



**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
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES**

**Thursday August 13, 2026, 6:30 PM
Annex Meeting Room, Town Hall and via Zoom
Meeting was recorded**

6:30pm: ROLL CALL PRESENT:

PRESENT: Mark Fairbrother (chair), Justin Fermann, Margaux Reckard, Al Averill, Sean Werle

ABSENT: Anthony Reiber, Donna Francis, Toby Carter

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

ALSO PRESENT: Gary Houle; Adam Kohl, Oxbow Associates, Inc.; and members of the public

MEETING MINUTES:

Approval of Meeting Minutes from July 9, 2026 - *MOTION by M. Reckard to accept the meeting minutes of July 9, 2026 with minor edits. Seconded by J. Fermann. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE) , Al Averill (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE) MOTION PASSES*
5:0. 6:33pm

PUBLIC HEARING:

NOI #2026-06 – Notice of Intent, filed by **Gary Houle** for the proposed construction of a new garage on a single-family lot at **31-33 Randall Road, identified as Assessor's Map 21, Lot 141** within the Riverfront Area of an unnamed brook.

Background: the applicant submitted a Request for Determination of Applicability in early 2026 for the review/approval of this proposal. DEP advised the Commission to issue a positive determination and require a Notice of Intent for the proposed work, as it is within Riverfront Area. The applicant withdrew his application and submitted the Notice of Intent.

Adam Kohl, representative to the applicant/owner, introduced himself and explained the proposal. The proposed project consists of a new garage to be constructed within a portion of the property that has been historically landscaped with approximately 1,200 square feet of disturbance within the 200-foot Riverfront Area, all of which is also within the 100-foot buffer zone to the Bordering Vegetated Wetlands.

Due to the configuration of the property, all proposed work will occur within the 200-foot Riverfront Area. Since this lot was created prior to August 1, 1996 (per the Deed) the Applicant is limited to disturbing 10% or less of the total Riverfront Area on site.

Prior to the start of work, erosion and sedimentation controls (siltation fence and straw wattles) will be installed along the approved limit of work to prevent disturbance outside the project area and minimize risk to the downhill Resource Areas.

Commissioner Al Averill and Planner/Agent Maureen Pollock conducted a site visit on April 6, 2026, under the previous RDA application. Based on site observations and the application submittals, Al Averill suggests that a catchment system and erosion control be provided in order to mitigate any adverse impacts to the adjacent wetlands.

Gary Houle stated that he does not intend to extend the existing asphalt, as reflected in the submitted site plan.

MassDEP has issued a file # for this project (DEP file #229-0273).

MOTION by Mark Fairbrother to close the public hearing and to issue an Order of Conditions for NOI #2026-06 – Notice of Intent, filed by Gary Houle for the proposed construction of a new garage on a single-family lot at 31-33 Randall Road, identified as Assessor's Map 21, Lot 141 within the Riverfront Area of an unnamed brook, with the following special condition:

- 1. The applicant shall provide a water catchment system to the proposed garage, which shall be connected via gutter downspouts.*

Seconded by Margaux Reckard. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE) MOTION PASSES 5:0. 6:58pm.

NEW BUSINESS:

MassDEP has filed a draft proposed amended Wetlands Protection regulations at 310 CMR 10.00 and the 401 Water Quality Certification regulations at 314 CMR 9.00. The goal of these regulation changes is to make it easier to restore wetlands across Massachusetts. The proposal supports strengthening the natural systems that reduce flooding, improve water quality, support wildlife, and help communities adapt to climate change. You can read the full announcement [here](#). A Public Hearing and Comment Period will take place on August 10, 2026 at 1:00 PM and 6:00 PM, and MassDEP will accept written comments until 5:00 PM on August 20, 2026. The public hearing notice with additional details on how to register is available at MassDEP's Public Hearings and Comments.

The draft regulations would:

- **Expand streamlined permitting** for four additional ecological restoration project types, including retired cranberry bog restoration, invasive plant management, and new techniques to restore degraded salt marshes.
- **Support healthier wetlands and forests** by allowing the removal of invasive plants and diseased or damaged trees in certain buffer zones and riverfront areas without requiring a filing under the Wetlands Protection Act.
- **Improve access to nature** by allowing routine construction and maintenance of unpaved trails in buffer zones and riverfront areas.
- **Incorporate the latest science** by updating wetland boundary methods and plant lists used to identify bordering vegetated wetlands.
- **Protect important wetland functions** by strengthening standards for wetland replacement soils and recognizing the role of mature trees, forest canopy, and soil carbon in maintaining healthy wetlands.

OTHER BUSINESS NOT ANTICIPATED WITHIN 48 HOURS: None

ADJOURN: *MOTION by Averill TO ADJOURN. Seconded by Fermann VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE) MOTION PASSES 5:0. MOTION PASSES 5:0. 7:05pm*