

# Montague Conservation Commission

One Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376 (413) 863-3200 Ext 207 Fax: (413) 863-3222 Email: [planner@montague-ma.gov](mailto:planner@montague-ma.gov)

Thursday, June 8, 2017 - 6:30 PM

Upstairs Meeting Room, Town Hall, One Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA

Meeting was opened at 6:30 PM. Present were Board members Mark Fairbrother, Justin Fermann, Donna Francis, and Alex Peterkin; and Walter Ramsey, Town Planner. Fairbrother makes introduction and announces meeting is being recorded.

**Approval of Minutes of May 11, 2017. Votes may be taken.** Minutes were not available.

**Review final draft 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan. Votes may be taken.**

Alyssa Larose from Franklin County Region of Governments joined the Board and reviewed the changes to the final draft:

## Plan Summary:

- Recreational trail systems are one of the remarkable resources in Town
- Added some information about Parks and Recreation assets and modified the language
- Three sections: Goals, Objectives, and Action Items (added "Objectives")

## Introduction:

- First Open Space and Rec Plan was in 1987
- Updated main changes, trends, things that haven't changed at that time
- Population getting older, high poverty rates, manufacturing lost and gained, accomplishments in Turners and Millers Falls in terms of redevelopment, historic preservation, and the creative economy, and the recently designated Cultural District
- Information about all the work that has been done to the parks in Town, as well as the bike path
- Information on relicensing
- New housing development activity outside of the villages has been relatively slow
- Modified language to show more "positive planning"

Statement of Purpose: Mentions that the focus of this plan is on open space protection and recreation, but it needs to be considered in the context of other Town plans like the Comprehensive Plan and other recent plans

## Planning Process and Public Participation:

- Led by Conservation Commission; Parks and Recreation had input
- Updating information of the survey and the whole process
- Survey and forum were advertised in the environmental justice areas
- Forum was held in Turners Falls and was filmed on MCTV and recorded

## Section 6 - Community Vision:

- Description of process and updating
- Some tweaking to the statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals, which mainly added information on river access points, general performances and events that draw people to Town, information about the trails, and information on village centers

Goals and Objectives: List of Goals and Objectives listed in the Action Plan

Action Plan: Objectives are all new; at least two objectives for every Goal

- Goal A (Recapture our rivers and waterways for improved habitat and recreation opportunities):
  - Objectives:
    - Increase public access to rivers in Montague
    - Protect riverfront areas and improve habitat and water quality
  - Priorities by Public Forum attendees:
    - Develop public boating, fishing, and viewing access to the Connecticut River below Turners Falls Dam
    - Improve public access to the Connecticut River at the Rock Dam and Poplar Street for fishing, boating, and wildlife viewing
    - Increase the flow in the Connecticut River bypass to support habitat and recreation
- Goal B (Provide access to quality parks in each village):
  - Objectives:
    - Maintain and improve existing recreation facilities
    - Ensure access to recreation programming and facilities for all residents

# Montague Conservation Commission

One Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376 (413) 863-3200 Ext 207 Fax: (413) 863-3222 Email: [planner@montague-ma.gov](mailto:planner@montague-ma.gov)

- Priorities by Public Forum attendees:
  - Maintain Unity Park, the Skate Park, and Peskeompskut Park
  - Support programming and investment at Great Falls Discovery Center
  - Develop the public park/Native American Culture Center
- Goal C (Develop a comprehensive trail network for walking/cycling that connects the villages to open space):
  - Objectives:
    - Develop and promote a Town-wide multi-use trail system
    - Maintain and improve trails in the villages (Pathways in Turners Falls and the Canal Street Bike Path)
  - Priorities by Public Forum attendees:
    - Establish a Trails Committee, implement Town-wide trail master plan, and publicize trail maps
    - Develop and connect the Montague Plains/Dry Hill/Chestnut Hill system
    - Formalize the Recreational Trail System on the Montague Plains
  - Added Action Item:
    - Evaluate potential for Lake Pleasant, Green Pond, and Millers Falls Riverfront
- Goal D (Preserve farming as a way of life in Montague):
  - Objectives:
    - Protect farms and working lands in Montague
    - Support a continued economic viability of agriculture in Montague
  - Priorities by Public Forum attendees:
    - Permanent protection of farmland
    - Develop a brochure and website to promote farm and forest product businesses
    - Support existing and proposed markets for local farm and forest products
- Goal E (Preserve our pristine drinking water resources, habitat corridors, and special places):
  - Objectives:
    - Protect land with high water quality, habitat, and scenic and cultural resource values
    - Implement Town policies to protect water quality, wildlife habitat, and special places
  - Priorities by Public Forum attendees:
    - Develop or prioritize list of parcels to protect
    - Evaluate Town-owned tax title properties and Chapter 61 parcels for their conservation and recreation value
    - Evaluate current Water Supply Protection bylaws and Floodplain Management regulations
    - Implement best management practices for road maintenance in water supply protection areas
  - Larose moved some of the Action Items (i.e., Open Space Residential Design Development bylaw, Low Impact Development, Research Wetland Protection bylaw)
- Goal F (Green Our Villages):
  - Objectives:
    - Promote the revitalization of villages
    - Enhance green infrastructure within public spaces
    - Support active transportation choices
  - Priorities by Public Forum attendees:
    - Promote zoning amendments that encourage well-planned development and redevelopment in village centers
    - Expand Turners Falls tree inventory
    - Evaluate safe routes to schools to encourage youth walking and biking
- Goal G (Get organized for open space and recreation):
  - Objectives:
    - Maintain and build capacity for open space and recreation planning and implementation
    - Support funding for open space and recreation priorities
    - Conduct public education and outreach about open space and recreation priorities and projects
  - Priorities by Public Forum attendees:
    - Create an Open Space Committee
    - Maintain positive working relationships with landholding State agencies, regulatory agencies, and private utilities
    - Distribute copies of the Open Space and Recreation Plan to all schools and libraries in Montague

## Public Comment:

- Survey will be put into the appendix, including all the responses
- Summary of questions and comments at the forum

# Montague Conservation Commission

One Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376 (413) 863-3200 Ext 207 Fax: (413) 863-3222 Email: [planner@montague-ma.gov](mailto:planner@montague-ma.gov)

Members of the Commission made suggestions for additions (i.e., trail signs during hunting season, support public art in the villages, consider indoor recreation opportunities, and "DEP says no" regarding whether a certain location can be used for swimming), as well as changes in the wording/language (i.e., further identifying First Light, "preserve" instead of "protect" in Goal E, "community gardening" instead of "urban farming").

Larose: Walter has already gotten support from the Selectboard and the Rec Commission. Once we get this almost finalized and in good shape, I'll send a copy to the Franklin Land Trust and the Mount Grace Land Trust.

Ramsey read aloud a drafted cover letter for the Commission.

*Francis makes a motion to support the plan and sign the letter. Fermann seconded, unanimously approved. Fairbrother - Aye, Fermann - Aye, Francis - Aye, Peterkin - Aye*

Larose: We're going to pull this all together by the end of the month. I'll work with Walter to do the finishing touches. We'll be adding some photos in. And every section will start with a title page that will have children's art work on it. We'll wrap this up and send it to the Division of Conservation Services at the State at the end of June. The State normally takes several months to review these and they almost always have required changes. Once we get their comments back, I'll work with Walter on making those changes. If anything is substantial, Walter can always bring it to the Con Com and get your okay on any changes, and then we'll send it back to the State for final review. We probably won't get letters from the Land Trust.

## Agent updates

### Mass DOT Highway Division - Route 63 Resurfacing project

Ramsey: Mass DOT is doing roadway resurfacing on Route 63. There are a few small areas that they're avoiding, any resource areas, stream crossings- in order to save time. DOT had money that they had to spend before the end of the fiscal year, so they started on this project in short order.

## Forest Cutting Plans

- Robert and Kathy Rice at the end of West Mineral Road – no comments
- Water Department on Dry Hill- no comments

## Trails updates

Ramsey: There's going to be a Trails Work Day at Dry Hill this Saturday at 10:00 o'clock. All are welcome. There's been a lot of interest in a trails group or committee. We'll connect interested individuals with Alex and some other people we've already been working with and hopefully do a meet-up at the end of June.

## Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting

None.

*Peterkin makes a motion to adjourn. Francis seconded, unanimously approved. Fairbrother - Aye, Fermann - Aye, Francis - Aye, Peterkin - Aye*

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