



Town of Hopkinton

Planning/Building Department

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HOPKINTON PLANNING BOARD

MINUTES

JULY 14, 2026

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

I. Call to Order/Roll Call.

Chair Michael Wilkey called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM at the Hopkinton Town Hall, 330 Main Street, Hopkinton, NH. Members, alternates, and staff were introduced. A quorum was confirmed.

II. Review of Minutes and Notice of Decision.

Review of the Minutes of the June 9, 2026 meeting was deferred.

III. Conceptual Consultations.

There were no conceptual consultations.

IV. Applications/Public Hearings.

There were no scheduled applications or public hearings.

V. Other Business/Discussion Items.

A) Planning Board Work Plan 2026 – Project Updates

1) Conservation Subdivision Ordinance

Planning Director Karen Robertson presented the latest draft revisions to the proposed Conservation Subdivision Ordinance. She explained that the draft incorporates concepts and language from several New Hampshire communities, while also reflecting comments provided by the Planning Board during previous discussions. Board members were asked to review the draft and provide comments for discussion at a future meeting.

Ms. Robertson summarized several of the principal revisions, including:

- Incentives for the use of private roads with less stringent road standards than those required for public roads.
- A requirement that 70% of the required open space be contiguous, consistent with the Board's previous discussion.
- Provisions to ensure that preserved open space is accessible to all residents of the development through frontage or recorded easements, as appropriate.

Subject to PB review and approval.

- Potential additional incentives for example energy-efficient homes.
- Reorganization of the ordinance to improve readability by grouping related provisions together.

The Board discussed the proposed methods for determining development yield. Ms. Robertson explained that the draft revisions include three options for calculating density—a net developable area formula, a conventional yield plan, and an alternative density determination. She noted that the three approaches were included in response to concerns raised by Board members during previous discussions regarding the potential for inaccuracies in determining the extent of constrained lands used in the net developable area calculation. Chair Michael Wilkey suggested including language to ensure that the results produced by the different calculation methods remain reasonably consistent. Board member Sam Durfee questioned the need for three separate methods of determining development yield. He stated that offering multiple options could create unnecessary confusion and noted that the calculations used to determine net developable area and site constraints are prepared and certified by licensed professionals. Mr. Durfee stated that the Planning Board should be able to rely on the professional judgment of licensed engineers, land surveyors, and wetland scientists, whose professional responsibilities require them to certify the accuracy of their work. He further noted that, if there were legitimate concerns regarding the accuracy of an applicant's calculations or delineations, the Board already has the ability to require an independent third-party review rather than establishing multiple methods for determining development yield.

The Board discussed whether a standardized adjustment factor could be used within the density formula rather than requiring calculations based on individual site characteristics. Ms. Robertson explained that a regional planning commission had recommended a standardized factor that accounts for features such as roads and other development constraints. Mr. Durfee expressed concern that a universal factor would not adequately reflect differences between individual properties, noting that development constraints vary significantly from parcel to parcel.

The Board also discussed the relationship between conceptual consultations and wetland delineations. Members agreed that conceptual consultations should remain preliminary in nature and that applicants would still be required to satisfy the Planning Board's application submission requirements before a formal application could be accepted. Mr. Durfee recommended referencing the Planning Board's existing application submission requirements contained in the Subdivision Regulations rather than repeating those requirements within the ordinance.

The discussion then shifted to incentives for conservation subdivisions and the broader housing market. Ms. Robertson questioned whether sufficient incentives currently exist to encourage developers to utilize the conservation subdivision process. Members discussed recent development trends within Hopkinton, observing that relatively few conventional or conservation subdivisions have been proposed in recent years.

Board members considered several possible reasons for the decline in subdivision activity, including construction costs, market conditions, minimum lot sizes, and development review processes.

Mr. Durfee observed that changing market conditions, rising construction costs, and financing challenges have significantly reduced residential development throughout the

region, citing examples from Nashua where approved multifamily projects have become financially infeasible. He noted that increased density is one regulatory tool available to improve project feasibility.

Ms. Robertson questioned whether providing additional flexibility in road standards, such as allowing private roads, could reduce development costs. She noted that allowing less stringent private road standards could provide an incentive for developers while still requiring roads to be designed and constructed in accordance with appropriate safety standards. Chair Wilkey agreed that private roads warrant further discussion as part of the ordinance revisions.

No formal action was taken. The Board agreed to continue its discussion on revisions to the Conservation Subdivision Ordinance at a work session scheduled for 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 28, 2026, at Town Hall.

2) Committee and Staff Reports

Board member Dean Owens reported that the Housing Committee recently held a productive meeting with Sam Durfee, who attended in his capacity as a practicing planner to provide planning perspectives. Mr. Owens stated that the discussion helped refocus the committee's efforts by emphasizing the importance of first defining the community's housing goals. Rather than concentrating on individual ordinance changes or permitted uses, the committee discussed taking a broader approach by identifying the type of housing the Town hopes to encourage and evaluating where future housing opportunities may be most appropriate.

Mr. Durfee explained that he encouraged the committee to begin by envisioning a successful future outcome. As an example, he posed the question of what Hopkinton would look like if, by 2030, twenty new housing units had been developed and were widely viewed as successful by the community. He noted that once the desired outcome is clearly articulated—such as the location, scale, and character of future housing—it becomes much easier to draft zoning regulations that will achieve those objectives.

The Board briefly discussed the value of establishing clear policy goals before drafting land use regulations. Members agreed that a goal-oriented approach has proven successful in the past, citing previous ordinance revisions that focused on achieving specific community outcomes rather than simply regulating land uses.

VI. ADJOURNMENT.

MOTION was made by Jeff Donohoe and seconded by Emily Bouchard to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 PM. Motion carried unanimously (Bradstreet, Bouchard, Hardenbergh, Durfee, Donohoe, Owens, and Wilkey). The next regular meeting is scheduled for August 11, 2026, at 5:30 PM, at the Hopkinton Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Robertson
Planning Director