

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, July 13, 2017 - 6:30 PM

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

Present were Board members Mark Fairbrother, Addie Rose Holland, Justin Fermann, Alex Peterkin and Donna Francis; and Walter Ramsey, Town Planner.

Absent Board Members: Sean Werle and Deb Henson

Meeting was opened at 6:30 PM. Fairbrother makes introduction and announces meeting is being recorded.

Approval of Minutes of May 11, 2017:

Donna Francis made a **motion** to approve the May 11, 2017 minutes as presented. Addie Rose Holland seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Approval of Minutes of June 8, 2017:

Justin Fermann made a **motion** to approve the June 8, 2017 minutes with adjustment of typo of Alex's last name. Donna Francis seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Annual re-organization of the Commission:

Justin Fermann made a **motion** to re-appoint Mark Fairbrother as Chair of the Montague Conservation Commission. Donna Francis seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Addie Rose Holland made a **motion** to appoint Justin Fermann as Vice Chair of the Montague Conservation Commission. Alex Peterkin seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Request for Determination of Applicability #2017-03 filed by Eversource Energy:

Guest: Josh Wilson – Ecologist with Fuss & O'Neil

Mr. Wilson presented the project to the committee which is to determine if proposed work within the 100 foot buffer zone of bordering vegetated wetland is subject to the Wetlands Protection Act. Activities in the buffer zone include the ancillary work needed to complete the replacement of three structures on Transmission Line 354 and the construction of gravel pads within the three structures. The project is located within a 3.7 mile stretch of a right of way and is one of the priority transmission lines determined by Eversource Energy to upgrade at this time.

To highlight the three structures and the impact on the buffer zone:

- Structure 30429 –8,000 square feet of disturbance in the buffer zone
- Structure 34044 –8, 200 square feet of disturbance in the buffer zone
- Structure 34045 –8, 900 square feet of disturbance in the buffer zone

Mr. Wilson stated that they are seeking a Negative Determination Category/Box 3. Mr. Wilson added that the reason that they are doing gravel on the pads instead of mats is due to the slopes of the terrain. The terrain is steeper, and there is a need to get the pads level so gravel made the most sense for this situation and for safety reasons during construction. The area has existing access roads that have been graveled recently. Additional access road improvements are not proposed. There will be attention given as needed to make sure that they are level, draining properly and that there is no erosion.

Addie Rose Holland inquired about the pads and the process of getting to the poles.

Mr. Wilson highlighted the operation plan in the RDA and that they are doing live line work which requires the lines to be held up and in place by heavy construction equipment such as crane and tractor trailer equipment to complete the installation. The pads are used throughout to help support the heavy equipment during the process of the installation of the lines. The gravel remains in place (6-8 inches for a base with a finer 3 inch base with top dressing which helps foster re vegetation in the future) after the project is finished.

Alex Peterkin: Are the slopes being cut into or built into?

Montague Conservation Commission

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

Mr. Wilson: There will be a bit of both done during the process to give a balance; which is determined by how the road comes into the site. Consideration will be given to minimizing the new material being brought into the site. This project is altering the buffer zone but is not altering the resource area.

Justin Fermann stated there should be erosion control during the project especially given that digging in the area will occur. Walter Ramsey said that erosion control measures are clearly stated in the Operation Plan that Fuss & O'Neil has submitted.

Mr. Wilson: stated that Fuss & O'Neil typically does routine inspections where they look at the slopes to see if they are slopping towards wetlands, how they are going to stabilize during construction, silt fencing will be added nearest to the activities and furthest from the resource area. It is followed by treatments which can be seed and straw or if there is bedrock they can and will use that for stabilization. Mr. Wilson stated that he believes this project will use the seed and straw method for revegetation.

Mark Fairbrother: Do you know when Fuss and O'Neil was engaged to do this work? The reason he asks is that substantial access road improvements had been done by utility in the past few years without any consultation with the Commission.

Mr. Wilson: Fuss & O'Neil was not engaged in that specific project, but has been doing projects like this since 2014 and this project (structure replacements) was started in January 2017. Mr. Wilson walked the committee through all the line replacements that are being reviewed by this Commission. The wetlands have been flagged for construction.

Addie Rose Holland: asked the Commission what they think of seeding the gravel pads opposed to just leaving them? The current pads that were put in two years ago have no growth on them; it depends on how the pads are finished this determines how long it will take to generate growth. Mr. Wilson stated the pads are there for construction but also for emergency purposes to be able to gain access to the site.

Justin Fermann: Does growth on the mat diminish the ability of the utility to use it? I am concerned less about the aesthetics of the pads but that it does not alter the hydrology and does not introduce a lot of sediment or change the amount of water entering the resource area nearby.

Mr. Wilson: The location of the pads was discussed and he does not believe this would diminish the ability of them being able to use the pads; He feels the hydrology will not change.

*Addie Rose Holland made a **motion** to recommend a Negative Determination Box 3. Alex Peterkin seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.***

Agent updates, Review of Projects under construction:

- **44 Center Street:** This NOI project is located at 44 Center Street involving a former mill pond that is being dredged. The owner has been in excellent communication with the Conservation Agent who completed a satisfactory pre-construction site inspection last week to ensure erosion control measures were in place.
- **Montague Center School:** This NOI currently under construction and in the final stages; folks have begun moving in. The front lawn will be reseeded and this will help keep the sediment from washing into the road. Agent visited the site last week and asked the owner to replace some silt fencing. Otherwise, the project is in good shape.
- **Eversource Solar:** This RDA project is located on Millers Falls Road in the Montague Plains. Some preliminary tree removal has been started and the turtle fences went up about 2 weeks ago. Eversource got their clearance from Natural Heritage and the 70 acres are now in protection and they will be proceeding with the project.

*Alex Peterkin made a motion to adjourn at 7:31pm. Donna Francis seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously***

Approved by: _____ Date: _____