

Montague Planning Board

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December 23, 2014, 2014 7:00 PM
Town Hall Upstairs Conference Room

MEETING MINUTES

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

Ron Sicard opened the meeting at 7:05 PM.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion by Bob Obear to accept the November 25, 2014 Planning Board minutes. Seconded by George Cooke. **Motion passed unanimously.**

2015 Housing Plan: Review Comments and Approve

Town Planner stated that there were no public comments that were received through the open comment period which ended on December 22, 2014. There were some changes that were incorporated from comments received at the November Planning Board meeting where one resident asked for the plan to highlight proposed solutions for ADA Accessibility and the need for Senior Housing. The Housing Plan will be modified to highlight these comments changes.

- The Board had a discussion about the Zoning Strategies recommended in Section 9 of the plan:
 - Amend the Zoning Bylaws to refer specifically to assisted living facilities and to allow assisted living facilities by special permit in appropriate areas. Presently, Montague’s zoning regulates assisted living facilities as “lodging houses.” The Arbors in Greenfield is an example of an assisted living facility. This would be defining it as a use and allowing it in certain zoning districts. Lodging houses are allowed currently in commercial zones. It was suggested that a higher density bonus might be good so we can encourage development and not discourage developers away by special permit only.
 - Consider allowing conservation subdivision, also known as open space design or natural resource protection zoning, in the rural areas of town to allow for new housing while also protecting large areas of forest or farmland. This type of zoning generally provides flexible development options to allow clustering of homes on smaller lots, in exchange for protecting anywhere from 50-80% of a parcel as open space. We need to revisit so we don’t excluded infill subdivision – keep it flexible.
 - Amend the Accessory Apartment Bylaw to allow accessory apartments by right within existing single family homes, and to allow for the creation of accessory apartments in garages, barns and other secondary structures by special permit. If you were to sell the house you can’t sell it as a two family.
 - Create a special permit option allowing a density bonus for the creation of affordable housing and assisted living in selected zoning districts within or adjacent to village centers.
 - In areas served by public water and sewer, consider removing the requirement that two-family homes be built on larger lots than single-family homes, provided that adequate off-street parking is provided.

- Consider revising the Back Lot Development zoning bylaw to incentivize this type of development by allowing for a reduction in minimum lot size for back lots, and providing a density bonus for protecting a certain number or buildable ANR lots.

The Board found merit in most of these and showed interest in investigating these recommendations.

Motion made by Fred Bowman to approve the resolution for the 2015 Housing Plan as presented. Seconded by Bruce Young. **Motion passed unanimously.** Bob Obear abstaining.

Vote to Amend Planning Board Rules and Regulations:

There was no further discussion regarding the suggested amendments made to the Planning Board Rules and Regulations. These were recommended by the planner and presented at the November meeting. The amendments were in the following sections:

- Article II Section 6 (quorum)- 4 out of 5 affirmative votes are required for Special Permit- That is mandated by MGL 40A
- Article II Section 2 (Site Visit)- Gives chair ability to waive a formal site visit
- Article II Section 3 (Hearing Procedure) - incorporates Mullen Rule procedure since Town Meeting adopted the law.
- Article IV Section 2 (Voting Requirements) 4 out of 5 affirmative votes are required for Special Permit- That is mandated by MGL 40A
- Article V (Consultant Review Fee Regulation)- incorporate existing standalone regulation (from 2000) into this document

Motion was made by, George Cooke to accept the amendments made to the Planning Board Rules and Regulations at the 11/25/2014 meeting. Seconded by Bob Obear. **Motion passed unanimously.**

2015 Planning Board Business Updates:

- Discussion: 2015 Goals and Planning Board Work Plan
Walter recapped recent planning projects that were completed (Site plan review, minimum dwelling unit size, solar bylaws, and medical marijuana). He also recapped some initiatives that have been on the back burner (open space development, subdivision regulation overhaul, signage bylaw, wind energy bylaw, agriculture protection zoning). Based on some of the recommendation in the recently completed housing plan, a new priority emerged: seniors. The board discussed the need to accommodate the projected increase of seniors through multi-generational living and assisted living facilities. These types of development can be encouraged through some of the zoning strategies recommended in the Housing Plan. The board directed to planner to work on this issue as the priority in 2015.

Planner Updates:

- Slum & Blight Designation(s)
 - The Millers Falls and Turners Falls Slum & Blight designations were approved by the Selectboard.

Next meeting: January 27, 2014 at 7PM

Motion by, George Cooke at 8:02 PM to adjourn the December 23, 2014 Planning Board meeting. Seconded by Bob Obear. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Approved by: _____ Date: _____