

Montague Planning Board

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March 25, 2014 6:30 PM
Town Hall Upstairs Conference Room

MEETING MINUTES

Members Present: Ron Sicard – Chair, Bruce Young, Fred Bowman, George Cooke and Bob Obear
Staff Present: Walter Ramsey, AICP- Town Planner

Meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Ron Sicard-Chair.

Approval of Minutes:

*Motion made by George Cooke to accept the minutes from January 28, 2014. Seconded by Bob Obear.
Motion passed unanimously.*

*Motion made by Bruce Young to accept the minutes from February 25, 2014. Seconded by Bob Obear.
Motion passed unanimously.*

Public Hearing: Montague Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC) 2014 Economic Development Plan

EDIC Members present in joint session, Linda Ackerman, Moon Morgan, Don Valley, Richard Ruth and John Furbish.

Guests: John Reynolds – Town Meeting Member, Mark Fairbrother- Selectman, Michael Nelson-Selectman, Robin Sherman- Franklin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority

Ron S. opened the hearing and the planner presented the plan as follows:

In 1984, the Montague Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (MEDIC) were certified by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 121C. An EDIC is a corporation established by a municipality in order to implement economic development projects. The EDIC shall have the powers and duties imposed by Chapter 121C to undertake and carry out the economic projects covered by this plan. These powers include the ability to purchase, sell, and manage property and the ability to receive local, state and federal grants, among others.

When MEDIC was established in 1984, a plan was prepared to guide economic development and industrial activities in Montague. That plan was updated in 1999. In the 30 years since EDIC was established the Town has seen two very successful economic development projects come to fruition. The Great Falls Discovery Center site, a major tourist destination in Montague, has been developed to near completion. Also the Airport Industrial Park, a regional employment center is virtually built-out to capacity. The 2014 update will see these two projects wrapped up. The historic mill district of Turners Falls was part of the 1999 plan, but has seen comparatively limited redevelopment progress, however the EDIC has not yet played a significant role in that target area. The biggest change between the 1999 plan is that the 2014 Economic Development Plan update includes the proposed Turnpike Road Industrial Park an area slated for up to 45 acres of light industrial development in Montague. The 2014 update reflects the new phase in MEDIC's efforts to promote economic and industrial development in Montague.

Economic and industrial development activities in town have been examined and three project areas were identified as priorities. These target areas are very similar to those in the 1999 plan, but in many cases goals and plans for specific sites have been adjusting according to current planning efforts. Priorities for these economic development projects were developed based upon previously stated goals and recent input from the MEDIC, Montague Comprehensive Plan, Downtown Turners Falls Livability Plan, Turnpike Road Energy Industrial Park Master Plan, Franklin County Community Economic Development Strategy and the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development, each of which involved broad-based community participation.

Montague is part of the Franklin County Economic Target Area. Within Montague, there are two Economic Opportunity Areas (EOAs), the first of which extends from Turners Falls to Montague City. The Historic Industrial and the Great Falls Discovery Center areas fall within this Economic Opportunity Area. The second EOA covers the airport industrial park and a portion of the adjacent Montague Plains.

Because of strict legal requirements, the MEDIC is only authorized to plan for economic development projects in areas currently zoned industrial. Therefore, other town, non-profit, and regional economic development agencies and offices are strongly encourage to plan for economic and industrial development in parts of Montague outside the purview of MEDIC.

As a part of the requirements MGL Ch 121C, the MEDIC certifies that occupants of the designated economic development area shall make every reasonable effort to hire residents of the municipality for employment opportunities for a period of 40 years following approval of the economic development plan.

Turnpike Road Energy Industrial Park - The Industrial Park currently has 163 acres; 45 acres which are sellable and would be serviced by an extension of Sandy Lane. The zoning in this area is Industrial and would create 11 lots with each lot being 3-5 acres. The project cost would be 1.4 million dollars with the creation of 250 jobs in the metals fabrication and food processing areas.

Airport Industrial Park - There are only three parcels left in the Airport Industrial Park. Parcel A is in the process of being developed, Parcel B has the right of first refusal and Parcel C is 2.1 acres. The current park is just about at capacity. The needs are to enforce Industrial Road Covenants for current and new development, market and develop remaining industrial lots on Industrial Boulevard and support development and expansion of broadband infrastructure of the Airport Industrial Park. The goal is to maintain this park as a primary employment center in Franklin County while capitalizing on the Airport as an asset to economic development.

The Historic Industrial District – This was in the 1999 Plan and MEDIC has not done much work in this area up to now. The plan is that the MEDIC will work to redevelop these parcels for new industrial and mixed use, thereby reducing blight in Montague. The MEDIC must carefully think through their roles in any public or private redevelopment scenarios. The goal is to promote adaptive and/or productive re-use of these buildings, improve physical condition of historic buildings and remove barriers to private development. The Town seeks support for Slum & Blight designation from DHCD (2014), transfer the ownership of the Strathmore Mill to a responsible owner, restore and/or improve bridges over the canal, restore infrastructure connections to the historic mill sites and consider acquiring and redevelopment of parcels in tax title.

Public Comments:

Robin Sherman: Expressed support for the proposed industrial park for the creation of employment opportunities, particularly because of proximity to downtown.

Mike Nelson: Concern about relocation of the Franklin County Dog Shelter. Planner responded that the plan is not that specific, but effort will be made to find an appropriate location for that facility. At a minimum it will need to be relocated.

Planner laid out the Next Steps:

- Incorporate comments from this public hearing
- Planning board to issue a report/ endorsement of the plan
- Present the plan at town meeting for a 2/3 vote
- Once approved the plan will be filed with the Department of Housing and Community Development. This is the state agency that oversees EDICs

Public Hearing was closed by Ron S.

Planning Workshop:

Introduction to the Western Millers River Watershed Low Impact Design Project (LID) - a FRCOG/ Millers River Watershed Council Project

Guests: Pat Smith, Senior Land Use Planner FRCOG and Ivan Ussach, MPH Watershed Coordinator Millers River Watershed Council

This is a follow up to the Eastern Millers River Watershed LID project conducted by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) and Millers River Watershed Council (MRWC) in 2011-2013. The purpose is to provide LID education and technical assistance to develop LID bylaws/ordinances in Orange, Montague, Northfield, Warwick, Erving, Wendell and New Salem. The goal is to mitigate the impacts of storm water runoff in urban areas like Montague and Orange and encourage development that incorporates LID to protect the sensitive areas in the more rural areas of the watershed. Funding is provided through EPA's Section 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Grant program, administered by MassDEP.

During the project it was learned that a stand-alone general bylaw may work better than zoning bylaws because they avoid grandfathering provision under MGL Chapter 40A, S. 6 and require simple majority to pass at a Town meeting. It was also discussed that GIS mapping of catch basins and discharge areas assist Towns in managing storm water systems.

The concentration is on impaired waters in Montague which include Lyons Brook (segment MA35-19, 2, 119 miles) and Millers River (segment MA 35-05, 9.21 miles) both of the impairment causes in these locations is PCB in fish tissue.

Low impact development (LID) is a group of land use development techniques that capture water and rainfall on site, filter it through vegetation and let it soak into the ground before entering the water table. The riverfront park in Orange is an example of a current Franklin County LID project.

The time line for the project is 2 years with contact with local planning boards to begin in winter of 2014 with technical assistance on LID bylaw/ordinance development to boards to be given throughout the term of the project. There are regional workshops to be scheduled in summer and fall of 2014 through the FRCOG and Millers River Watershed Council. This will be a collaborative effort between the FRCOG and Millers River Watershed Council and the towns to accomplish the project. There will also need to be collaboration with the Highway Department on this ongoing project and the issues surrounding storm water management.

The Board discussed the following potential avenues for further exploration:

- Highway Salt Plan
- Incorporate LID into covenants of the proposed Industrial Park
- Incorporate LID into Site Plan Review, Stormwater policy, and subdivision regulations

Planner to follow-up with FRCOG

- **Discuss Draft Scope of Work for a Montague Housing Production Plan**

Planner announced that FRCOG has gotten a grant from DHCD to help Montague do a housing production plan. This will be an update to the 2004 housing plan and to meet the 10% 40B threshold. The town is currently at 9.93% and that correlates to a shortage of 1-2 housing units for affordable housing in Montague. More information will unfold in future meetings.

Motion made by Fred Bowman to adjourn the March 25, 2014 Planning Board meeting. Seconded by Bob Obear. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Approved by: _____ Date: _____