



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, October 29, 2024. This meeting was recorded.  
Upstairs Meeting room. Opened by the Chair. 6:31pm

**ROLL CALL:**

Members Present: Ron Sicard, Elizabeth Irving, Bob Obear, George Cooke. ABSENT: Sam Guerin.  
Staff in attendance: Maureen Pollock, Town Planner and Conservation Agent  
Also in attendance: Sage Winter, Erin-Leigh Hoffman (Greenfield Recorder)

*MOTION by E. Irving to accept the meeting minutes of September 24, 2024. Seconded R. Sicard VOTE: Ron Sicard (AYE), Elizabeth Irving (AYE), Bob Obear (AYE), George Cooke (AYE) MOTION PASSES 6:34pm*

George Cook recuses himself.

***FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS: ANR 2024-03: Bruce & Tessa Young, 137 Old Sunderland Road***

The Planner describes the project; they would like to acquire and combine parcel 2A as shown on the plan. A new lot will not be created. The transaction meets all the zoning and dimensional requirements for frontage and access.

Bob Obear asks if an ANR is required since a new lot isn't being created. George Cook answers that whenever you change a lot line an ANR is required.

*MOTION by R. Sicard to approve ANR 2024-03: Bruce & Tessa Young, 137 Old Sunderland Road. Seconded by B. Obear. VOTE: Ron Sicard (AYE), Elizabeth Irving (AYE), Bob Obear (AYE). MOTION PASSES 6:41pm*

George Cook rejoins the meeting 6:42pm.

***NEW BUSINESS:***

**[2024 Regional Housing Plan for Franklin County](#)**

The Planner informs the Board about the completion of FRCOG's 2024 plan for the county. The plan shows that Franklin County needs about 3000 affordable units. She encourages the Board to review the plan via the FRCOG website and contact Megan Rhodes with questions. A grant application has been submitted to allow FRCOG to help Montague update their housing plan, which is at least 10 years old. The number and type of housing units will be outlined in the plan.

***Accessory Dwelling Units*** – discuss possible zoning amendments to Section 8.5 under the Zoning Bylaw, to comply with the Affordable Homes Act, a new legislation signed into law on August 6, 2024

New legislation will go into effect February 2, 2025. Communities are gearing up to amend ADU bylaws. There will be some “tweaks” in Montague bylaws. The Planner gives the Board a handout which outlines definitions, dimensions and changes in ADU State law. A significant change to current law is that ADUs no longer need to be owner occupied. ADUs will be “by right” although Towns can require reasonable standards, restrictions and site plans reviews. For example, a Town can require that the design of an ADU fits in a specific neighborhood or district. One additional parking spot is also a requirement unless it is near a bus stop or other public transit.

Bob Obear thinks that making something “by-right” but with restricts can open the Town up for legal issues. George Cook counters that the Town should have some oversight. Bob agrees but thinks there “should be specific parameters.... the site plan review process opens it up for interpretation.” He sees possible legal issues.

The Planner reports that Site Plan Review could be done administratively through the building inspector (skipping ZBA and Planning Boards). It’s something that the Board could consider, especially if the ADU is contained within an existing structure. The Planner sees more of a question with detached ADUs. The Planner moves the conversation to current setback requirements. The Board reviews possible changes to the current 5.5 and 5.5.2 Dimensional Requirements. Bob Obear wonders if we might be creating regulations that are *more* restrictive.

The Planner discusses other communities that allow ADUs outside of single-family zones, like duplexes. “There’s a lot to consider.”

The State will provide guidelines for Towns; these decisions do not need to be rushed. The State is still working out the “grey zones” like non-conforming lots. While new legislation goes into effect soon, building an ADU is very expensive. Allowing/restricting short term rentals is another consideration.

For the next meeting the Planner will create a list of changes that Montague needs to make. The community will be informed about ADU guidelines at an upcoming informational session.

George Cook asks if the upcoming State law will supersede local bylaws. The Planner responds “yes.” E. Irving thinks some of the architectural requirements of current bylaws will be hard to defend. The Planner discusses vague language in some of the bylaws that the Board might choose to clarify.

***Community Preservation Act (CPA)*** – discuss possible educational initiative aimed to provide Montague residents and public officials an opportunity to learn more about the Community Preservation Act (CPA), how it can be used, and provide campaign examples.

Passed in 2011, it allows a small surcharge to build/ rehab parks, protect open space, build affordable housing and rehab historic buildings. Many of our neighboring communities have adopted this surcharge. The Planner is looking for three residents to take the training and organize educational events. Sage Winter asks if Massachusetts matches the funds. E. Irving responds that “it depends on the project.”

***FY25 One Stop for Growth Grant Announcements:***

***\$62,000 Community Planning Grant Program- Montague City Village Center Zoning Amendments***

Montague received a grant to hire a consultant to explore uses and dimensional regulations and possibly design standards for the former Farren site. The Town will go through a procurement process. It will be a six-month process that will likely start in January 2025. The results of this process will ultimately go to Town meeting.

***\$25,000 Mass Downtown Initiative Program- Rural Downtown District Implementation Pilot Project***

This grant is part of a project with FRCOG to explore support structures for downtown businesses such as a BID or other models. The needs and wants of business and building owners will be the focus of the study.

***Proposed Intersection Improvements at Route 47 (North Leverett Road) and Route 63 (Federal Street) - MassDOT Public Info Meeting at 6pm on November 6, 2024 via Zoom***

Bob Obear does not like the idea of a roundabout. He agrees that the intersection is dangerous due to the grade of the “crest.” Speed is another factor. He thinks the grade should be lowered. He thinks the rotary is a huge expense and will create a big problem.

***OLD BUSINESS: Updates:***

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

The Town is waiting for information, but lead was detected in the soil. The Town is working with LST on determining how much soil needs to be removed and replaced. The Town will seek funding for remediation through the Mass Development Brownfields Grant. Mass Housing has withdrawn their grant (with Habitat for Humanity) without prejudice but encourages them to reapply.

The canal has not been refilled yet. The Board speculates how and why.

***MOTION by R. Sicard to ADJOURN. Seconded by G. Cook. VOTE: Ron Sicard (AYE), Elizabeth Irving (AYE), Bob Obear (AYE), George Cooke (AYE). Meeting ADJOURNED 7:31pm.***