

Newfields Planning Board Meeting Minutes
August 13, 2026

Attendance: Chair Jeff Feenstra, John Hayden, Bill Meserve, Shawn McGowan, Select Board Representative Catherine Tarnowski, Town Planner Glenn Greenwood, Alternate Mike Sununu and Mike Price. Absent from the meeting was Jamie Thompson.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm.

Preliminary Discussion-Dwight and Gayle Davis, Old Lee Rd

Dwight and Gayle Davis are interested in subdividing their lot on Old Lee Rd. They would like to remain in Newfields and build a smaller 2,500sf home on their parcel. The parcel has 300 feet of frontage and 4.5 acres. They have not yet consulted an architect and sought the board's input before proceeding.

Glenn stated that our zoning regulations require 200 feet of frontage and 2 acres in the residential agricultural district. The only way to subdivide without building a road (which is cost prohibitive) is to seek a variance from the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Catherine explained that a variance requires hardship, which cannot be financial. The hardship must relate to the unique characteristics of the property, so it is important to determine whether one exists. She suggested that Dwight obtain the ZBA application and ZBA Handbook from the town office, as the handbook explains the process and the criteria required for a variance. She emphasized that applying for a variance does not guarantee approval.

Jeff noted that recent changes allow for accessory dwelling units up to 950sf, but Dwight's plans exceed this size, making subdivision and variance the appropriate path.

Pleasant St Truck Traffic-Tom & Stacy Grella

Tom Grella was before the board to discuss the traffic on Pleasant St. He explained that the original site plan for Home Fashions limited truck traffic from 1-2 trucks per day and no after hour activity. Over time, truck traffic and overnight parking has increased, leading to noise and safety concerns for the residential neighborhood.

Tom described how the noise ordinance was amended in 2022 to prohibit unloading and idling of trucks between 10:00pm and 7:00am, with Home Fashions posting "no idling" signs, but enforcement remains challenging as trucks continue to park overnight and noise persists.

There has been property damage, deteriorating roads and safety risks due to trucks entering from the wrong direction, damaging utility wires, with the Police responding to complaints but unable to provide ongoing proactive enforcement.

Michael Sununu commented that the Planning Board's authority is limited to site plan approval and does not extend to enforcement. He suggested implementing a penalty for each incident to enforce. The Select Board is responsible for enforcement.

Glenn will review the original Home Fashions site plan to understand what was approved and notify the Select Board of any violations that may need to be enforced. He added that if overnight parking is not on the plan, by default it is not allowed.

Tom Grella was advised to submit any evidentiary photos or documentation to the town office.

Public Hearing-Subdivision Regulations and Road Design Amendments

Bill explained that there were some discrepancies in our site plan and subdivision regulations and this amendment will clean those up. The amendments standardize pavement widths (changing inconsistent references from 20 to 24 feet), clarified pipe material requirements to be determined by the road agent, added a five-foot sidewalk to the cross-section as required by ordinance.

Glenn clarified that these standards apply to newly constructed roads, with all new streets required to have a 50-foot right-of-way.

Jeff closed the public hearing; there was no discussion and a motion was made by Bill and seconded by John to approve the amendments. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Capital Improvement Project

John stated that after meeting with Jen Rowden from Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) in May, it was determined that the Planning Board can accomplish updating the CIP without spending funds with RPC.

The Board considered whether to conduct a community survey in-house or hire RPC, noting that similar surveys in other towns cost \$4,000-\$5,000. Cat will put this on the next Select Board agenda to determine if there are funds available in the budget to conduct the survey.

Bill commented that the CIP does not allow fees for remote impacts, and impact fees should only be used in clear cases of direct impact.

Michael added that unused impact fees must be returned if not spent within six years.

State Law Changes Affecting Local Ordinances

The Board reviewed recent upcoming law changes impacting cul-de-sac lengths, multi-family and commercial zoning buffers, and the regulation of tiny homes.

Glenn said he will need to look at the new law for buffer requirements for multi-family in the commercial zone, to determine if conservation district buffers are affected.

State law now allows towns to permit tiny homes under defined standards, but Newfields' minimum dwelling unit size effectively prohibits them unless the town chooses to adopt the new standards.

Michael Sununu explained that the State prohibited tiny homes prior to this law change. The new law defines tiny homes and towns may adopt the new standards, if they choose to. The Town is not required to.

Oaklands Road Subdivision

John asked if there was a Notice of Decision on file for the Oaklands Road subdivision.

Glenn said the Notice of Decision is pending, because he has not seen the deed restrictions to date and the town attorney has not reviewed them. The mylar should not be signed until the review is complete.

Muddy River Smokehouse

John also asked if the Notice of Decision had been prepared for Muddy River Smokehouse. Jeff said the plan was rejected by the Registry and needs to be revised.

Glenn said he reviewed the plan and noted that, for recording purposes, it cannot include all the information the Board would like. The Registry has taken a strict approach to site plans, accepting them in principle but challenging them throughout the process. Recording notices of decision that reference plans kept in the Planning Board office may be the better approach.

Glenn suggested that any information removed from the mylar to make it recordable be added as a plan note stating, "Additional information is reflected on the plan in the Planning Board/Town Office." This would allow the plan to show what was approved. He noted that recording the site plan is important because an unrecorded plan cannot be revoked if necessary.

Glenn said he would reach out to Beals Associates about getting the plan recorded.

Proposed Ordinances

The board also discussed the need for an ordinance to prevent narrow, irregularly shaped lots.

The minutes of June were reviewed. A motion was made by Bill and seconded by Catherine to approve the minutes as written. All were in favor and the motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue McKinnon