down the bridge, and running utilities up along the side of Canal Street. Would the State pay for it through an expansion of our MassWorks grant?
- If we are not granted an easement, then we may have to look for an exemption to ADA accessibility.
- Kuklewicz wonders whether we have enough money with the grant to just relocate the bridge. If we relocate the utilities off of the Strathmore Bridge, what would the cost be and would Firstlight be willing to fund some of that? Would we be able to leverage some additional grant monies through MassWorks?

Ramsey states that the engineers are working on putting together a ballpark budget. He is hopeful that he will have some numbers by early next week.

Ellis states he will let Traester know tomorrow that the Board is open to the conversation.

Ramsey intends to update MassWorks and try to entice them into expanding the scope of the project and maybe provide us with more funding.

Boutwell makes the motion to adjourn Executive Session. Seconded by Nelson, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Nelson - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Approved:

☒ Boutwell ☒ Kuklewicz ☒ Nelson

Release to the Public:

☒ Yes ☐ Not Yet 8/23/21 Date

Date Released to the Public: 9/15/21



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Donald E. Traester, P.E.
Regulatory Compliance Manager

VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

FERC0135

April 30, 2020

Steven Ellis
Town Administrator
Town of Montague, Massachusetts

Dear Administrator Ellis:

Thank you for your letter of April 16th, 2020, and for our related conversations with your team regarding the Town of Montague's planned replacement of the 5th Street pedestrian bridge as part of its planned redevelopment of the former mill properties along the Power Canal. This is an exciting project, and FirstLight Power applauds the Town's leadership in undertaking this important economic development plan for Montague and our region.

FirstLight understands that the limitations of the current bridge site make an alternative bridge location on the other side of the vehicular bridge more feasible for a number of reasons. We are happy to discuss creation of the easements and FERC approvals that would be necessary to accomplish this. As you referenced in your letter, in our preliminary discussions on April 14th, First Light has proposed that this project, which includes utility work by the Town to provide the mill district with water and sewer service, would also be an ideal opportunity to relocate the aging water and wastewater lines that have historically served the properties at 16, 20, and 36 Canal Road via the nearby Strathmore Pedestrian Bridge. As you know, the poor condition of these lines has recently required repairs by the Town, and replacement would probably be necessary in the future. The same is true with the lines along Canal Road, which are also in a similar condition. We would like to propose that the Town relieve FirstLight of its obligations to maintain the Strathmore Bridge and its associated utility service, provide replacement utilities as part of the Town's project, and allow demolition of the Strathmore Footbridge, in exchange for a contribution by FirstLight toward funding the Town's new pedestrian bridge and related utility infrastructure work and provision of the easements and regulatory filings necessary for their construction.

Because the Town will be mobilizing construction companies to accomplish its bridge and utility project, FirstLight has recommended that it might improve the efficiency of the project's success and reduce overall costs if the Town were to manage the entire project, including the above items. We believe this would save the Town on overall contractor mobilization costs, lower construction risks, and help the Town meet its tight timeline by allowing better coordination of activities and schedules. We realize, however, that this changes the scope of the planned development, and further exploration by the Town will be necessary to determine if this is feasible.



We understand that this is a very time-sensitive project for the Town. In that spirit we have attempted to identify as many options and issues as quickly as we can, and we appreciate the Town's continued willingness to let us all think through these options together. We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with all parties, and we are happy to answer any questions.

Many thanks for the opportunity to give our initial thoughts on this exciting project. We look forward to our next discussion and to working with the Town of Montague going forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donald E. Traester".

Donald E. Traester, P.E.
Manager, Regulatory Compliance
FirstLight Power Services LLC