



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, September 24, 2024. This meeting was recorded.
Meeting is opened by the Chair. 6:33pm

ROLL CALL:

Members Present: Ron Sicard, Elizabeth Irving, Sam Guerin, George Cooke. ABSENT: Bob Obear.
Staff in attendance: Maureen Pollock, Town Planner and Conservation Agent
Also in attendance: Megan Rhodes (FRCOG), Sage Winter (GPI)

MOTION by R. Sicard to accept the meeting minutes of April 2, 2024 & June 25, 2024. Seconded by E. Irving. VOTE: Ron Sicard (AYE), Elizabeth Irving (AYE), Sam Guerin (AYE), George Cooke (AYE) MOTION PASSES 6:34pm.

NEW BUSINESS:

Affordable Homes Act – new legislation signed into law on August 6, 2024 – review/discussion

The Planner provides an update on the act recently signed into law by the Governor. The Planner reviews what is currently allowed by the existing Montague Bylaws regarding ADU dwelling units. Standards and conditions are listed in section Montague Bylaws 8.5. The goal of new State legislation is to clarify what is permissible Statewide. Legislation goes into effect in February 2025. The Planner and the Building Inspector have attended online webinars to understand ADU by-right use in residential zoning districts and standards for egress, size, residency and setbacks. The Planner informs the Board that they may update Montague Bylaws to incorporate this new legislation; the change could be administrative through the Building Inspector, or through a Site Plan Review process. Special consideration will be needed for permitting ADU units on a preexisting/non-conforming lots.

George Cook asks if ADU units need to be on separate utilities (septic)?

Megan Rhodes (FRCOG) answers “it could be separate or combined” based on size of the system.

The Planner informs the Board that there are online resources to understand the new legislation; upcoming training are expected, as well. The Planner has seen pre-built ADU model units that can be a creative way for multigenerational families. The Planner would like to have an entire meeting about understanding “gentle density” ADU housing. The Planner reviews the process of amending the Bylaws. Public hearings/outreach will be part of that process. Exterior lighting, screening, mass will be considered before approval by Town Meeting.

Proposed Avenue A Sidewalk Designs with a focus on ADA accessible ramps – October 15, 2024 Community Input Session from 5:30-7:30pm at Great Falls Discovery Center, 2 Avenue A, Turners Falls

The Town is proposing sidewalk improvements with a focus on ADA accessibility. The scope of project is the odd side of the street between Third and Fourth Street, and the even side of the street between Fourth and Fifth Street. The goal of the meeting is to provide information and get feedback from residents, retail shops and restaurants owners. Food and childcare are provided.

Housing Production Plan: Request support for FRCOG grant application that would provide an updated The Planner seeks support from the Planning Board for a HUD application; if awarded FRCOG will help the Town with their (expired) Housing Plan. The Planner describes why a plan is necessary and asks for the Planning Board to sign a letter of support. The Planner received support from the Select Board at a previous meeting.

MOTION by E. Irving to support FRCOG's Montague Housing Production Plan. Seconded by G. Cooke. VOTE. Ron Sicard (AYE), Elizabeth Irving (AYE), Sam Guerin (AYE), George Cooke (AYE) MOTION PASSES 6:52pm

Comprehensive Plan – to review and vote to adopt (if ready) the draft Comprehensive Plan. The draft Plan be accessed via this link: <https://montagueplans.org/>.

Megan Rhodes (FRCOG) presents the final draft of the Montague Comprehensive Plan which started in February 2022. Rhodes discusses the timeline of this plan including the sequence of public workshops, meetings, community surveys, virtual and in person workshops, subcommittee meetings, Town Board and Committee meetings, focus groups, and technical reports. The considerable public feedback was compiled into a draft plan which covers goals, challenges and recommendations to build resiliency and equity in Montague. The presentation discusses: Open Space, Recreation, Housing, Transportation, Community Facilities, Economic Development, Historic Resources.

The slide deck is entered into the minutes.

The Town Administrator requests that the Planning Board approves the final plan before it is presented to the Montague Select Board and endorsement by Town Meeting.

A project page for the Montague Comprehensive Plan exists on the Town website.

Ron Sicard would like statistics for this project from the Town and FRCOG websites. Meghan Rhodes remarks that participation in community input sessions was “better than any project done recently.” Town Planner remarks that food, childcare, and translation services are costly but make a difference in engagement. It should be “baked into” overall project budgets.

The Planner encourages the Planning Board to review the chapters. Elizabeth Irving is concerned that Town Meeting might want to “wordsmith” the document. Ron Sicard does not think it will be an issue considering the level of outreach for this project. The Planner comments that Town Meeting members will receive a “memo” about the final report, including information about the extensive community engagement and the Planning Board vote.

Ron Sicard calls the Montague Comprehensive Plan “An excellent piece of work...well, well done.”

MOTION by S. Guerin to approve the final draft of the Montague Comprehensive Plan. Seconded by E. Irving. VOTE. Ron Sicard (AYE), Elizabeth Irving (AYE), Sam Guerin (AYE), George Cooke (AYE) MOTION PASSES 7:16pm.

Affordable Housing Development on 0 First Street (Parcel #04-0-0031)

The Planner provided a review of the project delay, related to contaminants in the soil. The Town is waiting for a cost estimate to remove the contaminate. Mass Development has an annual brownfield clean up grant. When the Town gets this estimate they will apply for the funds through the One Stop/Mass Development. The project is a high priority for Mass Development, Montague and Franklin

County. Habitat for Humanity has been asked by Mass Housing to resubmit their application, but the money is being held.

Redeveloping former Farren Care Center site, located at 330-340 Montague City Rd

The Town will hear (very soon) about a community planning grant award through the Office of Affordable Housing for technical assistance with zoning amendments related to the Farren site. The project will start as soon as possible, maybe November 2024. The Planner will need input from the Planning and other Boards, committees, residents and special groups. A working group will be created to get the widest input from the community as possible. Sam Guerin shows an interest in being in this working group.

Megan Rhodes invites the Montague Planning Board to upcoming regional meetings. There is a ZOOM workshop on the Site Plan Review process and regulations. The Planner encourages Board members to consider attending this event.

The Planner informs the Board about the October 10, 2024, FERC relicensing meeting at the Shea Theater. Information is on the Town website. The meeting is open to the public.

The property at 10 Unity Street will be entered into the receivership program. The Board of Health submitted that paperwork to the State AG Office. There was a public hearing two weeks ago. Ryan Paxton and RDE, Inc. attended the meeting and requesting the receivership. The Board of Health can answer questions. The plan is to demolish the building and build a deed restricted/ single family house. The permitting pathway for that project is T.B.A.

MOTION by Ron Sicard to ADJOURN Seconded by E. Irving. MOTION PASSES 7:32pm.