

MONTAGUE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND INDUSTRIAL CORPORATION
TOWN HALL
1 AVENUE A
TURNERS FALLS, MA 01376

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday February 13, 2025 at 3:30PM

IN PERSON MEETING
Town Hall Annex Meeting Room
One Avenue A Turners Falls, MA

Present: Rob Steinberg (RS), Kimberly Williams (KW), Linda Ackerman (LA), John Furbish (JF), Ella Ingraham (EI), James Mussoni (JM)

Staff: Chris Nolan-Zeller, Assistant Town Administrator (CNZ)

Also present: Ariel Elan (AE)

Meeting opened 3:31 PM Rob Steinberg presiding.

Approval of minutes: **MOTION BY LA to approve the minutes of 12/5/24. Seconded by JM. All Approved. Motion Passed Unanimously.**

Notice of change in EDIC banking information, authorized account representatives. CNZ updated group that authorized representatives for EDIC account with Greenfield Savings Bank had been updated, as the previous representatives were no longer members.

Discussion on local opportunity mapping. JM inquired on current zoning for Sandy Lane. CNZ responded this was zoned Industrial (ID). KW asked if this was different from the nearby site on Turnpike Rd that recently had a project fall through. EI responded these two areas had different zoning. JM noted that if Sandy Lane saw further industrial development, the transfer station and dog shelter would likely need to move, asking if moving the transfer station to the Airport Industrial Park could be an option. CNZ added that a wetland had been unintentionally allowed to form in the center of the former landfill site which could pose an obstacle to development efforts. RS noted that Montague Machine Co on Rastallis St seems eager for new development, but there is concern over the pile of contaminated material in the rear of their building. JM stated that several local sites have been contaminated due to the Town's industrial heritage. LA asked about the status of the former Railroad Salvage Annex on Power St, owned by Bob Obear. RS expressed that he felt Mr. Obear should consider selling this property back to the Town.

Notice of acceptance into Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners' Public Library Construction Program; ramifications for property at 38 Avenue A. CNZ updated the group that if the Library Building Steering Committee chooses to move forward with designing a new library at 38 Avenue A, the Town would be interested in having ownership of the property changed

from EDIC to the Inhabitants of the Town of Montague. More updates on this project would be discussed at future meetings.

Discussion of EDIC position on future development; relation to Selectboard and Town administration. JM expressed that the current federal funding freeze could set the Town back years if it impacts current projects funded by federal grants. RS agreed that little alternative funding was available for many of these projects, recommending that the Town continue apace on its projects while keeping a close eye on protecting existing grant agreements. KW expressed that the federal situation was outside of the group's control, and the focus should be on luring investment and attracting taxpaying businesses to the Town. LA noted the example of Erving's success with a housing proposal in development. JM inquired whether the Turners Falls Chamber of Commerce could be revived, and inquired whether EDIC could help promote existing local businesses. LA responded that much of this work was being undertaken by the Town Planner. The group discussed challenges to economic investment in the Town, including rents too low to attract many developers while still being unaffordable to many local residents and businesses, zoning, NIMBYism, and a high commercial tax rate. KW expressed that the Town's split tax rate makes it less appealing to businesses than Greenfield, which offers better services at a lower tax rate. LA added that property taxes for Montague residents had also been increasing, but without additional services to justify this. JM stated that Town Meeting tends to rubber-stamp articles without fully understanding their impact or level of necessity. JM added that another disadvantage was the Town's high amount of state-owned land which does not generate tax revenue. CNZ clarified that the Town receives payments-in-lieu-of-taxes for state-owned land in the Town, but the PILOT payments often fall short of what would be received if the properties were taxable. RS expressed interest in the Town working closely with the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce to make the Town a magnet for future industrial and commercial development in the region, and noted his interest in writing an op-ed for the Montague Reporter from the group, which could be reviewed at its next meeting. The group also agreed to discuss how Montague's tax rates compare to other area communities at the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned 4:34 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Nolan-Zeller, EDIC Coordinator