

Montague Planning Board

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MEETING MINUTES

January 25, 2022 6:30 PM

This meeting was held via ZOOM

Members: Ron Sicard, Fred Bowman, Elizabeth Irving, George Cooke, Bob Obear.

Absent: Matt Lord.

Staff: Walter Ramsey, Town Planner.

Meeting was recorded

6:30PM MOTION by R. Sicard to approve the minutes of 12/21/21. Seconded by F. Bowman. VOTE: Ron Sicard, Fred Bowman, Elizabeth Irving, George Cooke. MOTION PASSES.

Zoning Workshop

Approve final zoning amendment language and town meeting report for proposed regulations pertaining to Battery Energy Storage Facilities

The Planner shares the language of the proposed bylaw which will be presented at Montague Town Meeting on March 3, 2022. The Planner reviews the findings listed in the document which detail the reason for the bylaw, changes to current zoning, expectations and standards to receive a special permit, and exemptions. The Planner asks for suggestions.

R.Sicard is in favor of the bylaws because of the balance between protecting the public and accommodating the needs of the industry.

E. Irving is in favor of the wording because it addresses concerns that she expects will be the most important to residents

B. Obear asks how “size” is determined, citing that batteries in the future might be much smaller and the grid might evolve/adapt in ways we can’t predict.

Planner responds that the proposed 80 kilowatt threshold is consistent with current electrical codes. 80 kilowatt is much larger than home use, and can also accommodate commercial interests. If this threshold needs to be changed in the future the process can go through the zoning amendment process.

E. Irving asks if the proposed bylaw should recognize the possibility that it might need to be changed in the future in order to reflect evolving technology.

Planner sees this as a good suggestion and will make the small addition.

MOTION by R. Sicard to adopt the Montague Planning Board Recommendation vote in favor of adopting the proposed zoning bylaw amendment relating to the regulation of Battery Energy Storage Facilities as shown in draft dated 1-6-2022 and findings. Seconded by F. Bowman. VOTE: Ron Sicard, Fred Bowman, Elizabeth Irving, George Cooke, B. Obear. MOTION PASSES 6:42PM

Preparations for initial public hearing on 40R Zoning to promote new housing production in downtown Turners Falls

There is a 40R public hearing on February 14, 2022 with the Select Board. This initial public hearing is legally required of the Select Board. Invitations will be sent; the Planner encourages the Board to attend via ZOOM. As a companion hearing, the Select Board will review 2.3 million dollars in ARPA funding and solicit community input for spending priorities. Affordable housing production is an eligible expense. The Planner is considering requesting an initial appropriation as seed money to entice affordable housing development. The Planner explains that Montague doesn't have CPA funds which is used by other communities as a steady income stream for affordable housing development.

E. Irving conducted some research which determined that mixed income housing helps to sustain and promote the community without drastically changing the community. Additionally, housing designed for families (multi-bedroom) also maintains stability and minimize crime. She will share this data with the Planner.

Habitat for Humanity is still interested in the First Street site and sent their site review team. Habitat for Humanity will send a formal expression of interest for 5-6 separate 2 story units which means the minimum density requirement under 40R housing. An RFP will still need to be released by the Town.

George Cooke asks if they would construct one unit per year. Planner responds that is likely, but the design+ construction methods will be consistent.

The Planner will submit the pre-application with the State after the February 14, 2022 hearing. The State will issue a letter of eligibility which will cover the bonus incentive, expected in the range of \$75,000. The next step is for the Planning Board to hold their public hearing with hope to bring this for vote at the May 2022 Town meeting.

The Planner described a parallel plan to request local ARPA funds to support the development of affordable housing at the 40R sites and potentially elsewhere. The board concurred with the conceptual proposal.

Comprehensive Planning Workshop

The Town is contracting with FRCOG as the planning consultant. Walter is beginning an effort to recruit a broad and diverse citizen advisory panel. Elizabeth is considering being the Planning Board "lead" on the plan. Phase I Community Visioning and Goal Setting will be year one or the 2-3 year process.

MOTION by R. Sicard to nominate Elizabeth Erving as the Planning Board representative for the Montague Master Plan. Seconded by G. Cooke. VOTE: Ron Sicard, Fred Bowman, Elizabeth Irving, George Cooke, B. Obear. MOTION PASSES 7:05PM

Project Status Review Site Plan Review SP 2021-04- Franklin Regional Transit Authority

The garage is under construction. Fencing and erosion control is installed. A project schedule has been

submitted to the Planner. We can expect to see building on Sandy Lane from April-July with substantial completion by December 2022. Residents have been contacting the Planner about impacts related to clearing. The resident at 98 Turnpike Road has a clear view of the facility, generator and transformer.

Planner show images of the site clearing and reviews what is currently approved; a 10' high (wood) fence on the north side and a 6 foot chain link fence on the west side. The Town was not anticipating the visibility from Turnpike Road because the site was so heavily wooded.

The Planner brought this complaint to FRTA who proposed removing the 10' stockade (wood) fence on the north side and replace everything with a 10' high chain link fence with slats, which is cost neutral. The resident did not like this solution. The site plan was approved by the Planning Board.

B. Obear does not like the chain link with slats solution and asks if the neighbor came to any of the meetings. The Planner responded that the property owner did come forward expressed concern when the project was proposed years ago.

The Planning Board is in favor of the 10' high chain link fence with slats or a 6' high wood fence, if FRTA agrees. Planner will also inquire with FRTA as to whether there is a cost effective way to move the transformer. There would be a small amendment in the site plan to move the generator. The Planning Board would be favor of these changes to the site plan.

Topics not anticipated:

The Planner will help the Selectboard facilitate a public forum involving the future of the Farren Hospital on Monday, February 7.

MOTION to Adjourn by R. Sicard. Seconded by E. Irving. Meeting was Adjourned 7:28PM