



Fairhaven Planning Board

Town Hall · 40 center Street · Fairhaven, MA 02719

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES Tuesday, June 16, 2026 at 6:30PM

1) GENERAL BUSINESS:

- a) **Welcome and Media notification** – Sean Powers
- b) **Pledge of Allegiance**
- c) **Quorum/Attendance**
 - Present – Jessica Fidalgo, Sean Powers, Miles Grant, Kevin Grant, Ruy Dasilva, Pat Carr, Mona Phillis, Jenn Cardoza
- d) **Welcome New Members**
 - Jen and Mona
 - The board formally acknowledged and thanked Sharon Simmons and Jeff Lucas for their service
- e) **Board Reorganization**
 - Chair – Sean Powers and Jessica Fidalgo were nominated, Sean declined. A vote for Jessica passed unanimously
 - Co-Chair – Sean Powers was nominated, vote passed unanimously
 - Clerk – Miles Grant was nominated, vote passed unanimously
 - SRPEDD – Mona Phillips was nominated, vote passed unanimously
 - EDC – Miles Grant was re-nominated, vote passed unanimously
 - Rogers School Reuse Committee – Pat Carr was re-nominated, vote passed unanimously
 - New Bedford Harbor Development Committee - Pat Carr was re-nominated, vote passed unanimously
 - Town Meeting Committee – Jenn Cardoza was nominated, vote passed unanimously
- f) Meeting minutes draft to be reviewed- **5/26/2026**
Motion made by Jessica to approve minutes passed unanimously
- g) Correspondence:
 - i) Town of Acushnet, Resident Email (Crosswalks)

2) PUBLIC HEARING:

3) RECEIPT OF PLANS:

4) NEW/OTHER BUSINESS:

- a) **Former G Bourne Knowles** - Release of Covenant.
 - The board addressed the release of a covenant on the former G-Four Knolls property.
 - The covenant was originally placed by the Select Board when a specific development plan was proposed. That plan is no longer proceeding.
 - The property owner requested the covenant be released to allow for future development options.
 - The Select Board had previously voted to release the covenant, and the Planning Board also needs to approve it by a majority vote.

- Pat Carr recused himself from the discussion and vote due to having done business with the company involved.
Motion to sign the release of covenant by Kevin Grant seconded by Miles Grant passed 7-0
- b) **SP26-02 – 62 Center Street-Community Nurse Inc:** Request to withdraw application without prejudice following a determination of exemption from Planning Board review.
 - Was not a project that was required to be in front of Planning.
Motion made to withdraw without prejudice by Pat Carr seconded Ruy Dasilva passed 8-0
- c) **PS25-01- 4 Earle Street: Map 31A, Lot 453 – CONTINUED** an existing single-family residential lot accessed via Earle Street, a private way. The parcel is in the Residential A zoning district, this is a preliminary subdivision application.
 - The applicant requested a continuance to the next meeting on June 30, 2026, to allow the board time to review new plans submitted on Friday, June 12, 2026.
Motion to continue made Kevin Grant seconded Miles Grant Passed 6-0

5) LONG RANGE PLANNING:

a) Updates:

- A debate arose on how to proceed with bylaw changes, balancing control with development goals and navigating a tight timeline for the Fall Town Meeting.
- Michaela Shoemaker, the town's contracted planner, was introduced to discuss the ongoing bylaw review.
- Concerns were raised about the lack of responses from department heads (Water, DPW, Conservation) despite three requests for feedback; it was agreed their input is critical before moving forward.
- A member noted the Building Inspector suggested a 5,000 sq. ft. minimum lot size, amending a 4,500 sq. ft. proposal to align with state law.
- A debate occurred between using a special permit process versus by-right development for smaller lots. Some favored special permits for case-by-case control, while Michaela noted a by-right system would more effectively increase housing.
- The goal is to replace the need for property owners to prove hardship for special permits on lots around 15,000 sq. ft., facilitating incremental creation of smaller houses in existing neighborhoods.
- The board hopes to finalize the proposal for the Fall Town Meeting to avoid another delay, though the timeline is very tight.
- Action Item: @[Danielle, Michaela] - Continue to reach out to department heads for their comments on the proposed bylaw changes.
- The board stressed the importance of the timeline to prepare for a Fall Town Meeting, likely in November, given that the spring session was missed.
- Michaela confirmed the timeline would be very tight, requiring a quick public hearing process once the meeting is called.
- While one member expressed nervousness about rushing, another countered that the discussions began in September 2023.
- The board discussed strategies for proactive public engagement to build support for the bylaw changes ahead of the official public hearing.

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- The board acknowledged that topics often disappear from public view, leading to a lack of awareness before a formal hearing.
- Michaela explained the ideal process involves informal public vetting before the official hearing, which should be for final tweaks.
- Proposed early engagement methods included:
 - Informal public meetings publicized by the local paper.
 - Online surveys.
 - Using the Town Administrator's weekly broadcast.
 - Hosting "meet and greet" coffee sessions.
- It was contended that the Fall Town Meeting is generally focused on bylaws, making it a better venue than the Spring meeting, which is expected to be dominated by fiscal issues, including a potential deficit and another override.
- The board has four months to finalize the proposal for the four districts.
- One member expressed optimism that the proposal has broad appeal and will be an easier sell than past issues if presented clearly with backing from all town departments.
- A member raised the importance of updating the town's outdated use table for small business owners.
- However, the group agreed that changing lot sizes is a more manageable task for the immediate Fall Town Meeting timeline, given limited staff and time.
- Michaela agreed that the broader use table update is too complex for the fall, as it requires extensive departmental vetting.
- The board discussed the history of delays and a need for better GIS mapping to visualize the impact of proposed bylaw changes.
- The board narrowed its focus to RA, RI, RC, and MU districts after receiving an unmanageable 38-page package.
- The board seeks to regain momentum and define next steps, including re-engaging consultant Ted Brovitz for the June 30 meeting.
- The board is willing to hold additional summer meetings focused solely on zoning to keep momentum.
- Michaela requested initial feedback on proposed lot size changes, such as moving the RA/RB district to 5,000 sq ft, and flagged a potential conflict with state law identified by the Building Commissioner.
- Concerns were raised about the public's understanding of large reductions (e.g., RC from 100,000 to 10,000 sq ft), with members noting this may be the only opportunity for major change until November 2027.
- Action Item: - Consult the Building Commissioner on the 5,000 sq ft minimum and potential state law conflicts; also flag the issue to Ted - Due Date: Before June 30, 2026.
- Frame the upcoming effort as the primary opportunity for change and include as much as can be reasonably advanced
- Limited future windows and potential for town progress and revenue opportunities.
- The board requested visual aids and acreage conversions to help the public conceptualize the proposed changes.

b) **Board discussion:**

- A candidate has been interviewed for the Planner position, and a potential hire may be forthcoming
- To avoid losing time, the new Planner, if hired, will be immediately updated on the ongoing bylaw work.
- Noted that hiring a Planner would be a significant help in advancing the board's work.
- An inquiry was made about whether the two new members had received their binder containing bylaws and other information.
- The binders from former members Jeff and Sharon must be returned first.
- Danielle will notify the new members when the binders are available for pickup.
- Town bylaws (a link to the eCode360 version was also emailed on June 15, 2026).
- The Economic Development Committee discussed a multi-phase development project and the departure of a staff member.
 - The committee met the week of June 8, 2026 and heard from a developer.
 - The development project will be built in sections, with the front building being constructed and occupied first before the others are built.
 - The project is noted to have "a ton of parking" and will include affordable units located on the Route Six transit line.
 - Alyssa Bothello is leaving the Economic Development and Tourism department.
 - The responsibility for posting public information on social media will likely fall to the board or other staff following her departure.
- There was a discussion regarding the process for issuing a new Request for Proposals (RFP) for a property, referencing past experiences.
 - The Planning Department, specifically the old planner, wrote and issued the last two RFPs for the property in question.
 - The first of those two RFPs resulted in a litigation case.
 - The second RFP was halted, possibly due to appeals.
 - It is assumed that a similar RFP process, soliciting project proposals for the property, would be used again.
 - It was stated that a completely new RFP would need to be sent out, as the design would be different from previous proposals.
 - clarified they were referring to reusing the RFP document itself, not the old project proposals received.

c) **Any other business:** that may properly come before the Board, not reasonably anticipated when posting 48 hours prior to this meeting.

6) **NEXT MEETING:** June 30, 2026 @ 6:30PM

ADJOURN: There being no further business before the board, the meeting is adjourned.