

Minutes of the Lexington Planning Board

Held on Wednesday, January 7, 2026, Virtual Meeting at 6:00 pm

Planning Board members present: Michael Schanbacher, Chair; Melanie Thompson, Vice-Chair; Tina McBride, Clerk; Charles Hornig; Robert Creech; and Michael Leon, associate board member.

Also present were: Abby McCabe, Planning Director.

Michael Schanbacher, Chair of the Planning Board, called to order the meeting of the Lexington Planning Board on Wednesday, January 7, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. For this meeting, the Planning Board is convening by video conference via Zoom. LexMedia is filming this meeting and is recording it for future viewing [here](#). The Chair explained the process and the procedure of the meeting.

Mr. Schanbacher conducted a roll call to ensure all members of the Planning Board and members of staff present could hear and be heard.

Mr. Schanbacher provided a summary of instructions for members of the public in attendance. It was further noted that materials for this meeting are available on the Town's [Novus Packet](#) dashboard. The Board will go through the agenda in order.

Development Administration

Accept Performance Guarantee and Endorse Definitive Subdivision Plans

Ms. McCabe, Planning Director, informed the Board members that the appeal period for all the definitive subdivision plans approved at the Board's November 19 and December 10, 2025, meetings has concluded without appeals. The last step in the definitive subdivision process and the step that will solidify the zoning freeze process that began last year with the spring Special and Annual Town Meeting is to accept the performance guarantees and endorse the plans. The Applicants for the various projects have submitted covenants as the surety and they are provided in the Board's packet. The copies with the Applicant signatures are in the Planning Office. She recommended the Board members accept and vote to sign the plans and then come to the office to sign the plans and documents.

Ms. Thompson moved to accept and sign the covenants submitted by the Applicants for definitive subdivisions at: 16 Clarke Street, 217-241 Massachusetts Avenue, 429 & 433 Marrett Road, 80 Bedford Street, 329 Massachusetts Avenue, 162 Bedford & 5 Reed Street, and 7-13 Muzzey Street & 1834 Massachusetts Avenue. Ms. McBride seconded the motion. The Planning Board voted in favor of the motion 5-0-0 (Roll call: Creech – yes; McBride – yes; Thompson – yes; Hornig – yes; Schanbacher – yes). MOTION PASSED

Ms. Thompson moved to endorse the Definitive Subdivision plans for: 16 Clarke Street, 217-241 Massachusetts Avenue, 429 & 433 Marrett Road, 80 Bedford Street, 329 Massachusetts Avenue, 162 Bedford & 5 Reed Street, and 7-13 Muzzey Street & 1834 Massachusetts Avenue, 407 Waltham Street. Ms. McBride seconded the motion. The Planning Board voted in favor of the motion 5-0-0 (Roll call: Creech – yes; McBride – yes; Thompson – yes; Hornig – yes; Schanbacher – yes). MOTION PASSED

Board Administration

Zoning Amendment Work Session for 2026 Annual Town Meeting

Ms. McCabe summarized the draft motion for technical corrections to the Zoning Bylaw to be scheduled for a public hearing with the Board on February 4th. The Board members had questions about the proposed changes to the Table 1 and 2 key and requested this be clearer by showing the changes. Board members suggested including the zoning district names before the tables and adding “zoning district” to the top row of the table.

Other potential future Zoning Amendments

Special Residential Developments (SRDs):

Ms. McBride requested that language be added to strengthen preserving historic structures and require that they be saved as part of a special residential development (SRD) by adding it as #3 under Section 6.9 for types of SRDs and removing that reference from the site sensitive approach. Board members discussed the Meriam Street proposal from 2024 that saved one historic structure but demolished another.

Mr. Hornig expressed concern that if a property owner were not intending to save a historic structure, they would go through the delay process, demolish the structures, and then an SRD application for development could be submitted when there is no longer a historic structure on the property.

Board members discussed the purview of the Historical Commission and the Historic Districts Commission as they relate to historic structures and the site sensitive path for SRDs. A board member raised a question as to whether or not saving all historic structures is the priority or not, if so, then that should be a required criterion and if it's not the main priority it can fall to the Historical Commission or District Commission if in a historic district.

Ms. McBride added that it was important to require historic structures to be saved since they are mentioned in the site sensitive approach and this would help quantify that.

Ms. Thompson thought it would be helpful to provide guidance in examples like Meriam Street where there were two historic structures; the main house and the carriage house and how that should be handled.

Mr. Hornig added that approximately 20% of single-family homes in town are designated as historic structures and this requirement is a concern for potential future residential developments under the SRD.

Ms. McBride discussed adding in a site coverage requirement of 28% to include all impervious areas such as buildings, driveways, parking spaces, and walkways/sidewalks. She looked at past applications reviewed with Ms. McCabe and found that Meriam St. had 43% impervious areas, 287 Waltham Street had 25%, and 114 Wood Street has 3%. She explained that adding this would help create better projects and be better for stormwater and infiltration, by providing more green space which would improve air quality and livability for the development's residents.

Mr. Hornig commented that he would prefer this requirement be added to the development standards table to be applied to all developments in town including single-family detached housing. He added that he didn't feel this was necessary for multi-family development but not a one-family development. Mr.

Hornig added that the old special residential development zoning included site coverage that included buildings but not all impervious surfaces so this addition is stricter and would be a disincentive to doing an SRD. He also thought the Meriam Street proposal was 33% rather than 43%. He also thought this could encourage less parking spaces being proposed.

Mr. Schanbacher felt the exact percentage for site coverage should be further considered and thought 28% may be low and wanted to analyze this further but was supportive of less parking which could come as a result. Mr. Creech noted that we adopted an Open Space Residential development (OSRD) Bylaw a few years ago but was unsure why it has not been used. Knowing why may be helpful in this discussion.

Ms. McBride talked about wanting to change the GFA bonus by changing the current formula to be 115% times the GFA amount allowed in the Zoning Bylaw for one and two families as updated in 2023 that references the two tables. Mr. Hornig suggested only reference the new table in the GFA section.

Ms. McBride presented her proposal to add a transition area requirement for a 20-foot-wide landscape area along the boundary of an SRD to provide screening for neighbors and be more beneficial to the people living in the development.

Mr. Hornig was not supportive of this change. He explained that the intent of a transition area is to screen and separate “incompatible land uses” between zoning districts as detailed in the purpose section 5.3.1.2 of the Bylaw. He felt this creates isolation of the residents where residential developments are compatible with the surrounding residential properties. Mr. Hornig also added that the transition area section of the Bylaw is intended to create a full-screen 6 ft. tall and shade trees don’t achieve that.

Ms. McBride responded that shade trees and a mix of plantings are beneficial and could be adequate for screening but also to improve the development but recommended this because the density is much greater in the SRDs than in the one-family districts.

Mr. Schanbacher pointed out that shade from trees is treated differently than shade from buildings. He felt fences and walls or landscaping that serves a screen do cut out direct communication from neighbors and questioned some of the references in Section 5.3.1 of the Bylaw.

Ms. McBride continued to present her proposed change to limit the maximum average GFA for each dwelling unit to 2,250 SF rather than 2,000 SF (except for units in historic structures) and to reduce the maximum GFA for each unit from 2,800 SF to 2,500 SF (except for units in historic structures). Mr. Hornig was opposed to this change because he felt this would effectively eliminate the site sensitive approach because it removes the incentive for a site sensitive development by removing the compact neighborhood development.

Ms. McBride elaborated on her proposed change to improve and SRD’s common open space requirement by sharing revised language that the open space areas not have more than an 8% slope. The Board discussed how much of the open space could be natural and how much should be re-graded to be relatively even. Overall, Board members felt this section was improved since the December draft.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs):

Mr. Hornig shared slides that included the language from the state’s definition of Accessory Dwelling Units. He explained that the definition from the State’s Regulations is not that different than Lexington’s, however, the state’s uses 900 SF, or half of the gross floor area of the principal dwelling, whichever is less, while Lexington’s current Bylaw limit is for 1,000 SF. He also pointed out that the state measures GFA

from the interior face of the exterior wall while Lexington's Bylaw measures GFA from the exterior face of the exterior walls, which results in a smaller area by the state's definition. Additionally, Lexington Bylaw includes porches in GFA while the state's definition does not.

Mr. Hornig summarized the major requirements of the EOHLC Regulations:

- One protected ADU permitted by-right in any zoning district where one-family dwellings are permitted (at least 900 SF);
- No limit on lot size;
- No limit on number of bedrooms;
- No required parking for lots within a ½ mile of a bus stop (place of embarkment for public transportation operated by a Transit Authority)
- Located within, attached to, or detached from principal building;
- Same setback, height, and exterior appearance restrictions as on one-family dwellings; and
- Not counted in dwelling unit density calculations.

Mr. Schanbacher took public comments.

Ms. Jensen, 133 Reed Street, encouraged the Board to look at surrounding towns and bylaws recently adopted under the new rules. She recommended not allowing larger GFA or less setbacks.

Mr. Kelly, Building Commissioner, informed the Board that Brookline made zoning changes last year and the Attorney General did not allow tying lot size to GFA in a way that would prevent permitting an ADU. He added that Lexington is in a good place since we have allowed accessory apartments for a long time so we haven't had any real challenges so far. He noted that the building code has not yet caught up, especially for ADUs in basements.

Ms. Gau, Chair of the Lexington Bicycle Advisory Committee, asked that the Board also add review and discussion of updating the Zoning Bylaw to include bicycle parking requirements to some upcoming agendas.

Site Plan Review final action deadline:

The Board discussed the final action deadline for major site plan review projects, which was updated a couple years ago to be 150 days. Ms. McBride asked that the same language in the zoning bylaw be added to the Board's Regulations to emphasis that the time clock should start when an application is complete. Board members generally felt that 150 days was the correct amount of time but were supportive of revising the language in the Regulations.

Board Member & Staff Updates:

Mr. Hornig informed the Board he was not running for another term on the Planning Board. Members thanked him for his dedication and service over the years.

Ms. McCabe reported that at the Select Board's meeting this week they voted to create a surcharge on non-residential development (new construction over 30,000 SF) that would go towards affordable housing. The Board discussed the possible implications of this on commercial development prospects. Mr. Hornig suggested the Board may want to revisit the transportation mitigation fee for Hartwell Ave's TMO.

Review of Draft Meeting Minutes:

Upcoming Meetings: 12/10. Confirmed January 21, February 4, 25, March 11 and 25

Adjournment

Ms. Thompson moved that the Planning Board adjourn the meeting of January 7, 2026, at 9:17 PM. Ms. McBride seconded the motion. The Planning Board voted in favor of the motion 5-0-0 (Roll call: Creech – yes; McBride – yes; Thompson – yes; Hornig – yes; Schanbacher – yes). MOTION PASSED

Meeting adjourned at 9:17. [Lex Media](#) recorded the meeting.

Material from the meeting can be found in the Planning Board's [Novus Packet](#).

List of Documents

1. Draft covenants for: 16 Clarke Street, 217-241 (231) Massachusetts Avenue, 429 & 433 Marrett Road, 80 Bedford Street, 329 Massachusetts Avenue, 162 Bedford Street & 5 Reed Street, 7-9-11-13 Muzzey Street & 1834 Massachusetts Avenue.
2. Draft motion and article summary for technical corrections zoning amendment
3. ADU "model bylaw" from MA EOHLC
4. ADU Regulations from EOHLC
5. Accessory dwelling unit slides presented by Mr. Hornig
6. Special Residential Development Draft Changes 12-10-2025 Presentation
7. Draft Special Resident Development changes dated October 24, 2025
8. Draft Special Residential Development changes dated January 7, 2026
9. Draft Meeting Minutes 10/22/25, 11/19/25