



**TOWN OF
MONTAGUE
MASSACHUSETTS**

TOWN HALL
One Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
(413) 863-3200 ext. 112
Planner@montague-ma.gov

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

**Thursday June 11, 2026, 6:30 PM
Annex Meeting Room, Town Hall and via Zoom
Meeting was recorded**

6:31pm: ROLL CALL PRESENT: Mark Fairbrother (chair) Anthony Reiber, Al Averill, Justin Fermann, Sean Werle, Margaux Reckard, Donna Francis, Toby Carter, Sean Werle. **STAFF:** Maureen Pollock (Staff Liaison, Planner/Conservation Agent), Chris Nolen-Zeller (Assistant Town Administrator) **ALSO PRESENT:** Melissa Coady (Tighe and Bond)

MOTION by M. Reckard to accept the meeting minutes of March 12, 2026 with minor spelling edits. Seconded by J. Fermann. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE), Donna Francis (AYE), Toby Carter (AYE). MOTION PASSES 7:0. 6:33pm

MOTION by M. Reckard to accept the meeting minutes of April 9, 2026 with minor revision by M. Pollock. Seconded by J. Fermann. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE), Donna Francis (AYE), Toby Carter (AYE). MOTION PASSES 7:0. 6:35pm

Meeting Minutes from May 14, 2026 were tabled.

Sean Werle joins the meeting.

PUBLIC MEETING:

Request for Certificate of Compliance, filed by **Town of Montague**, in reference to work regulated under the approved Order of Conditions (DEP #229-0253/NOI #2019-01), to conduct asbestos abatement and demolition of five connected buildings and associated areas within the **Strathmore Mill Complex at 20 and 8 Canal Road, Turners Falls** within Bordering Land Subject to Flooding and within the Riverfront Area of the Connecticut River.

Melissa Coady of Tighe and Bond presents. She explains the administrative process to close out the expired Order of Condition issued in 2019. The project did not move forward at that time.

MOTION by Anthony Reiber to Accept the Invalid order of Conditions for DEP #229-0253/NOI #2019-01 to conduct asbestos abatement and demolition of five connected buildings and associated areas within the Strathmore Mill Complex at 20 and 8 Canal Road, Turners Falls within Bordering Land Subject to Flooding and within the Riverfront Area of the Connecticut River. Seconded by Donna Francis. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Toby Carter (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE), Donna Francis (AYE). MOTION PASSES 8:0. 6:40pm

EmergCert 2026-02 – USGS – Request a Emergency Certificate to provide immediate improvements to the boat ramp that would provide a more stable surface for putting in and taking out vessels needed and to clear some of the residual silt deposits that have narrowed the ramp at 1 Migratory Way, Turners Falls within Riverfront Area of the Connecticut River

The Agent reports the drowning of a kayaker at “Rock Dam” near the Conte Research Laboratory. The ramp used for emergency vehicles is old and in disrepair. The conditions of the ramp’s surface are muddy. As reported by USGS staff, emergency vessels had difficulty during the emergency. They would like to conduct emergency repairs of the ramp because of the expected increase in kayaking and other water recreation this summer. Emergency repairs would include adding stable surfacing to the ramp using 6-12 yards of traprock. No work is happening in the water. USGS would like to come up with a longer-term solution with partners in the future, which may include some minor regrading and removal of a few trees that are within the existing boundary of the boat ramp. This application was shared with Natural Heritage.

MOTION by Sean Werle to issue EmergCert 2026-02 – USGS – Request a Emergency Certificate to provide immediate improvements to the boat ramp that would provide a more stable surface for putting in and taking out vessels needed and to clear some of the residual silt deposits that have narrowed the ramp at 1 Migratory Way, Turners Falls within Riverfront Area of the Connecticut River. Seconded by Margaux Reckard. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE), Toby Carter (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE), Donna Francis (AYE) MOTION PASSES 8:0. 6:47pm

PUBLIC HEARING:

NOI #2026-04 – Notice of Intent, filed by the **Town of Montague** for the Former Strathmore Mill Abatement, Demolition, and Restoration Project at **20 and 8 Canal Road, Turners Falls** within Bordering Land Subject to Flooding and within the Riverfront Area of the Connecticut River.
CONTINUED FROM MAY 14, 2026

Melissa Coady has received comments from Natural Heritage. A summary of DEP and Natural Heritage comments was sent to the Commission. Natural Heritage is requiring surveys of in avoidance of aster and hairgrass; Oxbow and Associates will complete those surveys. A time of year requirement relative to short-nose sturgeon was noted as well as seed requirements, and recommendations to protect bats.

The project goes to bid in the fall of 2026. Construction is 12 months total, finishing between spring 2027 and 2028.

The Agent covers other requirements including where debris can be stored and parameter controls.

Craig French of Tighe and Bond comments that the time of year restriction in the tailrace will not significantly impact the project. French believes the contractor can work in the tailrace between June and mid-October. The bat species protection is a recommendation but not a requirement.

The Agent reminds the Commission that the Order of Commission is valid for 3 years but an extension could be issued, if necessary.

MOTION by Donna Francis to issue a Notice of Intent for NOI #2026-04 with Conditions filed by the Town of Montague for the Former Strathmore Mill Abatement, Demolition, and Restoration Project at 20 and 8 Canal Road, Turners Falls within Bordering Land Subject to Flooding and within the

Riverfront Area of the Connecticut River. Seconded by Sean Werle VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Toby Carter (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE), Donna Francis (AYE). MOTION PASSES 8:0. 7:00pm

NOI #2026-03 – Request to Amend an Order of Conditions, filed by **US Geological Survey**, to reconsider Special Conditions 3 & 5 under the previously approved Order of Conditions (NOI #2026-03/DEP #229-0270), at **1 Migratory Way (Parcel #08-0-3) Turners Falls** within buffer zone

Bradley Stumph of Chloeta provides a brief review of the project, which is a 4500-foot pipe that connects the Conte Lab to the municipal sewer system; a sub-surface/horizontal drilling method will be employed. There will be only minor surface disturbances. The time of year restriction in the Order of Condition for all species is from March 15 to November 15, which is a serious construction challenge. Stumph thinks the “frack out” emergency plan protects surface water and endangered species.

Al Averill asks if the lubricant remains in the soil. Stumph responds that while he is not an engineer, some lubricants remain in the soil and some is pumped out. He cannot speak to the chemical composition of the lubricant.

Sean Werle asks if the directional drilling is under the river. Stumph responds “no” the drilling will not cross surface water. “That’s why USGS is requesting this amendment.”

The Agent reads Condition 3 as stated in the order, is “all work shall occur outside of the spawning and early life stage period of state and federally listed species, including, but not limited to shad, sturgeon, and eels” and asks for USGS’s counterproposal to that condition. Stumph responds that he understands the extent but at no point does the project pass under the Connecticut River or the canal, or near the spawning habitats. Additionally, there is a frack out plan in place. The time of year restriction is considered overly cautious to USGS.

Sean Werle asks if the Conservation Commission has the authority to remove the condition. “Shouldn’t the waver come from Natural Heritage?” Mark Fairbrother replies, “no. it’s our Order of Conditions.”

The Agent reads an email from Misty Ann Maroon from Fish and Game that provides context to Conditions 3 and 5.

Justin Fermann asks if there is an alternative way to meet the objectives of Conditions 3 and 5. The Agent reads Conditions 3 and 5. Bradley Stumph comments that at places the project is several hundred feet away from the Connecticut River. He interprets Misty Ann Maroon’s email as about “things to consider in the event of a frack-out.” He reiterates that a frack out plan is in place and even under those conditions, the lubricant would need to travel several hundred feet.

Sean Werle has witnessed a frack out at another project and reports that it was easily contained in the work area. He reiterates his motion to remove the time of year restriction, as long as there is a frack out plan and erosion control.

Margaux Reckard reads the letter for USGS which identifies two safe guards: a frack out plan and “best management practices of their contractors” without further identifying those best practices.

Justin Fermann recommends that “best management practices of their contractors” are articulated in a

new Order of Conditions.

Sean Werle thinks the BMPs are already listed in the original Order of Conditions and the frack-out plan obviates the problem. He thinks removing the time of year restriction is reasonable.

Margeaux Reckard asks the Agent if the original Order of Conditions has Best Management Practices listed. Bradley Stumph responds that the Standard Order of Conditions section is considered best practice. USGS is looking for a change to the Special Order of Conditions.

Reckard and Fermann show support of removing Special Conditions 3 and 5.

MOTION by Sean Werle to remove Conditions 3 and 5 from NOI #2026-03 filed by US Geological Survey, to reconsider Special Conditions 3 & 5 under the previously approved Order of Conditions (NOI #2026-03/DEP #229-0270), at 1 Migratory Way (Parcel #08-0-3) Turners Falls within buffer zone. Seconded by Justin Fermann. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Toby Carter (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Margeaux Reckard (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE), Donna Francis (AYE). MOTION PASSES 8:0. 7:28pm

OLD BUSINESS:

EmergCert 2026-01 – FirstLight Power Services LLC – Review/discuss weekly monitoring report submitted from applicant and MassDEP’s updated 30-day extension to the Emergency Certification. The Agent has been receiving weekly reports and forwarding them to Commissioners. The additional 60-day extension of the original emergency certificate will expire on July 27th.

Justin Fermann asks about two RDAs that were “pushed” from the last meeting. The Agent reports that the applicants are working on their NOIs for a future submission to the Commission.

ADJOURN:

MOTION by Anthony Reiber TO ADJOURN by Seconded by Al Avrill. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Toby Carter (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Margeaux Reckard (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE), Donna Francis (AYE). MEETING ADJOURNED 7:31pm.