

# Montague Planning Board

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**October 27, 2020 6:30 PM**

*Meeting held remotely in accordance with the Governor's Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G. L. c. 30A, § 20, relating to the 2020 novel Coronavirus outbreak emergency*

## MEETING MINUTES

**Members Present:** Ron Sicard (Chair), Fred Bowman, George Cook, Elizabeth Irving, Matt Lord, Bob Obear

**Staff:** Walter Ramsey

**6:30pm:** Ron Sicard opened the meeting.

**6:31pm:** *MOTION by Ron Sicard to approve the minutes of September 22, 2020. Seconded by Fred Bowman. VOTE: FB(Aye), GC(Aye), EI(Aye), ML(Aye),RS(Aye) MOTION PASSES*

**6:32pm: Subdivision Approval Not Required ANR # 2020-03 filed by Montague Selectboard on behalf of the Town of Montague. The property is identified as 500 Avenue A (Map 5 Lot 127)** Applicant seeks determination that subdivision approval is not required.

George Cooke recused himself from the discussion due to his business relationship with the surveyor.

Planner: The Town will issue an RFP on 10/28/20. The lot is zoned Industrial and the affected lots have adequate frontage and access. The purpose of the survey is to clarify the extent of the parcel and clarify ambiguities about the a paper alley in the rear. The Town will still own the strip of land next to the bike path which acts as a buffer. This buffer runs along the bike path, behind Couture property to 11<sup>th</sup> street. Additional survey points have been added by H. Eaton along the bike path. RS asks if the new owner can get a lease on the bike path parcel buffer. (Yes, it could be possible in the future, but not under the current RFP). EI asks about the types of businesses showing interest. Planner: A wide range of commercial/ Industrial operations have expressed interest in the property (electrical contractor, brewery, timber frame manufacturing, recycling).

**6:38pm:** *MOTION by Ron Sicard to endorse ANR # 2020-03 for 500 Avenue A filed by the Town of Montague. Seconded by Bob Obear. VOTE: FB (Aye), EI (Aye), BO(Aye), RS (Aye). MOTION PASSES*

**6:42pm: Subdivision Approval Not Required ANR # 2020-04 filed by Mechanics Lodge Building Association, Inc. property is identified as 10 Masonic Avenue (Map 19, Lot 12).** Applicant seeks a determination that subdivision approval is not required. Planner: Mechanics Lodge, Inc. is in the process of selling the parcel and intends to sell a small piece of that land to the abutter, Frank Dudek, who seeks additional frontage'aread for his existing single family home lot. Property is zoned NB. Neither parcel is left with less than the amount of frontage; meets all requirements for subdivision.

**6:45pm:** *MOTION by Ron Sicard to endorse Subdivision Approval Not Required ANR # 2020-04 filed*

by Mechanics Lodge Building Association, Inc. property is identified as 10 Masonic Avenue Map 19, Lot 12. Seconded by Bob Obear. VOTE: BO (Aye), FB (Aye), EI (Aye), GC (Aye) RS (Aye). MOTION PASSES.

### 6:46pm: Planner Report

**Initial scoping of downtown Form based codes (FBC).** Planner approached a local architect to “pick his brain” about a potential scope of work to develop a FBC. It was determined that the next step would be a “mini-feasibility study” for the purpose of understanding what other communities do, as well as what Montague intends to achieve. The expense for a professional assessment would be between \$5 to \$10K. Planner hopes to find a State grant to fund the assessment. Ron Sicard: what is the timeline for a working project? (1-2 years) Will this consultant meet the Board? (Yes). Matt Lord asks about the goals of pursuing the endeavor. It warrants further discussion and would be explored in depth in the study. Elizabeth Irving comments that some of the best modern architecture is designed within constraints, citing the Holyoke Public Library. Planner: This interim step would address exactly that- we would help us decide things like building scale, massing, and architectural features. We would work to identify a flexible model that works for Montague. Bob Obear comments that communities with FBC type regulation have higher property values, which drives the tax base; a positive effect on the bottom line.

**Notice: Proposed cannabis delivery business in Millers Falls at 41 E. Main Street** is seeking a special permit as required in a central business district. The ZBA hearing is Wednesday November 4 at 6:30pm. An informational community meeting facilitated by the Planning Department is scheduled before the hearing via ZOOM. The Planner will help the ZBA understand the regulations of a cannabis business.

### Other items

- Town received a Complete Streets Grant for about 1 mile of sidewalks to connect schools, senior housing, Judd Wire in the area. The project will be done next summer.

Shared Streets Project is finished and it seems to function as intended; pedestrians feel safer, traffic slows down and it brightens up downtown. Planters and delineators will come down over the winter but be brought back up in the spring.

- Planner attended a zoning workshop for small (5G) cells. His take-away is that small cells technology will come to heavily developed areas first. Montague still has time to consider based on what other communities do. The regulatory responses from different communities are rapidly evolving.
- The mural policy has changed considerably and the Planning Department will look to authorize the incentive program only, rather than regulations. The RiverCulture Steering Committee wants regulation. The Planning Department will revisit this discussion in a few months.

*MOTION by George Cook to adjourn. Seconded by Bob Obear. F. Bowman (AYE), G. Cook (AYE) E. Irving (Aye), R.Sicard (AYE) R. Obear (AYE). MOTION PASSES 7:03pm.*

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_