



Manchester-By-The-Sea Minutes of the Joint Planning Board Meeting with Select Board

Date: February 2, 2026

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Members Present: Sarah Creighton, Peter Morton, Sandy Bodmer-Turner, Chris Olney, Brian Frey

Members Absent: Susan Philbrick, Gordon Brewster

Staff Present: Marc Resnick, Director of Land Management

Call to Order

The Planning Board meeting was called to order. Members present included Sarah Creighton, Peter Morton, Sandy-Bodmer Turner, Chris Olney, & Brian Frey. Marc Resnick, Town Planner, was also present.

Associate Member Interviews - Nancy Garvey & Isabella Bates

Chair Creighton introduced the two candidates for the Planning Board associate member positions. The interviews began with Nancy Garvey, who introduced herself as a 20-year resident of Manchester. She noted her previous experience serving on the Planning Board for 6 years under Carol Cabot, who had recruited her after she expressed concerns about construction near her property. Ms. Garvey mentioned balancing her Planning Board duties with raising her child and working full-time during her previous tenure. She highlighted her community involvement, including opening her home for the Manchester Historical Museum house tour. Ms. Garvey stated she has a master's degree in education, is a former teacher, teaches skiing part-time at Stowe Mountain, and has flexibility in her schedule to serve.

Isabella Bates then introduced herself, sharing that she has been a full-time resident for 16 years but has connections to Manchester for all of her 82 years. Ms. Bates explained that she began attending Planning Board meetings during a contentious period, bringing her 45 years of meditation experience to serve as a "peaceful presence." She acknowledged having limited technical knowledge of planning regulations but emphasized her skills as a good listener who could absorb what's needed with advanced preparation. She noted her professional background as a voice and piano teacher and meditation instructor.

Following the interviews, the boards proceeded with appointments.

Motion by the Select Board & Mr. Morton to appoint Nancy Garvey and Isabella Bates as Associate Members to the Planning Board, expiring June 2026. Seconded by Mr. Olney. Motion passed unanimously.

It was clarified that at the end of June, there would be a decision regarding which member would serve a one-year term, and which would serve a two-year term.

Review of Possible Articles for the ATM

Downtown Zoning Article

Chair Creighton presented the proposed downtown zoning articles. He explained they were trying to make zoning reflect what currently exists, as current zoning does not match much of the downtown. The proposal divides a portion of the general district into two districts:

- Town Center - extending from Boo Bird to Sea Breeze Variety and the Post Office
- Harbor's Edge - including Beach Street, Ace Hardware Store, Crosby's, Madame Had'em, Nor'east Cleaners and Harbor Point

The distinction was that Harbor's Edge already has significant parking to meet customer needs, while Town Center generally does not.

For the Town Center district, the proposal includes:

- Mixed use on the first floor
 - along the street
 - at least 25 feet deep
- Up to 4 residential units per lot (minimum 6,000 square foot lot)
 - Residential units allowed above or behind first-floor retail/commercial space
- Setbacks and height requirements reflecting current conditions
- Zero parking spaces required for commercial uses and one space per residential unit
- Special permit required for residential use on the first floor

For the Harbor's Edge district:

- Commercial use required on the entire first floor
- Residential allowed above, with maximum of 15 units per acre
 - Affordable housing requirements for developments of 5 units or more
- Historic district standards remain for properties in the historic district
- Design standards from MBTA zoning would apply to other properties

Senior Housing

Chris Olney presented on the senior housing proposal, noting he had been advocating for this for about 8 years. He highlighted that about one-third of Manchester's population is 65 or older and growing, making Manchester the only town on the North Shore without zoning provisions for senior housing.

The proposal includes:

- Allowance for up to 10 units per acre for independent senior housing in any residential district
- Assisted living also at 10 units per acre but excluded from certain districts
- Size limitations on units to encourage smaller-scale development
- Local preference for town residents, those with relatives in town, or former employees
- Affordable housing requirement of one unit per every 5 units built

John Round (Select Board) raised several concerns:

- Whether the lot size requirements (1-2 acres) would limit potential development sites
- Whether the square footage limitations (1,200 sq ft for 2-bedroom units) were too small for downsizing seniors
- Whether the density for assisted living (10 units/acre) was economically feasible

Chair Creighton and Mr. Olney noted that they were considering reducing minimum lot sizes to half an acre, that the square footage was standard apartment sizes, and that there were examples of small, assisted living facilities that worked at that density. They also explained that additional units could be approved if more affordable units were included.

A concern was raised about whether the affordability requirement would discourage development, with developers potentially capping projects at 4 units to avoid the requirement. The Planning Board indicated they would continue to evaluate this issue.

Inn Article

Chair Creighton presented the inn zoning, explaining they would define "inn" as accommodations for transient occupants, limited to 12 guests. Inns would be allowed by right in the town center and downtown districts, by special permit in the general district, and by right in limited commercial areas. She noted that small inns could help with downtown vibrancy.

The Board decided to delay consideration of hotel zoning based on feedback expressing concerns about hotels.

Driveway Entrance General By-Law Amendment

The Planning Board explained this amendment would make the current driveway entrance requirements in the general bylaws more flexible. The current bylaw is very restrictive with no exceptions process, which creates problems with topography changes that sometimes necessitate two site entrances. The amendment was developed in collaboration with DPW and Town Planner, Marc Resnick.

ADU Article

Chair Creighton mentioned that Sarah Mellish (Chair of the Zoning Board of Appeals) had requested consideration to modify the large ADU bylaw (901-1200 square feet) to allow them in D districts. Currently, these larger ADUs are not permitted in D districts because two-family structures are already allowed there. The Planning Board is still evaluating this request, noting it might be more appropriate to modify the two-family requirement that structures be in a single building. She noted that ADUs often lead to lengthy town meeting discussions.

The Planning Board concluded by summarizing that they plan to move forward with the downtown zoning, senior housing, inn, and driveway bylaw articles for Town Meeting, with the ADU article still under consideration.

Unanimous motion to adjourn the meeting.