

**SELECTMEN'S MEETING
MONDAY, APRIL 14, 2008**

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#19-08

Meeting opened at 7:00 PM in the Upstairs Meeting Room. Present were Selectpersons: Patricia Allen, Patricia Pruitt and Allen Ross; Town Administrator Frank Abbondanzio; and DPW Superintendent Tom Bergeron

Earth Day Parade, April 14, 2008

Allen: Everybody walked from Sheffield School. The Turners Falls High School Band and the Gill-Montague School District Band were great. .

Approve Minutes of March 17, 24, 31 and April 7, 2008 if available

Ross made a motion to approve the minutes of March 17, 2008 with corrections. Seconded by Pruitt. Approved unanimously. Pruitt – Aye, Ross – Aye, Allen – Aye. No other minutes were available.

Tom Bergeron, DPW Superintendent – Illegal dumping at the leaf pile

- Busy with spring clean up, but ahead of schedule.
- Sweeper is back after \$33,000 worth of work being done to bring it up to shape
- Running it sixteen hours per day.
- Leaf pile is now open. Finding unacceptable items which do not compost.
- People dumping illegal items when no one is around.
- Don't like contractors in there as they charge their clients and then dump for free.
- Leaf pile is for our residents' leaves and grass.
- Contractors used to come and get the compost to make their own loam, but don't anymore because there is too much rubbish.
- Make an announcement that if illegal parts of dumping don't cease, then we will close it off. They will be able to dump at the top only on Wednesdays during the day and Saturday mornings.
- Fall clean-up is usually worse.

Ross: Is that section part of the police route? Do they go in there?

Bergeron: I will speak to the Chief to see if a cruiser could just zip in and zip out.

Allen: What the penalties for illegal dumping?

Bergeron: Illegal dumping is actually a fineable offense of around \$150. I have letters all set. If I could get their license plates and then get their names and addresses, I could send them a letter advising them that they have been caught and if they do it again, a fine could be assessed.

Discussion continued regarding the possibility of having a schedule for the Town Sweeper Truck. Highly impossible as we don't always have a driver for the truck. We alternate drivers with the re-cycling truck.

Registration for Public Demonstration Use of Public Property: Skate Park Advisory Board

Ross made a motion to sign the Registration for Assembly and Public Demonstration, which was discussed at a previous meeting. The applicant is Ruth Nervig, representing the Skate Park Advisory Board, for an assembly in the Skate Board Park on Saturday, June 7, 2008 from 12 noon to 6:00 PM for approximately 200 people. It has been approved by Chief Ray Zukowski. There will be music at this function to publicize and raise money for the Skate Park. Seconded by Pruitt. Approved unanimously. Pruitt – Aye, Ross – Aye, Allen – Aye.

License to Place Sign or Object in the Right of Way: Parent Child Development Center

Applicant Kara Peters of the Parent Child Development Center, 110 G St., Turners Falls requests permission to hang a 2' x 16' two-sided banner to advertise their Head Start preschool and other child care programs, over Avenue A, from May 12, 2008 (or anytime after May 12th) until May 23, 2008.

Ross made a motion to accept this request, contingent upon approval of the Building Inspector David Jensen, who is in charge of sign permit guidelines. Seconded by Pruitt. Approved unanimously. Pruitt – Aye, Ross – Aye, Allen – Aye.

Town Administrator's Report

Vote on Override Basket

Ross made a motion that the Select Board accept the Override Basket as described on page 3 of 13 on the Financial Committee and Board of Selectmen Monthly Meeting Minutes. The Override Basket includes the following:

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Town Nurse position, with a \$26,000 value, Town Libraries Budget of \$35,000, Animal Control Officer position - \$39,000, less an associated revenue of \$20,000, Curbside Recycling - \$41,000, Parks & Rec. Department - \$98,000, Council on Aging Department - \$36,000 (less an associated revenue of \$5,000), The total of the potential savings equals \$250,000. Seconded by Pruitt. Discussion followed.

Ross: Much thought about a way to potentially address our financial shortfall and the items listed in this basket are items that I think it is fair to say the people on the Finance Committee and Select Board would like to have as part of the Town. Given the budget crisis, the monies that potentially could pay for these things would be included in an override.. *Ross – Aye, Allen – Aye, Pruitt – Nay.*

Allen: On the Town side we have had a budget gap of \$600,000 and we have already cut about \$400,000 leaving approximately \$250,000 as a gap.

Pruitt stated she doesn't feel that these are real cuts. I feel that these are cuts that will make it easy for people to vote for the override. The truth is we need an override, because we do not have enough money in our operating budget. We have selected these things because maybe they aren't required by law, but also because these are the things that make a Town a Town in a real live way. I would be much happier if we were putting down the things where costs have really gone up dramatically; it is not in the library that costs have gone up dramatically. Things like energy, things like the \$1,110,000 Health Care Bill that we have. We have only been mentioning the \$110,000 increase this year, but that isn't on the list; that is one of the reasons why we need an override. I think we are fooling people into thinking that they will lose their library, when in fact, they need to contribute more to run the Town. That is why we are having the override.

Vote on Gill/Montague Assessment

Ross made a motion to approve the assessment to the Gill/Montague Schools of \$7,002,683. \$162,992 from net reserves and \$6,839,691 from taxation. Seconded by Pruitt. Ross – Aye, Allen – Aye, Pruitt – Abstained.

Vote on Residential Requirement By-law

This is Article 22 on the Warrant. All persons appointed to Boards, Committees, Commissions and Authorities shall be residents of the Town of Montague, provided, however, that this by-law shall not apply to appointments to those Boards, whose charge or enabling legislation specifically requires appointment of non-resident members. If an appointed member of a Board, etc. shall remove from the Town, such member shall, after a hearing held by the Board of Selectmen, be deemed to have vacated his office. If an appointed member of the Board, etc., moves within the Town, notice shall be provided to the Board of Selectmen within 30 days of such move. Applicants for appointment and reappointment to Municipal Boards, etc., shall provide to the appointing authority proof of residence in the Town. For the purposes of this by-law proof of residence shall include but not be limited to a Driver's License, recent utility bill, rent receipt on a landlord's printed letterhead lease, duplicate copy of voter registration affidavit or any other government issued printed identification which contains the person's name and address. The appointing authority may require provision of additional evidence of residence.

Ross made a motion to approve the warrant, Article 22 with a residency requirement by-law as read. Seconded by Pruitt. Approved unanimously. Pruitt – Aye, Ross – Aye, Allen – Aye. Discussion followed.

Appoint Landfill Committee

Allen: Reclused herself.

Ross: There are seven people who have been suggested for being appointed to this Committee. They are Frank Abbondanzio, Town Administrator; Tom Bergeron, DPW Superintendent; Leslie Cromack, Capital Improvements Committee; Christopher Boutwell, Board of Health; Gregory Garrison, a resident and neighborhood abutter; Pat Allen, resident and neighborhood abutter; Jan Ameen, Director of the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District. She is described as a non-voting resource person. Discussion followed.

Pruitt expressed an interest in serving on this Committee. Ross also expressed an interest in serving on the Committee. Pat Allen can do things as a private citizen, but cannot vote as a Selectperson.

Ross: Suggested that a Committee of nine, but no more than eleven, be formed. This group should start meeting and look at the issue. This Committee can define precisely what the charge would be. If specific skills are needed to evaluate different parts of it, or sequentially be represented by this Committee.

Abbondanzio: I see the Committee bringing in resource people; somebody who is an expert on ash, whatever. As long as we can pull in resources when we need them.

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Ross made a motion to accept the list as described, without Pat Allen, at this point, and that we accept this and initiate meetings that the Landfill Committee to further define the charge and potentially add more members as appropriate and as discussed in this meeting. Seconded by Pruitt. Pruitt – Aye, Ross – Aye. We will see if any other people are interested in being on this Committee. We approved seven member: Frank Abbondanzio, Tom Bergeron, Les Cromack, Chris Boutwell, Greg Garrison, Jan Armeen, as a non-voting resource person, and Patricia Pruitt.

Appoint Sidewalk CDBG Committee

This is the Citizens Advisory Committee for the Community Development Block Grant. We have three people who expressed an interest in being on the Committee. They are: Jeanne Golrick, Sharon Cottrell and David Detmold. In the past the Committee has worked very closely with Bruce Hunter from the Regional Housing Authority.

Ross made a motion to appoint Jeanne Golrick, Sharon Cottrell and David Detmold to the Citizens Advisory Committee for the CDBG. Seconded by Pruitt. Ross – Aye, Allen – Aye, Pruitt – Abstained.

Formation of an Energy Green Committee

Other communities do have these committees who deal with energy issues. There are various laws and grants coming down from the State and Federal government. We are looking for citizens who would like to be on this Green Committee. We hope that some people with expertise with different energy aspects will come forward. Probably within the next two weeks, we would like to have some people who would be interested to contact us.

Sign Annual Town Meeting Warrant

There are some changes since last Wednesday. There are now 24 articles, and we have removed the two articles that relate to the acceptance of Chapter 48, for the Police Chief's salary and the monies that were appropriated for that purpose. Nothing else has changed. The numbering has changed a little bit. At the request of the Town Moderator, we moved the Vermont/Yankee discussion right up to the front of the Warrant. The override will be right behind the regular appropriation for the Town Departments. Then we moved the school article up a little bit, at the request of the Gill/Montague School District, because the Superintendent had another commitment.

Ross made a motion that we accept the current presented order of the annual Town Meeting and note that two of the previously included articles have been withdrawn. Seconded by Pruitt. Approved unanimously. Pruitt – Aye, Ross – Aye, Allen – Aye.

Sign Special Town Meeting Warrant

Abbondanzio: Both the Annual and Special Town Meetings are scheduled for 8:30 AM at the request of the Town Moderator. There was a concern that we would do the Special and get it over with, and not be able to start the Annual Meeting until 9 o'clock. There are three articles on the Special Town Meeting.

Article 1 is to appropriate \$21,043.50 for the funding of the deficit in the snow and ice budget for 2008.

Ross made a motion to approve Article 1 which is to appropriate the sum of \$21,043.50 or any other amount for the purpose of funding a deficit for FY 2008 snow and ice budget, or pass any vote or votes in relation thereto. Seconded by Pruitt. Approved unanimously. Pruitt – Aye, Ross – Aye, Allen – Aye.

Article 2 is to appropriate \$200 for a prior year bill from Guilford Transportation Industries, Inc. for fiscal year 2006; some kind of a license fee for the Sewage Treatment Plant that never got paid. *Ross made a motion to approve Article 2 which authorizes the appropriation of the sum of \$200 or any other amount for the purpose of funding a prior year bill, 2006 to the Guilford Transportation Industries, Inc. for related votes. Seconded by Pruitt. Approved unanimously. Pruitt – Aye, Ross – Aye, Allen – Aye.*

Article 3 is an article that Carolyn suggested in the event that our expenses on the Strathmore continued into FY'09. I think the article specifically said FY'08 and it also clarifies including legal expenses as part of operation and maintenance costs. That is actually what the Selectmen were authorized to spend. Funds are appropriated under that Article 5 of the October 11, 2007 Town Meeting for that purpose.

Ross made a motion to approve Article 3 which authorizes the Board of Selectmen to spend funds appropriated under Article 5 of the October 11, 2007 Special Town Meeting, for legal expenses incurred in the implementation of this project regarding the Strathmore Paper Mill Building stabilization, for any operation and maintenance costs

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incurred in FY 2009 or pass any vote or votes in relation thereto. Seconded by Pruitt. Approved unanimously. Pruitt – Aye, Ross – Aye, Allen – Aye.

Vote on Ballot Question

The Ballot Question reads on Monday, April 14, 2008, the Montague Board of Selectmen voted to place the following question on the May 19, election ballot: Shall the Town of Montague be allowed to assess an additional \$250,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purpose of supplementing the FY 2009 appropriation for the maintenance of the Town Departments for fiscal year beginning July 1, 2008? Again, this article is basically the wording that is stated in the Mass. General Laws on how you write these articles, and when I spoke to Town Council about it last week, he said yes you are right. You will have a real hard problem with the fact that the articles all sound a like, and it makes it very, very difficult for the voters to understand what they are really voting on and the rationale supposedly is that it would seem to influence the vote, by actually telling the people what they are voting on.

Ross made a motion that we place the ballot question on the May 19, 2008 election ballot as read by Frank Abbondanzio. Seconded by Pruitt. Approved unanimously. Pruitt – Aye, Ross – Aye, Allen – Aye.

Announce Pre Town Meeting Date

The Pre Town Meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday, April 30, 2008 at 7:00 PM in the Upstairs Meeting Room of the Montague Town Hall.

Election

Election is Monday, May 19, 2008. If you aren't going to be here, you need to get an absentee ballot. This is our usual election, but it is even more than that because it will have the override question on it.

Turners Falls Fire District Annual Meeting at Hillcrest School at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, April 15, 2008. If you live in the Turners Falls Fire District, you are welcome to go and if you live in the District, you may vote.

Annual Town Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, May 3, 2008 at 8:30 AM at the Turners Falls High School, 222 Turnpike Road, Montague, MA

Next Selectmen's Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 22, 2008 at 7:00 PM in the Upstairs Meeting Room of the Montague Town Hall.

Other

Allen: We received a petition from the people who live in the south end; otherwise known as "The Patch" saying that this is a petition to get our bridge re-opened near the old Railroad Salvage. It has been long enough for the owner to have taken care of this matter to either clean it up or tear it down; meaning the Railroad Salvage building. We have been patient long enough and this has been signed by fifteen residents. David Jensen said that on May 5th, we will be back in Court and he actually said that he would love to have company. It wouldn't surprise me if that might make a bit of difference or at least make people wake up and pay attention that actually others beside David Jensen and town officials care. I think all of us at Town Hall do feel that this has gone on way too long. It is sad, but our judicial system allows some of these things to run on and on, and inappropriate because this is a safety issue for our residents. So, hopefully, there will be several people there and we will have a better resolution at this hearing. The hearing will be at 9:00 AM on Monday, May 5, 2008 at the Housing Court on Gothic Street in Northampton, MA.

Editorial in the Montague Reporter

Ross stated that he saw the editorial and was surprised to read about the efforts that the Town took to kind of evaluate the current financial challenges that we are facing. I found it surprising in terms of the analysis, it's conclusions and I would say almost more important, but there was a tone to that editorial which I found surprising coming from a paper that seems to be so kind of sensitive to Town issues. I have written something and I think other people here have also. It was a bit negative, sarcastic and pejorative and I think it was very inappropriate.

Allen: I mostly found some great inaccuracies in one section, referring to our contract negotiations. I thought they tried to handle a very large topic in one editorial. I think a piece that implied that the Town Administrator was

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running the show in contract negotiations, I thought was false and inappropriate. I don't think you deserve that at all Frank.

Pruitt: It seemed to me like a piece that was trying to give words to a lot of the abuse of our financial situation that you might hear throughout the five villages if you were talking to people on a casual basis. I have certainly overheard similar comments in the grocery store and elsewhere. I think those are, however impolitely you may feel that they are expressed, they are certainly attitudes that folks have out there and concerns that they have. I think we all feel going through this financial period that our means of correcting the problem are very inadequate to the problem. None of us have a solution that we are putting forward that we are really thrilled about that we feel we really resolve the issues here that we have. What I hope that the paper does is goes the next step and talks about what are the causes of the situation that we are in and how do find ourselves here. I think that will put a needed perspective on what is missing in that article.

Pam Hanold: As a Town Meeting member, one thing that I thought was missing from the article was that I think that Town Meeting needs to also feel very accountable for being the body that actually does the voting, and perhaps for being more accountable for finding out more information. Although I will say, even though I live with someone on the Finance Committee, I would also encourage both the Finance Committee and the Select Board to put more information out. I am more interested in actually the information than the ideas you have about it, than your recommendation votes. I don't know if that is a shared perspective, but I do think now is the time when we need to have as many heads involved so that we can benefit from that collective wisdom. Town Meeting is our big collection of heads.

Abbondanzio: I started out with a nasty response to that editorial, because obviously it was pointed directly at me. In the end I ended up deciding to take the high road and realizing that the thing that was missing in there was the understanding of just how we got to where we are and why proposition 2-1/2 is an issue that unfortunately we are going to have to contend with, and not entirely of our own doing. I think in addition to tackling a lot of the issues that the editorial pointed out, on the cost side, those are obviously things that the Select Board is addressing in the collective bargaining processing and they should. I think on the other side, people need to realize just how Montague fits into the overall context of Massachusetts. I think that is an education process that needs to take place in the next two or three weeks.

Allen: On the good side, look at how many of us read "The Montague Recorder."

Ross made a motion to go into Executive Sessions; one for Collective Bargaining and the other for Real Estate. When those are over we will come out and adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Pruitt. Approved unanimously. Pruitt – Aye, Ross – Aye, Allen – Aye.