

Montague Planning Board

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August 23, 2016 7:00 PM
Town Hall – Upstairs Meeting Room
One Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376

MEETING MINUTES

Members Present: Ron Sicard – Chair, Fred Bowman, George Cooke, Bruce Young

Members Absent: Bob Obear

Staff Present: Walter Ramsey, AICP- Town Planner

Ron Sicard opened the meeting at 7:01 PM.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion by Fred Bowman to accept the June 28, 2016 minutes. Seconded by George Cooke. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Annual Board Re-organization: Electing a Chair, Vice Chair and Regional Representative

Motion by Fred Bowman to appoint Ron Sicard as Chair of the Planning Board, Fred Bowman as Vice Chair and Bruce Young as Regional Representative to the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. Seconded by George Cooke. **Motion passed unanimously.**

DISCUSSION: Village Center Design Guidelines and Design Review

Guest: John McNamara

Planner: The Board currently has design guidelines that apply to downtown Millers Falls and Turners Falls. These were developed in 2000 to support a façade improvement program. It makes recommendations regarding facades, signage and rehabilitation efforts, but it really geared toward the façade improvement program. The Planner has posted it online and uses it a reference for new building owners. Planner noted that Turners Falls and Montague Center have National Register Historic Districts, but these have no regulatory “teeth” for non-state/federal funded projects.

John McNamara, a business owner, developer, and resident of downtown Turners Falls has approached the planning office about the design review for façade and signage. John raised concern about lack of design review for new business signs and murals that have been emerging on private buildings. John advised looking into case studies like Holden and Williamstown, MA

The Board heard and noted the concerns. The Board observed that it is difficult to regulate for the often competing interests of historic preservation, artistic vibes, and being business friendly. It was also noted that regulating and enforcement is a challenge. The Board agreed that the design guidelines and signage bylaw could stand to be updated in conformance with current plans, but that design review is premature at this stage of downtown development in Tuners and Millers Falls. There was discussion of setting an informal pre-permit session for all new businesses/ property owners with the Town planner to review the design guidelines as early as possible. Planner will explore these options and report back.

Planners Updates:

Turnpike Road Industrial Park

Franklin Regional Transit Authority is exploring feasibility of building a new 62,000 square foot bus garage off Sandy Lane. They are looking to construct in the next 2 years. Since they cannot enter into a PILOT agreement, they have initially offered to build out infrastructure extenuation necessary for their project, but would also be usable for the proposed Town DPW and future industrial park.

Solar Projects:

There has been a hold up with Eversource due to the interconnection study with Kearsarge and we are now awaiting results on how much it will cost to hook into the system. The results of this study should be available by the end of September 2016. Tighe & Bond are working on putting all the permitting in place for the project to be able to begin in 2017. The plan has three solar fields to be located in the Industrial Park. Fred Bowman believes there should be some agreement that the companies within the Industrial Park receive some benefit from having and using solar. Planner did not think this was possible.

The Park Villa Solar Park project was issued a special permit by the zoning board meeting. The main concerns were aesthetics by the neighbors. Fence styles and vegetated buffers on the site plan were amended to the satisfaction of the Board and residents. The applicant notified all the residents within Park Villa apartment of the meeting. The next step is now for the applicant to receive an interconnection permit from Eversource.

Motion by Fred Bowman at 7:58 PM to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by George Cooke. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Next scheduled meeting: September 27, 2016

Approved by: _____ Date: _____