HOPKINTON PLANNING BOARD
WORK SESSION
JULY 28, 2026

Members Present: Chair Michael Wilkey, Ex-Officio Alyssa McKeon, Molly Hardenbergh, Emily Bouchard, James Fredyma, and Alternates Dean Owens, Sam Durfee, and Jeff Donohoe.
Members Absent: Vice Chair Rob Dapice, and Alternates Sam Durfee, Jeff Donohoe.
Staff Present: Planning Director Karen Robertson

At 5:30 PM, Chair Michael Wilkey opened the Planning Board work session at the Hopkinton Town Hall, 330 Main Street, Hopkinton, and introduced those present.

The purpose of the work session was to review proposed amendments to Zoning Ordinance **Section VII, Conservation Subdivision**. Planning Director Karen Robertson explained that the working draft included a broader rewrite than originally contemplated. The Board agreed to proceed through the proposed revisions and identify changes and recommendations to be incorporated into the next draft.

Review Materials and Scope of the Rewrite
The Board began reviewing Section 4 of the packet, using the first three sections as reference material. The ordinance being reviewed was Section VII, Conservation Subdivision. Participants agreed to proceed through the draft language and the highlighted questions.

Ms. Robertson explained that the draft went beyond the limited changes originally requested. The Board could retain the existing ordinance and address only the principal concerns, including accessible open space, the previously discussed requirement for 70% contiguous open space, private roads, and lots fronting on existing roads. Alternatively, it could undertake the broader rewrite presented in the packet.

A Board member referred to the principal revisions summarized in the previous meeting minutes and asked whether the Board should concentrate on problems encountered with recent applications, complete the entire rewrite, or make some changes now and reserve others for later. The Chair favored reviewing the proposed changes suggesting that matters important enough to be included in the draft warranted discussion.

Ms. Robertson clarified that highlighted provisions are where she had questions, rather than necessarily identifying every change. She began explaining that the purpose of Conservation Subdivisions had been expanded to address wildlife corridors, housing opportunities and affordability, road character, and visual screening.

Authority, Purpose, Objectives, and Energy Efficiency
Under Section 7.3, Objectives, Ms. Robertson questioned the phrase “significant natural features,” asking how “significant” would be defined. Participants agreed that the qualifier should

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be removed. No further questions were raised when the Chair asked about Sections 7.1 and 7.2 and the remaining objectives. Paper copies were made available during the review.

Ms. Robertson also questioned the proposed reference to high-performance, energy-efficient homes, explaining that she had included it while considering additional incentives. The Board recognized that modern homes already must meet energy standards and that certifications, including LEED or other programs, can recognize performance above baseline requirements. Sam Durfee confirmed that such certifications exist, but there is no specific certification threshold, administering organization, or corresponding local benefit to incorporate into the ordinance.

The discussion included possible federal tax incentives and the distinction between generally encouraging efficient construction and offering a defined zoning incentive. Participants questioned retaining a vague statement without specifying what performance would qualify and what benefit would follow. Later in the meeting, during the detailed incentive discussion, participants expressly agreed to remove the **energy-efficient residential building** incentive.

Definitions and Elimination of Building Envelopes
Ms. Robertson identified new or revised definitions, including net developable area, private roads, common open space, and contiguous open space. The Board then discussed the proposed building-envelope definition, including language limiting the area to one-half acre unless a larger envelope was approved.

Mr. Durfee questioned the terminology because “building envelope” can mean the exterior enclosure of a building—its roof, walls, foundation, windows, and siding—rather than an area of land within which development must occur. Other participants understood the term to mean the designated area on a lot containing the house, well, septic system, and accessory structures. Ms. Robertson explained that the latter interpretation had been used for the two recent subdivisions, including future accessory development.

Alternative terms considered included building site, buildable area, usable area, and a limit on clearing. Participants noted that a clearing limit would not adequately describe a site already cleared. An area within setback lines also might not actually be buildable because of wetlands, slopes, lot coverage, or other constraints. Concord’s ordinance was mentioned as using both “usable area” and “buildable area” with different meanings, and reviewing those definitions was initially suggested.

The discussion shifted from selecting a better term to determining whether the separate concept was needed. Ms. Robertson explained that the existing ordinance allows construction outside a building envelope if conventional setbacks are satisfied. She questioned whether that exception undermined the purpose of clustering development and limiting clearing, since it could allow improvements to spread beyond the designated area.

Participants reviewed the exclusions in the proposed definition: required setbacks, wetland buffers, perimeter buffers, and designated open space. They observed that these areas already have independent restrictions. Similarly, a direction to locate both building sites and building envelopes in the least sensitive areas appeared duplicative. The question was whether setbacks and other development standards already accomplished the intended protection without a second regulatory area.

Ms. Robertson read the existing lot-design provision concerning adequate separation between new primary structures, measured by average distance between building envelopes on adjacent lots. The provision allows individual separations below the stated minimum if the required average is achieved across the new lots. It also specifies a 50-foot minimum distance where more than one building containing dwelling units occupies a common lot. Participants questioned the additional complexity and possible inconsistencies between these standards and ordinary setbacks.

Section 7.8.4 of the draft was identified as containing the detailed building-envelope separation requirements. Using R-4 as an example, the Board compared a 120-foot average separation between envelopes with conventional side setbacks of 30 feet and conservation-subdivision side setbacks clarified during the discussion as 25 feet. Two 25-foot setbacks would result in 50 feet between structures on adjoining lots, substantially less than the 120-foot envelope separation. The availability of reductions or waivers, as used for the Farrington Corner Road subdivision, added another layer of complexity.

Members expressed concern that requiring greater separation between envelopes could force development farther apart even though the conservation-subdivision objective is to cluster. They also discussed whether proper house setbacks and well/septic separation already provided sufficient controls. The question of utilities within designated open space was raised and then addressed separately.

After reviewing the draft, Mr. Durfee reported that he found 18 references to building envelopes and did not identify a reason those references needed to remain. The drafting direction was to strike the **building-envelope concept** and its references throughout the working draft, simplifying the ordinance and relying on the applicable setbacks and other standards. It was clarified that the review of the 18 references concerned the working draft with strikethroughs.

Utilities and Other Uses Within Common Open Space
A Board member asked whether provisions for utilities in **common open space** applied only to shared facilities serving two or more lots or could also accommodate an individual lot's septic system. The question arose from the existing language and a possible change in state law.

Members initially described structures in common open space as requiring prior Planning Board approval, using a meetinghouse, community pool, and tennis court as examples. They then distinguished these recreational or community improvements from wells, septic facilities, and utility infrastructure. Ms. Robertson referred to the Commerce and Community Overlay near Hart's Corner in the B-1 District, where community wells, septic systems, and utilities had expressly been allowed in open space.

Members discussed ownership and responsibility if a septic system were placed on common land. Questions included whether all residents or the homeowners' association would be responsible for a failure or overflow, whether the Town would accept land containing private utility obligations, and how to ensure that the Town did not assume responsibility for residents' septic systems. Easements and maintenance agreements were suggested, with an analogy to arrangements associated with Class VI roads. Ms. Robertson said the actual language would need review before responsibility could be determined.

Ms. Robertson read existing allowable-use language referring to individual or group wells and transmission pipes for stormwater or wastewater disposal systems, subject to subdivision approval and appropriate legal arrangements approved by the Planning Board for maintenance and operation. Participants clarified that the wording included individual as well as group facilities.

The discussion also addressed a provision limiting certain uses to 15% of **designated open space** through a special use permit, to be termed a conditional use permit in the revision. Examples included animal or farm uses, parking for access to open space, outdoor recreation such as playgrounds and tennis courts, support facilities, community wells, stormwater management, and sewer pump stations. Participants questioned whether the percentage limit would remain consistent with the new legislation.

Mr. Durfee identified **Senate Bill 564** as having been signed by the Governor and read language stating that municipalities shall permit utilities—including septic systems, wells, electric distribution, drainage structures, and other utilities—within **designated open space** or **perimeter buffer** areas of subdivisions, provided those areas are not wetlands. Participants noted that "open space" can be defined differently among ordinances; Hopkinton's definition was described as land permanently protected from further development through conservation deeds or restrictions.

Ms. Robertson agreed to review SB 564 and determine how it affected the ordinance, including the 15% limitation and the need for maintenance agreements. The discussion suggested that the percentage restriction might have to be removed for affected utilities.

Contiguous Open Space Definition
Ms. Robertson questioned the phrase "narrow utility crossing" in the **contiguous-open-space** definition. She recommended removing "narrow" because the draft did not define a width or meaning for that qualifier. There was no contrary view to the recommendation.

Net Developable Area and a Simpler Density Approach
Ms. Robertson explained the proposed **net developable area** calculation. The calculation begins with the gross area of the parent parcel and subtracts the exclusions identified in Section 7.6.2, such as protected conservation land, wetlands, flood areas, slopes greater than 25%, and other permanently protected or unusable areas. The resulting area is multiplied by a development factor and divided by the conventional minimum lot size of the underlying zoning district to determine density.

She had used a development factor from the state model ordinance. She also described an older Hopkinton formula that used a large square-footage factor rather than a decimal. That earlier factor incorporated allowances for roads, utilities, and similar development needs. Although the formulas differed in presentation, both required a series of calculations to estimate the number of lots.

Members considered whether ten parcels of 100 acres each should have different permitted densities because of varying slopes, floodplain, wetlands, and other conditions. Ms. Robertson explained that these conditions could result, for example, in 20 lots on one parcel and 15 on another. Participants recognized that land with greater carrying capacity may support more development but questioned whether a detailed preliminary formula was the clearest way to regulate it.

Mr. Durfee proposed establishing a straightforward maximum density or reduced lot-size requirement and allowing actual site constraints to determine what could be laid out. Illustrative lot sizes of 15,000 or 20,000 square feet, or approximately one-half acre, were discussed. Even if the initial calculation suggested a larger number of lots, wetlands, steep slopes, septic requirements, frontage, lot width, and other standards would limit the final design.

Ms. Robertson noted that this would change the existing approach under which a conservation subdivision should not exceed the conventional subdivision yield before applicable incentives. Mr. Durfee disagreed with preserving that limitation as a policy goal, arguing that conserving land should justify allowing more lots than a conventional subdivision. Participants considered making the conservation lot-size requirement one-half of the conventional requirement in each zoning district, rather than adopting the same half-acre minimum townwide.

Members favored a method that property owners and applicants could readily understand. The discussion recognized that the Town generally lacks water and sewer service in the areas likely to contain the acreage for conservation subdivisions. State subsurface review, soils, groundwater, and septic loading would continue to limit what could actually be built. Ms. Robertson described the difficulty of explaining the existing multiply-divide-round formula to prospective applicants before an engineer or surveyor was involved.

The Chair supported incorporating the simplified approach into the next draft, subject to further review. Board members expressly recognized that this would not be their last opportunity to consider the language. Ms. Robertson was asked to test the proposed approach against an approved conservation subdivision and compare the possible yield with what had been approved or built.

Ms. Robertson clarified that she had already tested the state model's net-developable-area formula against the two most recent approved subdivisions and obtained the same lot counts. That was not a test of the newly suggested half-lot-size method. She also recalled testing the Town's older formula against approximately 20 subdivisions, including Hopkins Green, with generally comparable results and occasionally one additional lot, considered acceptable in exchange for protected open space.

Open Space, Lot-Size Fractions, and Physical Feasibility
Members clarified that the simplified approach would eliminate the separate preliminary net-developable-area calculation and yield plan. The designer would work from the allowable reduced lot size and satisfy the actual subdivision constraints. An illustrative nine-acre parcel divided into half-acre lots could suggest 18 lots mathematically, but that result could not be achieved once required open space, roads, and other standards were applied.

The Board discussed the continuing requirement for 50% open space. Ms. Robertson stated that the communities she reviewed generally required that amount. On a hypothetical ten-acre parcel, five acres would be set aside, leaving five acres for development before roads and other constraints. If the underlying lot minimum were approximately one acre, reducing it to one-half acre would nominally allow ten lots on the remaining land, with actual yield likely lower.

This raised concern that one-half of the conventional minimum might not provide enough **incentive** after the open-space requirement and road area were accounted for. Members suggested testing one-quarter and one-third of the conventional requirement as alternatives. Jeff Donohoe suggested that one-third, or approximately 33%, was a reasonable figure to test. Ms. Robertson again clarified that the comparable yields previously mentioned came from her model-formula tests, not from a completed analysis of the proposed one-half or one-third approach.

Ms. Robertson cited the Bound Tree Road housing project to illustrate the difference between zoning capacity and septic capacity. Although zoning allowed 24 units, state review reportedly limited the development to 11 because of septic loading. The example was offered to show that an ordinance maximum would not guarantee that many units.

Mr. Durfee also suggested exempting conservation subdivisions from additional land-area requirements for each additional dwelling unit. If duplexes or multifamily housing were permitted in the district and a compliant lot could be created, removing the extra square footage per unit could provide another incentive. Ms. Robertson clarified that few of the communities she reviewed required that additional acreage.

Members discussed whether the changes would be acceptable to the community and how incentives could make an internal subdivision road financially attractive compared with lots fronting on an existing road. They observed that residents may not recognize established developments with smaller interior lots as conservation or cluster subdivisions, because the protected land and reduced lot sizes are less apparent from the main road.

Later, Board members returned to dimensional feasibility. If conservation lots were reduced to one-third of the conventional minimum, maintaining existing **setbacks** could leave little or no buildable area. A corresponding reduction to one-third of other dimensional criteria, including setbacks, was suggested for testing. The Board did not settle final dimensional values; the interaction among lot area, frontage, setbacks, road layout, and incentives was to be evaluated together.

The Board agreed that Section 7.6.3, **Alternative Determination**, would be removed as part of moving away from the yield-plan approach. Ms. Robertson explained that the alternative had been intended to address questions about whether the proposed yield was realistic.

Eligible Zoning Districts and Mandatory Conservation Subdivision Exemptions

Returning to the definitions and applicability provisions, Ms. Robertson questioned including VM-1, NR, and VR-1 among the districts eligible for conservation subdivisions. She explained that these areas did not appear to contain sufficient available acreage. The discussion described VR-1 as the village area and adjoining small side-street lots, VM-1 as the limited Riverside Drive area, and NR as Amesbury Park and Pinewood Drive. Members agreed to remove these districts from the applicable list.

Ms. Robertson reviewed the existing exemptions from the otherwise mandatory conservation-subdivision requirement. The stated exemptions were subdivisions creating lots averaging at least ten acres with deed restrictions against further subdivision; parent parcels of nine acres or less where no new road is required; and subdivisions creating five or fewer dwelling units where no new road is required.

Some members had understood conservation subdivision to be optional and questioned why exemptions were needed. Ms. Robertson clarified that conservation subdivision had long been the required method unless an exemption applied, reflecting the community's goal of rural character and land preservation.

Ms. Robertson explained that new-road subdivisions generally had been handled as conservation subdivisions for many years, recalling that the approach dated to approximately the 1980s. However, although participants had associated conservation subdivisions with internal roads, the current ordinance did not actually require a new road. Recent applications had exposed that omission. Ms. Robertson indicated that she would leave the exemption language for the time being and return to it if the Board wished to pursue a different approach.

Conditional Use Permit Criteria and Legal Documents
Ms. Robertson recommended removing subjective qualifiers such as "excessive fragmentation" and "superior site design" from the conditional use permit criteria because their meanings could differ from one decision-maker to another. The intent was to avoid relying on undefined comparative standards. Members agreed.

Board members clarified that a permit allowing a conventional subdivision could function as another exemption from the conservation-subdivision requirement, but that the permit provisions also applied in other circumstances. Ms. Robertson explained that the existing "special use permit" terminology was being changed to "conditional use permit." She stated that the legal-document review requirements remained substantively the same, although the wording had been revised.

Density Incentives, Percentage Caps, and the Boscawen Example
Ms. Robertson reviewed the draft density-incentive language requiring a permanent public or community benefit proportional to the additional density and limiting combined bonuses to 25% of base density. Members distinguished the proposed reduced lot-size requirement, which would establish the baseline, from any further density bonus. Even with a bonus, the development would remain subject to wetlands, slopes, septic capacity, dimensional standards, and other constraints, and some sites might not physically accommodate additional lots.

A Board member asked how bonuses would be awarded: whether an applicant simply proposed qualifying benefits and requested 25%, or whether specific benefits carried specified percentages. Ms. Robertson explained that the existing ordinance assigned percentages to particular items, although those details were not all in the draft under discussion.

The Board reviewed Boscawen's approach as a simpler example: a 10% bonus for one qualifying feature, 15% for two, and 20% for three or more. One member preferred that structure to Hopkinton's combination of individual 5% and 10% increments. Potential benefits discussed included affordable or senior housing, conservation easements, public trail connectivity, additional open space, and other listed features. A reference to 25% for three features was corrected to 20% when describing Boscawen.

Other participants cautioned that benefits differ in cost, difficulty, and public value. Awarding equal credit for any qualifying feature could allow an applicant to select relatively inexpensive improvements while receiving a substantial density increase. Board members supported examining the simpler format but wanted to ensure that the public benefit justified the bonus.

Ms. Robertson offered to use Boscawen's approach as a reference while also testing the one-half and one-third lot-size options. The final incentive percentages and the appropriate maximum remained under review, together with the dimensional changes needed to make smaller lots workable.

Affordable and Senior Housing; Combining Incentives

The Board discussed whether an applicant could receive a conservation-subdivision incentive for affordable housing and also benefit from another ordinance section. Some participants characterized this as "double dipping" and wanted the ordinance to state clearly whether combining benefits was allowed. Others noted that affordable housing is costly and difficult to provide and that additional incentives could be proportionate to that expense.

Participants distinguished an expressly authorized affordable-housing incentive from an unintended combination of bonuses. They wanted the ordinance to make the intended result clear, including whether a combined maximum would prevent additional or repeated bonuses from exceeding the Board's expectations.

During review of the existing ordinance, a Board member identified a conflict in Section 7.6.2: an introductory limit of a 25% increase in dwelling units was followed by a subsection offering a 30% increase. The participants clarified that this discrepancy was in the current ordinance rather than the working draft. It was also stated that the referenced provision did not require an additional conditional use approval. The inconsistency was identified for correction.

The discussion briefly addressed accessory dwelling units. Ms. Robertson stated that state law allows an ADU to count as workforce housing. Participants also referred to the subordinate nature of an ADU and an informal indication of the Board's position at a previous meeting. The exchange did not produce a separate new decision on ADUs at this session.

Mr. Durfee proposed removing affordable housing from the conservation-subdivision incentive list and relying instead on a separate, generally applicable affordable-housing incentive. His concern was that including affordability within a capped list of conservation benefits could dilute its value. He described a Nashua conservation subdivision that also used inclusionary zoning, reportedly obtaining approximately 16 bonus lots in an approximately 86-unit development. He offered the example to illustrate intentionally combining conservation and affordable-housing incentives.

Participants discussed adding a cross-reference making clear that a separate housing incentive could be combined with the conservation-subdivision provisions. Rob Dapice suggested language identifying the separate provision and its relationship to the conservation bonus. Ms. Robertson agreed to examine the Boscawen numbers and add a sentence along those lines for further review.

In reviewing the list itself, Board members agreed to remove energy-efficient residential construction. They also recommended removing permanent conservation easements as a separate bonus category because permanent protection is already a prerequisite of conservation subdivision. Additional open space and trail connectivity remained examples of possible qualifying benefits.

Ms. Robertson described a recent application in which the applicant included an existing flood-control easement in the density calculation until she questioned it. She explained that the area could not be built upon regardless of the application, but the applicant had included it because the ordinance did not expressly list it as an exclusion. The example reinforced the importance of clear calculation language and avoiding credit for an obligation or restriction already in place.

Discussion returned to the possible combined bonus. One suggestion was to reduce the conservation-only maximum to 15% and permit an additional affordable-housing incentive, potentially producing a total of 25% or 30%. These were examples, not adopted limits. Members emphasized testing the resulting density against actual lot dimensions to avoid nominal entitlements.

The Board then asked whether senior housing should be treated similarly, with references to its respective ordinance section. At this point, Ms. Robertson questioned a central assumption in the preceding discussion: the separate senior- and affordable-housing sections might not actually provide density bonuses. She indicated that the bonuses appeared to be located in the conservation-subdivision section and that she did not think conventional affordable-housing development automatically received extra units under the separate section, while acknowledging that she would need to verify the language.

Board members recognized that the separate housing provisions might need modernization. The discussion therefore did not establish that an existing, generally applicable bonus available to replace the conservation-subdivision incentive. The proposed removal and cross-referencing of affordable and senior housing remained dependent on checking those sections and determining the intended incentive structure. No final combined-bonus cap or replacement housing-incentive language was settled.

Existing-Road Frontage Lots and Internal Subdivision Roads
The Board returned to Section 7.7.2 and highlighted language that would permit frontage lots only when they better protected important resources, avoided environmental impacts, or provided safe access. Ms. Robertson questioned whether those standards were too subjective. Without an express restriction on frontage lots, simply removing the proposed exception language would not prohibit them.

Ms. Robertson reiterated that the original understanding of conservation subdivisions was clustered development on interior lots served by a subdivision road. Recent applicants had demonstrated that the existing language did not require that arrangement. She asked whether the Board wanted to restore the interior-road model or preserve a discretionary option for lots on existing town roads.

The Board discussed the visual and neighborhood effects of placing much smaller lots along a road otherwise characterized by larger residential parcels. Hypothetical examples included six quarter-acre lots with 75 feet of frontage, but the discussion clarified that the proposed fraction would not apply to each district’s conventional requirements. A reference to five-acre R-4 minimums was corrected during the meeting to 2.75 acres; one-third would be approximately 0.9 acre.

Ms. Robertson expressed concern that reduced-size frontage lots in R-3 and R-4 would not fit the established rural road character as well as similar lots grouped on an internal road. The Farrington Corner Road and Sugar Hill Road applications were cited as examples where residents had objected to roadside development. Farrington Corner Road’s approved lots were described as approximately 1.2 acres. Others believed that some neighbors would have accepted comparable density if it had been located within a separate development off the main road.

Members recalled public comments asking why the conventional yield plan could not be approved instead. Board members suggested that eliminating a yield-plan presentation could reduce confusion caused by first showing a conventional layout and then presenting a substantially different conservation design.

Road cost was another consideration. A member cited construction costs of $700 to $900 per linear foot. The option of private roads, potentially unpaved or using other permitted design alternatives, was discussed as a way to reduce costs. Additional lots could also make an internal road financially feasible; an example compared the revenue from 15 lots with that from five.

Board members questioned whether a development that placed lots along the frontage and conserved a large rear area—potentially 80% or 90%—achieved the desired conservation-subdivision form. They also recognized that parent-parcel geometry could make an internal road impractical. The Farrington Corner Road parcel between the road and Interstate 89 was cited as a narrow or rectangular tract with slopes toward the highway. An internal road there might run parallel to the existing road, leaving only a narrow intervening conservation strip.

The discussion included the quality of protected land and a suggestion that open space should contain a minimum buildable proportion, rather than consist entirely of land that could not readily be developed. Another example described a subdivision with an approximately 50-foot roadside conservation strip and additional open space at the rear. No new numerical standard for buildable open space was established.

Mr. Dapice proposed allowing conservation-subdivision frontage lots in R-1 and R-2 districts but requiring an internal-road arrangement in R-3 and R-4. This would restrict frontage lots by district, not prohibit conservation subdivisions in R-3 and R-4. They noted that the smaller-lot village pattern differs from the larger rural parcels, where setting density back from the road could preserve extensive contiguous land and existing road character.

The Board agreed to try the R-1 and R-2 frontage-lot approach in the next draft, with internal-road lots in R-3 and R-4. Subsequent comments raised additional questions about curb cuts, traffic, and the relationship of development to the villages.

Roadside Vegetative Buffer

Ms. Robertson reviewed the roadside buffer provision in Section 7.7.2. The discussion referred both to a 100-foot buffer and to language allowing the Board to require a vegetative buffer “up to” 100 feet between new development and the existing road. Members described the purpose as visually separating the clustered development from the existing road and helping it function as its own neighborhood.

The language discussed keeps the buffer free of structures, parking, lawns, leach fields, and detention basins; maintain mature forest cover; require supplemental plantings where needed; and protect the buffer through a recorded restriction.

A member asked whether the proposed restrictions were consistent with the utility legislation discussed earlier. The scope of permitted utilities and the final mandatory or discretionary buffer wording remained matters to resolve during revision.

Public and Private Roads; Emergency Access and Fire Protection
Ms. Robertson introduced new Section 7.7.3, allowing the Planning Board to approve either public or private roads. She explained that private subdivision roads were not currently permitted and that recorded restrictions and legal documents would be needed to establish responsibility for their upkeep.

Under the proposed language, private roads could use standards different from public roads only where expressly authorized by the Subdivision Regulations. Ms. Robertson noted that those regulations would also need amendment. Approval would require written findings that the design safely accommodated residents, emergency response, utilities, school transportation where applicable, service and delivery vehicles, snow storage, drainage, and anticipated traffic.

Private-road approval would not reduce applicable fire-protection, emergency-access, stormwater, sight-distance, or structural-capacity requirements. The proposed language would allow the Board to require turnarounds, pull-offs, secondary emergency access, cisterns, fire ponds, or other mitigation recommended by the Fire Chief.

Ms. Robertson stated that the Fire Chief already had authority to require necessary protections under applicable fire and life-safety requirements, but she wanted the ordinance to give applicants advance notice. Board members discussed whether to reference applicable code. NFPA 101 was mentioned as a possible example, without confirming the final citation.

Continuation of the Review
As the work session approached its stopping point, Board members suggested ending at approximately 7:00 p.m. and continuing at the next meeting, if other business concluded early enough.

The Board did not complete a section-by-section review of the remainder of the draft during this session. The Chair invited public questions and comments before concluding.

Public Comment: Curb Cuts, Village Development, and Road Character
A resident identifying himself as Butch Laker stated that he had recently moved to Hopkinton from Concord and was an attorney and city planner for Manchester. He addressed Mr. Dapice’s proposal to allow frontage lots in R-1 and R-2.

Mr. Blaker cautioned that reducing an approximately one-acre R-1 lot requirement to one-third acre, with frontage potentially around 50 feet, could substantially increase curb cuts along roads serving as through routes. He suggested considering the opposite approach: restricting roadside conservation lots in R-1 and R-2 districts while potentially allowing them in R-3 and R-4, where larger resulting lots would create fewer curb cuts.

As another option, he described Manchester’s current work on cluster-subdivision provisions and suggested greater setbacks or buffers from existing streets. Even where lots retained street frontage, setting homes farther back could reduce their visibility and effects on surrounding neighborhood character. Participants thanked him and described the comments as helpful.

Another Board member offered a different perspective. Using Maple Street in Contoocook Village as an example, the participant suggested that a pattern of smaller-frontage lots and individual driveways could support an organic extension of the village. More driveways might help slow traffic and support sidewalks, while cul-de-sacs could extend development into the wooded land behind the existing frontage. Route 103 between the villages was also mentioned as an area where frontage development might be preferable to repeated interior cul-de-sacs.

The member emphasized that some development would occur and favored a pattern that felt like an incremental outward extension of the village rather than a series of cul-de-sacs whose traffic would enter and leave the main road. These were opinions expressed during the discussion, not findings regarding traffic safety or performance.

Board members asked about state regulation of curb cuts. An earlier subdivision at the former oil-company property off Maple Street was cited as a case where shared driveways had been required because additional individual curb cuts were not permitted.

Public Comment
Butch Laker, a resident and Planner for the City of Manchester, commented on the proposed treatment of frontage lots. He cautioned that significantly reducing lot size and frontage in the R-1 and R-2 Districts could result in numerous additional curb cuts along roads. He suggested considering whether frontage lots might instead be more appropriate and whether greater setbacks and roadside buffers could reduce impacts.

The Board also discussed an alternative perspective that smaller frontage lots could, in appropriate locations, allow development to occur as a more natural extension of the villages rather than exclusively through interior cul-de-sacs. The comments highlighted the need for additional consideration of curb cuts, traffic, village development patterns, and rural road character when revising the frontage provisions.

Adjournment
With no further business, the work session adjourned at approximately **6:50 PM**.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Robertson
Planning Director