

Montague Planning Board

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January 26, 2021 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), George Cook, Elizabeth Irving, Fred Bowman, Bob Obear, Matt Lord (alternate-non voting)

Present: Henry Komosa,

Town of Montague: Walter Ramsey (Planner)

6:30pm Meeting is opened by Ron Sicard, Chair. ROLL CALL

6:31pm MOTION by EI to accept the meeting minutes December 22, 2020. Seconded by GC. VOTE: FB(AYE) GC (AYE), EI (AYE), RS(AYE). MOTION PASSES.

6:31pm: Subdivision Approval Not Required (ANR) #2021-01, filed by Henry Komosa to combine three lots with frontage on Gunn Rd, Federal Street, and N. Leverett Rd into a single 5.64 +/- acre lot. Properties are identified as Assessor's Map 51 Lots 96, 97, 98.

Present: Henry Komosa

George Cooke recused himself from the discussion because his employer performed the survey.

Planner: No new lots are being created. The plan combines three existing parcels. The property has access on Gunn Rd, Rout 63, and North Leveret Rd. The plan is meets all requirements for endorsement.

Henry Komosa addresses the Board. He has been haying the land for the last 14 years and thinks it is easier to be one, instead of three lots. There is a curb cut and open guard rail on Federal Street for his tractor and hay wagon.

MOTION by R. Sicard to endorse Subdivision Approval Not Required (ANR) #2021-01, filed by Henry Komosa to combine three lots with frontage on Gunn Rd, Federal Street, and N. Leverett Rd into a single 5.64 +/- acre lot and to authorize the chairman to execute on behalf of the Board. Seconded by F. Bowman VOTE: FB (AYE), EI (AYE), BO (AYE), RS (AYE). Cooke- abstaining. MOTION PASSES 6:37pm

George Cooke returned.

Letter of Intent from Hydroflower LLC to locate a cannabis cultivation manufacturing at 36 Canal Street (Former Southworth site).

Planner: Hydroflower LLC presented to the Select Board on Monday, 1/25/20. Their plan is cultivation only, not sales. The owner has experience establishing these operations in Pennsylvania and Maine. The group will come before the Planning Board soon with special permit and site plan application. The property will be leased from Tom Cusano. Hydroflower will be using roughly 1/3 of the space. Submittal to the Planning Board is expected in the next couple of months.

6:48pm Discussion on how to approach regulation of "Tiny Houses"

Planner has been getting inquiries about tiny houses, particularly from Montague Center. Planner is looking for the "temperature" from the Board on this topic, since it has not been discussed at length before.

Planner explains that if it has a foundation, home owners can have a tiny house by right. If there is another house on that lot, you could have a tiny house on a foundation by special permit as a secondary structure or as an accessory apartment. The challenge is if a tiny house on a chassis (wheels) classifying it as a mobile home, which is prohibited. The latter is what many people consider to be “tiny homes”.

RS: How long can a mobile home be parked?
WR: 90 days/over 30 days requires BoH certificate.

FB: is concerned that while an accessory apartment might be fine, a group of tiny homes will decrease the value of single family homes. Fred wants to closely examine the law. Expressed concern about allowing “trailer parks”.

Planner suggests that a good next step would be to find some good examples of how other communities differentiate between trailers and tiny homes.

EI. wants to make sure that the Board is not just using “trailer park” as a code word for poor people. The town needs defensible reasons to permit or not a certain land use.

ML. believes public input is important. He encourages a longer conversational about tiny houses inside of the Master Plan process. In the past the Board has worked to encourage housing density in Town, but next time he’d like to examine the feasibility of zoning changes.

EI reminds the group that the town has mobilized against affordable homeownership in the past, which was disappointing.

Planner announces that he was contacted by Mass Housing Partnership, which has a new program to work with municipalities to facilitate conversation about housing. We might have an opportunity for technical assistance. In the meantime, he will look for models from other communities, but without outside pressure the Board would prefer to address this issue comprehensively in the context of a master plan.

Topics not anticipated:

FRCOG

E.I. makes a FRCOG report. There is progress on the east/ west rail. (Pittsfield, Springfield, Boston) A study continues for a north corridor train on Route 2. On behalf of Franklin County, Rep. Jo Comerford received 82K grant distributed to social care agencies to employ lyft drivers. There is a micro-ride sharing program.

Tree Bylaws

Planner reports that the tree committee met and wants to advance the Tree Bylaws. COVID delayed community outreach sessions, but they would like to move forward. 300 trees have been planted so far. Planner will send copies of the proposed bylaws to the Planning Board and will discuss in a future meeting.

MOTION by EI to ADJURN. SECONDED by FB. VOTE: FB(AYE), ML (AYE), GC (AYE), BO (AYE), EI (AYE), RS (AYE). Meeting is adjourned 7:15pm

Approved by: _____ Date: _____