

Montague Conservation Commission

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MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, March 9, 2017 – 6:30 pm

Upstairs Meeting Room, Town Hall, One Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA

Commissioners Present: Mark Fairbrother - Chair, Alex Peterkin, Addie Rose Holland, Deb Henson, Justin Fermann and Donna Francis

Commissioners Absent: Sean Werle

Staff: Walter Ramsey – Conservation Agent

Mark Fairbrother called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

6:30 Approval of Minutes: *Motion* made by Addie Rose Holland to approve the January 12, 2017. *Seconded* by Alex Peterkin. *Motion passed.*

6:31 PUBLIC MEETING:

Request for Determination of Applicability RDA #2017-01 filed by Bill Blanchard of Eversource Energy to determine if a proposed 4,800 kW solar array impacting 25 acres is subject to jurisdiction of the Wetlands Protection Act. The property is located off Millers Falls and Lake Pleasant Road and it is identified as Assessors Map 24 Lots 10, 23, 24, 25.

Walter Ramsey (Conservation Agent) presented the plans for the 25 acre solar project. There are no wetlands on the property and there is no anticipated stormwater run-off from the project. Eversource had a wetlands scientist walk the property and the confirmation was that there are no wetlands. The Topo Map shows a flat, sandy site. The application provided a Stormwater Management Plan stamped by an engineer. The project is within mapped priority Natural Heritage Endangered Species Program (NHESP) habitat so the applicant will be required to obtain a Conservation Permit. The strip of land (200 foot natural buffer) separating the array from the road counts against Eversource and makes the land fragmented which as a result means Eversource has to put more land into protection under the Conservation Permit. The fence surrounding the array will be 6 inches off the ground to allow for uninhibited box turtle movement. It is anticipated that the Conservation Permit will require a biologist to be present during the construction project to make sure endangered species are protected. Walter R. added that In terms of the Wetlands Protection Act the work would be considered a negative determination in terms of jurisdiction.

Mark Fairbrother: *when is the project proposed to be started and completed?* Walter R. replied that Eversource has indicated that they intend to star construction in June of 2017 and be finished in December of 2017.

Mark Fairbrother: *Is this site going to be bulldozed?* Walter R. responded that yes 25 acres will be cleared and grubbed. Walter Ramsey added that there will be low mow grasses planted after the clearing. Mark Fairbrother commented that it would be nice after they clear the land to do a burn.

Addie Rose Holland: *Will areas outside the array be impacted?* Outside of the southerly shade clearing area, rest is going to be left as pitch pine forest.

Walter R. added that the placement of the array was changed so as not to cause glare for the pilots coming into the Turners Falls Airport. The new positioning of the solar panels does sacrifice energy to accommodate this design issue.

Motion made by Deb Henson to issue a Negative Determination (Boxes 4 and 6) for RDA#2017-01 filed by Eversource Energy. **Seconded** by Justin Fermann. **Motion passed unanimously.**

6:40 Request for Certificate of Compliance for NOI #2013-01 filed by Mark Sicard of Thomas Memorial Golf Club for removing silt from an irrigation pond and restore pond to historic depth. The property is identified in the Franklin County Registry of Deeds Book 3739 Page 138.

Agent shared photos of the site before, during and after construction including where they relocated the dredged materials. Agent made a site visit to Thomas Memorial today (March 9, 2017) and shared those photos of the project site in good condition. The wetlands restoration areas rebounded naturally. Mark Sicard remained in good communication with the Conservation Commission throughout the project. The Golf Club simply did not mow these staked-out sections for the last two seasons. It was noted that Thomas Memorial appears to have restored more wetlands than what was required by the Commission as mitigation for NOI #2013-01.

Walter recommends issuing the Certificate of Compliance for NOI #2013-01

Motion made by Deb Henson to issue a Certificate of Compliance for NOI #2013-01 filed by Mark Sicard of Thomas Memorial Golf Club. **Seconded** by Donna Francis. **Motion passed unanimously**

6:45 Open Space and Recreation Plan Workshop. Review Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest. **Guest:** Alyssa LaRose – Franklin Regional Council of Governments

The Commission reviewed the chapters and provided feedback. Alyssa will return at April Meeting. Project to wrap up by June 2017.

Agent Updates:

Conservation Fund- Mark Fairbrother asked that the Commission request a \$10,000 supplement to the Henry Waidlich Conservation Fund. Current balance is approximately \$50,000. Walter R. will submit an Annual Town Meeting Article Request.

8:07ADJOURN Motion made by Donna Francis to adjourn the meeting. **Seconded** by Alex Peterkin. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Approved by: _____ Date: _____