



## Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday December 17, 2025

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Meeting called to order at 6:00 PM.

**Board Present:** Alecia Loveless, Jerry Blanchard, Rob Gilgen, Linda Moore, April Hibberd and Sally Fitzgerald; Sean Gawlik

**Public Present:** Mary Moritz, Chris Jensen, Cheryl Jensen, Nancy Strand, Veronica Morris, and Les Blomberg (via Zoom)

**Minutes:** Linda Moore made motion to approve the December 10<sup>th</sup> minutes, seconded by Jerry Blanchard as amended. Move Sally Fitzgerald from present to absent. All in favor. Motion carried

**Continued Business:** None

**New Business:**

**Country Club Subdivision:** The Board reviewed the subdivision application submitted by the Bethlehem Country Club for their property located at 1901 Main Street. The proposal is to subdivide the existing Country Club restaurant area as a separate parcel. The plan included a larger overview depicting the entire 99.26 acre parcel and the 1.62 acre portion being subdivided from the main tract, and a detailed blow-up showing the restaurant building, parking area.

The Board has previously seen this application and due to a 5 year holding condition after the purchase of the property, the Board requested the applicant to come back no earlier than November 2025.

The Board reviewed Subdivision application checklist. The submitted plans met the current land use regulations. The Chair called for a completeness vote.

**Motion:** Motion by Rob Gilgen to accept the application as complete. Seconded by Sean. All in favor. Motion carried.

The Chair called for discussion. Liz Emerson had two questions. The first being about acreage. The tax card/tax map currently lists the parent parcel as **99.26 acres**. The plan needed to reflect the subtraction of the **1.62-acre** lot being subdivided, resulting in a remaining parent parcel acreage of **97.64 acres**. The Board agreed that the plan should be amended accordingly. The second question of the front porch being within the front setback. Zone D1-M requires structures to be 60 ft. from centerline; the restaurant porch appears closer (approximately 45 ft.), but it is an existing structure and no expansion was proposed. The Board discussed that because this is an existing structure and no modifications are being proposed, it would continue as a legal non-conforming structure. The Chair called for public comment. Seeing none; called for a motion to approve.

**Motion:** Motion by Rob Gilgen to approve with a condition that the acreage figures be corrected prior to final acceptance/effectiveness. Sean Gwlik seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

The Chair closed the public hearing for the Country Club application.

**Zoning Ordinance Amendments Public Hearing:** The Chair opened the public hearing on proposed zoning ordinance amendments and proceeded through the proposed warrant-articles to recommend items to the Selectboard for placement on the March 10 ballot. The Board has previously discussed all amendments in depth at previous meetings.

#### **Amendment 1 – Accessory Dwelling Units**

The purpose of this amendment is to update accessory dwelling unit (ADU) regulations and definitions to comply with current New Hampshire state law.

A question was raised regarding parking: the draft showed a reduction in required parking for single-family dwellings from two spaces to one. Liz Emerson explained this reflected a separate state-law change in municipal parking requirements but is included with the ADU changes.

**Motion:** Linda Moore made the motion:

“I move to send this amendment to the Selectboard for inclusion on the March 10 Town Ballot to read as follows: Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 1 as proposed by the planning board for the Town of Bethlehem Zoning Ordinance as follows: *to update all Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) regulations and definitions to comply with current New Hampshire state law. The Planning Board recommends this amendment.*” Rob Gilgen seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

Cheryl Bailey requested since Les Blomberg with the Noise Pollution Clearinghouse was joining via Zoom if the Board could review Amendment 6 so we could let Les go.

#### **Amendment #6 – Commercial/Industrial Noise Regulations (New Section)**

Cheryl Johnson, on behalf of the Conservation Commission, and Veronica Morris provided an overview and introduced Les Blomberg (Noise Pollution Clearinghouse) via Zoom as a technical resource in drafting the proposed regulations.

The objective of the proposal is to ensure commercial/industrial uses are consistent with community character goals and public health considerations (sleep disruption, stress/health impacts) and wildlife impacts (disruption of feeding/mating/migration; communication interference). They discussed enforcement triggering mechanisms intended to minimize cost to the Town, including “plainly audible” standards (especially at night) and low-cost preliminary measurement tools, with professional measurement as a later step if needed. It was written as a way to establish clear, enforceable metrics beyond discretionary site plan conditions.

A questions was asked whether existing businesses would be affected. It was explained that the ordinance would apply to new businesses and existing businesses only if proposing substantial changes that trigger renewed site plan review.

Veronica and Cheryl proposed striking a portion of the “Applicability to Existing Commercial and Industrial Uses” language (identified as “item 4”) to avoid retroactive application to existing

businesses, stating that retroactive use was not the intent and could create problems. The Board indicated agreement with removing that provision.

**Motion:** Linda Moore made the motion:

“I move to send this amendment to the Selectboard for inclusion on the March 10 Town Ballot to read as follows: Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 6 as proposed by the planning board for the Town of Bethlehem Zoning Ordinance as follows: *to add a new section to include noise regulations for commercial and industrial uses. The Planning Board recommends this amendment.*” Rob Gilgen seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

#### **Amendment 2 – Maximum ADU Living Area (950 sq.ft.)**

This amendment would establish the maximum living area of an ADU at 950 square feet.

A member of the public asked why 950 sq. ft. was selected. Liz Emerson explained that state law provides parameters (municipality may set any maximum size as long as it’s not lower than 750 square feet. If the Town doesn’t set a maximum, the default minimum is 950 square feet. The Board noted prior discussion during public meetings and preference to set 950 rather than a smaller maximum.

**Motion:** Alecia Loveless made the motion:

“I move to send this amendment to the Selectboard for inclusion on the March 10 Town Ballot to read as follows: Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 2 as proposed by the planning board for the Town of Bethlehem Zoning Ordinance as follows: *to establish the maximum living area of an Accessory Dwelling Unit at 950 square feet. The Planning Board recommends this amendment.*” Linda Moore seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

#### **Amendment #3 – Sign Regulations**

The Selectboard requested the Planning Board assume responsibility for sign regulation review. This amendment will clarify that the Planning Board has the reviewing authority where sign approval is required and reorganize the sign section to remove repetition and improve clarity.

**Motion:** Alecia Loveless made the motion:

“I move to send this amendment to the Selectboard for inclusion on the March 10 Town Ballot to read as follows: Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 3 as proposed by the planning board for the Town of Bethlehem Zoning Ordinance as follows: *to amend the Sign Regulations to clarify to identify the Planning Board as the reviewing authority, when approval is required and to reorganize the regulations to remove repetitive language and improve clarity. The Planning Board recommends this amendment.*” Sean Gawlik seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

#### **Amendment #4 – Add State Law References Throughout the Ordinance**

This amendment is proposed to insert RSA references throughout the zoning ordinance for added clarity and to align with current state law.

The Chair called for further discussion. Seeing none; called for a motion.

**Motion:** Alecia Loveless made the motion:

“I move to send this amendment to the Selectboard for inclusion on the March 10 Town Ballot to read as follows: Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 4 as proposed by the planning board for the Town of Bethlehem Zoning Ordinance as follows: *to add state law references throughout the ordinance. The Planning Board recommends this amendment.*” Sean Gawlik seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

#### **Amendment #5 – Personal Wireless Service Facilities**

This amendment is proposed to clarify that under state law, collocation/modification of equipment on an existing facility is reviewed for building permit compliance only and is not subject to zoning/land use review; add the required appeal process.

The Board noted this is driven by state requirements and would apply regardless of what the Bethlehem Zoning Ordinance says.

**Motion:** Linda Moore made the motion:

“I move to send this amendment to the Selectboard for inclusion on the March 10 Town Ballot to read as follows: Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 5 as proposed by the planning board for the Town of Bethlehem Zoning Ordinance as follows: *To amend the Personal Wireless Service Facilities section to clarify that, under State law, collocation or modification of equipment on an existing facility is reviewed only for building permit compliance and is not subject to zoning or land-use review, and to add the required appeal process. The Planning Board recommends this amendment.*” Alicia Loveless seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

#### **Amendment #7 – Minor Grammatical and Formatting Corrections**

This amendment is being proposed to correct minor grammatical and formatting errors throughout the ordinance with no substantive changes.

The Chair called for any discussion from the Board or public. Hearing none; called for a motion.

**Motion:** Jerry Blanchard made the motion:

“I move to send this amendment to the Selectboard for inclusion on the March 10 Town Ballot to read as follows: Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 7 as proposed by the planning board for the Town of Bethlehem Zoning Ordinance as follows: *to correct minor grammatical and formatting errors throughout the document, with no substantive changes to the content or meaning of any section. The Planning Board recommends this amendment.*” Sean Gawlik seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

#### **Impact Fee Ordinance Proposal Discussion**

The Board discussed the concept of adopting an impact fee ordinance (referencing RSA 674:21), which is as a mechanism to collect proportionate contributions from development to fund capital

improvements (roads/transportation, water/wastewater, solid waste, public safety, and potentially public education facilities).

The Town has concerns about potential future large housing/development projects and the Town's ability to recover costs associated with increased demand on facilities.

Rob Gilgen noted that RSA 674:21 provides some authority even without an ordinance (exactions for off-site improvements necessary for occupancy) and asked what additional authority the ordinance would provide. Liz Emerson would investigate further and have more information for the next meeting. A short discussion ensued that having the ordinance available provides an important option/tool, even if not used frequently.

**Motion:** Jerry Blanchard made the motion:

"I move to send this amendment to the Selectboard for inclusion on the March 10 Town Ballot to read as follows: Article \_\_: To see if the Town will vote to adopt an Impact Fee Ordinance, pursuant to RSA 674:21, V, authorizing the assessment and collection of impact fees on new development to fund growth-related capital facilities identified in the Town's Capital Improvements Program; such fees to be deposited into separate capital reserve funds established under RSA 35:1, and used only for eligible capital improvements; and to authorize the Planning Board to administer the ordinance; said ordinance to take effect upon passage." Rob Gilgen seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

The Chair closed the Zoning Ordinance Amendment public hearing.

The Chair called for any further business from the Board or the public. A question was raised as to whether a final draft of the Impact Fee Ordinance was required in order for the proposal to move forward to the Selectboard.

Liz Emerson stated that, based on her understanding of state law, a proposed Impact Fee Ordinance may be forwarded to the Selectboard without a completed final draft, but that she would conduct further research to confirm this interpretation.

The Chair called for any further business. Seeing none; called for a motion to adjourn.

**Motion:** Jerry Blanchard made a motion to adjourn. Linda Moore seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:05pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Liz Emerson

Interim Planning & Zoning Clerk