



TOWN OF
MONTAGUE
MASSACHUSETTS

TOWN HALL
One Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
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**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, January 8, 2026 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), Al Averill, Anthony Reiber, Sean Werle, Justin Fermann, Toby Carter, Donna Francis. ABSENT: Margaux Reckard
STAFF: Maureen Pollock (Staff Liaison, Planner/Conservation Agent)
ALSO PRESENT: Ward Smith. Suzanne Webber

Meeting Minutes from November 13, 2025 were tabled.

PUBLIC MEETING:

RDA #2026-01 - Request for Determination of Applicability, filed by Suzanne Webber to determine whether the proposed restoration of impacted wetlands at 392 Old Greenfield Road (Assessor's Map/Parcel 39-0-050) is subject to the Wetlands Protection Act.

Ward Smith starts the discussion. A septic repair was approved in RDA in October of 2024. At that time, Smith delineated a perennial stream and wetlands. The installer pushed fill into the wetland between flags A4 and A9.

This project would pull out the fill, create a slope that is no greater than 2:1 (other than previously existed), sow the area with a wetlands seed mixture, and add wetland shrubs. The shrubs demarcate the edge of the lawn. This work would happen before May 31, 2026, as conditions allow.

Sean Werle asks about the straw waddle around the septic. Webber responds that she took over the project from the seller and she wasn't paying close enough attention to the plan, assuming that the installer and seller had properly reviewed it. The installer moved the wetland stakes. Webber apologized that the septic plan was not followed. She said that the installer wanted to level the area so he could maneuver his equipment.

Ward Smith adds that the fill is outside of the floodplain. It's a minor wetlands violation and they are trying to bring the site into compliance. The new shrubs will be a clear edge, a few feet up from the wetland line.

Ward Smith or another wetlands scientist will supervise/ inspect the removal of the fill.

Justin Fermann asks about the condition of the silt fence. Ward responds fine and operating.

Anthony Reiber asks about the location of the shrubs in the plan. Smith responds between flag A9 to A2. Smith will notify the Conservation Agent when the work starts.

Al Averill asks about the species; if they are planted upslope of the wetland, how will they do? Smith answers that the soil is silty and they will do fine. Donna Francis asks who will do the planting. Webber responds that she will. The Agent asks the group when they want to check the plants. (Fall 2026 and Spring 2027)

The Conservation Agent discusses the Order of Conditions including before and after photos. The Agent thanks the property owner for being so responsible.

Sean Werle suggests that the Conservation Commission sends a friendly but firm letter to the installer. It's not a part of the RDA but the installer should have known he was 5 feet from the perennial stream and there were "wetland delineation" flags on site. The installer will be part of the remediation efforts. Ward Smith will supervise/inspect his work.

MOTION by J. Fermann to approve a Box 3 Negative Determination with conditions for RDA #2026-01 - Request for Determination of Applicability filed by Suzanne Webber to determine whether the proposed restoration of impacted wetlands at 392 Old Greenfield Road (Assessor's Map/Parcel 39-0-050) is subject to the Wetlands Protection Act. Seconded by S. Werle. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Toby Carter (AYE), Donna Francis (AYE). MOTION PASSES (7-0) 6:59pm.

Mark Fairbrother will sign. The Agent will sign on behalf of the Commissioners

OLD BUSINESS:

Status update on sinkhole(s) forming at 42 Canal Road (Parcel #03-0-086)

As reported in the Montague Reporter, the Montague Selectboard ordered the property owner to fill the hole. It was filled at some point that week.

Status update on Preliminary FEMA Floodplain Mapping

Two appeals were formally submitted. The Montague Plains were labeled a flood plain in error. The Agent also submitted an appeal for 72 Swamp Road, which was not deemed a floodplain in 1982 but is now. The homeowner and Agent worked together to supply FEMA with supporting documents. Mark Fairbrother agrees that the area floods.

MOTION TO ADJOURN by D. Francis. Seconded by A. Reiber. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Toby Carter (AYE), Donna Francis (AYE). MOTION PASSES (7-0) 7:04pm.