OFFICE OF THE
PLANNING BOARD
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Planning Board Minutes
Monday, January 5, 2026

Approved: **January 20, 2026**

At 6:30pm, Chair Joe Vlcek called the meeting to order.
Members present: Alan Chaney, Jeff Pallis, Joan Simmons and Jim Wilkie
Members absent: none

Meeting held: At the Dunstable Town Hall, 511 Main Street, lower level

Rezoning Request — 174 Pleasant Street

Property owners, Geoffry Schembechler and spouse Amy, were in attendance to present an inquiry regarding rezoning 174 Pleasant Street from its current R-1 zoning to Business 1 (B1). The property consists of approximately 1.38 acres with roughly 200 feet of frontage on Pleasant Street. The parcel is located adjacent to the Post Office and the existing Mixed Used District (MUD) and planned commercial development.

The owner described a conceptual proposal to develop a small-scale commercial building, approximately 3,600–4,000 square feet, similar in scale to the Post Office. Potential uses discussed included:

- A café or small restaurant
- A country store
- Retail space for locally produced goods and artisans

The owner emphasized that the intent is to create a high-quality, architecturally attractive development with thoughtful landscaping, lighting, and signage that would enhance the appearance of the area and align with community character.

Recent resident survey data and Town planning goals were cited indicating resident support for new local businesses and economic development in appropriate locations, particularly within or adjacent to existing commercial areas.

The Planning Board discussed the following key points:

- **Location Suitability:**
  Board members agreed the site is well-suited for potential business zoning due to its proximity to the Post Office and existing commercial uses. Members noted this would not constitute spot zoning.

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- **Zoning Considerations:**
  The Board reviewed permitted uses under the B1 zoning district and noted that while B1 allows a broad range of uses, it is not without restrictions. The MUD District overlay would also continue to apply.
- **Design and Community Impact:**
  Strong emphasis was placed on architectural quality, landscaping, lighting design, and signage. Board members stressed the importance of avoiding intrusive lighting or signage and ensuring the project enhances the streetscape.
- **Infrastructure Considerations:**
  Septic system capacity, stormwater management, and parking layout were discussed, particularly if food service is proposed. Board members encouraged early consultation with an engineer.
- **Traffic and Access:**
  The Board did not anticipate significant traffic impacts given the existing Post Office use. The possibility of coordinated access with the Post Office property was discussed.
- **Public Process:**
  The Board reviewed the rezoning process, noting that:
  - A public hearing before the Planning Board is required.
  - Rezoning requires a two-thirds vote at Town Meeting.
  - The Planning Board must issue a report to Town Meeting, either supporting, opposing, or taking no position on the request.

Board members emphasized that while rezoning can be requested without a detailed development plan, providing clear conceptual plans and narrative detail will significantly improve the likelihood of public and Town Meeting support.

No formal vote was taken. However, Board members expressed general support for the applicant pursuing the rezoning request, contingent upon:

- Completion of the required public hearing
- Submission of detailed conceptual plans addressing design, landscaping, lighting, parking, and septic feasibility
- Coordination with town staff regarding scheduling, notice requirements, and warrant deadlines

The Board agreed that moving forward with the rezoning inquiry is reasonable and appropriate.

Planning Board 2025 Annual Report

The Board discussed the draft annual report and recommended a clerical correction regarding the Administrator's contact number extension. The phone number listed in the first paragraph was outdated and should be corrected to Extension 9.

- Alan made a motion to approve the 2025 Planning Board Annual Report and send it to the Town Administrator for inclusion in the Town Report. Jim 2nd the motion. – Motion passed unanimously.

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Reschedule Feb. 16th PB Meeting due to President's Day Holiday

- Alan made a motion to reschedule the February 16th meeting to February 17th. Jim 2nd the motion. – Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Minutes – December 15, 2025

- Alan made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 1st meeting. Jim 2nd the motion. – Motion passed unanimously.

Bills, Task Orders and Payroll

No task orders or bills.

- Alan made a motion to sign off on one payroll. Jim 2nd the motion. – Motion passed unanimously.

Topics Not Anticipated by the Chair 48 Hours in Advance

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Bylaw

The Chair reported receiving comments from Town Counsel, Brian Faulk, regarding the proposed ADU bylaw. Due to time constraints and recent scheduling conflicts, the Board did not review the comments in detail during this meeting. It was determined that the comments would be forwarded to Board members for review, and the discussion would be continued at a future meeting.

Flashing Crosswalk Signals

The Board discussed the potential installation of flashing pedestrian crosswalk warning signals in the Town Center. Members clarified that the proposed devices are yellow flashing warning lights, activated by a push button, and not full traffic control signals. The lights flash for a short duration to alert motorists to pedestrians and then shut off automatically.

Board members noted that similar systems are being used successfully in surrounding communities and that the intent is to improve pedestrian safety without significantly increasing visual clutter or traffic disruption. General discussion followed regarding increasing traffic volumes and pedestrian safety concerns throughout town.

- No motions or votes were taken under this item topic.

A member moved to close the meeting at 7:55 PM. A member seconded the motion. – Motion passed unanimously.

The next meeting scheduled is on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 6:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Pallis, Dunstable Planning Board Member

APPROVED