

Montague Conservation Commission

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MEETING MINUTES

Thursday January 14, 2021- 6:30pm

Meeting held remotely via ZOOM due to COVID-19

Commissioners Present: M. Fairbrother (Chair), S. Werle, D. Francis, J. Fermann, D. Henson, L. Reid

Staff: Walter Ramsey, Agent

Also Present: Anthony Reiber, Tobias Carter

ZOOM meeting opened by Mark Fairbrother, Chair at 6:30 PM

6:31pm: Approval of Minutes:

MOTION to ACCEPT the minutes of December 10, 2021 by J. Fermann. Seconded by D. Francis VOTE: Fairbrother (AYE), Werle (AYE), Fermann (AYE), Francis (AYE), Henson (Abstain). MOTION PASSES.

6:32pm: PUBLIC MEETING: RDA 2021-01 Request for Determination of Applicability filed by Charles E. Bell to determine whether a planned single family house is subject to the Wetlands or Riverfront Protection Acts. The property is located off Meadow Road and is identified as Assessor's Map 50 Lot 2.

Present: Charles Bell

Charles Bell met with the Conservation Agent and Donna Francis at the property on 1/11/21 to review the proposed 200' riverfront offset, the footprint of the potential home, and proximity of the existing well. The lot was created prior to the Riverfront Protection Act. There is agricultural cultivation happening on the property in the riverfront that will lawfully continue after construction of the new house.

Agent presented the plan. The Connecticut River is at the west edge of the property. The proposed house footprint and well appears to be less than 5 feet from the 200' riverfront offset, which uses MassGIS data for the delineation. Agent observes that there not a high level of accuracy (within 10+/- feet) of this state mapped boundaries. The Conservation Agent recommended that the applicant file an RDA to make sure he can move ahead with his building plan. The Agent shows images of the riverfront which shows evidence high water routinely happening roughly 20 feet past the high water mark on the map. Agent recommends that the line should be pulled closer to the Meadow Road by roughly 20 feet. Agent comments "It's clearly a building lot" created before the Riverfront Protection Act but there is some ambiguity as to a.) the actual resource delineation and b.) the actual house location. Agent recommends having the Riverfront Area marked in the field and permanently monuments to prevent future encroachment.

Charles Bell presented his well permit from May 2010 for the well on the property. Agent noted that the Commission was not consulted for the installation of that well. There are no records on file.

MF stated that he was not comfortable approving a plan where the exact location of the proposed house is not properly identified.

Charles Bell makes a request to withdraw the existing plan resubmit an amended plan with updates and an accurate location of the house that will ensure all work will be outside the riverfront resource area.

MOTION by Deb Henson is made to accept the withdrawal of RDA 2021-01. Seconded by Seconded by Sean Werle, VOTE: Fairbrother (AYE), Henson (AYE), Fermann (AYE), Werle (AYE), Francis (AYE), Reid (AYE). MOTION PASSES. 7:16pm

7:17pm: Conservation Agent Report

- **Millers River Access at Newton Street Phase II Planning**
Project installation was a success. The village association in Millers Falls is working to expand the trail across the street which would double the length. Wetland permitting will be needed.
- **Planned public Connecticut River Access at Meadow Road by Mt. Grace Land Trust**
The trust is in the planning stages for a new boat access point across for 304 Meadow Rd. Access will involve stairs and some parking. They will be required to file with the Commission.
- **Overview of Proposed Recreational Riverfront Improvement in FERC License Application**
FirstLight is proposing more flow in the bypass, which is better for habitat. They also proposed recreational improvements totaling under \$500K in Montage: 1.) River Access path at Cabot Camp but no improvements to the buildings, 2.) formalize river access behind the dam below the Discovery Center, 3.) improved river access at Poplar Street including stairs and a dock. Filings will be anticipated.

The Town was hoping for more amenities and will push for an overlook of the falls at the decommissioned fish ladder. There will be 8 scheduled releases. The rock damn was not addressed. No funding toward erosion management. The Town will continue to collaborate with stakeholders: towns, federal agencies, preservation agencies, tribal agencies.

- **2021 Meeting Schedule**
The Commission agreed to continue to meet the second Thursdays of the Month through 2021.

MOTION by S. Werle **TO ADJOURN**. *Seconded by D. Francis. VOTE: Fairbrother (AYE), Francis (AYE), Werle (AYE), Fermann (AYE), Reid (AYE), Henson (AYE). MOTION PASSES 7:31pm.*

Approved by: _____

Date: _____