

DRAFT

**TOWN OF DURHAM
DURHAM PLANNING BOARD MEETING**

Wednesday, October 29, 2025

Town Council Chambers, Durham Town Hall

7:00 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Rasmussen (Chair), Sally Tobias (Vice Chair), Peter Howd, Peyton McManus, Julian Smith, Robert Sullivan, Gary Whittington, Heather Grant (Council Rep), Darrell Ford (Alternate Council Rep)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Richard Kelley, Munish Nanda (Alternate),

OTHERS PRESENT: Town Planner Michael Behrendt

I. Call to Order

Chair Paul Rasmussen called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm

II. Roll Call and Seating of Alternates

Chair Rasmussen called the roll. He appointed Julian Smith to cover for Richard Kelley.

III. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Smith suggested that it might be helpful if there was a discussion added to the agenda regarding the Conservation Commission meeting of Monday night. Chair Rasmussen stated that they would include this discussion between items #4 and #5.

Mr. Whittington MOVED to approve the Agenda as amended; SECONDED by Councilor Grant; APPROVED: 9-0, Motion carries.

IV. Update to Regional Comprehensive Plan. Discussion with Mike Polizzotti, Senior Economic Development Planner at Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC).

Mike Polizzotti introduced himself. Strafford Regional Planning Commission is in the process of updating their regional 10-year master plan. The last regional master plan was completed in 2015. The Commission sent out a full regional survey earlier this year.

The Commission has decided to have conversations with each of the regions' Planning Boards to supplement the information in the regional plan. The following questions were sent to the Planning Board to help the Commission understand each community better:

What is Durham's identity? Mr. Whittington stated that Durham is a prosperous, liberal college town with strong social justice and environmental priorities. It has an older population. Chair Rasmussen stated there is an overall fear of making a mistake and a fear of more students. Mr. McManus feels it is an excellent place to raise kids.

What do you view as your community's role in the region? Mr. Whittington stated that Durham's "special sauce" was that it is the site of the University of New Hampshire. Chair Rasmussen stated that Durham's walking trails are also a draw. Vice Chair Tobias stated that land and waterways conservation for the region is also an important point. Councilor Grant feels that the UNH has isolated itself from the community. There was discussion about the struggles between students and the community.

What are your community's priorities for housing, land use, transportation and economic development? Councilor Grant stated that there has always been a butting of heads between conservation land and housing as priority. Vice Chair Tobias stated that there was the creation of the Housing Task Force, and they have recommended several zoning changes. However, those changes have not been easy to pass. Mr. Whittington stated that there is a profession to create more attainable housing but people are conflicted about it. Councilor Grant stated that the downtown economic development is in focus right now. There was additional discussion about land use priorities.

Do these priorities align with your neighboring cities and towns? Chair Rasmussen stated that they hardly ever talk with the neighboring towns. He said that the Town Planner from Newmarket came in a couple years back, but not much came out of it. Vice Chair Tobias stated that the Housing Task Force did reach out to other communities. Mr. McManus stated that there is more alignment with the shared school system. Mr. Sullivan asked Mr. Polizzotti what Durham should be contributing to other towns. Mr. Polizzotti stated that all communities are tracking on similar themes. He thinks that Durham is aligned with its neighbors on priorities.

Vice Chair Tobias mentioned that there was coordination with Exeter when Durham was looking at dismantling the Mill Pond Dam. Their experience in dam removal was very helpful.

What progress has your community made towards these goals? What is enabling or hindering progress? Chair Rasmussen stated that much of this has already been talked about. The big milestone that was completed was the Housing Overlay District. There was discussion about The Edge at UNH. Chair Rasmussen stated that he is leery of making zoning changes not knowing what the State might do. Mr. Sullivan thinks that Riverwoods is a good example of how the Board is working with developers. Mr. McManus stated that it was unfortunate that it was located so far from downtown. Councilor Grant mentioned that there was a plan to build 55+ housing at Young Drive, but it was shot down by the community because of its height. Mr. McManus stated that when he thinks about hindering progress, he thinks about the groups that come out against projects and that ends up shutting projects down. Chair Rasmussen also mentioned that the appeals process has hindered projects.

What are you most excited for in your community's near and long term future? Chair Rasmussen stated that The Edge is hopeful. Mr. Sullivan mentioned that making ADU's easier to build is good for the town. Chair Rasmussen mentioned that there are some zoning changes coming which will be cutting down buildable lot sizes to encourage building. Mr. McManus is excited by the increase

in non-car transportation available, specifically e-bikes. There was discussion on multi-modal transportation. Vice Chair Tobias is excited about the changes that are going to happen in the future. Mr. Howd feels that if you want to bring life to the downtown, you have to think about the students. Mr. Sullivan believes that increasing density downtown is key.

Mr. Whittington feels that it would be helpful for the regional planning commission to have resources or tools that would help with cost benefit analysis of how a development affects the region.

Planner Behrendt asked Mr. Polizzotti to give them some feedback on what he heard in their discussion. Mr. Polizzotti stated that a lot of what he heard was not surprising to him based on Durham's Master Plan. He welcomes the chance to work with Planning Boards in the future.

Mr. McManus would like to have a regional clearing house resource as to what other towns are doing. Mr. Polizzotti felt it was a good idea, but encouraged them to reach out to SRPC in the meantime if they have any questions about other towns.

IV.(B) Update from Monday's Conservation Commission meeting: Mr. Sullivan gave an update on the SPOD and WCOD changes presented to the public at the Conservation Commission meeting. There were many people who were not in favor of the increase of the Shoreland buffer. Mr. Whittington felt there was a theme that people were looking for clearer guidance to allow them to do things that are practical and reasonable. There was a variation of the needs between different property owners.

Mr. McManus stated that the regulations were well-intentioned, but there were secondary effects that need to be thought through. Mr. Howd stated that the Conservation Commission needs to get back to thinking about what impairments in the water bodies they want to keep track of. What are the problems that we are trying to solve? He felt that the wildlife concern was a red herring.

V. Electric Vehicle Charging Stations. Proposed amendments to the Site Plan Regulations to create more electric vehicle charging stations. Developed by the Durham Energy Committee. Chair Rasmussen stated that there was a fresh copy in the packet. Mr. Sullivan went over the changes and the cost/benefit analysis for a developer. There was further discussion on the amendments.

Chair Rasmussen asked if they wanted to start going through Planner Behrendt's comments. Planner Behrendt suggested going page-by-page. Mr. Sullivan asked about the strategic direction they want to go in. Vice Chair Tobias feels the market is going to rise to the occasion for this. There will be a market that will come forward to fulfill the need. She is concerned about requiring EV Charging Stations. Mr. Whittington is not sure that they need to intervene as regulators. Mr. Sullivan asked if it should be required just for new development. There was additional discussion on this.

Planner Behrendt encouraged the Board to be open to this regulation. He feels it is consistent with Durham's values. Chair Rasmussen stated that before they go through the amendments page-by-page, they need to decide where they are going to be requiring EV Charging Stations. They can start with that question at the next meeting.

There was discussion about what should be on the next Planning Board agenda.

VI. Other Business

VI. Adjournment

Mr. Whittington moved to adjourn the Planning Board Meeting; SECONDED by Mr. McManus; APPROVED: 9-0, Motion carries.

Chair Rasmussen adjourned the meeting at 9:29 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Edwards