

**TOWN OF EXETER
PLANNING BOARD
NOWAK ROOM
10 FRONT STREET
NOVEMBER 20, 2025
APPROVED MINUTES
7:00 PM**

I. PRELIMINARIES:

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT BY ROLL CALL: Vice-Chair Aaron Brown, Jennifer Martel, John Grueter, Marty Kennedy, Alternate Dean Hubbard, Alternate Sam MacLeod and Select Board Representative Nancy Belanger.

STAFF PRESENT:

II. CALL TO ORDER: Acting Chair Brown called the meeting to order at 7 PM, introduced the members, and activated Alternates Dean Hubbard and Sam MacLeod.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Administrative Work Session for the purpose of discussing potential zoning amendments for the 2026 Town Warrant

A. Ben Hodsdon and Silas Richards (residents) proposed ordinance amendments for:

5.6 OFF-STREET PARKING

5.6.1 In all districts, in connection with every manufacturing business, institutional, recreational, residential or any other use, there may be provided, at the time any new building or structure is erected, up to the maximum number of off-street parking spaces for automobiles in accordance with the off-street parking schedule and requirements set forth herein. 5.6.2 Any change of use of the premises, or expansion of building size, to non-residential use and/or multi-family use, or to another substantially different non-residential use, or any expansion of the number of such multi-family or non-residential uses, may reduce (or increase up to the number of spaces in accordance with the off street parking schedule) off-street parking based on the needs of that use. 5.6.3 Off-Street Parking: A. Size and Access: Each off-street parking space shall be rectangular, nine feet by nineteen feet exclusive of access drives or aisles, and shall be of usable shape and condition. The Planning Board may grant a reduction in the size of the space if circumstances on the site, such as perimeter parking which allows overhang, can be provided. B. Maximum Number of Parking Spaces: The maximum number of off street parking spaces, to the extent of floor area devoted to each specific use, shall be as set forth in the Off-Street Parking Schedule 5.6.6. For sites with multi-uses, applicants are encouraged to utilize shared parking as defined in Article 5.6.4. 1. Alternative Parking Calculation: If the proposed use is not represented or if the

applicant believes the maximum number of spaces are not sufficient for the specific proposed use as shown in Table 5.6.6 (Off-Street Parking Schedule), the applicant may utilize the most recent data available from the Institute of Transportation Engineers' (ITE) Parking Generation Guide, and/or actual field data collected from a comparable trip/parking generator (i.e., comparable in size, location and setting) to determine the number of necessary parking spaces. This data will be presented in a summary table such that assumptions on trip generation and parking calculations arrived at by the engineer are fully understandable and approved by the Planning Board. 2. Phased Parking Option: If approved by the Planning Board, the Applicant may utilize a phasing option in which the parking is indicated on the plan but not all initially constructed. The plan must show how parking space construction is to be phased, depicting the parking to be built at the onset of the project and what may be built if needed at a later date. C. Off-Street Parking: Off-street parking areas shall be screened from adjoining residential uses or districts. See Article 5.8.1 General Landscaping Regulations – Unenclosed Uses. 5.6.4 Shared Parking: Shared parking is parking on a single site utilized by two or more uses in a 24 hour period. Shared parking recognizes complimentary parking characteristics that may be unique for each case and for the specific users of the site. 5.6.5 The Planning Board may grant reductions in the size of required off-street parking spaces in conjunction with its site plan review. The applicant must first submit with the proposal, a parking plan that adheres to 5.6.3 A and B. The intent of this provision is to grant discretionary review authority to the Planning Board in order to promote: A. Better utilization of parking areas, or B. A reduction in impervious surface, and C. Conservation of open space lands and buffers. In its discretion, the planning board shall require specific information detailing user parking needs and schedules. The Board may also require parking lot buffers and /or landscaping. 5.6.6 Off-Street Parking Schedule

Mr. Hodsdon noted that providing too many destinations far apart make people drive and need more parking and lots continue to get bigger at more cost to the taxpayers for roads, utilities, pipes, pumps, sidewalks, resurfacing and repairs down the road.

Acting Chair Brown noted that the Board defeated a proposal on Portsmouth Avenue recently and parking was one reason. He noted density and parking general limit the size and scope of the project. He noted the Board has worked with phased parking but tries to work with the use in front of us. One spot for single family is pretty limiting.

Mr. Grueter noted that people aren't getting rid of cars, they are getting more cars and to have parking is important; people often won't buy if there is no parking and there is no subway system. Less parking may create more units but they will get filled up one way or another as the town grows. He noted he managed property and every time they resurfaced the lot they needed to add more parking. He questioned where else could we have shared parking.

Mr. Kennedy noted he was in favor of shared parking and switching from minimal parking to maximum parking is a change that isn't going to happen over night but worth discussing.

Ms. Belanger noted she works out of town and understands the lack of public transportation and challenge getting to work. She noted the town is trying to add bike and pedestrian access.

Ms. Martel noted she was intrigued by the idea and would like to hear what other towns are doing. She has seen instances where there is four spaces for one townhouse, a lot of parking is in excess and she thinks it's a great idea. Portsmouth has maximums and minimums.

Mr. Hodsdon noted the unit he lives in is part of a 96-unit development with no bike racks and he would like to see a requirement to provide them with a shelter from rain and snow where they can be locked securely.

Silas Richards of Lincoln Street indicated that starting the process now is important and downtown can be dangerous sometimes for bicycle transit which is the only means for some to get where they are going. Leaving bikes out in the weather create mechanical issues. There could be exemptions like warehouses, and garages could be counted.

MAXIMUM PARKING SPACES (keep the same requirement numbers)

5.6.8 Bicycle Parking Off-street parking for bikes shall be provided as follows: ● Multi-family residential: 1 space per unit for the first 3 units in a development, 1 space per every 5 units thereafter or portion thereof. ● Other developments except those exempted in article 5.6.8.A: At least 3 bike spaces per commercial establishment. ■ Larger establishments may be required to provide more at the discretion of the Planning Board. ■ For changes of use in the downtown area, where bicycle parking exists currently, no extra parking needs to be provided. ● For sites with multi-family housing that require more than 3 bike spaces, the bike spaces shall be provided a shelter with a cover or roof. 5.6.8.A The following uses are exempt from these requirements: ● Single family dwelling ● Accessory dwelling unit ● Two-family dwelling ● Assisted living facility ● Medical rehabilitation/nursing home ● Agricultural uses ● Accessory use ● Elderly Congregate Healthcare ● Gasoline or automotive ● Wholesale establishments/warehouses ● Mini storage 5.6.8.B ● Bike racks shall be: located in a convenient and secure location, shall be designed to allow the frame and one wheel to be locked to the rack with a high security, U-shaped shackle lock if both wheels are left on the bicycle, and shall be anchored to a durable surface 6.19.2 MUND Parking Standards A. Maximum Parking Space Standards: a. For both residential and non-residential use, effort shall be made to provide minimal parking in MUND applications, to the extent possible, up to the maximum number of allowed spaces pursuant to Article 5.6.6 Off Street Parking Schedule. B. Alternatives to Providing Off Street Parking: The Planning Board may allow the applicant to provide parking off-site. The applicant must demonstrate, through the use of maps and/or site plans, that the number of spaces is adequate and access will be safe and convenient. 6.19.4 Inclusionary Housing 2. a. Maximum multi-family density in the C-1 District is one unit per 3,500 SF. Maximum multi-family density in the WC District is one unit per 750 SF. MUND removes these density caps and allows for parking requirements, maximum building height, and site constraints to dictate the number of allowable residential units. b. Allowable building height is increased in two of the three C-1 Zoning Districts where an applicant pursues MUND. c. Parking for MUND applications is significantly reduced. Explanation for maximum parking: The goal for this zoning change is to create a maximum number on the amount of parking a project can build. This requirement will not get rid of parking by any means, but simply put a range of what is expected that developers can provide and let the market dictate how much parking is actually needed. In my mind, it puts the burden of figuring this out on the developer because parking can make or break projects. In the free market, the developer won't provide

too much parking because it is costly to build and maintain, and they won't provide too little because no one will buy the units. Removing the existing requirements can also allow for more flexibility of parking in projects, and allow them to utilize underused parking in places all over town, especially for guest parking and smaller commercial uses in residential areas. Limiting parking can allow for the creation of more affordable units by reducing project costs, stormwater maintenance costs, and land clearing. It can be better for our environment and open space by limiting how many trees must be cut down to facilitate parking for the development. It is more aesthetically pleasing and creates a better walking environment to have less open land in downtown dedicated to parking. We have seen from the Downtown Parking and Flow Analysis done by Stantec, that A: at peak utilization, downtown parking is only 57% utilized, and B: The parking required by the current Exeter zoning was higher than the ITE observed parking use rate for all uses studied. Explanation for added required bicycle parking: In order to follow the path that the Town has established in the "Master Plan" and "Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan," we should continue to promote biking as a form of transportation and not just recreation. In order to do so, bikers should have places to store their vehicle at their place of residence, place of work, or where they intend to visit in town. I live in an apartment building of around 100 units. We have zero bike infrastructure, and folks who live here frequently store their bikes on their 4th story balconies, leave bikes chained up to meters outside the building, or leave them in their cars. It should not have to be this way. All developers should be mandated to provide a safe, comfortable space for people to store and park their bicycles, because generally, they tend to ignore this important mode of transportation in their plans to develop. It is not an expensive amenity to provide compared to the overall cost of some of these projects, but it can make a huge impact to people who will be living there. In terms of the verbiage for this amendment, the structure was taken from how Portsmouth regulates bicycle parking. However, I took it a step further and required developers of large scale mixed-use and multi-family projects to provide covered parking to protect bikes from rain, snow, and other harsh New England weather. Explanation: Reducing front yard setbacks to 0 feet in C-1, C-2, NP, and WC districts. Reducing Lot Width, Minimum Lot Area, Increasing Maximum Building Coverage. Though this important change already exists within the MUND regulations, I propose bringing this to all applications in these districts. I will start by saying that the most popular area in Exeter is our beautiful downtown, where the buildings come up to the sidewalk, parking is on the street or in behind the buildings, and street trees line a wide sidewalk for a pedestrian focused environment. This is how development and redevelopment should be modeled all across town. Creating arbitrary front setbacks for lots forces developers to create "green space" in the fronts of their property, but this "green space" is widely unusable for patrons of businesses, or people living on the property. Not only this, but front setbacks shift the entire development towards the rear of the property, where existing wooded areas might needlessly be taken down to facilitate certain aspects of the development. Front setbacks also encourage projects to put parking between sidewalks and the business, creating a disconnect for people walking there. With a zero front setback, projects will put businesses closer to sidewalks, allow for minimal but usable front yard space, and delegate parking to the rear of the building or to the street in order to create a more inviting, aesthetically pleasing front side of the property. Fronting buildings on or near the sidewalk creates a connection with the street and benefits both the businesses and the customers by creating a more attractive, less hostile environment. In the study done by the firm Urban3 a few years ago in town, it is clear that the properties in downtown that front the sidewalk and utilize as much of the property for businesses and residences as possible, pay the most taxes per acre, and are thus the most profitable for the town. The C-1 district is a great place to focus on site constraint reforms because the Lincoln Street

corridor and parts of Front Street already follow this development pattern, and are generally successful. The WC district primarily follows the 0 foot setback currently. The C-2 district on Portsmouth Ave is up for street redesign and complete streets on the CIP. The NP district along High Street is very car-oriented in its current state, but given its proximity to the rec center and many key businesses, presents an interesting opportunity to expand pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, as well as housing. For all C-2 districts in this scenario, the minimum lot area, frontage, lot width, and setbacks were all halved. The building coverage was also increased to match both the C-1 and WC districts. There is an opportunity to create less car-centric development in these C-2 areas that are still within reach of neighborhoods by walking to promote a more active community. For instance, the C-2 Epping Road corridor is adjacent to two of the largest housing developments in town (Colcord Pond Residences and Meeting Place Drive), where there are currently next to no places to shop, dine out, or buy groceries. The C-2 Portsmouth Ave corridor is close to the Jady Hill and hospital area neighborhoods and serves as an important connection between these neighborhoods and the restaurants, grocery stores, and shops along the corridor. We should be good stewards as a town and foster these connections, as well as adding less car-centric development along this corridor to match the future complete streets project. Though streets and roads in some of the above districts are less safe at the current moment for pedestrian traffic, redeveloping in this manner allows for a downstream effect of change to push for safety improvements along these corridors. + Setbacks based on building height: <20' = 5' min setback, 20-30' = 10' min setback, 30-40' = 15' min setback, >40' = 20' setback (except for MUND applications) (Rowhouses on abutting lots are excluded from these setback rules) *Height may be allowed up to 50' with a special exception on lots that directly abut the Exeter Train Station and next to lots where buildings of this height currently exist. Explanation: Combine the current R-2 through R-5 districts into one residential district. Remove minimum lot areas, area per dwelling unit restrictions, minimum lot widths and depths. Reduce minimum frontage to 50'. Create a maximum height of 40' (with caveats). Remove minimum front setback (model after MUND) and create side setbacks based on building height or type. Increase maximum building coverage to 50% and reduce open space requirements to 30% for lots with connection to municipal sewer. Allow two-family, multi-family, active adult community, independent living facilities, and assisted living facilities as permitted uses. The reasoning behind these changes is simple. Within the R-2 residential district, these "new" conditions currently exist on a large percentage of lots. There are many multi-family dwellings, many residential buildings have their front porch right up to the sidewalks, plenty of buildings that take up more than 50% of their lot, and residential homes and buildings built right up to side and rear property lines. In fact, I did research on a random assortment of lots within the downtown area R-2 district and found that of the 115 lots I looked at, 9 of them would be legal to build by right today under the current zoning in the R-2 district. That is only 9 lots out of 115 that meet setback requirements, lot size requirements, open space, building coverage, use restrictions, frontage, etc. If 92% of the lots within this sample size are "illegal" lots, we should start to raise the question of what really should be "illegal." If Exeter is serious about addressing the housing affordability crisis, we need to start making more drastic measures to ensure we are building the proper housing to meet the needs of your average Exeter citizen. For virtually every new project in town over the last few years, citizens have stepped up to the podium to voice their concern that the new housing being built is still out of reach for most folks living in the area. Developers are not building "starter homes," but are instead constructing million dollar "market rate" condos, massive single family homes, or large scale apartment complexes. We need to find a way to get more small-scale development built, and removing lot constraints has been a proven method around the US to do this. The National Association of Housing

and Redevelopment Officials found that changing zoning codes to limit things like parking requirements, removing single family restrictive zoning, and removing lot minimums can have a huge effect on the amount of and diversity of housing options within towns and cities.

Acting Chair Brown noted he was open to the idea but would keep it simple and flexible. There could be waivers granted.

Ms. Martel liked the idea of providing cover and noted the formula could result in excess bike spaces in some instances. She would like to see ground surface beneath it be a paved surface. Ms. Martel noted the timing to publish the first notice of amendments and hold the public hearing in December or January. Ms. Belanger noted the next meeting is December 11 and the next after is January 8, 2026.

Mr. Kennedy questioned if some enclosure sizes could become an issue. With larger developments it could be a massive structure based on the proposed formula. He would like more time to look at it.

Ms. Belanger questioned if e-bikes would fit in a standard bike rack.

AMENDMENTS RECOMMENDED BY THE TOWN PLANNER:

Amend Article 2 Definitions by deleting 2.2.3 Accessory Dwelling Unit and replacing it with the following definition: 2.2.3 Accessory Dwelling Unit: A dwelling unit subordinate to a detached one-family dwelling, located either in the principal dwelling or its accessory structure and as delineated in Article 4, Section 4.2 Schedule 1: Permitted Uses, Note #2. 2.2.3 Accessory Dwelling Unit: A residential living unit that is located on a lot containing a single-family dwelling that provides independent living facilities for one or more persons, including provisions for sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation, on the same parcel of land as the principal dwelling unit it accompanies and as delineated in Article 4, Section 4.2 Schedule 1: Permitted Uses, Note #2. Accessory dwelling units may be constructed at the same ~~one~~ as the principal dwelling unit. 2.2.3.1 "Attached unit" means a unit that is within or physically connected to the principal dwelling unit, or completely contained within a preexisting detached structure. 2.2.3.2 "Detached unit" means a unit that is neither within nor physically connected to the principal dwelling unit, nor completely contained within a preexisting detached structure.

Mr. Grueter questioned the ADU size for attached and detached which appeared to be 750 SF.

#2. Amend Article 5, Section 5.6.6 Off-Street Parking Schedule as follows: Dwelling Units 1 for each single-family unit 2 for each multi-family unit of 2+ bedrooms 1 for each multi-family unit of 1 bedroom/studio Amendments #1 & #2 are necessary in order to comply with recent state legislation.

Acting Chair Brown noted this is reactive to the recent legislative changes.

#3. Amend Section 9 of the Shoreland Protection Ordinance by adding new paragraph F and renumbering accordingly, as follows: 9.3.4 Use Regulations F. Permitted Uses: The following uses, to the extent permitted in the underlying zoning district, shall be permitted in the Shoreland Protection District as specified, provided that the proposed use will not cause increases in surface or groundwater

contamination, contribute to soil erosion, or cause a degradation of the shoreland. 1. Agriculture, including grazing, hay production, truck gardening and silage production provided the activity does not impact a prime wetland's 100' buffer. 2. Forestry and tree farming to include the construction of access roads for said purpose provided that the activity does not impact a prime wetland's 100-foot buffer. 3. Wildlife habitat development and management. 4. Recreational uses consistent with the purpose and intent of this article.

DRAFT AMENDMENTS FOR PLANNING BOARD REVIEW & 1st PUBLIC HEARING 5. Conservation area and nature trails. 6. The construction of well water supplies. This amendment is requested by staff in order to ensure that the Shoreland ordinance provides the same level of clarity regarding what is allowed as the Wetlands ordinance

#4: Amend Article 4 – District Regulations, 4.2 Schedule 1: Permitted Uses, by changing animal boarding/kennels from a permitted use in District C-2, C-3, and CT-1 to a use allowed by Special Exception. This amendment is requested by staff, based on observed conflicts when this use is allowed by right and the property abuts a residential zoning district or residential use.

Acting Chair Brown noted it is somewhat troubling to take away rights from a property owner. Mr. MacLeod noted it could protect the rights of many other property owners. He noted all zones would require a special exception.

Mr. Grueter questioned if the reason for the change was missing and Ms. Belanger agreed and recommended asking for a memo or someone to come in and give that explanation.

#5. Amend the Subdivision and Site Plan Review Regulations by adding to Section 7.5 and 7.6 the requirement to show the location of a mail kiosk, as follows: 7.5.16 & 7.6.18 location and description of a mail kiosk as required by and compliant with USPS regulations. This amendment is necessary in order to comply with recent requirements of the United States Postal Service.

#6. Amend the Subdivision and Site Plan Review Regulations by adding a new paragraph to Section 7.2 Professional Standards, as follows: Section 7.2.3 Landscape plans, as required, shall be prepared and stamped by a registered professional landscape architect licensed in the State of New Hampshire. This amendment is recommended by the Planning Board, in order to assure that professional standards are being met in applicable cases.

Mr. Kennedy asked if small projects would still need to.

Acting Chair Brown recommended adding that in specific cases the Board may waive the requirement when deemed appropriate.

MIXED USE NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT (MUND)

Acting Chair Brown read an email from Gwen English who requested after hearing many issues with Portsmouth Ave and Haven Drive that the MUND be more defined.

Ms. Martel recommended scheduling a time and to have planning staff guide the Board. Acting Chair Brown recommended getting it on the agenda ASAP.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

November 6, 2025

Ms. Belanger and Mr. Kennedy recommended edits.

Ms. Belanger motioned to approve the minutes of November 6, 2025, as amended. Ms. Martel seconded the motion. A vote was taken, the motion passed 6-0-1, with Mr. Grueter abstaining.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

- Master Plan Discussion

Mr. Kennedy noted there is a meeting on 12/4 to work on Complete Streets.

- Field Modifications
- Bond and/or Letter of Credit Reductions and Release
- Other

VI. TOWN PLANNER'S ITEMS

VII. CHAIRPERSON'S ITEMS

VIII. PB REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT ON "OTHER COMMITTEE ACTIVITY"

IX. DJOURN

Ms. Belanger motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 PM. Acting Chair Brown seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted.

Daniel Hoijer,
Recording Secretary (Via Exeter TV)