



Town of Hopkinton Planning/Building Department

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HOPKINTON PLANNING BOARD

MINUTES

JANUARY 13, 2026

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

I. **Call to Order/Roll Call/Seating of Alternates.**

Chair Michael Wilkey opened the meeting by acknowledging the recent passing of **Clarke Kidder**, who served on the Planning Board for 27 years. Chair Wilkey spoke about Mr. Kidder's extensive service to the Town, including his involvement with the Select Board, St. Andrew's Church Council, the Boy Scouts of America, and his professional career in telecommunications. Chair Wilkey noted Mr. Kidder's exceptional institutional knowledge, particularly his ability to recall historical applications and decisions, and described him as both a colleague and a friend. The Board expressed its condolences to Mr. Kidder's family and acknowledged that he would be deeply missed. A brief moment of silence followed.

Based on the number of regular members present, **eligibility** was established and Alternate Molly Hardenbergh was seated as a voting member. Alternates Sam Durfee and Dean Owens were present as non-voting members.

MOTION was made by Jeff Donohoe and seconded by Jane Bradstreet to allow Sam Durfee's **remote participation**. Motion was unanimously **APPROVED** by a roll-call vote.

II. **Minutes and Notice of Decisions.**

Review of the Minutes and Notice of Decisions of December 8, 2025 was deferred to the February 10, 2026 meeting.

III. **Conceptual Consultations.** There were no conceptual consultations.

IV. **Applications/Public Hearings.**

Chair Wilkey explained that the purpose of a preliminary review is to identify major design, layout, and regulatory issues early in the process and to allow the Planning Board, staff, and abutters to provide non-binding guidance before a formal application is submitted. He noted that comments made during the preliminary review are advisory only and do not bind the Board during formal review.

Approved: 02/10/2026.

2026-1 SNS Construction LLC – Preliminary review of a **conservation subdivision** proposing four (4) residential lots and one (1) lot for open space conservation. The property is owned by Kathryn Ashraf and located off **Farrington Corner Road** (Tax Map 257, Lot 14), within the R-3 Zoning District. ([Application/Plan](#))

The Applicant's representative, Ian Mackinnon of Jones & Beach Engineers addressed the Board on behalf of Scott Ainsworth of SNS Construction. Mr. Mackinnon described the proposed subdivision indicating that the plan before the Board was largely unchanged from previous conceptual discussions and was being presented to confirm that the general layout and development approach were acceptable to the Board prior to advancing further in the review process.

Mr. Mackinnon explained that a second yield plan sheet (Y-2) was prepared as part of the conservation subdivision process to demonstrate that the proposed roadway could be realistically constructed within the parameters used to establish the yield, and that the resulting lots would be valid buildable lots. He stated that the road design was intentionally kept within the limitations of the Town's Subdivision Regulations, including ensuring that no segment of the roadway exceeds a 10 percent grade. He emphasized that the road profile shown is preliminary but represents a design that is considered fully buildable.

The Applicant described the proposed subdivision as a four-lot Conservation Subdivision with a frontage-style layout, identifying the lots as Lots 14-1 through 14-4. Although the Conservation Subdivision Overlay Ordinance does not require substantial frontage, the Applicant stated that the lot layout naturally resulted in significant frontage due to spacing considerations between homes. He noted that the smallest frontage, on proposed Lot 14-4 along the east side of the project, is approximately 161 feet, while the largest frontage is approximately 295 feet. He stated that, although the subdivision is designed under the conservation/open space ordinance, the lots nevertheless have a sizable amount of frontage on the proposed roadway.

The plans show example house footprints for illustrative purposes only, demonstrating that the proposed lot shapes and limits of clearing would allow for variety in home design, rather than identical houses on each lot. He stated that it is the intent of the developer to introduce architectural variation and that the lot configurations support that goal.

With respect to subsurface conditions, the initial set of seven test pits had been excavated earlier in the process to confirm that there were no site limitations affecting lot placement. He stated that, as of the previous Monday, additional test pits had been excavated to ensure that there are at least two test pits within each designated 4,000-square-foot septic area shown on the plan. Using GPS location tools, the Applicant confirmed that the test pits are properly located. He reported that the test pit logs, prepared and stamped by the septic designer, indicate more than 24 inches of separation, exceeding both state and Town requirements for septic systems. This confirms the feasibility of the proposed septic areas, while acknowledging that final

septic locations may be adjusted during house design, subject to state approval and required setbacks from wells and lot lines.

The Applicant emphasized that by concentrating the four lots along the western portion of the parent parcel's frontage, the plan preserves approximately 8.2 acres of open space, representing much of the rear half of the property. He further explained that the plan provides an approximately 125-foot-wide open space corridor along the eastern side of the property, which serves as an additional buffer to the only immediately adjoining abutter to the east (Lot 15). He noted that the open space configuration also allows for the potential of a small parking area, recognizing that the Select Board has expressed preliminary willingness to accepting the open space for Town ownership. The Applicant stated that the open space is intentionally shaped to be usable land, suitable for potential future uses such as trails, should the Town deem that appropriate.

In response to Planning Director Karen Robertson, the Applicant confirmed that the primary difference between the preliminary plan and what would be submitted for final subdivision approval would be the inclusion of the updated test pit information within the designated septic areas.

Ms. Robertson recommended that the Applicant reconfirm all natural features, including floodplains, vernal pools, and other environmental constraints, are clearly reviewed and documented on the final plan. The Applicant agreed, and confirmed that floodplain mapping would be addressed by note on the plan and that wetland scientists had reviewed the site for additional environmental features.

Ms. Robertson further recommended that the final plan include more detailed information regarding the open space, including its vegetative cover and that it is for conservation purposes. She noted that the Conservation Commission has indicated that a formal conservation easement is not required if the land is deeded to the Town, but that the deed should include restrictions to ensure the land remains protected in perpetuity. She also recommended tagging and blazing of both the open space and buffer areas to prevent future encroachment by homeowners.

Discussion continued regarding fire protection, with Ms. Robertson noting that the Fire Chief had indicated no additional fire protection measures were needed. However, she requested that the plan note the nearest available dry hydrant or cistern, if any. She also discussed the building envelopes. In response, the Applicant confirmed that a Conditional Use Permit would be submitted to address reduced separation between building envelopes, while maintaining adequate building-to-building separation and required buffering between lots.

Ms. Robertson confirmed that the Select Board's willingness to accept the open space, subject to deed review and approval.

Ms. Robertson advised the Board that she did not believe technical review by an outside consultant was necessary for this application but left the decision to the Board.

She also asked whether the Board wished to conduct a site walk. Board members indicated limited interest in a formal site walk, though the Applicant offered to flag approximate location of lot lines if individual members wished to visit the site independently.

Chair Wilkey opened the meeting to public comment.

Craig Thomas – 240 Farrington Corner Road (speaking for David Conaway, Abutter)

- Said Conaway moved to Hopkinton to get away from “city” density and small lots; emphasized the R-3 low-density character and expectation of large setbacks and privacy.
- Acknowledged the applicant’s work and said the plan may “dot the i’s and cross the t’s,” but argued the proposal does not match the spirit of low-density zoning.
- Warned of potential over-clearing during construction unless strict guidance/markings is required; urged clear limits (trees/building envelope type restrictions).
- Raised concerns about auxiliary buildings shown on some lots and referenced additional square footage requirements for additional structures.
- Emphasized precedent concerns and suggested three lots instead of four could be a better middle ground.
- Expressed environmental concerns: wetlands downhill, stormwater/runoff impacts, habitat effects, and wildlife being “boxed” toward Route 89.
- Noted that open space may not be heavily used by residents (not appealing for ATV/dog walking, etc.), questioning the practical benefit versus neighborhood impacts.
- When asked if he reviewed the yield plan, he said he did but questioned real-world buildability/cost and whether “looks good on paper” equals feasible.

Bruce Farenwald — 204 Farrington Corner Road (Abutter)

- Said residents bought expecting everyone would “play by the same rules.”
- Indicated it was odd to have a small section of the road become much more intensely developed than existing lots across the street.
- Noted nearby homes are set back and screened; felt four homes close to the road would change the daily visual experience and “feel” of the road.
- Suggested three lots as a better compromise; asked what the motivation is for allowing this intensity at the beginning of the road.

Chair Wilkey and Ms. Robertson responded by explaining that the conservation subdivision design (Cluster), in effect since 1988, is an established option throughout Town intended to preserve open space in exchange for reduced lot sizes. They noted that similar developments exist elsewhere in Hopkinton and that the ordinance reflects a deliberate policy choice balancing growth and land preservation.

Chair Wilkey thanked the Applicant and speakers, noted that the Board had no further questions at that time, and stated that the Board looked forward to reviewing a formal application.

2026-2 Baystone Properties LLC – Preliminary review of a **Conservation Subdivision** proposing seven (7) residential lots and one (1) lot for open space conservation. The property is located on the corner of **Stumpfield Road** and **Sugar Hill Road** (Tax Map 231, Lot 6), within the R-4 Zoning District. ([Application/Plan](#))

Surveyor Dan Higginson, Higginson Land Services, and Shaun Geary, Owner, presented the proposal. Mr. Higginson explained that the project began with preparation of a yield plan, which initially resulted in six building lots, and that a roadway profile was also prepared. He described the parcel as having a consistent slope from front to back, with gradual elevation change rather than abrupt grade changes.

Mr. Higginson explained that the property abuts U.S. Army Corps of Engineers land to the rear and Town conservation land to the east, accessed from Old Bassett Mill Road. It was noted that the land proposed for preservation is located in the rear corner of the parcel and would be contiguous with existing conserved lands, thereby expanding an already protected area. He noted that the Conservation Commission has expressed interest in the open space.

The Applicant explained that the subdivision plan proposes seven building lots, utilizing density bonuses available under the Conservation Subdivision Ordinance for having a forestry plan and for providing public access to the open space. The proposed access for the Town would be located on the east side of the property and would be slightly over 100 feet wide, providing both required open space width and a buffer to the adjacent residence. Mr. Higginson noted that, although the ordinance would allow a narrower access, maintaining a wider buffer was intentional.

Ms. Robertson stated that Steve Dermody of the Army Corps of Engineers had reviewed the proposal and expressed satisfaction with the open space configuration, particularly as it relates to protecting the flood flowage easement. Mr. Higginson responded that the easement lies at an approximate elevation of 420 feet, while the closest proposed lot is approximately 10 feet higher in elevation. Preserving the open space eliminates concerns about residential interference within the flood easement.

The Applicant confirmed that the Conservation Commission's letter provided support for acceptance of the open space by deed rather than a formal conservation easement. The Applicant was agreeable to tagging and blazing both the open space and buffer areas to prevent future encroachment.

With respect to infrastructure, Mrs. Robertson stated that Director of Public Works is not requesting roadway improvements, noting that the road is a through road similar to others, including Sugar Hill Road. She further stated that the Fire Chief is not requesting additional fire protection measures. The Applicant agreed to note on the plan the nearest fire protection water source, identified as a dry hydrant at Drew Lake, within one-half mile of the development.

Mr. Higginson confirmed that test pits had been completed and that soil data is provided on the plan, noting that the site consists primarily of one soil type. He explained that the forest management plan, originally prepared in 2015 for a larger ownership, will be updated for 2026 to reflect current conditions and the proposed open space. He described the forest as largely mature pine, previously thinned approximately 15–20 years ago, with healthy regrowth.

Ms. Robertson raised concerns previously expressed by the Director of Public Works regarding sight distance for the driveway serving Lot 1, and the Conservation Commission Chair's observations of water movement in a nearby ravine area. Mr. Higginson stated that the Applicant would coordinate further with DPW to address sight-distance concerns and clarified that the ravine lies west of the proposed driveway and that the roadway (Sugar Hill Rd) elevation is significantly higher than the drainage area.

Ms. Robertson also discussed deed language for the open space, emphasizing that it must clearly state that the land is preserved in perpetuity and not subject to development. She confirmed that the Select Board has expressed preliminary willingness to accept the land, subject to deed review by counsel.

The Board discussed whether technical review or a site walk was necessary. Ms. Robertson stated that she did not believe technical review was warranted but left the decision to the Board. Board members expressed limited interest in a formal site walk, though the Applicant offered to flag proposed lot corners to assist with individual site visits.

Chair Wilkey then opened the meeting to public comment.

Anthony Alario — 670 Sugar Hill Road (Abutter)

- Asked whether there will be another public hearing after preliminary review and whether this was the only opportunity to speak.
- Board/staff explained there would be a formal public hearing after completeness review, and the public would get another notice and opportunity to comment.
- Said the plan “checks every box” but is maxed out to the minimums (gave examples like barely exceeding minimum lot area and frontage).
- Strongest concern: public safety/traffic at an a dangerous intersection near the site.
 - Described the corner as a blind corner, speeding, and close calls.
 - Shared personal story of losing a dog to a vehicle and said it “could have been my son.”
 - Explained safety concerns for moving a horse trailer/boat near blind driveways.
- Objected to “seven more driveways” near that intersection; stated a single internal road (conventional plan) would be safer than multiple direct driveways.

- Requested, at minimum, a traffic study or third-party assessment, and urged Board members to observe the site during morning peak.
- Stormwater/water concerns: described “significant” seasonal water pooling/flowing onto his property; questioned a wetland review done during a dry month; requested additional analysis so development does not worsen runoff onto his land (animals, horses, garden).
- Buffer concerns: said a 100-foot buffer is small; also expressed concern about public trails immediately behind his property given horses/electric fencing and risk of trespass.
- Suggested alternatives: fewer lots (e.g., 5/4), clustering away from the intersection, or using the conventional plan.
- When questioned about “vernal pool,” clarified he had not hired an expert; described a recurring seasonal pool and flow path across his land and into adjacent Town land; pointed to the area on the plan.

Erin Tullar — 860 Sugar Hill Road (Abutter)

- Concurred with Mr. Alario’s concerns, especially safety on the corner (intersection).
- Described observed near-misses, swerving to avoid animals/people/tractors; cited farm activity and blind views.
- Said seven houses would add traffic, headlights, sound, and shift the “energetics”/rural character of the road.
- Reiterated significant seasonal water flow—“up to your knee” some years—running for months in normal years; asked where displaced runoff would go if grading/building occurs.
- Mentioned concerns about neighboring driveways washing out and potential increased impacts if water is redirected.

Mark Goldblatt — Old Holmes Road (nearby resident)

- Strongly emphasized danger at the intersection:
 - Reported hydroplaning due to runoff and multiple near-fatal encounters with oncoming vehicles/semis.
 - Explained the corner forces vehicles wide and creates confusing movements; urged Board members to drive the area to understand.
- Objected to the visual/rural-character impact: did not move there to look at “seven mini mansions.”
- Preferred a design with an internal road/clustered access as “less offensive” than multiple driveway cuts at a hazardous corner.
- Framed comments as preserving what makes Hopkinton “special” and warned about slowly turning it into a more urban pattern.

Anthony Alario — 670 Sugar Hill Road (Abutter readdressed Board)

- Asked for a definition of “building envelope.”
- Expressed concern that two houses shown (referencing the “last”/west lot and adjacent lot) looked very closely—possibly less than 100 feet—based on the small plan copy.

- Wanted confirmation that the layout met building envelope/separation requirements and raised broader concern that “bowling alley” style lots reduce privacy even if technically compliant.
- Said they would prefer an internal road-style development over multiple individual driveway frontages.

In conclusion, Chair Wilkey emphasized that the plan was before the Board for preliminary review only and thanked the Applicant and members of the public for their detailed input. He stated that the comments raised would be important for both the Applicant and the Board to consider as the project advances to formal application.

Board members then discussed the conflict between ordinance compliance and unintended consequences, noting that the proposal appears to meet the technical requirements of the Conservation Subdivision Ordinance. Members discussed whether the Conservation Subdivision Ordinance, as currently written, may warrant future review or amendment to better address buffering, frontage-based development, and public safety considerations. Members acknowledged, however, that safety concerns at the intersection warrant further consideration. While familiar with the intersection (Sugar Hill/Stumpfield), Chair Wilkey recommended that Board members drive the area and visit the site. Discussion concerning the safety of the road intersection included the possibility of shared driveways, limiting driveway access near the intersection, intersection improvements (exaction fees), reducing the number of lots, or requiring a conventional subdivision with one access (new road) onto Stumpfield Road. Again, it was noted that the Public Works Director had also expressed concern with the proximity of one of the new driveways to the intersection.

V. Other Business/Discussion Items.

- Planning Board Work Plan 2026 – The Planning Board postponed review of the 2026 Work Plan and agreed to hold a Work Session on **Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 5:30 PM**, to develop the Board’s 2026 Work Plan.
- Committee and Staff Reports – Mr. Owen provided an update on the Housing Committee’s previous meeting, during which the Committee voted to prioritize recommended zoning amendment recommendations for consideration by the Planning Board for vote in 2027. The Planning Board anticipates receiving a formal request from the Committee.

VI. Adjournment. With no further business, Chair Wilkey declared the meeting adjourned at 7:38 PM. The next regular meeting will be held at 5:30 PM on Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Robertson
Planning Director

Approved: 02/10/2026.