



**TOWN OF
MONTAGUE
MASSACHUSETTS**

TOWN HALL
One Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376

PLANNING BOARD
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**MONTAGUE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

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

Opened by the Chair. 6:32pm

The meeting was recorded

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

ABSENT: Bob Obear.

STAFF PRESENT: Maureen Pollock, Director of Planning and Conservation

ALSO PRESENT: Kristi Bodin

MOTION by E. Irving to Approve the meeting minutes of February 24, 2026. Seconded by G. Cooke.

VOTE: Ron Sicard (AYE), George Cooke (AYE), Lisbeth Irving (AYE), Sage Winter (AYE), Sam Guerin (AYE). MOTION PASSES 5-0. 6:34pm.

DISCUSSION:

March 10th Montague TAP findings and recommendations for redeveloping the former Farren Hospital site.

The Planner and Chair attended the meeting. There was a good turnout at the Shea. The TAP panel of experts was interdisciplinary. They spent full day in Turners Falls and conducted comprehensive stakeholder interviews, a site visit at the former Farren Site, and conversation with Town staff.

Afterwards, the TAP team spent the afternoon going over their findings, previous plans to create recommendations for the redevelopment of the 7-acre site.

The Planner shows the slide desk for the presentation and the concept plan showed to the public at the Shea that night.

The TAP team recommended two developments with mixed income/multi-family housing. At the rear of the parcel, they recommended middle income- town houses. Along Cabot Street they recommended that the bike path be re-routed through the development to an open space.

The team did not recommend commercial retail until the housing is fully built; an intermediate step the recommended pop-ups in the open space to test what kind of business might be possible. The team also recommended that the Montague Parks are connected by the bike path.

Three parcels to the south, north and Rod Shop Road are currently being rezoned. The Planner made a request to FRCOG to conduct a bike-pedestrian-car traffic count at the corner of Montague City Road and Depot Street. This is be good information to attract retail.

G. Cooke asked if the TAP team had any ideas about the existing building on the site. The Planner responds that they did not discuss that building.

The Town will get an extensive report from the TAP experts in April/ May.

E. Irving reiterates the point that the experts made: “you can’t build speculative retail.” The Planning Board agrees about the state of the economy and the likelihood of attracting retail.

The Planner thinks the RFP could be specked in a way that allows first floor housing, but with design features that could transition to retail or restaurants in the future.

E. Irving agrees with the TAP recommendation for the Town keep a parcel as a spot for future redevelopment in a different economy.

The TAP team also recommended that larger housing units are subsidized because of the cost of elevators, double-wide hallways, etc.

S. Guerin asks about roads. The Planner is recommending that the Town works with experts on a master site plan for the parcel to establish stormwater system, roads, sidewalks, subdivisions, etc. Where do we start? The Mill District in Amherst did a master site plan, and it was helpful to the process. The Planner is working with Mass Housing Partnership on this project but doesn’t know if community engagement is required, or if they just pull together all of input, thus far.

G. Cooke thinks the road across the back of the parcel is a potential as phase 1. The Planner continues-even when it is phased, it’s important to make the next phase attractive to developers. The layout of the roads needs to be correct. And the size of the parcels.

Kristi Bodin comments that we have 6 coffee shops already...she’s curious how this project moves forward as a longtime resident of Turners Falls. She hopes it moves forward and sees the current cost of building frightening; all phases of this project will need creative financing.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

3:45pm- 5pm on Tuesday, March 31

Farren neighborhood Walking Tour – meet outside of building at 20 Masonic Avenue.

6-7:30pm, Tuesday, March 31

Community Meeting #1: Farren Neighborhood Rezoning & Design Guidelines

Shea Theater Arts Center, 71 Avenue A

Neighbors want to show off their historic homes and the trolley barn before the meeting at the Shea to discuss design guidelines for the overlay district. There will be interactive activities.

No updates on Unity Street and First Street Habitat for Humanity projects. The First Street site has been cleaned. Habitat will find out within the month whether they receive grant funding. Habitat for Humanity has already been through the RFP, but they will need to come before the Planning Board for final approval. RDI owns the condemned house on Unity Street and is also seeking a Mass Housing Grant. They will find out in May or June, as well. First Generation will break ground in “the Patch.”

MOTION by E. Irving. G. Cooke to Adjourn. Seconded by G. Cooke. MOTION PASSES (5-0) 7:10pm