

Montague Conservation Commission

One Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376 (413) 863-3200 Ext 207 Fax: (413) 863-3222 Email: planner@montague-ma.gov

Thursday, May 11, 2017 - 6:30 PM

Town Hall –Upstairs Meeting Room

One Avenue A

Turners Falls, MA 01376

MEETING MINUTES

Present were board members Mark Fairbrother, Addie Holland, Sean Werle and Donna Francis, and Town Planner Walter Ramsey. Deb Henson arrived a few minutes late. Fairbrother makes the introduction and announces the meeting is being taped. Votes may be taken.

Approval of Minutes of April 13, 2007. Votes may be taken.

Francis makes a motion to accept the minutes of April 13, 2007 as presented. Seconded by Werle, unanimously approved.

Fairbrother - Aye, Holland - Aye, Werle - Aye, Francis - Aye

Public Meeting: Request for Determination RDA #2017-02

Filed by Andrew Bernstein of Kearsarge Solar, LLC to confirm that a proposed electrical overhead electrical line associated with the Sandy Lane Solar Project which is located within the 100-foot buffer zones to inland bank (intermittent stream) and bordering vegetated wetland (BVW) is exempt from the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and Regulations. The property is located at the rear of Turnpike Road (former landfill) and is identified as Assessors Map 21 Lot 0-007. Votes may be taken. Present was Wetland Scientist Jessica Roberts from Tighe and Bond.

Jessica: I'm here to present what we think is an exempt portion of the solar project. It's a little stretch of overhead wires on utility poles along the existing landfill access road that's in buffer zone. We're filing an RDA for maybe six to eight poles within buffer zone along the landfill access road. We have a bordering vegetative wetland adjacent to an intermittent stream here and an isolated wetland that we delineated anyway up to the north. Exemption 2H talks about the installation of embedded utility poles adjacent to an exiting private or public roadway.

Ramsey: The specific language of the exemption is "provided that the work is conducted within ten feet of the road or driveway shoulder and is a minimum of ten feet from the edge of the bank or BVW, and is far away from resources as practicable, with no additional tree-clearing or substantial grading within buffer zone, and provided that all vehicles and machinery are located within the roadway surface during work."

Deb Henson: The only thing I'd want to stipulate is that we're not approving the BVW boundary as far as any future work is concerned.

Ramsey: I think that's implied, but I can find a way to call it out specifically for this. The wording is that "the area described in the request is subject to protection under the act. Since the work described therein meets the requirements of the following exemption as specified in the act and regulations, no notice of intent is required." The RDA does not ask for a delineation to be approved.

Werle makes a motion to issue a negative determination to Box 5. Francis seconded, unanimously approved. Fairbrother - Aye, Holland - Aye, Werle - Aye, Francis - Aye, Henson - Aye

Jaime Pottern, Mt. Grace Land Conservation Trust

Execute closing documents for Conservation Restriction (CR) to be co-held by the Montague Conservation Commission and Mount Grace Land Trust for 53.94 acres at 73 Mormon Hollow Road (Grantor: Denton J. Smith II and Marsha J. Smith). Votes may be taken.

Pottern passed out a map to the board members.

Pottern: This is almost on the Wendell line. It's a scenic farm, fifth-generation family farm owned by Marsha and Skip Smith. The CR will close the first week in June, I'm hoping. This is a sweet little small farm, gorgeous hay field, which comes up in the Open Space Plan as being a scenic farm for the Town. There's going to be a little loop trail in the western corner of the property, the yellow box is the farm house and that's actually going to be tied to the CR Land, and the peach hash mark is another house that they rent, which is going to be excluded from the CR. The public access is really only on that trail, and then they can allow hunting with land owner permission, and there's going to be a sign near the trailhead that all the properties will have, that say what

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kind of public access is allowed and disallowed. Our CR provision does allow for clearing for more pasture in the future. So it's been approved by the State, it's been through preliminary review so we get to go ahead and get local signatures, we can all sign, I'm going to be meeting with the Selectboard next week, then it will go back to Boston for the final signatures, and then we can close.

Pottern passed out and briefly reviewed several documents including the Conservation Restriction, the Purchase and Sale Agreement, the Memorandum of Agreement between Mount Grace and the Town of Montague, the Municipal Certification, and the Baseline Documentation Report.

Holland makes a motion to approve and accept the Conservation Restriction as presented. Henson seconded, unanimously approved. Fairbrother - Aye, Holland - Aye, Werle - Aye, Francis - Aye, Henson - Aye

Werle makes a motion to authorize the signing of the closing documents. Francis seconded, unanimously approved. Fairbrother - Aye, Holland - Aye, Werle - Aye, Francis - Aye, Henson - Aye

Pottern shared that there will be two upcoming events: (1) A volunteer clean-up date on Saturday morning on Hunting Farm from 9:00 to 12:00; and "Party in the Hollow" on June 4th from 10:00 to 4:00, celebrating 700-plus acres of land being conserved at the Diamond Farm, which will include a trail race and music fest.

Alyssa Larose, Franklin Country Region of Governments, Open Space and Recreational Plan Workshop Review Draft Section 7: Analysis of Needs and Section 8: Action Plan

Larose: I went through the old Action Plan and made some changes and sent them to Walter, and he completely redid the formatting and cut down on the wordiness. Jon Dobosz looked at this as well and had some input in terms of the recreational items. This will still be a draft, but the next step would be a public forum in a little less than three weeks. We will give a brief overview of the process of updating the plan, get feedback from the public, and maybe do some kind of prioritization exercise.

Ramsey: I'll also be presenting this to the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Selectboard before the public information session. So we'll have feedback from those boards, this board, and the public at large by the end of the month.

Larose and Ramsey gave a brief overview of the Action Plan:

Goals:

- Recapture our rivers and waterways for improved habitat and recreation opportunities
- Provide access to high-quality parks in each village
- Assess adequacy of existing recreational opportunities for senior citizens
- Support programming and investment at the Great Falls Discovery Center
- Develop a public park/Native American Culture Interpretive Trail below the Turners Falls Dam
- Develop a comprehensive trail network for walking/cycling that connects the villages to open space
- Preserve farming as a way of life in Montague
- Preserve our pristine drinking water resources, habitat corridors, and special places
- Green our villages
- Get organized for open space and recreation

Larose will send an electronic version to Ramsey and invited the board members to send any changes, comments, or edits to Ramsey by the end of next week. Ramsey will put it on-line by the end of next week for public review.

Agent Updates

Ramsey:

- Pan Am Railroad is going to be doing their yearly herbicide treatment.
- Applicant Rice filed a forest cutting plan in the property at the end of West Mineral Road.

Other

Fairbrother shared that Phil Brenner, formerly of the Conservation Commission in the 80s and 90s, passed away a few weeks ago.

Donna Francis makes a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Deb Henson, unanimously approved. Fairbrother - Aye, Holland - Aye, Werle - Aye, Francis - Aye, Henson - Aye

Approved by: _____ Date: _____