

Montague Planning Board

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MEETING MINUTES March 25, 2022 6:30 PM *Held in person and via ZOOM*

Members: Ron Sicard, Elizabeth Irving, George Cooke, Matt Lord.

Absent: Bob Obear

Staff: Walter Ramsey, Town Planner.

Meeting was recorded

Chair recognizes and thanks Planning Board member of Fred Bowman, who resigned.

6:30PM MOTION by R. Sicard to approve the minutes of 1-25-22. Seconded by G. Cooke VOTE: Ron Sicard, Elizabeth Irving, George Cooke, Matt Lord. MOTION PASSES.

6:31pm: Designate vice-chair and Capital Improvements Committee Appointee

The Chair asks for suggestions to fill these rolls. Matt Lord has become a full member and an alternate member to the Planning Boards will be recruited. Elizabeth Irving has volunteered to be the vice-chair of the Planning Board. The Planner describes the responsibilities of the Capital Improvements Committee member.

MOTION by Ron Sicard to make Elizabeth Irving the vice-chair of the Planning Board. Seconded by George Cooke. VOTE: Ron Sicard, Elizabeth Irving, George Cooke, Matt Lord MOTION PASSES 6:36pm.

6:37pm ANR 265 Federal Street - Stone Investment Trust- Assessors Parcel ID 4-52.

Planner shows the map of the 14 acres parcel to be divided into 2 lots. The plan conforms to the 1-acre minimum/200 foot frontage bylaws.

MOTION by George Cooke to endorse ANR 265 Federal Street- Stone Investment Trust. Seconded by E. Irving: VOTE Ron Sicard, Elizabeth Irving, George Cooke, Matt Lord. MOTION PASSES 6:40pm

6:41pm ANR 54 Greenfield Road- Jeffrey A. Marston- Assessors Parcel ID 20-015.

Planner describes the parcel to be subdivided into three parcels. Each parcel has 150 foot of frontage and access to a public way. Parcel C is the largest, but with some issues due to a culvert. There is room for a driveway to one side of the culvert. The DPW Superintendent says the owner can get a driveway permit and the guardrail would be moved. Alternately, a right of way is a possibility.

Planner recommends adding some statements for the record regarding Parcel C: 1.) adequate access exists next to the culvert and NW property line, 2.) The owner needs to get a driveway permit from the DPW before construction to address the guardrail issue, 3.) the side lot access (proposed right of way) requires a special permit and 4.) and all lots are subject to permitting through the Riverfront, Wetlands, Natural Heritage/Endangered Species Protection Acts. This will be in a memo in the file.

E. Irving asks how someone buying this property would understand the restrictions. Ideally, a good lawyer would understand the environmental setbacks.

MOTION by R. Sicard to endorse ANR 54 Greenfield Road- Jeffrey A. Marston- Assessors Parcel ID 20-015. Seconded by G. Cooke. VOTE: Ron Sicard, Elizabeth Irving, George Cooke, Matt Lord. MOTION PASSES 6:55pm.

Battery Energy Storage Bylaw

3/3/22 Town Meeting recap. Bylaws will be sent to the State Attorney General later in the week.

40R Smart Growth overlay Zoning DHCD Comments, Hearing feedback

The initial public hearing was on 2/14/22. The State contacted the Planner on 3/3 to let the Town know that we qualify. The Planner and Co-Chair worked together to draft language about the Town bylaw petition. Planning Board hearing will be scheduled on April 12. This hearing will be the last before the March Town Meeting vote.

Public feedback was centered around clarifications about what a 40R district actually does. The Planner spoke to Chris Couture who did not object to the 40R designation of his private First Street property.

E. Irving restates her position that the Planning Board should constantly clarify the definition of “affordable.”

M. Lord asks how big section 8 impacts section 8 housing. The Planner responds that voucher housing travels with the person, so it does not affect Montague affordable housing numbers. Deed restricted affordable housing is tied to the property for no less than 30 years.

Habitat for Humanity has done initial assessments for the First Street lot.

E. Irving wants to know when the Town will discuss the percentage of Affordable vs. market-rate housing. 20% is the minimum. Most communities do 25% because it better aligns with State law.

DHCD provided very minor changes in their written comments but clarified reversal of previous advice regarding the cap in the District. Not adding the cap back seems like a sensible thing by the Board.

Request for opinion regarding Open Space Residential Development dimensional standards for Rural Business District. The Planner received an inquiry by someone who found an error in our new bylaws, which omits the dimensions of the lot size for Rural Business in 8.11.5. The Board agreed that RD should have been categorized with AF, RS-1 and RS-2 when the bylaw was adopted in 2019. The Board would like to fix this at an upcoming town meeting. The Planner has a list of errors/omissions from the bylaw that the Board should advance together through Town Meeting for amendment.

Comprehensive Plan Updates

The project kick-off meeting was well received, as reported by Elizabeth Irving. The group had a long list of ideas about how to reach folks who do not usually participate in Town business. The survey might go out with the sewer bill. The Planner has submitted a grant to compensate members of the Comprehensive Plan Committee and provide meals and childcare.

Canal District Master Plan Updates

Work is under contract with Dietz Co. who will complete construction and market analysis. The plan is intended for outside parties as well as the Town and will include the “Rail Road Salvage” site, which has support as housing from the community. The Plan will conclude in November. More soon.

The 6th Street Bridge is on order and that project will break ground in May.

Tom Cusano is looking for equity partners for his venture. His tenants have received their State licenses.

The Planner will meet with Town stakeholders for input in the Parking Study. Unfortunately, there was no enforcement of the winter parking permit system. Several people made the case of accessibility issues and need to park in front of their house.

MOTION to Adjourn by R. Sicard. Seconded by E. Irving. VOTE: Unanimous. Meeting was Adjourned 7:45PM