

**SELECTMEN'S MEETING AGENDA
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM
1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
MONDAY, September 15, 2014**

Meeting was opened at 7:00 PM in the Upstairs Meeting Room. Present were Selectpersons, Mark Fairbrother, Chris Boutwell, Mike Nelson; Town Administrator, Frank Abbondanzio, Executive Assistant, Wendy Bogusz;

Approve minutes of July 14, 28, August 11, 25 and September 8, 2014 if available

Fairbrother makes a motion to accept the minutes of July 14, 2014. Nelson seconded, approved unanimously. Boutwell – Aye, Fairbrother – Aye, Nelson – Aye

Hatchery Road, Ratify Letter to FRCOG Executive Committee withdrawing Hatchery Road Layout Petition

Abbondanzio: As you know there was a hearing scheduled on Thursday (9/11/14) actually a viewing over on Hatchery Road at 4:00 and a Hearing at 5:00 that was scheduled earlier in the week. I sent a letter to the Council of Governments asking that we withdraw the petition based on the availability of new evidence that found it was no longer in the public necessity best interest of the Town. So I asked that the petition be withdrawn. The FRCOG did do that, they published it and sent out notices to abutters saying it has been withdrawn. I'm asking tonight that the Board ratify the vote withdrawing the petition.

Fairbrother makes the motion to ratify the letter sent to Robert Dean, of the FRCOG. Seconded by Nelson, approved unanimously. Boutwell – Aye, Fairbrother – Aye, Nelson – Aye

Letter to Mr. Dean read into the record

L. Adams asks if we are discussing it tonight and Boutwell responds it's not open for discussion.

L. Adams asks what the evidence is and Boutwell responds he doesn't even have it all.

L. Adams asks why letter is being ratified then?

C. Collins asks if the Board voted in executive session to make this decision? Nelson responds Yes.

Abbondanzio: Counsel advises that the Town does not release the evidence and it has nothing to do with barns. The right of way as established by the Mass. Dept. of Transportation is the Right of way of record. There is a dispute between the Adams and the Dept. of Transportation and we acknowledge the dispute and it's a disagreement.

Town Administrators Report

Community Development Discretionary Hearing: Shea Theater, Maintenance and Appraisal Costs, \$4,000

Abbondanzio goes over status of the Community Development Discretionary Account. Recommends moving \$4,000 to the Shea Theatre account for various costs.

Fairbrother makes the motion to move \$4,000 from the Community Development Discretionary Account for the Shea Theater Account. Seconded by Nelson, approved unanimously. Boutwell – Aye, Nelson – Aye, Fairbrother - Aye

Chris Mason, Montague Energy Committee, Recommendation to Add Sheffield and Hillcrest School Buildings to Montague's Green Communities Energy Reduction Plan

Mason: The energy committee has been meeting with the school superintendent regarding a worn out boiler. There is concern about putting in a boiler that's too large or inefficient. There should be a comprehensive energy audit. The audit is available free though any building in the Green Communities Program.

Nelson makes the motion to add Sheffield and Hillcrest School Buildings to Montague's Green Communities Energy Reduction Plan. Seconded by Fairbrother, approved unanimously. Boutwell – Aye, Fairbrother – Aye, Nelson – Aye

Shea Theater, Appraisal; Interim Lease; Shea Theater Planning Study; Peer to Peer

Abbondanzio: Appraisal amount that came in has nothing to do with direction the Town is going in as far as a prospective tenant. The appraisal did a rental market analysis. An RFP will need to be done as expected. The square footage value is between \$6-7.35 per square foot.

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Interim Lease

Lease is extended out to December 31, 2015 to give additional time. Have document for Shea Board to review, sign and then return at a future date.

Planning Study

Abbondanzio: Calling Planning study but more of a visioning study. We have letter from Deborah J'Anthony offering to be facilitator of study. Proposing to have a couple forums, would have people come in and tell her what they think they like of Shea, what people would like to see. In second forum she would come back and discuss recommendations of what she would like to see and it would help to develop the RFP. The process needs to happen before the RFP.

Advertised in newspaper and on town web site for members and have 3 people who have expressed interest. Would like 5 people to be on the Civic Center Commission. Letters of interest will be accepted until September 25, 2014.

We are talking about it being a community theater; to find out what would people like to see that they are not seeing now. That's what we might see happening over time. Trying to get a consensus of where we are going.

Fairbrother makes the motion to support the Shea Theater Planning study and hiring Deborah J'Anthony. Seconded by Nelson. Boutwell – Aye, Fairbrother – Aye, Nelson – Aye

Nelson makes the motion to set Sept 25, 2014 at 12 noon as the deadline for Civic Center applications. Seconded by Fairbrother. Boutwell – Aye, Fairbrother – Aye, Nelson – Aye

Fairbrother makes the motion to authorize the Chair to sign the Peer to Peer grant letter for \$1,000. Seconded by Nelson. Boutwell – Aye, Fairbrother – Aye, Nelson - Aye

Personnel Board

Hire Michele Esposito as Truck Driver/Laborer, 40 hrs/wk, Grade 3, Step 3, \$15.01/hr, effective 9/22/14

Bergeron requests the Selectboard hire Esposito as a new laborer.

Fairbrother makes the motion to Hire Michele Esposito as Truck Driver/Laborer, 40 hrs/wk, Grade 3, Step 3, \$15.01/hr, effective 9/22/14. Seconded by Nelson, approved unanimously. Boutwell – Aye, Fairbrother – Aye, Nelson - Aye

Strathmore Mill

Long Term Planning (Walter Ramsey)

Ramsey: Let me open by citing the first two sentences in the executive summary of the 2005 Strathmore Feasibility Plan: To maintain possibility of redevelopment, further deterioration must be prevented. To assure that end, it is critical that the town remain active.

Aside from all soft things the town does like planning, streamlining, resolving legal issues the foremost thing the town can do to support this property is to prevent deterioration.

It goes on to say that the town should:

- review zoning and other regulatory tools to ensure the local regulations express desired outcomes. (done)
- assist and facilitate responsible developers of the property by providing flexibility in code enforcement and permitting where warranted, undertaking infrastructure improvements, lending support for grants and financing, and working with abutters with an eye focused on positive future for the mill.

This has been the MO of the planning department, particularly since I came on board around the time the town took ownership through tax-title.

Work plan since taking ownership:

- Achieve 43D designation for expedited permitting
- Clean up Building 10 debris to reduce town's liability and enhance access/ develop ability
- Slum+Blight Designation study to target investment in infrastructure to the historic-industrial area (underway)

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- Work with FirstLight regarding ownership of the pedestrian bridge/ legal access rights (this has proven far more difficult than anyone could anticipate and negotiations are currently stalled with FirstLight. They simply await a catalyst for the discussion to re-open)
- Build Public interest and support through the following: Downtown Livability Plan, ULI technical assistance panel (2010), Riverscaping Art installation on Building 11 (2012), attracting motion pictures use of the site (2012), applied for a PWED for bridge (2011) (unsuccessful)

Two RFPs have been released.

2012- two proposals received by Threshold Cooperative and Flight Patterns, LLC. Issued after the cleanup of building 10. The town worked with Flight Patterns, but ultimately they required more public investment than what their speculative financing plan could justify.

2013- no proposals received. Poor timing on release.

At the most basic level, the town needs to button up the property to protect the asset from becoming more of a liability. We learned through building 10 debris removal project that collapsed buildings are more expensive to demo than standing buildings because of the co-mingling of Hazardous with clean materials. Every plan, study, and expert that has braved the cavernous mill says: the first step is to secure the property. As a town, We have done this to a limited degree- but not a proper mothball as the studies suggest

Development-wise-The town has been stuck at a point where we cant expend (or receive) resources to remove development hurdles without a developer's commitment. A developer cant make a project work without commitments from the Town. It's the proverbial chicken or the egg situation. And in this case the town is stuck sitting on the egg. Here is an example of how this has played out. In 2010 asked the state for an econ dev grant replace the ped bridge, but they would not build a bridge to nowhere without a developer on board. Then in 2012 Flight Patterns flew the coup because the town could not secure a functional ped bridge among several other concessions. Despite best efforts to systematically dismantle the chicken v egg proverb, my department has not yet been able to which came first. Isn't revitalization fascinating stuff?

Before I get into suggesting strategies I want to make you aware of several factors influencing the development potential of the site:

FERC process- The possibility of the section below the dam being open for recreation and or whitewater expands the pallet of possibilities for the site. This is an intangible thing we cant hang our hat on, but could have a big impact.

Battlefield mapping study has attracted the attention of the National Park Service. The island could be used to support the Native American Cultural Park Concept

Implementation of the Turners Falls Livability Plan- enhancing the downtown stimulates interest and investment in the site., particularly as the reputation and external perception of the town and village improves.

Slum+Blight Designation- The prospect of public CDBG investment in infrastructure should support and attract private investment. Designation is good for 10 years.

Abutters- we do not know the plans of the former indeck site –owned by Solutions Consulting Group LLC- in tax title. It is parcel that does not have legal access, negligible value. That parcel will never be anything without the Strathmore site and vice verse. Also FirstLight holds the card on the ped bridge and they could, as they claim, remove it. FirstLight's business interests do not necessarily align with the town's rehabilitation goals in this instance.

Moving forward I suggest the following strategies:

- Re-open negotiations with FirstLight about the pedestrian bridge
- Continue to promote the development of the site, particularly Building 11 as a catalyst for further development
- Obtain former in Indeck site through tax title or other methods.
- Facilitate or provide basic water, sewer and electricity the town can at least lease space.
- Consider properly mothballing the complex
- Lastly (most importantly) Consider re-establishing the Strathmore Planning Committee or task force to have some citizen and stakeholder oversight over development of the mill.

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Nelson: There was previous consideration about removing some of the properties that are not feasible for development. Has there been more thought about that?

Ramsey: Want to think that out, could be left up to developer as it is impossible to anticipate what they would want. More productive way would be to do interior hazmat removal.

Maintenance Issues (David Jensen and Tom Bergeron)

Bergeron: We are securing flooring that had larger holes. Earlier in spring Allied waste hauled about 54 tons of junk out of building. He's talked with Sheriff about getting some help there. Have 120 tons of paper to remove. Jimmy has boarded up some doors and secured flooring.

Nelson: How do we move forward, cant keep putting money into the building. We're going to have to call it quits at some point.

Frank: Large recession 2005 – 2013. Timing was really bad, big item is going to be cost of demolition going down the road.

Topics not anticipated

Abbondanzio: Town awarded Adams Art grant for \$22,800 from Mass Cultural Council.

There will be special meeting with Erving Selectmen next Tuesday, Sept 23 at 6:30 regarding the sewer agreement.

Executive Session under G.L. c 30A, Section 21 (a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to Collective Bargaining involving town unions (UE) votes may be taken

Boutwell declares holding in open session will be detrimental to Towns bargaining position

Nelson makes a motion to enter executive session at 8:30 PM under G.L. c 30A, Section 21 (a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to Collective Bargaining involving town unions (UE), votes may be taken. The Board will leave executive session only to adjourn the regular meeting. Seconded by Fairbrother, approved unanimously. Boutwell – Aye, Fairbrother – Aye, Nelson - Aye

The next regularly scheduled Selectmen's Meeting will be held on **Monday, September 22, 2014** at 7:00 p.m. at the Montague Town Hall, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA