

Montague Planning Board

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Tuesday, February 22, 2011

MEETING MINUTES

Board Members Present: Ted Armen- Chair, Bruce Young, Robert Obear, Fred Bowman, Ron Sicard

Staff: Walter Ramsey- Planner, David Jensen – Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer

Ted A. called to order the meeting of the Planning Board at 6:30 PM

- **Approval of Minutes:**

A motion was made by Ted Armen to approve the minutes of the January 25, 2011 meeting. The motion was seconded. by Ron Sicard, Robert O. Abstained. All approved.

- **Discussion:** Turnpike Road Industrial Area – Master Planning:
Western Mass. Electric Company (WMECO) announced to the town that they were not willing to release the 100 acres of land in the plains for an Industrial Park. The town of Montague will now need to think 5-10 years down the road to where we can place an Industrial Park which would engage developers and companies to come to the area – specifically Montague. Montague's land = 60% under some type of limited protection. Economic Development Administration is funding cluster industries – so the town needs to think creatively to attract target industry.

Current Industrial Park – Board agreed this area is approaching capacity. Natural Heritage Endangered Species is a major development constraint. When it was originally built it cost \$600,000 and in theory the land sales within the Industrial park would go to pay down any debt. A question was raised if Franklin County Technical School were to expand/renovate they would need certain amount of acreage per student. Would there be enough land available? Bruce Young inquired about the future of the airport and the site a future industry.

Turnpike Road Area - The Conway School of Landscape and Design did an industrial development feasibility study in 2000. This area is all industrial zoned. The Burn dump area would have to be capped per Department of Environmental Protection. A major advantage is the fact that there are no known endangered species. Walter will approach Judd Wire to see if they have any expansion plans in the future which would encroach on the purposed area for possible development on Turnpike Road.

The Board would like to review all potential industrial land before initiating a master plan for the Turnpike Road industrial area.

- **Discussion:** Ground mounted solar array draft regulations:
Walter R announced that there are currently considerable incentives to build ground-mounted solar arrays- guaranteed over next 10 years. The towns of Canton, MA and Greenfield, MA have recently begun projects and more communities will follow. He recommends the Planning Board consider a Ground mounted solar array provision to the zoning bylaw to have some control on location and site planning.

Bruce Young mentioned that In Northampton, the new Kollmorgan building through a utility company (from Delaware) had a 10 million dollar system installed and got credit.

David Jenson said that we need to pay attention to some serious issues with that situation. For example: IDEC knows we have a built environment that has a lot of flat surface angled towards the sun. Why would we want to encourage ripping up virgin land for a “chancy” situation? Is the tax credit worth it? Or are we just getting on board for an industry that is a growth industry?

The need for careful planning and decision making is because solar energy can not be denied unless it is a public health safety or welfare issue – this is a state law for solar energy use. Solar energy generation is allowed in every zone except educational.

Walter R recommended a prescriptive approach to the regulations that will give solar developers predictability from the Town’s end and ensure performance. He recommended allowing ground mounted solar by-right in Industrial zones with a special site plan review (similar to cell tower regulations).

Some questions for future discussion:

- Should solar be limited to rooftops?
- What is the value of these systems, financially and environmentally?
- Should the board allow them by right or by special permit?
- Where should they be located?
- Does the Planning Board want to encourage ground mounted solar in the interest of the Town?
- Would the Board consider a ground mounted solar array a public or private utility?

Walter has also called a meeting for Wednesday, March 15, 2011 to engage with developers on the Turnpike Road site for development. Planning Board is invited along with the Select board, Finance Committee, Energy Commission and others.

The Planning Board will wait until the March meeting to see what the issues, suggestions and receptiveness is to ground-mounted solar in Montague.

- **Old Business:** Revisions to Montague Subdivision Regulations:
 Tabled for discussion at a later meeting

A motion was made to adjourn by Ted A. Seconded by Robert O. All approved. Meeting closed at 8:14 PM

Approved by: _____ Date: _____