



TOWN OF
MONTAGUE
MASSACHUSETTS

TOWN HALL
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PLANNING BOARD
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DRAFT JULY 25, 2023 MEETING MINUTES
PLANNING BOARD

The Montague Planning Board met in-person in the Upstairs Room, located in Town Hall, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls and via Zoom at **6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 25, 2023.**

ROLL CALL:

Present: Elizabeth Irving, George Cooke, Ron Sicard (Chair), Sam Guerin Also, in attendance was Town Planner Maureen Pollock, Colleen Carlisle, Caitlin Walsh, Justin Demers, Mr. Demers, Sr.

INFO SESSION: Discuss possible zoning district changes to property identified as Turnpike Road (Assessor's Map/Parcel: 21-0-152) and possibly property identified as Turnpike Road (Assessor's Map/Parcel: 21-0-004) from Neighborhood Business (NB) Zoning District to General Business (GB) Zoning District.

With the assistance of the Town's interactive GIS mapping tool (<https://www.axisgis.com/montaguema/>), the Planner shows an aerial overview of parcels located in the General Business (GB) and Industrial (ID) Zoning Districts within the Town. The Planner emphasizes the point that there is very limited land in the GB and ID Zoning District available for manufacturing development for a variety of reasons: land is already developed, land is not large enough to develop, levels of land protection, wetlands, topography limitations, no sewer/water, and lack of frontage and access. The Planner describes the problem- there is very limited land available in Montague that is zoned for manufacturing growth and business retention. This problem is seen in surrounding Franklin County communities too.

The proposed zoning map change would allow a permit pathway for potential manufacturing or multi-family residential uses to occur by the review and approval of a Special Permit and Site Plan Review.

The Planner informs the Board that an existing Franklin County based manufacturing business is interested in developing on Parcel #21-0-152. The current zoning district prohibits a manufacturing use to occur at this location.

Although the proposed zoning map change was initially inspired by a perspective business, the proposed zoning change goes beyond any particular business. With a lack of land available for manufacturing uses, various planning and economic development plans recommend the Town to pursue a strategy to retain existing industry needing to expand from locations within the Town of Montague and from other property within the Franklin County regions as a means to support industrial and commercial growth. These plans include:

- 1999 Comprehensive Plan
- 2004 Montague Comprehensive Economic Development Plan
- 2014 Montague Economic Development Plan
- 2018-2023 Montague Community Development Strategy

The 15.5 acre town-owned property is surrounded by Judd Wire, FRTA, the burn dump, the dog shelter, St. Mary's cemetery, Springdale cemetery, solar fields, and 54 dwelling units located at Park Villa.

Ron Sicard asks about what use are allowed in the Neighborhood Business (N-B) Zoning District, which is the current zoning district.

Planner lists the uses allowed in the NB Zoning District, including:

Permitted Uses:

- Single and two-family dwellings
- Retail sales and services less than 1,000 gross square feet of floor area and without an accessory drive-through component
- Business, professional, or medical office less than 1,000 gross square feet of floor area

Uses allowed by Special Permit from the Board of Appeals:

- Non-residential uses in § 5.2.5(a) exceeding 1,000 square feet of floor area and without an accessory drive-through component
- Multi-family dwellings
- Lodging houses
- Hotels
- Non-profit clubs or lodges
- Parking lots or parking garages, as a principal use
- Craft workshop or light assembly shop
- Farming and forestry on less than 5 acres of land
- Public utilities
- Other non-industrial uses if similar to § 5.2.5(b) in externally observable attributes and compatibility with residential environs.

“Manufacturing, processing, or research” and “multi-family dwellings, including mixed use is prohibited in the N-B Zoning District.

Ron Sicard doesn't think that anyone would want to build housing on the town-owned lot (Parcel #21-0-152) because of the abutting uses although the Town recognizes the need for housing.

The proposal “General Business” zone would allow a permit pathway for manufacturing by special permit with public hearing and conditions. Multi-family development would also be allowed by also by special permit.

E. Irving lets the group know that there has been input from the community that Montague works to “keep jobs here” especially Tech School students and other public-school graduates. It gives developers the “most options” and the Town the “most say.”

G. Cooke does not see a problem from a surveyor's point of view.

There are no wetlands on this parcel and the land drains well, making ideal for development,

The Board and Planner reiterate that types of “conditions” put on a business through the special permit process.

Public Comments:

- Colleen Carlisle states that she uses the woods for recreation and peace and quiet. She has family members buried there. She is against the proposed zoning map change.

Caitlin Walsh (Oakman Street) represents the cemetery and is a homeowner. Definitely opposed. She let the Board know that the cemetery at Springdale cemetery wants to expand. She is concerned about the traffic but has no problem with the police/fire department. She asks about why the cemetery is being included. She tried to reach out to the Planning Department about how the cemetery should start the expansion process.

Ron Sicard brings up the point that 15 duplexes could be put on the property currently with the associated traffic. He asks about where the cemetery exists in relation to the brook. (260 feet from the clearing is available.)

The Planner will discuss the cemetery expansion idea with Ms. Walsh.

The Planner asks the Board if they (generally) agree that there is limited manufacturing space in Montague. The Planner asks the Board (generally) if they want to create the ability to expand business/ attract new business.

Justin Demers asks if the way that it’s zoned now could someone clear it for housing? (Yes) and some of that housing could have business? (Yes). So the zoning change turns it from “any type” to a “certain type” of business. Ron Sicard responds “Yes” with additional protections.

Mr. Demers Sr. asks about the location of the intermittent stream, the ravine, and the slope near the Springdale cemetery. George Cooke explains the elevation and land contours of that area to the Board and people present. He knows about a pipe that was installed decades ago by the Town.

The Planner stated that a MA licensed wetland scientist did look at the property and he did not find wetlands on the town-owned lot (Parcel #21-0-152)

Someone from the audience asks putting in land into conservation is an option.

Mr. Demers Sr. asks about the difference in taxes in relation to zoning designation.

“Gerry” asks where the dog pound will be relocated. (The Planner does not know.)
Gerry asks if Turnpike Road is the only access. (Planner responds most likely, yes.)

Meeting materials were posted to the Town website, including the zoning-use chart.

The Planner asks the Board if they would like to continue the discussion until a future a meeting or would they like to make a motion to initiate petition to the Selectboard. Once the Selectboard

receives petition at its meeting, the Selectboard then refers the petition to the Planning Board. At which time, the Planning Board would schedule a public hearing. Once the planning board closes the public hearing, the planning board will provide a report with recommendations for the Special Town Meeting vote.

MOTION by R. Sicard to advance possible zoning district changes to property identified as Turnpike Road (Assessor's Map/Parcel: 21-0-152) and possibly property identified as Turnpike Road (Assessor's Map/Parcel: 21-0-004) from Neighborhood Business (NB) Zoning District to General Business (GB) Zoning District to the Select Board. Seconded by G. Cooke VOTE: Elizabeth Irving (AYE), George Cooke (AYE), Ron Sicard (AYE), Sam Guerin (AYE). MOTION PASSES 6:25pm.

REVIEW AND ADOPT the Smart Growth Overlay District Plan Approval Form, Administrative Rules, and design guidelines in accordance with Section 10 of the Zoning Bylaws and pursuant to MGL Chapter 40R.

The Planner has researched design guidelines created by other towns for Montague's two 40R districts: Griswold Mill and First Street. Building heights (plus size and scale) have already been determined. *Meeting materials on-line and entered into the minutes.*

The Chair asks if the Planner compiled the guidelines alone.

Planner responds "Yes" and they were reviewed by Walter reviewed and Habitat for Humanity.

Elizabeth reminds the Board that guidelines are not "requirements" and can be amended. Additionally, the Griswold site will be delayed significantly because of bridge work.

Guidelines discussed include ADA, roof lines, walkways, energy efficiency, connection with Avenue A, access to public transportation, parking, shared parking, vegetation, stormwater, utilities, lighting, landscaping and trees.

E.Irving requests that local species and pollinators be included.

Habitat was notified of these guidelines (section 10).

MOTION by R. Sicard to ADOPT the Smart Growth Overlay District Plan Approval Form, Administrative Rules, and design guidelines in accordance with Section 10 of the Zoning Bylaws and pursuant to MGL Chapter 40R. Seconded by E. Irving. VOTE: Elizabeth Irving (AYE), George Cooke (AYE), Ron Sicard (AYE), Sam Guerin (AYE) MOTION PASSES 7:40pm.

PLANNER REPORT

Affordable Housing Development on First Street (Assessor's Map 4, Lot 31)

Habitat is moving forward and working well with the Town.

Farren Study: The Planner has held 3 stakeholders meeting, including: Mass in Motion, EDIC and Affordable Housing Group. Consultants will be tabling on August 12 to seek public input. There will be a public forum in the fall. Concept plans are being created now. The type/numbers of housing units developed will need to be explored thoroughly.

The Town has been awarded a MVP program grant from MA Executive Office of Energy and Planning Board Meeting Minutes of July 25, 2023

Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) in the amount of \$95,000 total, to complete the MVP 2.0 Planning Process (\$45,000) and implement a climate resilience seed project (\$50,000).

We will look at the plan through the lense of equity. Once complete, the Town qualifies for funding to complete a related project.

FRCOG hosts small-town housing group meetings. The group is organizing an in-person, field trip version of the Small Town Housing Working Group in Turners Falls at 5:30pm on July 27, where attendees will visit some housing sites, network, and gather at a local eatery to talk shop and catch up with one another.

ADJOURN:

MOTION by R. Sicard ADJOURN. Seconded by E. Irving VOTE: Anonymous 4-0. MOTION PASSES 7:57PM.

