September 22, 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. **Present:** Tom Holt, Sarah Megan
This meeting was recorded.

6:30pm: Ron Sicard opened the meeting. Roll Call Present: ML, EI, GC, FB

6:31pm: Planner points out the mistake in the agenda under "Planner's Report."
These items will not be discussed.

6:32 Approval of Minutes
MOTION by to accept minutes of 8-25-20. Seconded by FB. Vote is E. Irving (Y), G Cook (Y), F. Bowman (Y), M. Lord (Y). MOTION PASSES

6:31PM Request by Kearsarge Solar LLC to consider amended vegetative screening plan for Special Permit 2018-03- for a solar energy facility off Millers Falls Road at intersection with Industrial Boulevard. 31PM Request by Kearsarge Solar LLC to consider amended vegetative screening plan for Special Permit 2018-03- for a solar energy facility off Millers Falls Road at intersection with Industrial Boulevard.

Tom Holt from Kerarsarge addresses the Board. The project fully permitted and designed but the electrical infrastructure is so "busy" that Kersarge could not move forward. They will remove as few trees possible to install the additional pole, then get approval by Eversource. They propose planting deer resistance plants 6 feet past where they remove trees. (A plan and species list is presented.) Planner discusses the location of the screening and suggests plantings in the front of the roadway to offset the removal of trees- instead of or in compliment with the screening in the back. Tom Holt: The site will be seeded and established, no silt running past the silt fence. The area currently being used for parking will be over-seeded with a low-grow pollinator mix. R. Sicard asks about the possibility of planting about 6 trees in the area to the left of the sign. Tom Holt: Eversource is driving this project and the trees cost about $400-$600 installed. His preference is to do one (plant trees as indicated in plan) or the other (plant trees near the street.) G. Cook thinks it makes more sense to plant trees near the street. Realistically trees would be planted in the spring.

***6:44pm** Ron Sicard makes a motion to amend the vegetative screening plan to move material from the west side to the east side. Seconded by GC. Vote E. Irving (Y), F. Bowman, G. Cook (Y) R.Sicard MOTION PASSES*

Tom Holt will make that change in the plan and resubmit it to the Planner.

The Planner asks Tom Holt for additional updates:
-Construction at the solar farm is going well/smooth.

-They experienced trash outside of the limits at the Burn Dump; basins in the south and to the north near Judd Wire. They tried to get a cap plan for the north area only, but the DEP wants plans for both areas. Modules will probably be installed in the spring. They are doing the as much as they can while they wait for the redesigned (GZA) and approval (DEP).

6:47PM Overview of proposed Montague Mural Policy
Assistant Planner Suzanne LoManto gives an overview of the draft Montage Mural Policy presented recently to the Montague Select Board. The policy was written over the summer with the input from the RiverCulture Steering Committee. Time and increased interest from the community were sited as the impetus for the creation of the policy. The goal of the mural policy was to balance the rights of property owners and artistic expression while preserving the look of the historic district. The policy divides all murals in Montague into two categories- independent projects and projects seeking RiverCulture support. All murals are expected to meet the standards/ requirements listed, while projects seeking RiverCulture support require additional information and go before the RiverCulture Steering Committee for approval. LoManto updates the Board on the mural in Millers Falls, which is failing. Matt Lord questions the language of the mural policy, specifically our ability to regulate murals on private property and brings up First Amendment concerns. The Planner responds that the mural policy does not regulate content at all but is rather an attempt to get people to participate in the RiverCulture program which offers technical and financial assistance. Matt Lord approves the incentives of the RiverCulture mural program and agrees with the creation of criteria for projects on public property, but sees the mural policy as regulatory overkill for murals on private property. LoManto points out that the policy "discourages" murals in certain places, but only restricts murals on the façades of buildings that are listed in the Registry of Historic Places. E. Irving likes the friendly and approachable document and can see its value, but also questions the need/ desire for private property owners to apply for a permit. Ron Sicard is comfortable with the mural policy as written but Matt Lord is not, commenting that the wording of the document ("Standards and Requirements") gives the impression of regulatory authority. The Planning Department will revisit the wording.

7:07pm: Comprehensive Plan: Scope and Timeframe
Planner provided an overview of the project. The State requires certain chapters like open space, housing, transportation, land use etc. The Town already has many of chapters written and vetted, but needs to complete transportation, economic development, and land use in particular. One option is to hire FRCOG to complete these chapters for the Town. Direct Local Technical Assistance is a service that they provide but it could take up several years of State funding. It would be best if we used new census data, which does not come out until 2022/23. The Planner recommends that we request technical assistance from FRCOG for certain chapters and update these chapters when the new census data comes in. 2024 is a realistic timeframe for this work. Another idea is to hire a consultant to do the plan which would cost $100-$120K. Part of the process is public engagement which can not happen this year.

7:12PM Initial discussion about form-based codes for village center area
Planner brings up the subject of form based code starting in Turners and possibly Millers Falls. The idea is to regulate the form and appearance of buildings, rather than the use. If you can build according to the

design standards, you can fill it by right. The Town of Montague has surprisingly few rules about the appearance of a building and currently relies on the good-will of builders. Form based codes have been adopted mostly in cities but is moving to smaller communities. (Ayer, MA) Form based codes require extensive community input to decide on the architectural forms. The Planner shows images of form based code: examples of set backs, lot coverage, frontage required, and building entrances. Turners Falls has 20 potential infill sites; together it could be substantial change to the way Turners Falls looks. Matt Lord thinks the policy is fantastic in concept, but *how* the policy is developed is the key and could go hand-in-hand with master plan. Ron Sicard is encouraged by the number of possible infill sites. Planner: Most infill sites were identified in the TF Livability Plan; grant funding would need to be secured and a consultant would be hired to help the community with the process. Ron Sicard would like to strengthen this activity after COVID. Elisabeth Irving asks if codes will change to make buildings pandemic/ climate change proof. (Planner: "No") Ron Sicard: The Board is in general support of this track. Bob Obear is in favor of having some control of the architecture to avoid eye-sores. The Planner believes there is a possibility for a "hybrid" between the current model and form based models.

7:29pm: MOTION by RS to adjourn. Seconded by GC vote is unanimous. MOTION PASSES.

Approved by: _____   Date: _____