

**TOWN OF DURHAM  
DURHAM PLANNING BOARD MEETING**

**Wednesday, July 29, 2026  
Town Council Chambers, Durham Town Hall**

**7:00 pm**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Paul Rasmussen (Chair), Robert Sullivan, Sally Tobias, Richard Kelley (arrived late), Heather Grant (Council Rep), Michael Lehrman (Alternate Council Rep), Julian Smith (Alternate), Peter Howd (Alternate)

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Gary Whittington, Emma Hollander (Alternate)

**ALSO PRESENT:** Michael Behrendt, Town Planner

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Paul Rasmussen called the Durham Planning Board meeting of July 29, 2026 to order at 7:00 pm.

**II. Roll Call and Seating of Alternates**

Chair Rasmussen called the roll and seated Peter Howd for Gary Whittington and seated Julian Smith for Richard Kelley.

**III. Approval of Agenda**

Julian Smith suggested several additions to the agenda. Chair Rasmussen stated that these items could be handled under other business.

Richard Kelley arrived.

*Chair Rasmussen moved to accept the agenda with the stated additions placed under Other Business; SECONDED by Heather Grant; APPROVED: 7-0.*

**IV. Proposed new Planned Unit Development (PUD) Ordinance:**

**The Edge.** Presentation by development team for the proposed Edge Project to be constructed as a PUD: UNH, Ryan Companies, and ZGF design firm. The Edge is the triangular parcel of land located westerly of the intersection of Concord Turnpike/Main Street and Mast Road.

The Board received a presentation from the development team for the proposed Edge project, intended to be constructed as a Planned Unit Development (PUD) on a 42-acre triangular parcel west of the intersection of Concord Turnpike/Main Street and Mast Road. Ken Weston from UNH, David Wilson from Ryan Companies, and Kate Mann from ZGF Architects presented the vision for the innovation district called "The Edge." Mr. Weston explained the pre-development phase, noting the team is targeting late August for a community engagement forum. Ms. Mann detailed

1 the design goals, which include promoting innovation, creating an active live-work community,  
2 and connecting to the natural environment and downtown Durham. The concept includes  
3 lab/office buildings, residential units, a hotel, a central common, and a transit hub; while  
4 preserving existing woods and wetlands.

5  
6 Mr. McManus compared the vision to successful innovation districts like Tech Square at Georgia  
7 Tech, and emphasized the importance of connectivity.

8  
9 Mr. Smith asked about existing buildings on the site. Mr. Weston confirmed the plan is to  
10 demolish the existing buildings currently on the site, though negotiations are on-going regarding  
11 the USDA and Fish and Game facilities.

12  
13 Mr. Smith asked about federal funding. Mr. Wilson clarified that the project is not federally  
14 funded, though some tenants might be.

15  
16 Mr. Sullivan asked about how many residential units they were envisioning. Mr. Wilson stated  
17 that the developer they are working with is also looking at 66 Main Street as well, so there are  
18 quite a few residential units being considered. He estimates 200 to 300 market-rate units at The  
19 Edge, intended for people working in the district.

20  
21 Councilor Lehrman asked about connectivity to downtown and the train station. Mr. Weston  
22 mentioned the existing campus connector bus, potential autonomous vehicles, and e-mobility  
23 options.

24  
25 Mr. McManus mentioned that it is important that this development can compete with other like-  
26 minded opportunities in Portsmouth and elsewhere. Mr. Wilson mentioned that they have been  
27 receiving quite a bit of interest from companies in Boston and elsewhere that want to come to  
28 Durham. He stated that in order to move forward, they need the PUD Ordinance approved so  
29 that they can start designing the buildings.

30  
31 Mr. Smith asked if in the marketing for The Edge there was also marketing about Durham as well.  
32 Mr. Wilson stated that yes, that was the case.

33  
34 **PUD Ordinance. Discussion about draft ordinance which is prepared as an amendment to**  
35 **the Zoning Ordinance. The amendment would allow for large-scale, mixed-use innovative**  
36 **development, where the developer may propose special rules for the project that depart**  
37 **from the zoning that is otherwise applicable, subject to approval by the Planning Board.**

38  
39 Mr. Kelley asked if the developers had any issues with the draft PUD ordinance. Ms. Mann and  
40 Mr. Wilson confirmed they were happy with it and appreciated its flexibility.

1 Planner Behrendt mentioned that in his discussions with Administrator Selig and Council Chair  
2 Friedman, it was important that the PUD master plan approval process reside entirely with the  
3 Planning Board and not have to go to the Town Council.

4  
5 Mr. Sullivan asked the presenters about their process once the PUD ordinance is approved. Ms.  
6 Mann stated that there will be a general PUD design created with flexibility, and then there will  
7 be phases brought to the Planning Board as buildings are designed.

8  
9 There was additional discussion about architectural standards and the importance of  
10 connectivity. Mr. Weston stated that the master plan is designed to take the pressure off of Main  
11 Street by having a Northern Route and a Southern Route to The Edge.

12  
13 The Board discussed scheduling a public hearing for the PUD ordinance. The Board decided to  
14 have the Public Hearing on August 12. Mr. Wilson asked if the Public Hearing was for the PUD  
15 Ordinance only or for The Edge project as well. Planner Behrendt stated that it was just for the  
16 Ordinance. The Board debated whether to have a brief presentation of The Edge project vision  
17 before the public hearing to provide context and head off uninformed questions. Chair  
18 Rasmussen and Sally Tobias cautioned that showing project renderings might confuse the public  
19 into thinking the hearing was about approving the specific development rather than the zoning  
20 ordinance.

## 21 22 **V. Other Business**

23  
24 Chair Rasmussen explained his logic for developing the zoning proposal for the downtown that  
25 he had submitted, stating that he wanted to create a complete package, including tables of uses  
26 and dimensions, before seeking public feedback to ensure the feedback was informed. He noted  
27 that presenting incomplete ideas in the past had led to the Board requesting maps and more  
28 detail. Councilor Grant stated that this proposal is just a starting point for a brainstorming process  
29 and not some nefarious thing that the Board is doing. Ms. Tobias reminded that this is a process  
30 and is completely transparent. Chair Rasmussen stated that he will be at the August HDC meeting  
31 to discuss the proposal with them.

32  
33 Planner Behrendt relayed Ms. Olshansky's concern that the Board might invest months into  
34 fleshing out a zoning change before holding a public hearing, resulting in piecemeal feedback in  
35 the interim. He suggested holding a dedicated information session early in the process. Mr. Howd  
36 stated that having a high-level discussion about the Board's vision and goals for the downtown-  
37 adjacent zoning changes would be beneficial and help allay public concerns. The Board agreed to  
38 schedule a high-level vision discussion for the second meeting in August.

39  
40 Julian Smith asked if the Board was interested in having the Public Works Department set up a  
41 Planning Board site walk at the former Mill Pond site on a weekend to observe the area. Several  
42 members opposed the idea, citing safety concerns and the fact that it is an active construction  
43 site. The consensus of the Board was to wait until construction was finished.

**VI. Adjournment**

***Richard Kelley moved to adjourn the Planning Board Meeting of July 29, 2026; SECONDED by Sally Tobias; APPROVED: 7-0.***

The Planning Board Meeting was adjourned at 9:09 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Edwards, Minute Taker

Durham Planning Board