



The
TOWN OF
MONTAGUE
MASSACHUSETTS

TOWN HALL
One Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376

PLANNING BOARD
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**TUESDAY, APRIL 30, 2025 PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

The Montague Planning Board
Tuesday, April 30, 2025. This meeting was recorded.
ZOOM Opened by the Chair. 6:30pm

ROLL CALL:

MEMBERS PRESENT: Elizabeth Erving, Ron Sicard, George Cooke, Sam Guerin, Sage Winter, Bob Obear.

STAFF: Maureen Pollock, Town Planner and Conservation Agent

Also in attendance: Gary Billings

MOTION by R. Sicard to approve the minutes from March 25, 2025. Seconded by G. Cooke. VOTE: Elizabeth Erving (AYE), Ron Sicard (AYE), George Cooke (AYE), Sam Guerin (AYE), Sage Winter (AYE) MOTION PASSES (5-0) 6:32pm.

FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS:

ANR 2025-01: Verne W. Williams, 25 West Chestnut Hill Road (Parcel #52-0-135) & 11 Chestnut Hill Road (Parcel #52-0-087)

George Cooke recuses himself. 6:35pm

A copy of the plan Gary Billings (abutter) is in attendance. Gary is a relative of the owner, Verne Williams. He describes the history of the property. He thinks that the driveway and possibly the well is on his property. This ANR will make sure that the well and the driveway are on parcel 52-0-135

The Planner reviewed the submitted plan and finds that both parcels meet the minimum lot frontage requirement and provide practical access to Chestnut Hill Road. All the items required to be listed on the plan are shown.

The Planner reviews the steps to register the map with the Franklin County Register of Deeds.

MOTION by R. Sicard to ACCEPT ANR 2025-01: Verne W. Williams, 25 West Chestnut Hill Road (Parcel #52-0-135) & 11 Chestnut Hill Road (Parcel #52-0-087). Seconded by B. Obear. VOTE: Elizabeth Erving (AYE), Bob Obers (AYE), Ron Sicard (AYE), George Cooke (AYE), Sam Guerin (AYE), Sage Winter (AYE) MOTION PASSES (6-0) 6:32pm.

George Cooke returns to the meeting. 6:41pm

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Announce receipt of Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs Planning Grant of \$34,000 – For technical assistance in preparing Town’s five-year Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP).

The Planner reviews the project. The application was submitted in July 2024. The Open Space and Recreation plan needs to be updated every 10 years in order for the Town to be eligible for grants including land acquisition grants and Park Grants. There will be robust community engagement process to identify priority projects. Information from the recently finished Comprehensive Plan will be included. A consultant will be hired, and the project will be finished by June 2026.

MONTAGUE CITY VILLAGE CENTER REZONING PROJECT

Project Update: The April 17, 2025 meeting at the Great Falls Discovery Center was well attended by the community. Sam Guerin was in attendance and thought the community workshop was a very “broad brush” way to approach the topic of zoning with the public. The meeting was recorded and is available on the MCTV Vimeo page. The current zoning of the former Farren site is Central Business, which allows mixed-use buildings (commercial on first floor, with housing allowed in upper floors) but not other residential uses like single family homes, duplexes, triplexes and apartment buildings. The attendees expressed at the April 17 community workshop expressed a desire for housing, small retail shops, community spaces, open space, and improved bike path access. Daycare services and possibly a hotel were mentioned as possible uses to be permitted under the Zoning Bylaw. Attendees were also asked about possible permitted uses for parcels on Rod Shop Road. The Planner has a check-in meeting with Innes Associates Ltd. and is considering hosting the interactive “pop-up” activities for residents who could not attend on April 17. E. Irving suggested this engagement process is situated on the former Farren site. The Brick House and Senior Center are other possibilities.

The Planner informs the Planning Board about an upcoming June 10 meeting via ZOOM.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Short-Term Rental (STR) in Franklin County

The Planning Board received language from FRCOG related to topic. Ron Sicard asks if the Board is tasked with discussing a tax on short-term rental. The Planner lets the Board that she expects the Selectboard to discuss possible taxation at a meeting later this year. According to FRCOG, customers are not deterred from staying at an Airbnb based on the tax.

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. Draft language was given to the Board based on State regulation. Suggested changes made by the Planner were indicated in red or with a strike-through. Montague bylaws cannot be more restrictive than the State. Montague bylaws can be more permissive. One benefit of being more permissive could be eligibility in the “Housing Choice Community” program. For example, by eliminating the “not larger in Gross Floor Area than ½ the Gross Floor Area of the Principal Dwelling” clause help Montague qualify for future funding. The Planner suggests this idea because the Montague’s existing zoning regulation already allows ADUs to be 900 square feet in size without the added clause. Using the size already permitted under the Zoning Bylaw works well with the designers and the Building Inspector.

The Planner goes through the strikethroughs with the Board. She eliminated language related to historic districts, as Montague does not have a local historical district. According to FRCOG a bus stop operated

by Transit Authority is considered a “transit station” which related to mandating designated parking stops for ADUs. The Planner will reach out to the State for clarifications of Montague bus stops. She would like to remove the word “transit station” and replace it with “bus stop” which is easier to understand.

The Planner asks if the Board would like to regulate if ADUs used as short-term rentals. The Board found that they would not like to handle the regulation of short-term rentals under this section.

The Planner mentioned that she has had several folks stop by the office to ask about building multiple ADUs on larger parcels including residents wanting to set up multi-generational housing. Bob Obear thinks that on Ag2 or Ag 4 this might be possible, but not smaller lots like downtown Turners Falls. The model by-law provides suggested language for multiple ADUs.

E. Irving asks if ADUs count toward the Town’s Affordable Stock Numbers.

The Planner will review zoning amendment timeframe needed to get on the Special Town Meeting warrant scheduled in October at next Planning Board meeting.

The Planner encourages the Board to look especially at dimensional regulations in the State suggested language. Page 29 of the model bylaw provides a suggestion option for ADUs larger than 900 square feet. The Planner will clarify the suggested State language related to by-right ADUs on any sort of housing, like duplexes.

Ron Sicard asks for an update about abandoned property on Unity Steet. The Planner reports that FRHA has been appointed as the receivership to demo the building and erect a modular house. Unfortunately, FRHA did not receive a grant related to the project. The Planner will seek more information about current status and will report back.

TOPICS NOT REASONABLY ANTICIPATED WITHIN 48 HOURS PRIOR TO MEETING:

MOTION by R. Sicard to ADJOURN. Seconded by G. Cooke. VOTE: Elizabeth Erving (AYE), Bob Obers (AYE), Ron Sicard (AYE), George Cooke (AYE), Sam Guerin (AYE), Sage Winter (AYE) MOTION PASSES (6-0) 7:38pm.