

Town of New Ipswich  
Planning Board Minutes  
Jan 21st, 2026

New Ipswich Town Office /Town Hall, 661 Turnpike Rd, New Ipswich, NH 03071

7:05 - Pledge of Allegiance/Roll Call/Zoom Check

Attendees: Dee Daley (chair), Josh Muhonen (vice chair), Bruce Routsala, Richard Smeeth, Graham Heagy, Lou Alvarez (Select Board Ex-Officio), Rob Fournier

Public Attendance: Christy Warrender

SWRPC Master Plan Consultant (joining virtually) Sarah Bollinger

7:10 PM – Public Hearing Master Plan

Dee opened the public hearing. Sarah noted the Master Plan is the basis for the Town zoning and other town policies and ordinances. The purpose of updating it every 10 years, is to make sure that the town policies, ordinances and activities are in line with the direction the town wants to be going, the direction that your residents and businesses feel is important, and to ensure that everyone is pulling towards the future that that you desire.

Sarah reviewed starting the plan at the end of 2024, recruitment of the Steering Committee, and the extensive public outreach. The survey conducted last February and March (2025) got over 400 responses and there were two community forums last March. People were able to turn out and talk about what they thought was great about New Ipswich and places where they saw room for improvement. There were also stakeholder interviews with a broad swath of town staff, community volunteers and business leaders to get their input for what the vision of the town should be. The process tonight is to hear any final public comment on the draft content, and then the Planning Board can determine if public comment warrants further revision to the plan, and if not, then the Planning Board may vote to adopt the plan this evening. She noted if further revision was required, that the Board extend the public hearing to a later date.

Dee asked for public comment and Kristi noted she didn't have any comments. She noted it looked like a lot of work went into the Master Plan and she wanted to thank the people who did that and was curious about the hearing would go.

Dee noted the survey and request for written comments concluded Jan 10<sup>th</sup>. There was one public comment that came in with email content the Board had previously discussed but missed in discussion over the Summer. The comment related to aspects of enforcement within the Town. This goes back to Jim Coffey coming in and asking the Planning Board to find a way to improve enforcement of Zoning/Regulations regarding how it would work best and how to apply the regs with fairness/consistency in a growing community. Other community members have requested to understand speeding enforcement and how the various elements of the town are guided. The Town recently voted to support a Code Enforcement Officer, so this comment was timely. Jim's original comments from the Planning Board official minutes was included in the email. While the Planning Board does not directly influence enforcement, Dee consulted with Sarah to make an adjustment to objective 4 changing the wording on community facilities, to community facilities and services to incorporate the concept into the last draft. The action items focus on developing and understanding an enforcement approach/framework the Select Board would develop. They have been working with the Code Enforcement Officer to bring more of an understanding to the role. The primary change was on the initial goal section, however there was more expanded information on community facilities and services further back in the document on page 78 on the latest draft,

Objective 4, notes ensure that municipal policies, regulations and service expectations are implemented consistently through clear roles, procedures and enforcement mechanisms. This topic also came up in the public forums, so when you take all the content and combine it, there was a theme that ran through things. Dee had sent a request to the Select Board/Town Admin (since Jason has mentioned work in this area) to give an update on kind of what's going on with code enforcement. No one attended this evening and Lou did not have additional details on work in this area.

Sarah noted the designated output was that town adopt a formal enforcement response framework that clarifies procedures for handling zoning complaints, outlines roles and responsibilities of the Select Board and its designee, and establishes clear communication and follow-up practices. The framework supports consistent enforcement of the zoning ordinance, provides transparency for residents and strengthens confidence in the town's regulatory processes. Cases may require different responses, but having an outline/framework on the decision process as seen as appropriate by Board members.

The only other change in the document was moving the maps from the body of the document to the end to make it more navigable. There will also be standalone large maps.

Dee asked the Board members for any thoughts/comments they had reviewing the draft document over the last 4-6 weeks. The following content areas were commented on-

- Regarding ADUs, there is a note on allowing subdividing lots with ADUs that was brought up for discussion. Currently the regs don't specifically address that, but conceptually someone may choose to subdivide in the future. Currently ADUs seem to be a local solution to an unmet need for small/rental housing, and down the road that may change. It is something for the Board to consider as we go forward and monitor trends, etc. Based on comments during Cluster or ADU hearings, the town doesn't currently want defacto smaller lots, but that may change over time.
- The will of the Town may start with the Master Plan, but the citizens also get a vote when Zoning Warrants are brought forward to town meeting.
- There appears to be some interest in commercial development, but it isn't clear how that will turn out, what kinds of appetites folks have for change, etc.
- There were comments that it would be nice to have been able to compare results from previously to now, but there has been some changes in areas of interest since as the master plan chapters evolved - around 2003-2008 when the Town was concerned about growth between the big housing booms there was a predisposition to curtailing growth, now we are looking at post Covid housing needs for folks, and there is a gap in the young adult numbers in town when you look at demographics. There were a lot of developments in the period right up to 2008 and then the housing market crashed in general (developers went bankrupt and some of those developments are only getting finished now).
- The Master Plan process allows for minority or loud voices to be heard, but also there are a significant number of things that got decent support that should be considered. People can't say they couldn't be heard and the Master Plan guides decisions and people

understand that that's the value of the master plan. People can also get involved in the next master plan. Folks can also make their voices heard with voting for town officials, volunteering, etc. The Master Plan Steering Committee did a nice job of balancing the Planning Board. The Steering Board led the way, but the elected Planning Board members adopt the document. Overall, there weren't any big changes and that reflects finding the common ground through multiple types of data gathering. The Steering Committee included people with different perspectives like farming, emergency services, library service, water quality, etc. There were some informal leaders and folks had relationships that helped the Board find additional groups – for example the librarian helped us find home school families so we could get insights from that group. The last formal Steering Group was in Oct., prior to sharing draft results with the Select Board.

- This last activity the Planning Board participated in together was the accident and dangerous intersection list.
- One area discussed was that although builders seem to have an appetite for single family homes, there may be a smothered multifamily housing need that ADUs may not be able to meet. Rentals in town may not hit the market, so it is hard to tell the real inventory
- The Commercial result findings indicate the sugar shack type of business is super positive (82%), but the strip malls are like 12-17% approval. The Planning Board will need to consider what this means a bit more, if the strip mall isn't viewable from the road, might it be more appealing. There are strategies based on different business types that we may want to consider as we go forward (Jaffrey on the 202 corridor allows national chains only in a condensed area). It may be that bigger buffers or natural building materials would help (less metal and glass design, more rural, etc.) The Board need to consider what appeals to the public, but also viability. New Ipswich also currently has a 1500 sq ft commercial building regulation (larger businesses needing to go to ZBA).
- Commercial development – the survey didn't just have an option to allow it anywhere in town. The responses seemed to focus on Rt. 123/124 and not harming neighboring properties.
- Spending for the school of \$19,000 was brought up as seeming high (around page 80 or 102), and the Board noted they were generally surprised that was the lowest cost compared to all the other towns noted (except Goffstown). It isn't clear there is a single set of standards between local/state on what costs are considered for state funding or not. The class size is going down which is attributed to more homeschooling and parents worrying about cultural influences.
- Average income was discussed, it was interesting the average income has increased about 25% from \$60,000. Sarah noted this may be due to the average age of New Ipswich going up and there being more people who are advanced in their career path means they earn more. After Covid, workers were getting paid more as well, remote work allowed individuals from Boston, NY and CT to live in NH, etc - so the reason is likely multifaceted. The last Master Plan shows the Average Median Income staying pretty consistent for those in New Ipswich.

Previously NI citizens income was higher than the region/state (and isn't as much now) so the town buying power may not be as high.

- The Master Plan is a guiding document. It is not perfect, but it is the Planning Board, Select Board etc. job starting in March to figure out which things that we should work on. How are we going to build the foundations for the changes to happen, etc. There is plenty to choose from.

The Chair noted the comment/discussion period highlighted some specific areas of the document, but there didn't appear to be anything people wanted to change (except for the content from the 1/10 feedback period regarding enforcement). There was no objection and Sarah noted the document could be finalized as noticed. The Board members confirmed they downloaded the most recent document to follow along with Sarah from the posted agenda that includes the new objective 4 regarding development of an enforcement framework (and related language).

Bruce made a motion to adopt the Master Plan posted with the 1.21.26 agenda with an adoption date of January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026. Dee seconded. Motion carried 7-0-0 and the Board members completed the authorization page which will be scanned back to Sarah for the final version of the document.

There was discussion about how to fund future Master Plans (question of a capital fund or fund from LUCT after Conservation). The Board thanked Sarah for her time and dedication to the Master Plan Project (as well as others at SWRPC). Sarah noted it was great to learn more and meet the people of New Ipswich, what they care about and she hopes the town is happy the project is complete.

8:10 PM – Select Board and Chair Updates

Planning Board Chair update

- The Planning Board Annual report was submitted for the town report, it included a Board Acknowledgement of the Master Planning Steering Group.
- The Select Board finalized a proposed budget for 2026, which did include initiating work on updated commercial/business elements of the Master Plan with SWRPC, but they did not include the National Resource Inventory component to allow the Board to explore some of the ridgeline development considerations/scenic view protections. The Board will have more discussion after the March voting.
- Tammy Roy will be joining the Town in the role of Land Use Admin, beginning Feb 2.
- Feb 3 is the Town Deliberative Session and Feb 4 is the School Deliberative Session. The Board has no applications pending and has cancelled our Feb meeting in the past. The Board discussed the topic and elected not to meet on Feb 4 as there would likely not be a quorum/no business.
- March 3 is Candidates night and March 10 is the town voting. Since the Zoning Warrant articles won't be discussed at the Deliberative Session, the Board discussed and decided to

hold a public Q&A session on the 4 proposed Zoning Warrant Articles at the March 4 Planning Board meeting.

- The Town has had a query from Eversource (Tighe & Bond) regarding tower replacement this Summer. We don't have any specifics and the installation pre-dated Site Plan Review, so we don't yet know if a Site Plan Review would be needed.
- Dee noted there have been a few questions coming in about clearing on the Aho site on Turnpike Rd, Board members noted the clearing seems extensive and may exceed what was anticipated. Dee will reach out to Mr. Aho and asks the Board to drive by and review recent activity.
- The next meeting we will pick up with the Capital Improvement Plan or the Integrated Application we set aside to work on Zoning Amendments.

8:45 Craig made a motion to adjourn and Graham seconded. Motion carried.

Submitted by D. Daley, Planning Board Chair