



Town of Hopkinton Planning/Building Department

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HOPKINTON PLANNING BOARD MINUTES FEBRUARY 10, 2026

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

I. Call to Order/Roll Call.

Chair Michael Wilkey called the meeting to order introducing members of the Board. A quorum was established. With only six members were present, Alternate Sam Durfee was confirmed as a voting member.

II. Review of Minutes and Notice of Decision.

Review of the December 8, 2025 meeting minutes was deferred to a later date.

MOTION was made by Rob Dapice and seconded by Jeff Donohoe to **APPROVE** the minutes of January 13, 2026, with corrections to the spelling of Mark Goldblatt's name and his street address. Motion carried in the affirmative (Fredyma, Donohoe, Dapice, Hardenbergh, Durfee, and Wilkey).

MOTION was made by Rob Dapice and seconded by Jeff Donohoe to **APPROVE** the minutes of January 20, 2026. Motion was carried in the affirmative (Fredyma, Donohoe, Dapice, Hardenbergh, Durfee, and Wilkey).

III. Conceptual Consultations.

Genesis Systems, LLC (JR Hoell) – Surveyor Joe Wichert and JR Hoell, principal of Genesis Systems, appeared before the Board for conceptual consultation regarding property that had previously been approved in 2006 for a conventional five-lot subdivision. That approval had lapsed while the property was owned by Barry Upton. The new owner, Genesis Systems, LLC, is now exploring development options under the current Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Wichert and Mr. Hoell presented a conceptual six-lot yield plan and inquired whether, under the Conservation Subdivision Ordinance, a 25% density bonus could be applied if at least 20% of the units qualified as affordable housing through the use of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). If eligible, there would be a potential for eight lots, with a minimum of three lots containing ADUs.

Subject to PB review and approval.

Board discussion focused on how the ADUs would qualify as affordable housing. Members clarified that ADUs must meet HUD affordability standards to count toward the density bonus, including deed restrictions ensuring continued compliance with income limits (120% of Area Median Income). The Board noted that mechanisms such as deed restrictions and monitoring agreements would likely be required to ensure long-term affordability. Questions were raised regarding enforcement and monitoring responsibilities, including whether oversight by a third-party housing organization might be necessary.

Discussion also addressed road design and whether the proposed road would be public or private. Sam Durfee expressed a preference for a private road, noting maintenance cost considerations for the Town. Mr. Hoell noted his preference for the road to be public and described prior discussions with the Public Works Department and Fire Department regarding cul-de-sac configuration and potential fire pond placement.

The Board provided non-binding feedback indicating that the six-lot yield appeared reasonable under current zoning; however, questions remain regarding how the affordability of the ADUs would be established and maintained. The applicant agreed to return with additional clarification.

IV. Applications/Public Hearings.

2026-1 SNS Construction LLC –Conservation subdivision proposing four (4) residential lots and one (1) lot for open space conservation. The property is owned by JAR Construction Management LLC, and is located off **Farrington Corner Road** (Tax Map 257, Lot 14), within the R-3 Zoning District.

Scott Ainsworth (SNS Construction Management) and Ian McKinnon (Jones & Beach Engineers) presented a conservation subdivision proposal for four residential lots and one open space lot. The project proposes development under the Conservation Subdivision Ordinance, preserving approximately 63% of the total parcel as open space.

Mr. McKinnon summarized revisions since the prior meeting (preliminary review), including adjustments to building envelope separations to comply with ordinance requirements allowing up to a 50% reduction in separation. Clearing limits were clarified and would be staked in the field to ensure compliance. The proposal includes a 75-foot vegetated buffer along Farrington Corner Road. Driveway locations remain conceptual and will be refined to minimize tree removal.

The applicant summarized compliance with the Special Use Permit criteria under Section VII of the Zoning Ordinance, including consistency with conservation objectives and findings that the proposal will not be detrimental to public health, safety, or welfare. It was noted that soils are suitable for septic systems, no wetlands will be disturbed, and the proposal consolidates development in a manner that protects natural features and limits overall impact.

MOTION was made by Jeff Donohoe and seconded by Sam Durfee to accept the application as complete and for consideration, placing the application under formal review pursuant to RSA 676:4. Motion carried in the affirmative (Fredyma, Donohoe, Dapice, Hardenbergh, Durfee, and Wilkey).

MOTION was made by Sam Durfee and seconded by Jeff Donohoe that the Planning Board determine that, based on the scale, location, and characteristics of the proposed subdivision, the project does not reasonably have the potential to constitute a Development of Regional Impact when considering the factors referenced in RSA 36:55. Motion carried in the affirmative (Fredyma, Donohoe, Dapice, Hardenbergh, Durfee, and Wilkey).

Chair Wilkey opened the public hearing.

Bruce Farenwald – 204 Farrington Corner Road

Mr. Farenwald asked whether a hardship was required to grant approval of the conservation subdivision. The Board clarified that hardship applies to variance requests before the Zoning Board of Adjustment, not to conservation subdivision applications reviewed under existing ordinance provisions.

Mr. Farenwald also questioned the purpose and accessibility of the open space, noting that it appears landlocked behind the proposed homes. The Planning Director explained that the open space would be conveyed to the Town, potentially allowing for walking trails, wildlife habitat, and permanent preservation. Board members explained that conservation subdivisions allow reduced lot sizes in exchange for preservation of open space.

Mr. Farenwald asked about tax implications, questioning whether smaller lots would result in lower tax assessments. While the Planning Director explained her general understanding of home site assessments, she recommended that assessment question be directed to the Assessing Office.

Jim Marshall – 136 Farrington Corner Road

Mr. Marshall sought clarification regarding whether the four lots could later be converted to multi-family housing. The Board clarified that the proposal is for single-family dwellings; however, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are permitted. It was noted that conversion to multi-family housing beyond what is permitted by ordinance would require additional approvals, likely a variance, which would trigger notification to abutters.

In response to Mr. Marshall's broader concerns about potential future use of the lots, the Planning Director explained the Town's zoning amendment process:

- Zoning amendments are typically initiated in the fall (often beginning in September).
- Proposed amendments are reviewed by the Planning Board through public hearings.
- Final proposed amendments are placed on the March Town Meeting ballot for voter approval.

The Planning Director encouraged residents to monitor posted agendas and website notices and to participate in the zoning amendment process if they have concerns about potential changes.

The Board emphasized that the current application must be reviewed under the ordinance as it exists today, and any future changes to allowed uses or density would require voter approval.

Billy Brown – 154 Farrington Corner Road

Mr. Brown expressed concern about differences between yield plans and final proposals and asked how residents can stay informed of future changes or similar developments in the neighborhood.

The Board explained that:

- The yield plan is required to determine the maximum number of lots that could be created under a conservation subdivision and acknowledged that reviewing the multiple layouts can be confusing.
- Conservation subdivisions are permitted under the ordinance.
- The Planning Board must administer the ordinance as written.
- Zoning amendments are reviewed annually, typically beginning in September.
- Residents are encouraged to monitor posted agendas, website notices, and meeting minutes to remain informed of proposals.

Chair Wilkey closed the public hearing portion of the meeting after no additional speakers came forward.

MOTION was made by Jeff Donohoe and seconded by Sam Durfee to approve and find, pursuant to Section 7.5.3(b) of the Hopkinton Zoning Ordinance, that the modified Conservation Subdivision design will not be detrimental to public health, safety, or welfare and is consistent with the purpose and objectives of the Conservation Subdivision Ordinance. Motion carried in the affirmative (Fredyma, Donohoe, Dapice, Hardenbergh, Durfee, and Wilkey).

Phasing Requirement Waiver (Section 7.10.C)

Under the ordinance, subdivisions of three or more lots are typically required to be phased over multiple years. Because this proposal includes four lots, the ordinance would ordinarily require phasing over two years.

The applicant requested a waiver of this requirement. Mr. McKinnon explained that the intent is to offer the lots as design-build opportunities rather than speculative construction. While construction could naturally occur over more than one year, the applicant did not want a regulatory restriction to delay purchasers if multiple buyers were prepared to proceed within the same timeframe.

The Planning Director noted that the Board had previously granted a similar waiver for the four-lot Maple Street subdivision since no new subdivisions had been approved in many years.

Stewardship Fee (Open Space Management Fee)

The Conservation Commission recommended that a stewardship fee be waived because the Town will own the open space lot and it will be managed by the Conservation Commission. However, discussion clarified that the Planning Board may not have authority to waive such fees independently and that any fee waiver would ultimately fall under the jurisdiction of the Select Board when considering acceptance of the open space parcel.

The Planning Director will forward the Conservation Commission's recommendation to the Select Board for consideration during acceptance of the open space lot (Lot 14).

MOTION was made by Jeff Donohoe and seconded by Rob Dapice to approve the waiver of the phasing requirements pursuant to Section 7.10(c) of the Hopkinton Zoning Ordinance. Motion carried in the affirmative (Fredyma, Donohoe, Dapice, Hardenbergh, Durfee, and Wilkey).

MOTION was made by Sam Durfee and seconded by Jeff Donohoe to grant conditional approval of the Conservation Subdivision proposing four residential lots and one lot for open space conservation under Section VII of the Hopkinton Zoning Ordinance, subject to the following conditions, based on the application materials submitted, the findings contained in the Planning Director's report, and testimony presented at the hearing:

a) **Conveyance of Open Space to the Town**

At the time of recording the final subdivision plat, the designated open space lot shall be conveyed to the Town of Hopkinton. The Planning Board finds that an acceptable deed to the Town may be used in lieu of a formal conservation easement, provided that the deed permanently restricts further development and subdivision of the open space lot. The deed specifies that the land is to be used for conservation purposes, including, but not limited to, timber and forest management, passive recreation by the general public, wildlife habitat improvement, watershed protection, and outdoor and environmental education. The open space shall be managed by the Hopkinton Conservation Commission.

b) **Posting Restrictions**

At the discretion of the Hopkinton Conservation Commission, the open space lot, or portions thereof, may be posted against hunting or trapping, consistent with conservation management objectives and public safety considerations.

c) **Boundary Monumentation**

All house lot corner bounds (Lots 14.1 through 14.4) abutting the designated open space lot (Lot 14) shall be set upon approval of the subdivision. Boundary lines between the bounds shall be clearly blazed and painted.

d) **Identification of Conservation Land**

Plastic or metal tags identifying the land as Conservation Land shall be installed periodically on trees along the boundary lines of the open space lot, in a manner acceptable to the Hopkinton Conservation Commission.

e) **Deed References for Residential Lots**

The deeds for Lots 14.1 through 14.4 shall reference the open space deed restrictions and identify the abutting land as permanently protected conservation land.

f) **Deed Revisions**

The applicant shall work with staff to revise the deed for the open space lot (Lot 14) to incorporate revisions recommended by Planning Board Counsel.

Motion carried in the affirmative (Fredyma, Donohoe, Dapice, Hardenbergh, Durfee, and Wilkey).

V. Other Business/Discussion Items.

- Planning Board Work Plan 2026 – The Board discussed prioritization of zoning ordinance amendments and other planning initiatives for 2026.

Affordable Housing Ordinance

Rob Dapice revisited prioritizing revisions to the Affordable Housing ordinance. Upon further consideration, he expressed concern that advancing revisions to the Affordable Housing ordinance at the same time as the recommended Housing Committee proposals — particularly amendments to the Table of Uses — could create confusion among voters and undermine support for changes. He noted that substantial revisions to the Affordable Housing chapter will be complex and potentially controversial.

After discussion, the Board agreed that revisions to the Affordable Housing ordinance should be deferred until 2027. Several members acknowledged that while the ordinance may benefit from clarification or modernization, attempting multiple major housing-related changes in the same warrant cycle could create confusion and a risk of failed support.

Conservation Subdivision Ordinance

The Board agreed that revisions to the Conservation Subdivision Ordinance should be a priority in 2026 as review of applications has been recurring. Discussion included:

- Confusion among abutters regarding the difference between yield plans and conservation layout plans;
- Density calculations and bonus provisions;
- Clarification of Special Use Permit versus Conditional Use Permit;
- Streamlining the review process where possible;
- Refinement of ordinance language to better reflect community preferences regarding development patterns.

Solar Ordinance

The Planning Director indicated that updates to the Solar Ordinance would likely be straightforward. The Town has already undergone a SolSmart audit, and recommended adjustments primarily involve modernization and removal of outdated

requirements. Amendments to the Solar Ordinance were characterized as “low-hanging fruit” that could likely be completed efficiently.

Manufactured Housing Parks - Expansions

The Board briefly discussed statutory requirements that municipalities provide reasonable and realistic opportunities for expansion of manufactured housing parks. While no current proposals are pending, the Planning Director suggested reviewing how other communities structure such provisions to ensure compliance with state law.

Board members agreed that while this issue is not urgent, and the Town must comply with current law regardless of ordinance language, the topic should remain on the work plan.

Private/Class VI Roads

The Board discussed whether revisions to the Town’s ordinances and regulations should include provisions for private roads and a policy for Class VI roads.

The Planning Director noted that questions continue to arise during development review regarding the construction of public roads, private roads, and upgrades or use of Class VI roads.

Board members acknowledged that recent applications have highlighted policy questions about whether taxpayers should bear the maintenance cost of short dead-end roads serving a limited number of residences, as compared to private road models where homeowners assume maintenance responsibility.

It was noted that while the Board may not be able to mandate private road construction, at this time, the Planning Director should review other jurisdictions and provide language for possible revisions to the Subdivision Regulations.

There was also discussion concerning RSA 674:41, which outlines the process for applicants seeking to build on Class VI and private roads. Recognizing that RSA 674:41 already addresses the procedure for issuance of permits on Class VI and private roads, it was a consensus that developing and recommending a separate Class VI road policy at this time may be redundant and is not a priority for 2026.

General Prioritization Summary

By consensus, the Board’s 2026 priorities will be:

1. Conservation Subdivision Ordinance revisions (primary focus)
2. Coordination with Housing Committee proposals (Table of Uses amendments)
3. Subdivision/Site Plan Regulations revisions (clean-up)
4. Solar Ordinance updates
5. Research on Manufactured Housing Park expansion provisions
6. Subdivision Regulations private road standards
7. Legislative monitoring and responsive amendments as needed

Note: The Natural Resource chapter of the Master Plan is currently being coordinated by the Planning Director. The work will be conducted in collaboration with the Conservation Commission and the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission.

Revisions to the Affordable Housing ordinance will be deferred to a future warrant cycle (likely 2027–2028).

- Committee and Staff Reports.

The Planning Director provided an update on the work of the Housing Committee at the request of the Planning Board representative Dean Owens who was not present at the Planning Board meeting.

She reported that the Committee has identified three potential zoning amendments contained in the Barrett Planning Group report. One previously discussed proposal — increasing the number of residential units in the R-4 District — has been removed from consideration for now.

The Housing Committee is:

- Evaluating the pros and cons of the amendments that they are to recommend.
- Conducting outreach to other communities to compare similar zoning provisions.
- Preparing an impact statement analyzing potential effects of proposed amendments.

VI. Adjournment. Chair Wilkey declared the meeting adjourned at 7:15 PM. The next regularly scheduled meeting/hearing is March 17, 2026, at 5:30 PM, at the Hopkinton Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Robertson
Planning Director