

# Montague Planning Board

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

**August 25, 2020 6:30 PM**

*Meeting held remotely in accordance with the Governor's Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G. L. c. 30A, § 20, relating to the 2020 novel Coronavirus outbreak emergency*

## MEETING MINUTES

**Members Present:** Ron Sicard (Chair), Fred Bowman, George Cook, Elizabeth Irving, Matt Lord, Bob Obear **Staff:** Walter Ramsey, Suzanne LoManto. This meeting was recorded.

**6:30pm** Ron Sicard opened the meeting. Roll Call.

### **6:30 Approval of Minutes**

*MOTION by RS to accept minutes of 7-28-20. Seconded by BO. Vote is Unanimous. MOTION PASSES*

### **6:33: PM Planner Report**

Discussion: Farren Care Center Zoning

The Farren, one of the largest buildings and largest employers in town is closing. Patients will be relocated to Holyoke. The Farren has already conducted an architect study which determined the facility isn't worth the investment to rehabilitate. The Planner visited the property; a tough to redevelopment with wide hallways and small patient rooms-all in bad condition. One goal is for the current owners of the property help fund a redevelopment study of the site to figure out potential for the 7 acre site, currently zoned central business. A map of the property is discussed. A study would produce a recommendation for the Farren property including zoning, cost of demo, hazardous materials, and market feasibility. The hired consultant would come up with three possibilities, including multi family housing. FB asks what is allowed in central business. WR responds: up to 4 residential units above a mixed-use building is allowed by right, and commercial buildings up to 10,000 square feet. FB thinks it's important to retain the residential character of the area. Splitting-off from Cabot Station zoning was seen as unbeneficial by BO and ML. The Planner informs the Board that once the property is vacated it will be taxable, or it is possibly taxable now that it has changed hands. EI asks about what kind of agency will conduct the feasibility study. WR answers that the Town will hire a qualified consulting that specializes in old medical facilities. The finished study would be used to attract private investment and public funds.

### **6:48pm:** Discussion: MassDevelopment Real Estate Technical Assistance Grant opportunity

WR: There is a grant round for a program to assess properties; up to 50K is awarded. After consideration the Town will apply for a redevelopment study of the Railroad Salvage site which will include feasibility, restraints, and 2 or 3 scenarios for the 2.2 acre site. The document will be used to market the property to outside investors and for support by the State for demolition on the property. The EPA is in the process of an assessment and the Town hopes they will clean-up of the collapsed site which has open asbestos near the river and senior housing. Railroad Salvage is in the late stage of tax-title taking but the Town is reluctant until the site is cleaned. The Railroad Salvage Technical Assistance Grant was present to the Select Board, who is supportive to advance. ML asks if there is a private

company “on the hook” for the cost of the clean-up. (No) This project was selected over a study of the Town Hall annex building; that project is premature because it requires an architect.

**Other Project Updates:**

EI asks if the expansion of the all Hallmark building was completed. (Yes)

WR reports that the Caluwe project has stalled. They did not close on the property and there is no longer an agreement to purchase.

38 Avenue A: A purchase and sale was signed three weeks ago. Things are proceeding slower due to COVID. A team of investors lined-up and permitting is the next step. They are working on a parking solution, which will be present to the Select Board. RS asks if the Planning Board should review and recommend the parking plan before it goes to the Select Board. (Yes) There might be an economic stimulus program to help this project.

The Planner would like to review of the existing Comprehensive Master plan and invites members of the Planning Board to work on the review, section-by-section. It would be a multi-month project and revisions to the Master Plan would be to present to Select Board. WR will send out a link to the Master Plan to Planning Board members.

*MOTION by RS to adjourn. Seconded FB by vote is unanimous. MOTION PASSES 7:06pm.*

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_