



City of Auburn, Maine
Office of Planning & Permitting
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PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

September 15, 2026

1. ROLL CALL

Ed Bearor (Chair), Riley Bergeron, Tim DeRoche, Chelsea Eaton, Bob Hayes, Maureen Hopkins, Bilal Hussein, Kathy Shaw, and Andrea Westbye

Staff members present: DeCarlo Brown (Planning Director) and Sam Peikes (Planning Coordinator)

2. MINUTES: Acceptance of the May 28 and August 11 meeting minutes

Motion made by Maureen Hopkins and seconded by Andrea Westbye to approve the May 28, 2026 minutes. Vote 3-0-4. Motion Does Not Carry

Motion made by Bilal Hussein and seconded by Maureen Hopkins to approve the August 11, 2026 minutes. Vote 7-0 Motion Carries

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. PUBLIC HEARING SITE PLAN AMENDMENT/SPECIAL EXCEPTION: 220

Danville Corner Road (PID 122-006) application submitted by Platz Associates, on behalf of Recovery Connections of Maine, to change the use of the property at 220 Danville Corner Road from education to a hospital. The property is located in the General Business (GB) district and will be reviewed under Chapter 60, Article XVI, Division 2 – Site Plan Review and Division 3 – Special Exception.

Sam Peikes gave a staff report stating the application is for a change of use from education to a hospital treatment facility. She said Hospital falls under special exception in the General Business zone and that it is an amendment because it was formerly an education facility for Spurwink School that was previously approved. She said Staff have deemed the application complete.

Dan Moreno of Platz Associates reviewed the plan and said there is very little to no change to the building. He said the parking is for staff only, that they will be extending the public sewer to replace the septic system, they will be serviced by a private well, the dumpster is being modified to be an 8ft enclosure with wood slats, and they're putting curb stops for the vehicles parking opposite the building. He said the Traffic Impact Analysis waiver was

submitted and approved by the City Engineer and the Auburn Water District approved the proposed sewer layout.

Jeremy Hiltz, of Recovery Connections of Maine, gave some background on the program stating they have been operating addiction treatment programs in Lewiston and Auburn for about 9 years. He said they plan to use the facility to create a 45-day inpatient high intensity residential program. He said they provide 24 hours of medically managed care with staff including a physician, psychiatric nurse practitioners, mental health counselors, case managers, licensed alcohol and drug counselors, residential advisors, and support staff.

After it was pointed out there are some inconsistencies in the number of beds and bedrooms between the proposal overview, plans, and letter from Auburn Water District, he confirmed the plans are accurate and there will be 28 beds and 15 bedrooms.

The board requested the applicant provide adequate Rights Title and Interest, updated letter of financial capacity to include the sewer line extension, and an updated letter from the Water District confirming that the water on site is adequate for the facility with the number of bedrooms and beds corrected.

The public hearing was opened.

Steve Warren of 241 Danville Corner Road – asked about the level of treatment provided and the types of addiction addressed. He expressed concern that the facility may not be compatible with the rural neighborhood and could affect property values. He questioned whether residents would remain supervised on-site or be able to leave the property. He also cited safety concerns due to the lack of transit, sidewalks, lighting, and nearby emergency services, and raised questions about whether staffing levels would be sufficient for the number of residents.

The public hearing was closed.

Jeremy Hiltz said the facility has never had residents leave the property unsupervised, that if they do leave, they are escorted by staff and transported with the facility van. He noted that residents are monitored every 15 minutes, the property allows for supervised outdoor activity, and the program will be staffed in accordance with state and federal requirements.

DeCarlo explained that hospitals are a permitted use in both applicable zoning districts and that the City of Auburn has identified these areas as appropriate for such services. He referenced the ordinance definition of “Hospital,” noting that the proposed inpatient care aligns with the intended use.

Andrea said that she has lived across from the Auburn Residential Program for many years and that the area is not rural but a dense neighborhood with single and multi-family homes and a nearby school bus stop. She noted that residents are always supervised when outside and transported by staff when leaving the property, and that she has never observed any issues or needed police presence in the neighborhood.

DeCarlo addressed concerns that the property value will be affected. He said that staff believe the project meets the standard under Special Exception and will not negatively impact neighboring properties, emphasizing that reusing an existing, previously abandoned structure is more protective of property values than leaving it vacant. He added that there is no evidence indicating the proposed use would depreciate nearby properties and suggested the applicant provide a letter from a qualified real estate professional to support this finding.

Motion made by Maureen Hopkins to continue the public hearing to either the next meeting or such time as we have the information requested.

Motion was revised by Maureen Hopkins and seconded by Ed Bearor to continue the public hearing until submission of the requested documents. Vote 6-1 (Bilal Hussein opposed) Motion Carries

B. WORKSHOP: Proposed Zoning Amendment – Variances and Waivers

DeCarlo explained that certain provisions in the City's ordinance are not consistent with State law regarding variances and waivers. He clarified that the Planning Board does not have authority to grant variances for zoning-related restrictions, while waivers may be issued only when authorized by the legislative body for general standards. He noted that the proposed amendment would correct these inconsistencies, ensuring that variances remain under the purview of the Board of Appeals and that the Planning Board is clearly authorized to grant waivers for site plans and subdivisions.

It was noted that the word variance should be struck from Sec. 1312.b. and 1366.b and there was discussion on if it should be struck from the title as well.

Motion made by Riley Bergeron and seconded by Bilal Hussein to schedule a public hearing for Sec. 60-1312 and Sec. 60-1366 Variances and Waivers for October 13. Vote 7-0 Motion Carries

4. OLD/CONTINUED BUSINESS

A. CHAPTER 60 ZONING AMENDMENTS LD1829/2173: Continued discussion of proposed block, open space and street standards.

DeCarlo reviewed amendments to Recreation Area/Open Space standards. In Sec. 60-1367. Dedication and Maintenance of Common Open Space and Services, it was suggested to change the word perpetuity to something else. It was requested that the Board talk about Div 4 Traffic Analysis Standards. The Board is not comfortable with the Engineer granting the waiver request from the Traffic Impact Analysis .

5. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

6. MISCELLANEOUS

Riley requested an update on the Academy Street project. DeCarlo will give an update at the next meeting.

Maureen suggested that sometime in the future they revise the definitions to address words that are too broad or terms not used anymore.

Ed requested that Planning staff research the tax revenue generated by apartment developments compared to single-family homes, noting that multi-unit housing may contribute less relative to the cost of services such as education. He asked that Assessing confirm whether there is a significant difference in tax impacts between the two housing types. DeCarlo responded that this analysis is part of the department's work plan and that a cost-of-services study will outline the revenue and service demands associated with different development types. Once completed, staff will share the findings with the Board.

DeCarlo said there are four meetings before the Board is scheduled to make an official recommendation on the Comprehensive Plan

- September 23 – Continue to talk about the comprehensive plan.
- October 13 – Regular scheduled meeting and continue to talk about comprehensive plan
- October 14 – Public Hearing on the Comprehensive Plan
- October 28 – Discuss and formally vote on recommendations to the City Council

7. PLANNING BOARD ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION: None

8. ADJOURNMENT

**Motion made by Ed Bearor and seconded by Riley Bergeron to adjourn at 8:57 p.m. Vote 7-0
Motion Carries**

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