

Montague Planning Board

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MEETING MINUTES

November 23, 2021 6:30 PM

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

Members: Ron Sicard (Chair), Fred Bowman (ZOOM), Elizabeth Irving, Matt Lord, George Cooke, Bob Obeir (ZOOM). **Staff:** Walter Ramsey, Town Planner. **Present:** EDIC Members

6:32PM MOTION by R. Sicard to approve minutes of October 26, 2021. Seconded by E. Irving **VOTE:** R. Sicard (AYE), M. Lord (AYE) E. Irving (AYE) F. Bowman (AYE) G. Cooke (AYE), B. Ober (AYE). **MOTION PASSES.**

6:33: PUBLIC HEARING: Montague Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (MEDIC) Economic Development Plan 2022 Update.

Present: James Mussoni (EDIC), Ella Ingraham (EDIC), John Furbish (EDIC), Lilith Wolinsky, Mark Hudyma

In accordance with MGL Ch 121C, the Montague Planning Board will hold a public hearing on the MEDIC 2022 Economic Development Plan on Tues, November 23 6:30PM. MEDIC is a corporation established in 1984 by Montague to implement economic development projects. MEDIC has the powers and duties imposed by Chapter 121C to undertake and carry out the economic projects covered in the plan. These powers include the ability to purchase, sell, and manage property and the ability to receive local, state and federal grants, among others. Projects have been identified at the Airport Industrial Park, Sandy Lane, Canal District, 38 Avenue A and the Farren Care Site. Review the plan at <https://www.montague-ma.gov/>.

Planner presents the MEDIC 2022 Economic Development Plan which reviews EDIC history, duties, powers, process and projects. Specific locations in EDIC jurisdiction include the Airport, Sandy Lane, Turners Falls Canal District and the Great Falls Discovery Center. New to this list is the Farren Hospital site, zoned central business. The slides reviews the context of Montague's need, municipal capacity, strategic advantage, accomplishments and challenges. Additional slides review the goals and actions of individual of the EDIC site (Airport, Sandy Lane, Canal District, Discovery Center and Farren Hospital site). The Farren site is intended to be conveyed to the Town and is seen as a unique opportunity for the Town to have some control of the economic and community development of the site. Goals and action items for the Farren site include: revitalization of the village center, increasing high quality commercial and workforce opportunities, and the creation of a community- supported master plan. Written comments will be accepted through December 23, 2021.

Comments:

J. Mussoni- Happy to see the Farren and Canal District included in the plan

M. Lord is happy that the Farren site has been included, regardless of the outcome.

R. Sicard is satisfied with the plan as presented.

R. Sicard makes a MOTION to close public comment. Seconded by B. Obear . VOTE. R. Sicard (AYE), M. Lord (AYE) E. Irving (AYE) F. Bowman (AYE) G. Cooke (AYE), B. Ober MOTION PASSES

R. Sicard makes a MOTION to endorse the MEDIC 2022 Economic Development Plan. Seconded by E. Irving. VOTE: R. Sicard (AYE), M. Lord (AYE) E. Irving (AYE) F. Bowman (AYE) G. Cooke (AYE), B. Ober. MOTION PASSES.

7:00: Zoning Workshop:

Planning for and regulating standalone energy (battery) storage facilities (There will not be a vote.)

Planner: The proposed bylaw amendment was developed in anticipation of the proliferation of battery storage technology in response to renewable energy initiatives at the state and federal level. Montague, with its hydro, solar, and electric transmission assets is a suitable candidate for grid-scale battery storage. So far, the State has not provided central guidance on how municipalities should regulate these, so municipalities are just starting to develop regulations on their own. Unfortunately there are no suitable models, but other communities were surveyed to inform the Planning Departments drafting of the regulations. If Montague wishes to retain its role as a regional leader in renewable energy and ensure a proper deployment of this technology, it would be wise to act swiftly to enact regulations.

Zoning Analysis:

In Montague, a battery energy storage facility would be considered a “Public Utility” use which is allowed by Special Permit in all zoning districts except RS-1 and RS-2. The proposed amendments represent an increase in restrictiveness in terms of land area and permit standards over a “public utility” use, however the proposed amendments are intended to prescribe a clearer set of standards/expectations that would facilitate the granting of a special permit for a properly sited and planned facility within the Industrial or Historic Industrial Zoning District.

Summary of Recommended Changes:

- Allow battery energy storage facilities by Special Permit and Site Plan Review from the Planning Board in Historic-Industrial and Industrial Districts.
- Regulate battery storage facilities to the same standards as solar energy facilities.
- Additional regulation to encourage battery storage to co-locate with like uses such as solar facilities, generation plants, and electrical substations. For a facility that does not co-locate, there are additional requirements that the facility be housed within a building or will otherwise require additional mitigation.
- Incorporate new standards for pollinator-friendly plantings at solar and battery storage facilities.

R. Sicard asks about the downside/push back to BES? What should be our concerns?

Planner sees the view of catastrophic failure and long-term environmental hazards as expected concerns in addition to neighborhood aesthetics.

E. Irving asks how would a BES would be taxed, Planner responds that taxation is through the increase in the assessed value of the property.

E. Irving asks if an improved safety plan will be in place. Planner responds that safety/maintenance/decommission/ storm water plans will be required.

Lilith Wolinsky (resident) supports fast-tracking this bylaw. She is primarily concerned about have one of these located in Montague City where she feels it would not be appropriate in her backyard

The Board agree to fast-track the development of these bylaws and no pursue a moratorium.

MOTION by Ron Sicard to initiate a zoning change amendment pertaining to the regulation of Battery Energy Storage Facilities as presented. Seconded by Fred Bowman. VOTE: R. Sicard (AYE), M. Lord (AYE) E. Irving (AYE) F. Bowman (AYE) G. Cooke (AYE), B. Ober. MOTION PASSES.

Planner Report:

- Updates on MGL 40R zoning to encourage infill housing development. – Habitat is interested at single family homes at First Street. Would go through LIP program to be counted as affordable. Planning Board still supports 40R at the site instead of just doing a RFP.
- Set December meeting date- Agreed to move Dec meeting to 12/21 due to holiday and planner availability
- Topics not anticipated within 48 hour posting requirements- Planner discussed a minor site amendment to Flower Power SP 2021-01 that was approved administratively earlier today. It involves as minor bumpout. Developer have cleared the site and they will submit a revised landscaping plan. Foundations are being installed this month.

MOTION to Adjourn. MOTION PASSES 8:10pm

Exhibits: MEDIC plan powerpoint
Battery Energy Storage Facilities powerpoint