

**TOWN OF**
**MONTAGUE MASSACHUSETTS**

TOWN HALL

One Avenue A

Turners Falls, MA 01376

PLANNING BOARD

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MEETING MINUTES PLANNING BOARD

The Montague Planning Board
**Tuesday, June 25, 2024**. This meeting was recorded.

Meeting is opened by the Chair. 6:33pm

ROLL CALL:
**Members Present:** Ron Sicard, Elizabeth Irving, Sam Guerin. **Absent:** George Cooke, Bob Obear.
**Staff in attendance:** Maureen Pollock, Town Planner and Conservation Agent
**Also in attendance**: Alfred M. Berry, Reporter for the Greenfield Recorder

*Minutes from May 14, 2024 were tabled.*

**FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS:**

ANR 2024-02, Marsha Potyrala & Nancy A. L. Stafford, 23 Old Sunderland Road (Parcel #48-0-0013)

Alfred Berry, the surveyor for this project was in attendance. The Planner describes the location of the parcel, which is about 7 acres.

A. Berry describes the plan, which also includes a parcel owned by Nancy Stafford which is not part of this ANR. The seven acres were inherited by two sisters by their father who are executers on the deed. This ANR will create a two-acre parcel with an existing house, and the sisters will divide the remainder of the land into two additional parcels. Dimensional requirements are listed on the plan and meet regulations.

The Planner notes that the overlay district is listed on the plan. She notes that if impervious surface is larger than 20% of the area would have to go to the Zoning Board of appeals.

*MOTION by R. Sicard to endorse ANR 2024-02, Marsha Potyrala & Nancy A. L. Stafford, 23 Old Sunderland Road (Parcel #48-0-0013). Seconded by E. Irving. VOTE: Ron Sicard (AYE), Elizabeth Irving (AYE), Sam Guerin (AYE). MOTION PASSES 6:43pm*

**OLD BUSINESS:**
Mass DOT presented their preliminary concepts to the Select Board about two weeks ago. There will be a public comment period. Work is planned for FY27 on the White Bridge, Canal Bridge, and the ...Bridge.

**Strathmore Mill Site** (Update)
The Town has been meeting with State and Federal officials for the planned demo of the mill complex. The structures are beginning to lean into the Connecticut River. It would be an environmental hazard if the complex fell into the river. The structure is connected to the canal wall, which could impact the structure of the canal, as well as the existing generator and abutting bridges. The Town received an EPS Brownfield Grant for 4.9 million dollars and an additional 5 million dollars from The Governers office. The Town is currently working on the demolition design. The Planner notes the complexity of working on a site with such limited access. The Town will explore future uses for the site, which was discussed during the Canal District Master Plan. Local Indigenous tribes will be consulted about their vision for the land. The demolition of the Strathmore Mill site needs to be completed before Mass DOT starts the bridge work.

**Montague City Village Center Study.** The Planner will reach out to Mass Housing Partnership about creating a working group related to the redevelopment of the former Farren site.

**Comprehensive Plan** – draft Chapters <https://montagueplans.org/review-comment/>An open house was conducted at the Discovery Center on Tuesday, June 4. A virtual zoom meeting was held on Thursday, June 6. Turnout was good for both. The Planner describes the in-person drop in event at the Great Falls Discovery Center and how residents participated. The postcard mailed to every household in Montague brought out a good cross section of residents.

The Planner mentions that FRCOG is looking for a participant from Montague. Elizabeth Irving describes her past participation in the FRCOG group.

Sam Guerin asks about assessory dwelling units. The Planner reports that she gets a lot of questions from the public about ADUs; the public relies on Town staff to interpret the bylaws.

**Affordable Housing Development on First Street (Parcel #04-0-0031)** Follow-up testing is in process. The Town needs the LSP to determine the lead levels and the cost estimate. The Town will apply for a grant to clean the property. Mass Development has a rolling grant. Mass Housing is keeping money on behalf of Habitat for Humanity until the property is cleaned up.

**Submitted Grant Applications**: Four grants due the first week of June were submitted.

Community Planning Grant Program – technical assistance for possible zoning amendments for the former Farren Care Center parcels, including: 330-340 Montague City Rd, 356 Montague City Rd, and Montague City Rd (Parcel #12-0-051). The study would include design standards and dimensional requirements. Budget Estimate of the grant is $62,000 with completion within 1-2 Years.

Rural Development Fund – In partnership of Rural Development, Inc. (RDI), to demolish a condemned single-family home (10 Unity Street, Turners Falls) and replace it with a new, energy-efficient home to be sold at an affordable price to an income-eligible homebuyer. This grant would pay to demolish an uninhabitable house of the build a deed affordable single-family house through Habitat for Humanity. The sale price would be about $190,000 (80% AMI) The total budget is $370,000. The grant request is $175,000 with an estimated completion within 1 year.

FY25 MA Downtown Initiative Program– technical assistance to implement a strategy to establish administrative capacity to support our downtown business community. This study follows a study on the subject conducted by FRCOG. Business and building owners would be consulted about what type of business support they need. Options may include a Business Improvement District (BID) and other models. The model eventually selected will be appropriate for downtown Turners Falls. The budget estimate for the study is $25,000 with an estimated completion within 1-2 years.

Municipal Digital Equity Implementation Program – This grant was awarded\* This funding will continue Gill-Montague Senior Center’s efforts to provide (2) 6-week in-person digital literacy training and support for area seniors and to purchase 12 laptops, 3 computers for participants. ($40,000). The Planner has been working with COA Director, Roberta Potter.

 TOPICS NOT ANTICIPATED WITHIN 48 HOURS

Ron Sicard asks about tree cutting on Turnpike Road. Nearly 3 acres of trees were cut down. M. Pollock reports that last summer Springdale Cemetery emailed her about cutting “baby saplings.” She recommended that they have the land delineated because of the intermittent stream. The Planner (also the Conservation Agent) sent a notice to the Springdale Cemetery Commission about a possible wetlands violation. During the site visit and May Conservation Commission meeting it was obvious that the logger cut within 50 feet of the wetland and inside the wetland. The sandy steep property will erode and compromise cemetery property. The representative from Springdale Cemetery was in shock about what the logger did. The Conservation Commission required a delineation and restoration plan. The cemetery has hired a Wetland Scientist and will be at an upcoming Conservation Commission meeting.

*MOTION by Ron Sicard to ADJOURN Seconded by S. Gerin. VOTE: Sicard (AYE), Elizabeth Irving (AYE), Sam Guerin (AYE) (3-0) MOTION PASSES 7:32pm.*