



TOWN OF
MONTAGUE
MASSACHUSETTS

TOWN HALL
One Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
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**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, February 13, 2025 6:30 PM
Annex Meeting Room, Town Hall, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls and via Zoom
Meeting was recorded

6:31PM: ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Mark Fairbrother (Chair), Anthony Reiber, Sean Werle, Margaux Reckard, Justin Fermann, Al Averill, Toby Carter

ABSENT: Donna Francis

STAFF: Maureen Pollock (Staff Liaison, Planner/Conservation Agent)

ALSO PRESENT: William Tunnell, Ward Smith, Will Van Heugland

MOTION to A. Reiber accept the meeting minutes of October 17, 2024. Seconded by J. Fermann.

VOTE: Mark Fairbrother, Toby Carter, Anthony Reiber, Sean Werle, Margaux Reckard, Justin Fermann, Al Averill. MOTION PASSES (7-0) 6:34pm

There was no meeting in November 2024.

MOTION by J. Fermann to accept the Meeting Minutes from December 12, 2024. Seconded by M.

Reckard VOTE: Mark Fairbrother, Toby Carter, Anthony Reiber, Sean Werle, Margaux Reckard, Justin Fermann, Al Averill. MOTION PASSES (7-0) 6:38pm

PUBLIC MEETING:

RDA #2025-01 - Request for Determination of Applicability, filed by **William Tunnel** to determine whether the construction of an Accessory Dwelling and associated site work within 100-foot buffer zone at **91 Taylor Hill Road (Parcel #48-0-0090)** is subject to the Wetlands Protection Act.

The Conservation Agent shows a map of the parcel. Ward Smith reviews the location of the wetlands on the plan noting that the proposed ADU area borders a small intermittent stream and a wooded swamp of sensitive fern and dogwood. The proposed ADU is within the 100-foot buffer zone. A branch driveway will run parallel with the wetland boundary. The septic is located outside the buffer zone, to the south-east.

William Tunnell is the designer. The owner, Will Van Haugland, is in attendance.

The plan shows the existing house and how the proposed driveway enters from Taylor Hill Road. Access for the ADU is an 11-foot-wide gravel driveway. They are trying to route the driveway in a way to impact the fewest number of mature trees. The parking area is 28 feet off of the wetland boundary. Ward Smith discusses the double erosion control barrier, composed of a filtration fence and along the

edge of the work area. A separate septic plan was also created for this project. Installing the septic will require that a temporary access road is constructed. The access road will be removed and the land restored after the installation of the septic.

The material for the temporary access road will be determined after the topsoil is removed; as little gravel as needed will be used and eventually removed.

The Conservation Agent, Ward Smith, and Commissioners Reckard and Averill attended the site visit. The wetland had been flagged as well as the proposed trees to be removed for the driveway and ADU. Approximately 16 trees will need to be removed, which includes trees inside the footprint of the ADU and along the path of the new driveway. Small white pine seedlings will be replanted as a screen.

Ward Smith shows a second plan which provides details of the erosion control which shows a silt fence that extends to the septic area, even though it's outside of the buffer zone, as a precaution.

Al Averill asks about the material of the driveway. William Tunnell answers "gravel".

Tree removal will begin before the ground thaws. Grading won't happen until mid-March.

J. Fermann asks about changes to the infiltration system. How will that be managed? Ward Smith answers that single family homes are exempt from this policy but there could be a small increase in runoff which shouldn't significantly impact the wetlands. Fermann suggests that the house has a gutter. Tunnell responds that the house won't have gutters except over the door, instead they will install an apron of gravel and French drain which directs runoff toward the septic, not the wetlands.

S. Werle asks about the stone patio. Tunnell responds that the patio is preexisting, and the plan is to work around it.

M. Fairbrother suggests that the Conservation Commission create a set of standard conditions.

M. Reckard likes the condition of refreshing the flagging of the wetland boundary and erosion controls.

T. Carter asks for a description of the bank of the stream. Ward Smith responds that it's stable and channelized, probably by a farmer at some point. It is eroded further (south) down the bank. M. Reckard adds that there is a foot of snow on the ground so this was not observable during the site visit but trusts Ward Smith's description.

*MOTION by S. Werle to issue a negative 3 determination with conditions and photos for **RDA #2025-01 - Request for Determination of Applicability**, filed by **William Tunnel** for construction of an Accessory Dwelling and associated site work within 100-foot buffer zone at **91 Taylor Hill Road (Parcel #48-0-0090)**. Seconded by M. Reckard. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother, Toby Carter, Anthony Reiber, Sean Werle, Margaux Reckard, Justin Fermann, Al Averill. MOTION PASSES (7-0) 7:05pm*

*Discussed: There cannot be any work during the 10-business-day appeal period, including tree cutting. The applicant will provide a photo record if necessary. The Conservation Agent requests photos of the erosion controls before work commences.

NEW BUSINESS:

Local Hazard Mitigation Planning and Community Wildfire Planning

The Town's plan is expiring at the end of February. The Conservation Agent will submit a grant application for technical assistance to update the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. Priority projects listed in the updated plan will be eligible for grants.

Al Averill asks about the kind of hazards that come under the purview of the Conservation Commission. Wetlands protection? The Agent responds that flooding would be a key issue. In particular, erosion on steep banks is a hazard to public health, safety and adjacent wetlands. Stormwater system updates, bridges and culverts all have potential hazards. J. Fermann adds that there are also possible hazards related to the Clean Water Facility.

The Conservation Agent notes that the Community Wildfire Plan (2015) also needs to be updated. The goal of the plan is to educate the public and local agencies about practices related to fire prevention and mitigation. This is a separate plan, not related to the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Agent asks for support from the Conservation Commission to work on these plans. It could help secure a grant.

MOTION by J. Fermann to support the application processes to fund an updated Community Wildfire Plan and a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. Seconded by M. Reckard. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother, Toby Carter, Anthony Reiber, Sean Werle, Margaux Reckard, Justin Fermann, Al Averill. MOTION PASSES (7-0) 7:11pm

MOTION by A. Reiber to Adjourn. Seconded by S. Werle. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother, Toby Carter, Anthony Reiber, Sean Werle, Margaux Reckard, Justin Fermann, Al Averill. MOTION PASSES (7-0) 7:12pm