Meeting Minutes

Town of Dunstable – Committee Meeting
Date: 2/11/26
Time: 6:40 PM
Location: 511 Main St, Dunstable, MA 01827
Attendees: Jeff Rosen (Chair), Linda Scully, Annika Selinger

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1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 6:40 PM.

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2. Approval of Previous Minutes

Previous meeting minutes will be reviewed next meeting.

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3. Responsible Lighting

- Discussion regarding documentation related to Responsible Lighting.
- Waiting on feedback from town administrator.
- Once received, it will be forwarded to the Select Board, as it has already been approved by this committee.

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4. Zoning – Commercial Vehicles in R1 District

- Proposal previously approved by the committee was sent to the Planning Board.
- Planning Board meeting scheduled for **Tuesday, February 17 at 6:30 PM** (item expected around 6:40–6:45 PM).
- Attendance optional; meeting expected to be in person (virtual possibility unknown).
- Proposal relates to number of commercial vehicles permitted in residential zones.
- Anticipation that the Planning Board may not support the proposal.

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5. Comparative Zoning Research – Business Districts

A comprehensive review of zoning bylaws in surrounding and comparable towns was conducted to evaluate:

- Uses allowed **by right**
- Uses allowed by **special permit**
- Structural differences (table-based vs. cumulative/roll-up systems)

Key Observations:

- Many towns use zoning tables, allowing more flexibility and non-linear use permissions.
- Dunstable's zoning is cumulative ("roll-up") — uses allowed in lower districts automatically apply to higher districts.

Dunstable Business District Overview:

- **B1 – Retail Business District**
    - Very limited parcels.
    - Allows by right: retail shops, offices, post office, crafters, restaurants.
- **B2 – Business District**
- **B3 – Expanded Commercial District (near Route 3)**

Current Special Permit Uses:

- Refer to zoning bylaws.

Comparative Findings (Other Towns):

Commonly allowed **by right** in comparable towns:

- Offices (including medical)
- Hotels/motels
- R&D facilities
- Light manufacturing (in expanded districts)

Marijuana and breweries/distilleries establishments are typically allowed by special permit.

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6. Proposed Zoning Recommendations (Preliminary Discussion)

B2 Recommendations:

- Consider moving to **by right**:
    - Motor vehicle repair/service
    - Light equipment rental
    - Medical offices
    - Possibly breweries/distilleries
- Maintain contractor yards as special permit.
- Add marijuana uses (likely special permit).

B3 Recommendations:

- Consider moving to **by right**:
    - Research & Development
    - Office buildings
- Explore allowing distribution/warehouse facilities (currently not permitted).
- Add marijuana uses.

Committee noted need to consider neighborhood impact and whether members would be comfortable living near proposed uses.

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7. Distribution Warehouse Opportunity

- Presentation referenced regarding large distribution warehouse development in Tyngsborough (M3 development near Route 3).
- Estimated significant annual tax revenue (reported example: ~$1M/year in property tax revenue).
- Observed that Dunstable's B3 district near Route 3 has similar geographic advantages.
- Discussion about potential economic development strategy:

    - First step: amend zoning to allow distribution warehouses.
    - Then assess land ownership and developer interest.
- Concern raised regarding access roads and truck routing.
- Further research and discussion deferred to next meeting.

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8. Marijuana Tax Revenue Research

Research conducted using Massachusetts Division of Local Services data (2020–2026) to evaluate cannabis tax revenue in comparable towns.

Observations:

- Most towns charge the full 3% local option tax.
- Revenue varies significantly by town.
- Pepperell revenue higher than expected.
- Some towns generate substantial annual revenue (~$200K+).
- Groton comparatively lower (~$16K).

Action Proposed:

- Share findings with Select Board.
- Recommend revisiting cannabis sales in town.
- Consider zoning location (B3 preferred over central business area).
- Local tax adoption and zoning approval are separate actions.

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9. Meals Tax / Restaurant Revenue Discussion

Meals tax data from comparable towns was reviewed.

Observations:

- Larger towns generate substantial revenue.
- Smaller towns (e.g., Shirley) demonstrate measurable benefit even with limited restaurants.
- Dunstable currently limited to Farmhouse Café and Dunkin'.

- Estimated local meals tax on $1M revenue ≈ $7,500 annually.
- Discussion on positioning Dunstable as a potential destination (e.g., farm-to-table concept).

Restaurant Survey Discussion

- "Dining in Dunstable" survey drafted (by Kathy).
- Committee reviewed survey structure and potential refinements.
- Concern raised about:
    - Ensuring survey is useful for potential developers.
    - Avoiding unintended opposition mobilization.
- Noted that previous town surveys showed strong support for restaurants.
- Question added to survey:
    - "If you dine out, how long are you willing to drive to get to a restaurant?"
        - Less than 15 minutes
        - 15–30 minutes
        - 30–45 minutes
        - More than 45 minutes

Rationale:

- Travel time may demonstrate regional draw potential.
- Data could support argument that a Dunstable restaurant could attract customers from a 30-minute radius.

Survey will not be released yet; committee will wait for Kathy to present in person and provide input before approval.

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10. Next Steps

- Email zoning research to committee for review.
- Attend Planning Board meeting before submitting formal zoning recommendations.
- Share cannabis tax data table with Select Board.

- Continue evaluating warehouse feasibility and land ownership.
- Refine restaurant survey with developer-focused framing.
- Follow up with restaurant developer contact (outstanding action item).

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11. Upcoming Meeting Dates

Availability discussed:

- Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays generally workable for some members.
- Tuesdays difficult due to standing commitments.
- Potential dates discussed:
    - Monday the 23rd
    - Thursday the 26th
    - Monday the 2nd
    - Wednesday the 3rd

Final date to be confirmed via email after reviewing member schedules.

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12. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:40pm.