

# 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)

## MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, September 8, 2016 – 6:30 pm

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

**Commissioners Present:** Mark Fairbrother - Chair, Donna Francis, Alex Peterkin, Deb Henson, Addie Rose Holland, Justin Fermann and Sean Werle.

**Commissioners Absent:** none

**Staff:** Walter Ramsey – Conservation Agent

Mark Fairbrother called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

### Approval of Minutes:

***Motion** by Sean Werle to approve the August 11, 2016 Conservation Commission Minutes with a grammatical change. Seconded by Addie Rose Holland. **Motion passed.** Justin Fermann abstained*

**Request for Determination RDA #2016-11** filed by Montague Planning & Conservation Department to determine whether a habitat management plan that includes mowing at the **North Street Wildlife Management Area** in Montague Center is subject to the Wetlands Protection Act. The property is identified as Assessors Map 192 Lot 117.1.

At the Town's request, The MA Dept of Fish and Game is allowing the Town to mow the North Street Wildlife Management Area. The area has not been mowed in at least 7 years. Fish and Game has authorized a license to allow the mowing, however the license requires a Wetlands Protection Act determination from the Commission. Thus, Walter Ramsey submitted the RDA behalf of the Town.

Agent: The license agreement spells out where the mowing is to be done and what guidelines are needed to be followed to allow the mowing to occur. There are three main areas where the cutting is going to be allowed to be done. There are portions of the areas that are within Riverfront Area; however the area has been mowed and maintained as successional meadow for many years. There is no cutting proposed in any wetlands resource areas. The area has not been flagged. Within the agreement there are seven guidelines built in regarding eastern box turtle protections that will need to be followed as well. Some of these guidelines include: the time frame of May 15-Sept 15 there is to be no mowing, mowing has to be rotated between the areas, only up to 50% of the areas can be mowed at a time, a sickle – bar mower would be preferred and if so then mowed at 7-12 inches. Mowing should be at low gear and start away from the pond areas to allow for the turtles to move to safety.

There was discussion as to whether invasive species will be removed. There are several known invasive in the project area- however that is outside the scope of work.

The contractor plans to access the norther portion of the site from the Tolan Well station on Swamp Road. The southerly section can be accessed from North Street. National Grid is scheduled to do the mowing this Fall as mitigation from the Cabot Taps project. In addition. National Grid has provided a contribution of \$6,000 towards mowing in the following years.

**Motion** by Sean Werle to issue a negative determination (Box 2) to the Town of Montague to allow mowing at the Sawmill River Wildlife Management Area. Seconded by Alex Peterkin. **Motion passed.**

**Review and Execute License Agreement for Habitat Management Plan at North Street Wildlife Management Area.**

With the negative determination in place, the Commission agreed that the license agreement was ready for approval. National Grid hopes to mow this fall. Agent will meet National Grid and their contractor on-site prior to beginning work to review the scope.

**Motion** by Addie Rose Holland to execute the license agreement for the Habitat Management Plan located at the North Street Wildlife Management Area – Mark Fairbrother to sign. Seconded by Deb Henson. **Motion passed**

**Kickoff Session: Open Space and Recreation Plan Update**

Guest: Alyssa LaRose – FRCOG Land Use Planner

The 2010 Open Space and Recreation Plan is valid for 7 years and thus requires an update. The Conservation Commission has agreed to be the stewards of the 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan update. The 2010 plan was a major overhaul and very thorough. The update should be less intensive. Alyssa will send updates to Walter to distribute through email to the Conservation Commission. All replies should be sent to Alyssa and all discussions to take place at the meetings. The plan is tied to funding sources so it is important to highlight what the funding would be used for. The 2010 plan enabled funding for the Skate Park, Mormon Hollow Working Landscape Project, and Dry Hill Recreation Area. Walter will be responsible for keeping the Parks and Recreation Commission engaged and informed in the process.

The committee reviewed the major OSRP implementation projects done since 2010

- 2010- Added a new Water Supply Protection District for the Hannegan Brook Public Water Supply Well
- 2010 did a phase I ESA on town owned property in support of park in Montague City
- 2011- Reconstituted the Agriculture Commission
- 2012- Passed a right to farm bylaw
- 2012 constructed new pedestrian bridge at North Street WMA
- 2013 Finalized construction of Unity Park with many good elements worth mentioning
- 2016 Built the skatepark!
- 2016- Completion of Greenfield Road bike+ pedestrian bridge(will be complete this fall)
- 2016- completion of bike path crossing at Montague City Road (will be complete this fall)
- 2016- Posting+ blazing a trail system at the Dry Hill Conservation Area (will be complete this fall)
- About 325 acres went into protection since 2010
- Conducting a planning study for Rutter’s Park in Lake Pleasant (underway)
- 2017- Town received funding for addition of pedestrian lighting to Peskeomskut Park. Will be installed before plan is complete

Some thoughts for the updated plan include:

- River access at Millers Falls
- RAFTING on the CT River! Access and other issues
- Increased flow in the CT river bypass

- Native American Cultural Park
- Revitalize Canal district with recreation in mind

The commission reviewed a survey drafted by Alyssa. Helpful comments and ideas were provided by the commission. The 2010 survey yielded very low response rate (40 responses). The Commission hopes to triple that response. Surveys will be available on line, Senior Center, Town Hall, the Libraries. Walter and Alyssa will work together to administer the survey.

**Agent Updates:**

Dry Hill Trails

The two trailhead kiosks and cemetery signage are installed and the Hannagan Brook trail has been blazed by Alex Peterkin and Walter Ramsey.

Eversource Solar Development

Walter will be meeting next week with Eversource regarding a piece of land (100 acre parcel) they own on the Montague Plains for a potential solar project.

*Motion* made by Addie Rose Holland to adjourn the meeting at 7:52PM. Seconded by Donna Francis.  
*Motion passed unanimously.*

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

**Exhibits:**

RDA# 2016-11 File  
Sawmill River WMA License Agreement  
Open Space Plan draft materials