



**TOWN OF
MONTAGUE
MASSACHUSETTS**

TOWN HALL
One Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376

PLANNING BOARD
(413) 863-3200 ext. 112
Planner@montague-ma.gov

**MONTAGUE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, August 26, 2025 6:30pm

**Montague Public Safety Complex, Meeting Room, 180 Turnpike Road, Turners Falls and via
Zoom**

This meeting was recorded by Montague Community Television.

Opened by the Chair. 6:40pm

ROLL CALL:

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ron Sicard (Chair), Sam Guerin, Sage Winter, Elizabeth Irving MEMBERS

ABSENT: Bob Obear

STAFF: Maureen Pollock, Director of Planning & Conservation; Suzanne LoManto, Assistant Planner;
Michael F. Doherty, ANR application; Project consultants: Emily Innes & Paula Ramos Martinez, Innes
Land Strategies Group, Inc.; and members of the public

MINUTES: Approval of Meeting Minutes from July 22, 2025 & July 29, 2025

Minutes for July were tabled.

FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS:

ANR 2025-05: Michael F. Doherty & Margaret H. Ricks, 83 E. Chestnut Hill Road (Parcel #52-0-072); and Patrick & Anne K. Williamson, 0 E. Chestnut Hill Road (Parcel #53-0-079).

Applicant/property owner Michael Doherty describes the property and issues related to an addition built on the house about 20 years ago; they recently discovered that the building was only about 12 inches away from the property line with the abutting property located at 0 E. Chestnut Hill Road (Parcel #53-0-079), owned by Patrick & Anne K. Williamson. Doherty wishes to buy a portion of land from the abutter, in order to locate a backup generator for his residential single family home.

The Planner states that the parcel is located in the Agricultural - Forest 4 Zoning District (AF4). The proposed property line change still allows both parcels to meet frontage requirements; and meets the required 15' side yard setback from the proposed backup generator to the side yard property line.

MOTION by R. Sicard to endorse FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS: ANR 2025-05: Michael F. Doherty & Margaret H. Ricks, 83 E. Chestnut Hill Road (Parcel #52-0-072); and Patrick & Anne K. Williamson, 0 E. Chestnut Hill Road (Parcel #53-0-079). Seconded by L. Erving. VOTE: Ron Sicard (AYE), Sam Guerin (AYE), Lizbeth Erving (AYE), Sage Winter (AYE). MOTION PASSES 4-0.

6:52pm.

MONTAGUE CITY VILLAGE CENTER REZONING PROJECT:

Provide public introduction to the full draft zoning language for former Farren sites, including: 0 Montague City Road (Parcel #12-0-044), 356 Montague City Road (Parcel #12-0-044A), 0 Montague City Road (Parcel #12-0-051), and 0 Montague City Road (Parcel #12-0-050)

Review full draft zoning language for former Farren sites

Maureen Pollock discusses the purpose of the meeting and reviews the timeline of the project, which started in April 2021 with the closing of the Farren Hospital. Two years ago, the Town began outreach to learn what residents envision for the 7-acre parcel. One of the key recommendation was to explore zoning. The purpose of this meeting is to review and discuss the language of the draft zoning amendment. The Planner stresses that there will be many more steps in this process, including approval by Town Meeting and subdividing the parcel. This happens before the Town would write and release an RFP for development. The future developer will need to go through the building and zoning Boards for permits. Future developers might want to tap into State grants for sidewalks, sewer connections and access to the bike path. "This is just one step of many steps." Ron Sicard concurs that the goal is 5-10 years. There will be an official Public Hearing on September 23, 2025 in preparation for fall Town Meeting.

Emily Innes discusses how the community vision was translated into zoning. The draft language builds off the 2024 VHB plan. The June online workshop considered three scenarios which included housing, public benefits, economic value and neighborhood character. The July working group meeting considered form-based code and 40R. The feedback from the working group was that the 40R situation was not flexible enough for the Town's purposes. Inness and Associated created a two-zone district: the existing base district and a design overlay district.

The slide deck is entered into the minutes

The Design Overlay District allows some uses by site plan review and some by special permit. Special permits will be triggered for allowed uses over 2000 square feet. Dimensional standards determine lot size, frontage and building heights. Design overlay determines some additional control. Emily Inness covers new definitions for job related, housing related and open space related uses.

The purpose of the Design Overlay District is how to "color" to the neighborhood, including transition with the surrounding area, pedestrian and bike access, façade requirements, open space and efficient procedures to ensure high-quality design. Development Standards determine housing density with 20% minimum open space, 30% permeable surface- 2/3 of which shall be landscaped. Setbacks are 12' on existing roads and 15' on interior roads. Sidewalk depth is also considered for walkability. Development Standards for building and sites include items like screening materials, plantings, lighting, waste management and storm management. This ties into conditions that can be required by the Planning Board during a Site Plan Review. The draft zoning bylaw language streamlines the permitting process.

Donna Gate asks if there have been traffic studies on Montague City Road. Innes responds "no" because we don't know what is going to be built. The Planner continues that a traffic study could be included as part of the zoning amendment as part of a Site Plan Review process, for example.

The Planner comments that the Executive Director of the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce reports that the County needs hotel rooms. That's why it's included as a considered use.

Sam Baker asks if single family houses are part of the zoning language, or just multifamily dwellings. Inness responds that the area already has a cluster of single-family homes, so the idea is to get more density.

Peter Hudyma asks if it is possible to zone a portion of the property so that it is conserved as open public space- like a public park. He doesn't want the parcel to be totally privatized. Inness responds that the 20% of open space is for anything that is developed. The Town would have more control of (for example) a community park request during the subdivision process or in the land disposition agreement.

Sam Guerin comments that we are not at the "drawing lines on the land" part of the process. Sage Winter asks if it is too prescriptive to say 20% of open *public* space. Inness describes the different scenarios for developers and the difference between open private and open public space-like for a restaurant. It is possible to get more specific.

Lilith Wolinsky is concerned about pressure to develop some of the larger proposed uses. She would like to see the percentage of open space more determined/ specific. Inness and Associates will go back and consider some of the definitions around open space and public vs. private uses. Paula Ramos Martinez (Inness Land Strategies) continues that 30% of the permeable surface is also landscaped. The team will consider these comments and create a diagram clarifying open and landscaped space.

Linda (Montague City Road) asks if zoning changes go to Town Meeting for a vote. The Planner clarifies that the draft bylaws go to the Select Board on Monday, September 8, to the Planning Board for a public hearing on September 23 and (if approved) to Special Town Meeting on Wednesday, October 22, 2025. If approved by Town Meeting the bylaws will be reviewed by the Massachusetts Attorney General.

Jeff Singleton (Montague Reporter) asks the name of the Inness responds, "The Montague City Mixed Used District." Singleton asks if we are losing the 40R. Inness responds "No" the 40R could still be used and clarifies the boundaries of the parcel. The Planner comments that the Town is focusing on rezoning the Farren parcel, not Rod Shop Road.

Mary Kay Mattiacci reiterates housing is a critical need in the county, state and nation. She doesn't want the group to get sidetracked with issues around the green space and retail.

Ron Sicard closes the public hearing at 8:06pm.

Planning Board Discussion:

Sam Guerin found the language around "hotel" and "boutique hotel" confusing. He likes the definition of "townhouses" including condominiums and coops. Sam Geriun asks about the layering of density. Inness responds you will see a gradual difference in height, not an existing two-story residential building next to a four-story building. The heights of the buildings will be more gradual. Sam asks about two parking spaces for residential units. Inness responds that the draft bylaws have a minimum of one and a maximum of two for residential units. Inness reviews parking spots for other uses, like restaurants. How to calculate parking and related criteria is part of the draft bylaws.

Sam Guerin clarifies that the Planning Board cannot amend the bylaws through a simple majority vote. A plant list, trees and lighting structures are included in the draft bylaws. Sage Winter would like to see

shade trees and/or solar canopies.

MOTION by Ron Sicard to accept the full draft zoning language for former Farren sites, including: 0 Montague City Road (Parcel #12-0-044), 356 Montague City Road (Parcel #12-0-044A), 0 Montague City Road (Parcel #12-0-051), and 0 Montague City Road (Parcel #12-0-050) with amendments: Section 2 definitions, Sections 4.1- types of districts, New Section 5.2.10- Village Center of Mixed Use District, Section 5.3-Multiple principal uses, Section 5.5-Dimensional requirements, Section 5.53-Dimensional Relief, Section 7.2.3-District Parking Requirements, Section 9.1.3-Authority and Add Section 6.4, District Design District Overlay and amend Official Zoning Map, subject to technical amendments and changes based on comments from tonight's meeting, as proposed by consultants and staff, and as discussed, and to initiate the zoning amendment petitions to the Select Board. Seconded by S. Winter. VOTE: Ron Sicard (AYE), Sam Guerin (AYE), Lizbeth Erving (AYE), Sage Winter (AYE). MOTION PASSES 4-0. 8:16pm.

The Planer reminds the group of the September 8 Select Board meeting and the September 23 Planning Board hearing via ZOOM.

This information and slide deck is available on the Montague Planning Department project page.

MOTION by R. Sicard to Adjourn. Seconded by L. Irving. Meeting is adjourned 8:18pm.