

Montague Planning Board

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MEETING MINUTES

August 24, 2021 6:30 PM

Meeting held at Montague Town Hall One Avenue A with a remote participation option.

Members: Ron Sicard (chair), George Cooke, Elizabeth Irving, Fred Bowman, Matt Lord (via ZOOM), Bob Obear (via ZOOM 6:45PM).

Staff: Walter Ramsey- Town Planner

Approval of Minutes

MOTION by Ron Sicard to approve the minutes of 7/27/21. VOTE: R. Sicard (AYE), G. Cooke (AYE), E. Irving (AYE), F. Bowman (AYE) Matt Lord (AYE) MOTION PASSES 6:31PM

6:31 Subdivision Approval Not Required (ANR) #2021-04, filed by Elinor S. Wright to establish a boundary line agreement with owner of 144 Taylor Hill Road (Map 50 Lot 14). Subject properties are identified as Assessor's Map 50 Lots 16 and 14 at an unnumbered address between 159 and 199 Old Sunderland Road. Planner reports that Sheila Miller (abutter) has signed the A-1 form. Both land owners are in agreement.

MOTION by R. Sicard to endorse ANR #2021-04, filed by Elinor S. Wright (Map 50 Lot 14). VOTE: R. Sicard (AYE), G. Cooke (AYE), E. Irving (AYE), F. Bowman (AYE) Matt Lord (AYE) MOTION PASSES

6:37 Planner Report: Exploration of 40R Smart Growth Zoning

The Planner presented a power-point about 40R housing that included zoning definitions, percentage caps on affordable units, the benefits of pre-planning 40R Zoning district, State reimbursement, 40R housing density and affordable housing income requirements.

E. Irving cautions against using "affordable housing" as a threat, or the perception of a threat, noting that working people actually qualify for affordable housing including teachers and workers in the Industrial Park. The Town Planner asks for Elizabeth's help with the language of the slide-deck.

Planner reports that the Town is short 30 units to reach the 10% 40B threshold (Also known as Subsidized Housing Index); a single project could get Montague to that goal.

Matt Lord thinks that all villages should be considered for affordable housing opportunities. WR: The goal is laudable, but would not be consistent with the specifics of 40R which requires the housing to be in fully serviced downtown areas. It is likely that only Turners Falls would meet the state's criteria.

George Cooke asks if there are incentives to build this type of housing. Planner comments that a builder could go for 100% market-rate units with special permit under "Historic Industrial" zoning. There are some tax incentives for 40R. Expedited permitting lowers costs, as well.

The Planning Department is beginning to rebrand the “Railroad Salvage” as the “The Griswold Mill.”, in reference to the former Cotton Mill on the property.

Three lots on First Street could also be considered for 40R Smart Growth Zoning. One lot is owned by the Town and two are privately owned. 40R zoning does not determine the fate of a piece of land and the Planner doesn’t believe that the zone change would alter the value. Multi-family housing is allowed by-right currently.

The Planner wants to seek further counsel as to whether the Town should pursue both sub districts, or just focus on the Griswold Mill site. The seven acre Farren site could also under future consideration; they are in the process of due-diligence, and it is too premature for a 40R.

The next step for the Town is an initial consultation with the State Department of Community Development which oversees 40R projects. Zone changes go to Town meeting for approval. Planner is working with a consultants to develop build-out concepts for the sites being considered for 40R.

The Planning Board supports this process. (Slide deck submitted with this record.)

Local Rapid Recovery Plan Update

Planner reported that between 8-10 actions items are being identified through the Downtown Rapid Recovery Plan. The projects have been identified through surveys, stakeholder focus groups, and current plans. Current projects include: downtown parking management, 501c(3) RiverCulture restructure, art lighting project on the Indeck Coal Silo, redeveloping the Town Hall annex, feasibility/ scope of a cultural center. More info to be provided at the next meeting.

MOTION by R. Sicard to ADJOURN. ***VOTE: Unanimous. MOTION PASSES. Unanimous. Meeting adjourned 7:29pm***

Approved by: _____ Date: _____

Exhibit: Town of Montague Smart Growth Overlay Districts PowerPoint Presentation