



Town of Hamilton
 Planning Board
 Meeting Minutes of February 26, 2025

Pursuant to the Open Meeting Law, MGL Chapter 30 A, §§ 18-25, written notice posted by the Town Clerk delivered to all Planning Board members, a meeting of the Hamilton Planning Board was posted for February 26, 2025 at 7:00pm. This meeting was held at the Hamilton Wenham Public Library, 14 Union St. A zoom link was provided as a convenience for the public.

The Planning Board has seven members elected to three-year terms with one, two, or three seats up for election each year. The Planning Board typically meets the first & third Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m. Planning Board members: Marnie Crouch, Chair (2026), Emil Dahlquist, Clerk (2025), William Wheaton (2025), Beth Herr (2025), Patrick Norton (2026), Jonathan Poore (2027), Darcy Dale (2027). Associate members: Matt Hamel (2026) & Jeff Austin (2027).

Call to order: *With a quorum present, Chair Crouch called the Planning Board meeting to order at 7:00 PM, identified the meeting was being recorded and those present:* M. Crouch, J. Poore, E. Dahlquist, D. Dale, J. Austin, P. Norton, B. Herr, W. Wheaton. *Not present:* M. Hamel. Also present: Mark Connors, Director of Planning; others as noted.

Agenda:

1. REVIEW & VOTE ON DRAFT MINUTES MEETINGS: March 26, 2024, January 21, 2025, January 29, 2025

Vote: *The Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of March 26, 2024, January 21, 2025, and January 29, 2025 with edits as noted.*

2. DOWNTOWN HAMILTON FORM-BASED CODE WORKSHOP

a. Discussion of public hearing process for Town Center Plan and Form-Based Code in anticipation of June Special Town Meeting

Chair Crouch opined, even if 3A Zoning were to “go away”, the Town should still have Form-based Code, as it benefits the Town. She also stated the Board should be prepared to understand the language of Form-based Code for when Utile completes their work. The Hamilton Development Corporation also wants to keep 3A Zoning separate from Form-based Code. P.Norton suggested Utile pause their work while the Planning Board takes up discussions of what they want to see in a Form-based Code and advocated making a recommendation to the Select Board. Chair Crouch observed Utile was charged with creating form-based code, but it was derailed due to residents vociferous opposition to 3A Zoning. Discussion continued regarding the sense of the Board on whether they should proceed with discussing Form-based Code, what, if any, recommendation should be made to the Select Board, and possible timelines of form-based code and 3A Zoning.

The Board proceeded to review and discuss Utile’s slide presentation from December. Comments were made in reference to Depot Square, and that it should emulate Railroad Ave with detached, not attached buildings along Walnut Road (not the rail line frontage). Railroad Ave is a good standard for a “Hamilton-style”, walkable, cohesive, retail center. J.Poore commented a design of a street has to be looked at in context, and what is across the street as well. It cannot be effectively designed by looking at postage stamp lots separately; it has to be considered in concert. The Board acknowledged the importance to design the downtown so people will want to get out of their cars and visit multiple buildings, rather than visiting one and driving to the next destination. There was desire to have more walkable areas with more greenspace as well. The Board reiterated they wanted to leave Carraige Lane out of the discussion and keep it residential, but that could change pending if the Winthrop lot changes usage. Other desirable features discussed included deep lots, parking behind buildings, few curb cuts, and either mixed use or retail buildings. It was noted that defining usage is an important part of the process. The Board recommended they see the lots more in context, and less in isolated lots; and they see a map with the frontage types clearly delineated. Comments, concerns and observation will be communicated back to Utile.

3. DISCUSSION of MBTA COMMUNITIES MULTI-FAMILY ZONING REQUIREMENT

a. Discussion of State Auditor’s Mandate Determination related to MBTA Communities Act

There was brief discussion regarding the recent decision from the State Auditor regarding 3A Zoning. It was noted the Select Board will hold an Executive Session to discuss the decision and how it affects Hamilton. Chair Crouch noted she computed the number of units that would have to be built in the Ipswich River Watershed under the law, and it would be unsustainable in terms of water supply. Discussion continued around water issues, and the current status of the Water Resilience Task Force. The Board noted that the Town is currently in compliance with 3A Zoning by submitting the Letter of Intent to the State from the Town Manager.

4. OTHER ITEMS:

a. March 12, 2025 Public Hearing date for proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendments for consideration at April 5, 2025 Town Meeting

Chair Crouch noted the Planning Board has their public hearing on the Zoning Bylaw amendments scheduled for March 12. The Finance Committee asked her as chair to appear at their meeting the next day to go over the amendments so that they can determine if there are any financial implications in them.

b. Master Plan Implementation

M.Connors reported the Master Plan is very close to being finished. E.Dahlquist also worked with him on the plan and M.Connors recommended one additional meeting with him to finalize the formatting and bring it to conclusion. The Board asked the Plan be finalized by March 15.

Adjournment:

Vote: *The Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at approximately 8:40pm.*

Documents:

- [February 26, 2025 Planning Board Agenda](#)
- [Draft March 26, 2024 Planning Board Minutes for review/approval](#)
- [Draft January 21, 2025 Planning Board Minutes for review/approval](#)
- [Draft January 29, 2025 Planning Board Minutes for review/approval](#)
- [Form-based Code Basics Slides](#)
- [State Auditor's Mandate Determination re: MBTA Communities Act](#)
- [Utile suggested hearings slide re: Town Center Plan/Form-based Code](#)

*Respectfully submitted by D. Pierotti, Recording Secretary, 3/9/25.
The minutes were prepared from video.*