OFFICE OF THE
PLANNING BOARD
TOWN HALL, 511 MAIN STREET
DUNSTABLE, MA 01827-1313
(978) 649-4514 FAX (978) 649-8893
planning@dunstable-ma.gov

Dunstable Planning Board Minutes
Tuesday, April 21, 2026

Approved: May 18, 2026

At 6:31pm, Chair Joe Vlcek called the meeting to order.
Members present: Alan Chaney, Jeff Pallis, Joan Simmons, and Jim Wilkie.
Members absent: None

Meeting held: Dunstable Town Hall, 511 Main Street – lower level, Grange Room.

Public Hearing: Eight Proposed amendments to "Zoning Bylaws of the Town of Dunstable"

a. Delete section 6.2.1, Accessory Dwelling Units
b. Amend to add Section 11.5.1, Accessory Dwelling Units
c. Amend Section 11.1, Dimensional Requirements Chart
d. Amend Section 29.5.2, Community Housing Administration
e. Amendment requesting parcel (12-50-0) designation as B-1 Retail
f. Amend Section 10, Subsection 10.2, Uses Permitted Subject to Special Permit of the Planning Board
g. Amend Section 9, Subsection 9.3, Uses Permitted by Special Permit of the Planning Board
h. Amend Section 30, Subsection 30.D(4), Eligible Types of Marijuana Establishments and Applicable Zoning Districts

Chair Joe opened the duly posted public hearing at 6:31pm on the eight proposed amendments to the Dunstable Zoning Bylaw. Joe reviewed the hearing procedure and process. The Administrative Assistant read the full legal notice, published once in the Lowell Sun on April 4th and a second time in the Groton Herald on April 10th. Members of the public were given the opportunity to comment on each article, and hearing procedures were followed. No formal objections, petitions, or written correspondence from the public were submitted.

a., b., c. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) Amendments

Chair Joe reviewed proposed amendments updating the Town's Accessory Dwelling Unit bylaw to comply with recent state legislation establishing ADUs as a protected use by right. He explained that the existing bylaw relied on a Special Permit process, which conflicts with

state requirements. The revised bylaw replaces Special Permit approval with Planning Board Site Plan Review and reduces the maximum ADU size from 1,200 square feet to 900 square feet. Additional discussion addressed limitations on parking, prohibition of short-term rentals, owner-occupancy, prohibition of separate driveway curb cuts, and the importance of maintaining neighborhood character while achieving state compliance.

Chair Joe sought questions or comments from the public in attendance.

Several residents asked questions seeking clarification regarding how ADUs would function under the proposed amendments. Topics raised included:

- **Water supply and well capacity**, particularly in areas of Town with limited groundwater yield, and how adequacy of potable water would be evaluated for ADUs.
- **Septic system requirements**, including confirmation that Title 5 standards would continue to apply and be enforced for ADUs based on total bedroom count.
- **Occupancy and tenancy**, with questions about whether ADUs were limited to family members or "in-law" use; the Board clarified that tenant occupancy is permitted.
- **Driveway access and parking**, specifically whether an ADU could have a separate driveway or mailbox. The Board explained that the bylaw prohibits separate driveway curb cuts but allows shared driveway access, and that mailbox placement is governed by the U.S. Postal Service.
- **Building configuration**, including whether freestanding ADUs are permitted and confirmation of applicable setbacks and dimensional requirements.

Planning Board members responded that ADUs remain subject to existing **Board of Health regulations**, **Building Code requirements**, and **zoning setbacks**, and emphasized that the revised bylaw is intended to comply with state law while maintaining neighborhood character.

Chair Joe closed this portion of the public hearing.

- Alan made a motion to recommend favorable action by Town Meeting to delete Section 6.2.1 Accessory Dwelling Units. Jim seconded the motion. – Motion passed unanimously (5–0).

- Alan made a motion to recommend favorable action by Town Meeting to add a new Section 11.1.2 Accessory Dwelling Units. Jim seconded the motion. – Motion passed unanimously (5–0).

APPROVED

- Alan made a motion to recommend favorable action by Town Meeting to amend Section 11.1, Dimensional Requirements. Jim seconded the motion. – Motion passed unanimously (5–0).

d. Section 29.5.2, Community Housing Administration – Affordable Housing In-Lieu Fees

Chair Joe reviewed a proposed amendment to change the timing of collection of affordable housing in-lieu fees from issuance of an occupancy permit to issuance of a building permit. Board members expressed concern regarding valuation uncertainty prior to sale and the need for flexibility in negotiated outcomes. Town Counsel and the Town Administrator recommended that no action be taken at this time, allowing for further evaluation.

Chair Joe sought questions or comments from the public in attendance. No comments were made. Joe closed this portion of the public hearing.

- Alan made a motion to recommend no action to Town Meeting. Jim seconded the motion. – Motion passed unanimously (5–0).

e. Rezoning Request – 174 Pleasant Street (R-1 to B-1)

Property owner Geoff Schembechler presented a request to rezone 174 Pleasant Street from Residential (R-1) to Business (B-1) to allow construction of a 3,600 square-foot single-story retail building. The 1.38-acre property abuts the Town's designated Mixed Used District (MUD). A site plan prepared by Waterman Design was reviewed, demonstrating compliance with zoning setbacks, septic requirements, and parking standards. Board discussion focused on compatibility with surrounding uses, pedestrian connectivity, and support expressed by the Economic Development Committee.

Chair Joe sought questions or comments from the public in attendance. No comments were made. Chair Joe closed this portion of the public hearing.

- Alan made a motion to recommend favorable action by Town Meeting for 174 Pleasant Street to be redesignated from R-1 to B-1. Jim seconded the motion. – Motion passed unanimously (5–0).

f. Uses Permitted by Special Permit, Cold Storage Warehouses – (B-3 District)

Jeff Rosen, Chair of the Economic Development Committee (EDC), presented a proposal to allow cold storage warehouses as a Special Permit use within the B-3 District. Discussion addressed regional demand for food and agricultural cold storage, reduced traffic impacts compared to distribution centers, access to Route 3, availability of existing Tyngsboro utility infrastructure near Blodgett Street, and potential tax revenue benefits.

Chair Joe sought questions or comments from the public in attendance. No substantive public comments were made. Chair Joe closed this portion of the public hearing.

APPROVED

- Alan made a motion to recommend favorable action by Town Meeting to amend section 10, subsection 10.2, uses permitted by Special Permit of the Planning Board. Jim seconded the motion. – Motion passed unanimously (5–0).

g. Uses Permitted by Special Permit, Breweries, Brewery/Taprooms, and Distilleries

Jeff Rosen, Chair of the EDC, presented a zoning amendment to allow breweries, brewery/taprooms, and distilleries by Special Permit primarily in the B-2 District, with applicability to the B-3 District under zoning hierarchy. Discussion included examples from surrounding communities, potential local tax revenue, alignment with resident survey feedback, and concerns regarding site suitability.

Chair Joe sought questions or comments from the public in attendance. No substantive public comments were made. Chair Joe closed this portion of the public hearing.

- Alan made a motion to recommend favorable action by Town Meeting to amend section 9, subsection 9.3, uses permitted by Special Permit of the Planning Board. Jim seconded the motion. – Motion passed by a vote of 4–0–1, with Alan Chaney abstaining.

h. Eligible Types of Marijuana Establishments & Applicable Zoning Districts

Jeff Rosen, Chair of the EDC, presented a proposal to allow marijuana retail establishments by Special Permit in the B-1, B-2, and B-3 Districts. Extensive discussion addressed potential economic benefits from local option taxes, regulatory controls, comparison to surrounding communities, and concerns related to community character, enforcement challenges, and personal opposition. Members noted that marijuana retail is legal under Massachusetts law; however, a majority of the Board expressed reservations about endorsing retail establishments within Dunstable.

Chair Joe sought questions or comments from the public in attendance. No substantive public comments were made. Chair Joe closed this portion of the public hearing.

- Alan made a motion to recommend favorable action by Town Meeting to amend Section 30, Subsection 30.D(4), Eligible Types of Marijuana Establishments and Applicable Zoning Districts. Jim seconded the motion. – Motion failed by a vote of 2–3.

- Alan made a motion to close the public hearing on all eight zoning bylaw amendments at 8:10PM. Joan seconded the motion. – Motion passed unanimously

APPROVED

Meeting Minutes – April 6, 2026

- Alan made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 6th meeting. Jim 2nd the motion. – Motion passed unanimously.

Bills, Task Orders and Payroll

- Jeff made a motion to sign off on one payroll. Jim seconded the motion. – Motion passed unanimously.
- Alan made a motion to approve a Groton Herald invoice for $141.25 to advertise the zoning amendments public hearing. Jim seconded the motion. – Motion passed unanimously.
- Jim made a motion to approve the Administrator's requested $75.40 reimbursement for mileage to attend the CPTC conference in Worcester on March 21st. Alan seconded the motion. – Motion passed unanimously.

The Board discussed cancellation of the May 4, 2026, meeting due to a lack of agenda items, subject to change should new business arise. The Administrator will coordinate with the Chair by April 29th to determine meeting necessity.

Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of the meeting

Chair Announcement

Chair Joe announced his resignation from the Planning Board after term completion due to relocation to western Massachusetts, citing his upcoming professional life retirement. Board members thanked Chair Vlcek for his years of service and dedication to the Town of Dunstable.

Jim moved to close the meeting at 9:20PM. Alan seconded the motion. – Motion passed unanimously.

The next meeting scheduled is on Monday, May 4, 2026, at 6:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol A. Rock
Administrative Coordinator
Dunstable Planning Board

APPROVED