



Planning Board

Meeting Minutes of January 5, 2026

(Meeting was recorded for future broadcast by Pepperell Community Media)

Board Members:

Present: Albert Patenaude, Jr. (Chair), David Ganong (Clerk/Full Member), Joan Ladik (Full Member), Amanda Huntington (Full Member), Sean Dorey (Full Member), and Sandra Hartnett (Associate Member)

Staff: Jason Cleghorn (Town Planner)

Attendees: Pepperell Community Media, various members of the public and town staff/officials

1. Call to Order – 6:30p.m.

The remote/hybrid public meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Mr. Patenaude

A roll call vote was taken, and the following Board Members confirmed they were present either in person, or remotely: Joan Ladik, Amanda Huntington, Albert Patenaude, Jr., Sean Dorey, David Ganong and Sandra Hartnett.

Mr. Patenaude provided an overview of meeting protocols/ground rules, noting that the meeting was being recorded and conducted both remotely via GoToMeeting and in person in Conference Room A of Town Hall, consistent with Governor Healey's executive order extending temporary provisions pertaining to open meeting law through June 30, 2027. He outlined the ground rules, explaining that all supporting materials were available on the town's website, the chair would introduce each speaker and invite comments from members by name, and all votes would be conducted by roll call vote.

2. Consent Agenda: No items

3. Discussion: Public Input – Varnum Brook/Nissitissit Schools – Tucker Ave. Sidewalk

Mr. Cleghorn presented information about a proposed sidewalk grant application under the Shared Streets and Spaces program. He said that a few weeks prior, the Select Board had held a public input session where residents Lorelei Dean and Izabeth Dean (6 Tucker Avenue), presented their proposal. The grant allows towns to apply for up to \$1M with no matching requirement. The project would connect Varnum Brook and Nissitissit schools. Two options were under consideration, Option A, referred to as the "double L," which would connect Varnum Brook to Chase Avenue via a sidewalk partially down Tucker and through an unpaved paper street called Russell; and Option B, which would involve a sidewalk running the entire length of Tucker Avenue

Mr. Cleghorn displayed maps showing existing sidewalks and the two proposed options. He noted that the grant deadline was the following week and that the grant criteria favored smaller, less expensive projects. He clarified this was a public input session, not a public hearing, and that the board was not required to take a formal vote but could provide a recommendation.

DPW Director Paul Brinkman outlined two options: the "double L" configuration connecting Varnum Brook to Chase Avenue through an unpaved paper street (Russell), estimated at approximately \$293,000, and a full Tucker Avenue sidewalk estimated at \$900,000. Brinkman explained the double L was designed as a cost-effective solution that could be implemented largely with town resources.

Board members discussed alternatives including road widening with striped walkways instead of raised sidewalks to reduce costs and maintenance requirements. The concept of making Tucker Avenue one-way was also considered to improve safety and reduce infrastructure needs.

Residents, Lorelei Dean and Izabeth Dean (6 Tucker Avenue), addressed the Board and presented their "Pathway to Safer Streets" proposal advocating for sidewalks along the entire length of Tucker Avenue. They emphasized that Tucker Avenue is the only street providing direct access to both schools and sports fields, making it a critical safety corridor for students.

The Board discussed the merits of both approaches, with general agreement that the full Tucker Avenue option would be ideal if funding permits, while recognizing the double L provides a more affordable starting point. Ms. Ladik suggested exploring additional funding through the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments' Transportation Improvement Program.

The Board moved to affirm support for pursuing a grant application for funding sidewalk construction as requested by the Select Board, so moved by Ms. Hartnett and seconded by Mr. Ganong and the motion passed unanimously with all in favor.

4. Discussion: 2026 Meeting Calendar

Mr. Cleghorn presented the 2026 Planning Board meeting calendar as prepared by Ms. Lutzca. He noted that the next scheduled meeting would have fallen on January 19th, which is a holiday, so he recommended the Board meet on Tuesday, January 20th instead. The Board Members confirmed their availability and agreed to meet on January 20th. Mr. Cleghorn also requested confirmation for the February 17th meeting, and the Board Members indicated they were available. Mr. Cleghorn indicated that Ms. Lutzca would revise the calendar and send it out to the Board Members.

5. Discussion: 2026 Goalsetting

Mr. Cleghorn requested Board Members submit written goals by a few days before the January 20, 2026 meeting. Ms. Ladik had already submitted goals focusing on concrete actions and improved voting procedures. Mr. Cleghorn outlined potential focus areas including completing the Table of Uses, addressing zoning district consolidation, and standardizing setback requirements across districts.

He noted significant legislative developments, including proposed bills to eliminate newspaper legal notice requirements and potentially mandate 5,000 square foot minimum lot sizes in areas with water and sewer service, similar to New Hampshire's recent housing legislation.

6. Reports/Correspondence/Discussion: (Matters may arise that the Chair did not reasonably anticipate)

Mr. Cleghorn provided updates on several ongoing matters:

- The Housing Production Plan public meeting had low attendance despite staff efforts
- 75% of the town is zoned for 2-acre minimum lots, with only 4% zoned commercial or industrial
- Tighe and Bond is reviewing the subdivision regulations with Paul Brinkman, with comments expected soon

Adjournment:

Mr. Patenaude asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting, so moved by Mr. Ganong, seconded by Ms. Huntington. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00p.m.

Future Meetings:

- Tuesday, January 20, 2026
- February 2, 2026
- Tuesday, February 17, 2026
- March 2, 2026

These Planning Board Meeting Minutes of **January 5, 2026**, were accepted by the Board at their meeting on March 16, 2026.

Respectfully submitted by:

Cheryl Lutcza, Assistant to the Planning Board/Department