

Montague Planning Board

One Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376 (413) 863-3200 Ext 207 Fax: (413) 863-3222 Email: planner@montague-ma.gov

October 27, 2015 7:00 PM

Town Hall – Upstairs Meeting Room

One Avenue A

Turners Falls, MA 01376

MEETING MINUTES

Members Present: Ron Sicard – Chair, Fred Bowman, and George Cooke.

Members Absent: Bob Obear and Bruce Young

Staff Present: Walter Ramsey AICP- Town Planner

Ron Sicard opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

Approval of Minutes: August 25, 2015 and September 22, 2015

Motion by George Cooke to accept the August 25, 2015 minutes. Seconded by Fred Bowman. **Motion passed.**

Motion by Fred Bowman to accept the September 22, 2015 minutes. Seconded by George Cooke. **Motion passed.**

Ron Sicard opened the Public Hearing at 7:03 PM

PUBLIC HEARING Zoning Map Amendment #2015-02 The Board will consider a landowner petitioned amendment to Montague Zoning Bylaws sections 7.9.4 and 5.2.5 that would allow solar energy facilities in the General Business District by special permit from the Zoning Board Appeals. Currently, large-scale ground mounted solar facilities are allowed by right in the Industrial District and allowed by special permit in the Historic Industrial, Recreation-Education and Unrestricted Districts. **Representing the Petitioner:** Robert Daddario and James Daddario

James and Bob Daddario are the owners of the property identified as Map 14 Lot 214. The parcel is 6.0 acres located to the rear of the Park Villa Apartments that they own. The landowners are requesting a change to section 7.9.4 of the Town of Montague Zoning Regulations. Currently, Solar Energy Facilities are allowed in the ID (Industrial Districts) and are permitted in the HI (Historic Industrial), RE (Recreation Education), and UN (Unrestricted Districts). They are requesting this change so they can install a solar 1.5 Megawatt generation facility on their parcel which is located in a General Business district. The power from the solar array could be used to lower the utility costs for their residents at Park Villa. The system will cost about 3.6 to 3.7 million. Renewable Energy tax credits make the project feasible. These are set to expire at the end of 2016.

The Daddario's goal is to install a community solar energy facility to supply clean, sustainable, zero emission energy to the local power grid load zone. Some residents might not be able to have on-site solar due to orientation on site, money or home condition, but they could purchase power from this project. Community Solar gives the opportunity to gain some of the benefits without the expense. Anyone not just residents that have service through Eversource can participate with no upfront costs.

They are proceeding tonight to ask the Planning Board to amend the zoning regulations to allow large scale solar in General Business.

Fred Bowman expressed concern that the land has higher potential as a multi-family residential or commercial. The Daddario's response is that housing market has changed thus making it cost prohibited for rentals. They view solar as a way to use the land in a profitable and productive way.

The Planner Reported that legal notices were duly sent out to those parcels zoned General Business. Response rate was very low. There are currently 4 General Business zones (1/3rd of square mile/47 parcels) and the majority of them are not feasible for large scale solar. There is only one other sites off Millers Falls Road (Franklin Commons Condos and Ruben's) where a portion of the district could be ideal for solar besides the Daddario property. If it is recommended tonight to go forward the next step would be to go to Town Meeting for a vote. If the zone change is approved, the Daddario's would still need to apply for a special permit.

Planner noted that there could be time limitations attached to solar facilities n the district knowing solar is not the highest and best use of commercial land with sewer infrastructure. Planner recommended considering additional change into the bylaws for allowing the ZBA to put a time frame (20 years) on General Business Districts and their uses. Walter will draw up the draft bylaw language to be voted on at next meeting with the addition of the time limit being added.

Ron Sicard closed the Public Hearing at 7:35 PM

Planner Report

Next meeting: November 24, 2015 at 7:00 PM

Motion by George Cooke at 7:50 PM to adjourn the October 27, 2015 Planning Board Meeting. Seconded by Fred Bowman. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Approved by: _____ Date: _____