



Town of Hamilton
Planning Board
Meeting Minutes of September 2, 2025

Pursuant to the Open Meeting Law, MGL Chapter 30A, §§ 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 September 2, 2025 at 7:00 PM. 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 and third Tuesday evening at 7:00 PM. Planning Board members: Marnie Crouch, Chair, 2026; Emil Dahlquist, Clerk, 2028; William Wheaton, 2028; Beth Herr, 2028; Patrick Norton, 2026; Jonathan Poore, 2027; Darcy Dale, 2027; Matt Hamel (associate), 2026; Jeff Austin (associate), 2027.

Call to Order: *With a quorum present, Chair Marnie Crouch called the Planning Board meeting to order at 7:03 PM, identified the meeting was being recorded and those present:* J. Poore, P. Norton, W. Wheaton, B. Herr, D. Dale, E. Dahlquist, J. Austin. *Not present:* M. Hamel. Also present: Mark Connors, Planning Director for the Town of Hamilton; Meirwyn Walters, Attorney with WaltersLacey, LLP, representing Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary via Zoom.

Agenda:

1. PLANNING BOARD BUSINESS:

a. 133 Essex Street, “The Village at Chebacco Hill” Comprehensive Permit Application – Discussion of potential comments to the Zoning Board of Appeals regarding a Comprehensive Permit application for 133 Essex Street (Assessor’s Map 65, Lot 1) to develop a 59-unit age-restricted housing development with 15 affordable units.

Chair Crouch opened discussion of the Comprehensive Permit Application for “The Village at Chebacco Hill” at 133 Essex Street. Chair Crouch recommended that comments for the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) be raised at the next Planning Board meeting on September 16, 2025.

J. Poore asked if the applicant could waive local, state, and federal regulations and bylaws since the proposed project was subject to Chapter 40B. Planning Director M. Connors confirmed that the project could only waive local bylaws, not state or federal regulations.

J. Poore raised the concern that the original Special Permit Application had several environmental design issues, and the current Comprehensive Permit Application did not address these issues. Chair Crouch raised the concern that since the affordable housing units were age-restricted, the development would be less accommodating for families with children.

Chair Crouch recommended that Planning Board members submit brief comments to M. Connors to supplement the Planning Board decision when presenting to the ZBA.

b. Discussion/Follow-up of July 14, 2025 Special Town Meeting

Chair Crouch opened a review of the Frequently Asked Questions related to Town Center rezoning developed by Planning Board members. P. Norton noted that he had been receiving lots of questions from members of the public about the protection status of the Winthrop School under the 3A and Town Center zoning decisions. Chair Crouch noted that it could be easier to provide answers to the FAQs after the Board consulted with Utile Associates regarding operating guidelines.

c. Brown’s Hill Overlay District – Discussion of a potential rezoning of the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Campus

Chair Crouch opened discussion of the potential rezoning of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary by summarizing her meeting with E. Dahlquist, Town Manager Joseph Domelowicz, and Attorney Meirwyn Walters to finalize the development agreement. She also noted that the current goal was to present the Brown’s Hill Overlay District for consideration at a Special Town Meeting on December 9th. M. Connors reviewed a potential Planning Board meeting schedule, with public hearings in late October and early November and the Planning Board voting on their recommendations by mid-November in time to present the overlay district at the Special Town Meeting.

E. Dahlquist summarized the findings of a yield analysis that showed the 102 acres on the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary property, of which roughly 50 acres on the site were developable. He added that the remaining acres consisted of heritage

landscape, the natural zone, and the Brown's Hill reservoir. J. Poore noted that piecemeal development could create greater density than having an overarching vision for the site with specified guardrails intended to prevent overdevelopment. P. Norton noted that piecemeal development could provide the Planning Board with greater insight because each individual project proposal could be viewed in the context of existing projects on the site.

E. Dahlquist presented a density analysis to showcase the different Floor Area Ratio (FAR) values of various hypothetical development plans for the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary property. Chair Crouch, E. Dahlquist, and J. Poore agreed that this data would provide a relevant metric for the Planning Board to use as a tool while drafting the BHOD language.

P. Norton advocated for the use of special permits for repurposing existing buildings or allowing commercial development that reused the footprint of the existing building. W. Wheaton expressed concerns about traffic increases as a result of extensive commercial development on the site and questioned if commercial development should be permitted at all. M. Walters noted that the site was currently operating in a semi-commercial state, with approximately 250 employees, 1,200 students, and corresponding traffic on the site. He also noted that Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary was in favor of permitting commercial development regulated by special permit while also allowing conversion of existing buildings.

d. Discussion of potential 2026 Zoning Bylaw amendments, including consideration of:

- i. Revisions to the Estate Overlay District (Section 9.4) to encourage effectiveness and wider adoption of the bylaw**
- ii. Solar/Renewable Energy Bylaw**
- iii. Potential regulations concerning retaining walls**

e. Master Plan Implementation

The Planning Board postponed discussion of the remaining agenda items due to the late hour, though members agreed that a zoning amendment discussion was an important topic to reconsider at a future meeting.

2. ADJOURNMENT:

E. Dahlquist made a motion to adjourn at approximately 9:20 PM. J. Poore seconded the motion.

***Vote:** The Planning Board voted unanimously by roll call to adjourn the meeting.*

Documents:

- [Meeting Agenda](#)
- [133 Essex Street Comprehensive Permit Application](#)
- [133 Essex Street November 2023 Town Comments](#)
- [Town Center Rezoning – Planning Board member submitted questions](#)
- Brown's Hill Overlay District (BHOD)
 - [Base Districts Map](#)
 - [District Development Breakdown](#)
 - [Development Density Analysis](#)
 - [Ipswich Great Estate Bylaw Comparison](#)
 - [Table 1: Description of Zoning Districts](#)
 - [Table 2: Allowable Uses in Districts](#)
 - [Table 3: Allowable Building Types](#)
 - [Table 4: Dimensional Standards](#)
 - [Table 5: Building Dimensional Standards](#)

Respectfully submitted by A. Brennan, 9/22/25.

The minutes were prepared from video.