



**MONTAGUE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, February 24, 2026 6:30pm
Town Hall Annex, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls and via Zoom**

Opened by the Chair. 6:33pm
The meeting was recorded

ROLL CALL:

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lisbeth Irving (Acting Chair), Sage Winter, George Cooke, Sam Guerin, Bob Obear. ABSENT: Ron Sicard

STAFF PRESENT: Maureen Pollock, Director of Planning and Conservation

ALSO PRESENT: Ben Dreyer, Ariel Elan, Stacey Langknecht (Montague Housing Coalition), Charles Beto

MOTION by Bob Obear to Approve the meeting minutes of November 19, 2025. Seconded by G. Cooke. VOTE: E. Irving (AYE), S. Winter (AYE), G. Cooke (AYE), S. Guerin (AYE), R. Obear (AYE). MOTION PASSES 6:35pm

MOTION by S. Guerin to Approve the meeting minutes of January 27, 2026. Seconded by R. Obear. VOTE: E. Irving (AYE), S. Winter (AYE), G. Cooke (AYE), S. Guerin (AYE), R. Obear (AYE). MOTION PASSES 6:36pm

PUBLIC HEARING:

6:30pm - ZC #2026-01 PROPOSED ZONING AMENDMENTS RELATIVE TO ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADUs): to consider and hear public comment on the following proposed amendments to the Zoning Bylaw: to consider amending Section 5.4 Accessory Uses by replacing Accessory Apartments with Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs); to consider rescinding Section 8.5 Accessory Apartments and replacing it with a new Section 8.5 Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) that includes provisions for a local ADU, and for the protected use ADU which are permitted by right in accordance with the Affordable Homes Act; and to consider amending Section 9.1.2(e) to remove Accessory Apartments within existing single-family homes per §8.5, as a specific use subject to site plan review

The Acting Chair reads the submitted materials into the record. Submitted comments by Ben Dreyer (present) and John Lapaday will be read at the end of the Planner's presentation.

The Acting Chair reviews the hearing process.

The Planner shows a slide deck which reviews the Proposed ADU Bylaws. The presentation reviews definitions, the many benefits of ADU construction including infill and environmental benefits, National and State ADU trends, and the history of Montague bylaws. State-mandated law was enacted last year;

ADU permitting is slow in Montague.

The intent of the Proposed ADU Bylaws is to update definitions, clarify requirements, and add flexible local options with oversight from the ZBA. The Planner reviews the specific changes and permitting process for By-Right ADUs and Local ADUs in the current draft.

The Montague Building Inspector was involved with the writing of the Proposed ADU Draft Bylaws. The public was also informed/involved with this draft. The Planner reviews the timeline and process for Town Meeting to formally adopt the Proposed ADU Bylaws.

The Acting Chair asks the Planning Board for comments and questions. Sage Winter and Bob O'bear show support.

Sam Guerin asks the Planner if she's reviewed the bylaws from neighboring communities, particularly related to Local ADUs and ZBA permitting. The Planner responds yes; towns are building flexibility into their Local Bylaws, especially related to living units for the elderly and disabled.

Ariel Elan asks about the reason the units are called ADUs instead of apartments. The Planner responds that the Town is complying with State mandated/approved language-which is also the industry language. Elan thanks the Planning Board for their work.

Stacey Langknecht asks if compliance with the State is optional. Irving responds that Montague must comply with the State for By-Right ADU units, but with the flexibility to write Local ADU Bylaws through ZBA approval. Langknecht likes that Montague has this flexibility. The Planner gives a brief overview of the ZBA process relative to abutter notice. Elizabeth Irving comments that the 2019 bylaws were actually more restrictive.

Elizabeth Irving reads an email by Ben Dreyer and John Lapadaya, both of which show support for ADU constructions and the more flexible Local ADU option. Irving thanks the residents for their thoughtful comments.

Stacey Langknecht asks the Planning Board if there are deed restrictions related to rent control on ADU units. Bob O'bear comments that there is a possible ballot measure related to rent control. He thinks rent control is a short term solution with a serious long-term impact on housing supply. In O'bear's option, existing housing over 10 years old will have a 5% maximum cap increase per year, or the rate of the local CPI index, which is really unfortunate because it means that units won't be able to be renovated that are below market rents, and then put back on the market with updated market rents.

Charles Beto recently converted a barn building into an ADU. He asks about ADU setbacks. The Board clarifies. He comments on wall thickness impacts the square footage and building cost. Bob O'bear clarifies that gross living area is the habitable interior living space. The Planner lets the group know that the Montague Building Inspector's thoughts on that topic were already included in the Proposed Draft Bylaws. Bob O'bear clarifies what is and is not exempt into gross living area as being measured from the interior faces of the exterior walls.

The Planner goes to 852c. The Planner reviews the steps by the Planning Department over the last 7 months, getting this project to this point.

MOTION by George Cooke to close the public hearing and TO APPROVE PROPOSED ZONING

AMENDMENTS RELATIVE TO ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADUs): to consider and hear public comment on the following proposed amendments to the Zoning Bylaw: to consider amending Section 5.4 Accessory Uses by replacing Accessory Apartments with Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs); to consider rescinding Section 8.5 Accessory Apartments and replacing it with a new Section 8.5 Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) that includes provisions for a local ADU, and for the protected use ADU which are permitted by right in accordance with the Affordable Homes Act; and to consider amending Section 9.1.2(e) to remove Accessory Apartments within existing single-family homes per §8.5, as a specific use subject to site plan review. Subject to technical adjustments based on comments from the February 24, 2026, public hearing as proposed by KP Law and the Mass Attorney General's Office. Seconded by Bob Obear. VOTE: E. Irving (AYE), S. Winter (AYE), G. Cooke (AYE), S. Guerin (AYE), R. Obear (AYE). MOTION PASSES (5-0) 7:16pm

Sam Guerin gives an update on his participation in the 6-month academy program CHAPLA: Citizens Housing Advocacy and Policy, a nonprofit that supports municipalities and residents.

Announcement from the Planner: On March 10, 2026, the Town is participating in a one-day extensive panel with senior level planners to help answer questions around issuing a multiple RFPs or finding a master developer a for the Farren site. There is a 6pm presentation at the Shea; the Planner encourages the Board to attend.

MOTION by G. Cooke to Adjourn. Seconded by E. Irving. MOTION PASSES 7:22pm