

**Montague Conservation Commission**  
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**APPROVED MEETING MINUTES**

**May 11, 2023- 6:30pm**

Meeting Held by ZOOM

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** Commissioners Present: Chair Mark Fairbrother, Margaux Reckard, Justin Fermann, Al Averill. Anthony Reiber, Donna Francis, Sean Werle **Absent:** Toby Carter **Staff:** Maureen Pollock, Planner & Conservation Agent. **Present:** Paul Scarpa, engineer with Berkshire Gas

**MOTION** by M. Reckard to accept the amended meeting minutes with date/spelling change of April 13, 2023. Seconded by J. Fermann. **VOTE:** Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE) Al Averill (AYE), Anthony Reiber (Abstain), Donna Francis (Abstain) **MOTION PASSES.**

**PUBLIC MEETING:**

RDA #2023-04 Request for Determination of Applicability, filed by Berkshire Gas Company, to determine whether the construction of the 4" gas main and regulator station to replace the existing facilities at the Sixth Street Bridge, located at the corner of Sixth, Canal, and Power Streets (Map 3, Lots 27, 82, 84, & 86 and Map 2, Lot 2) is subject to the Wetlands Protection Act.

The Agent, Margaux Reckard and a Berkshire Gas representative held a site visit.

M. Reckard summarizes the site visit. The gas line runs behind the brick building between the Fifth and Sixth Street Bridges and is partially underground. Berkshire Gas wants to decommission and relocate the gas line, which will involve removing trees and other vegetation on the slope. Erosion control will be required in areas where trees will be removed in addition to areas where pavement may be removed.

Paul Scarpa provides background for the project.

In 2000 or 2001 Berkshire Gas expanded the gas line from Greenfield, over Fifth Street Bridge, along Canal Street and behind the brick building to a "temporary" station. The line was tied into the existing line which provided services to the Eleventh Street neighborhood known as the Patch. Berkshire Gas was asked by the Department of Public Utilities to inspect bridge crossings which corrode over time. The line is not dangerous, but the 2027 Mass DOT project has made this line important to consider. Berkshire Gas looked at several options but settled on re-routing the line over the Arrow bridge. No structural issues with the bridge were identified in conversations between Berkshire Gas, the Arrow Manufacturer, and the State. Other regulations from the State will be required. A new regulation station will regulate the feed of gas.

The Agent describes the site plan including the closed Sixth Street Bridge. Currently the gas line is on/below the railing of the discontinued bridge.

Paul Scarpa discusses the green color high pressure line in the plan, which is the existing line from Greenfield which feeds into the regulator station. As it goes through the regulator station it heads BACK to the 42 Canal Road building and then makes a sharp right (south) across the decommissioned bridge to Power Street and Avenue A. The dashed lines in the plan represent the proposed location of the new gas line and the new regulator station. They will be excavating on either side of the bridge.

Mark Fairbrother sums up the conversation and asks for the next action for the Commission. The Agent describes where trees will be removed. About 8 trees will be removed and probably not replaced. Photos show the trees and regulator station that will be removed. The Agent understands this project as a utility trying to maintain their system. The Agent recommends a Box 5 determination. Erosion controls are shown in the site plan. No other conditions were set in place.

**MOTION** by S. Werle to issue a Box 5 negative determination RDA #2023-04 Request for Determination of Applicability, filed by Berkshire Gas Company, to determine whether the construction of the 4" gas main and regulator station to replace the existing facilities at the Sixth Street Bridge, located at the corner of Sixth, Canal, and Power Streets (Map 3, Lots 27, 82, 84, & 86 and Map 2, Lot 2) Seconded by D. Francis. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Donna Francis (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE), **MOTION PASSES 6:55pm**

#### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

Announcement: Assessment of the Sawmill River Public Forum, May, 24, 2023 at 6pm at the Montague Fire Station and ZOOM. The Commission is invited. There is a brief online survey.

March 9, 2023 Online Workshop Jamboard Summary for Climate and Sustainability goals and priorities may be accessed via the following link: To learn more about the overall project and find ways to be involved: [www.montagueplans.org](http://www.montagueplans.org)

Justin shows the list of ideas gathered from the public. Margaux attended the last Comprehensive Plan meeting and reports that FRCOG has the climate and sustainability chapter written in outline form. Another meeting is scheduled for 5/25

Justin would like the Commission to weigh-in on priorities from the Conservation Commission. Margaux sees points of consensus on the list and encourages all members to make their individual recommendation. Additionally, if they should also note topics NOT a priority.

The Agent will send a memo that states the purview of the Conservation Commission to add with the consensus of the Commission.

Margaux asks if the Commission feels comfortable with her and Justin representing the Commission at the upcoming sub-committing meeting. (Yes)

Sean Werle talks about his situation as a Commissioner currently living in California.

The Agent brings up the idea of "DocuSign" to mitigate issues related to working remotely.

**MOTION** by Justin Fermann to allow DocuSign. Seconded. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Donna Francis (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE) **MOTION PASSES 7:22pm**

**MOTION** by M. Reckard to ADJOURN. Seconded by J. Fermann. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE), Toby Carter (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Al Averill (AYE). **ADJOURNED: 7:27pm.**