

**February 3, 2026  
Planning Board**

**Present were Regular Members:** Lori Langlois, Henry Noel, Dan Whittet, Cassandra Mason, Micah Bachner, Jeffrey Quackenbush **Ex-Officio Member:** Mia Qualls, alternate **Alternate Member:** None

**Excused were Members:** Tom McCue and Brian Valerino

**Others Present:** Pamela Laflamme, Director of Strategic Initiatives; Michel Salek, Code Enforcement Officer; Ed Roberge and Dave McNamara from Stantec Engineering; Eamon Kelley; Clarence Sawyer; members of the public; Shelli Fortin, minutes; and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun

Lori Langlois, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

**Approval of December Minutes**

**Cassandra Mason made a motion to approve the minutes of January 6, 2026, as presented. Dan Whittet seconded the motion. All were in favor of approving the minutes, and the motion carried.**

**Presentation – Stantec Engineering**

Ed Roberge from Stantec Engineering began his presentation by sharing a Stantec moment on safety while driving near snowplows.

Mr. Roberge reviewed the project area, noting that the snowmelt system was no longer part of the project. Mr. Roberge advised that there is a potential to expand the project area to include Glen Avenue and Pleasant Street to the intersection by Veterans Park with two-way traffic. Pamela Laflamme advised that Federal Highways has approved extending the project if they choose two-way traffic, and NHDOT has also approved it, noting that they will need to decide which side Route 16 will be. Construction would be a full rebuild of the original project area, and repaving in the additional area.

Mr. Roberge shared examples of traffic patterns on Main Street and Pleasant Street with both one-way and two-way traffic. There would not be a dedicated bike lane on Main Street with one-way traffic, but it would be a shared road. Pleasant Street could have a dedicated bike lane with one-way traffic.

Henry Noel asked about the road width, and Mr. Roberge advised that the road width for Main and Pleasant street is the same sidewalk to sidewalk, but Main Street has wider sidewalks.

Dave McNamara reviewed the two-way traffic proposal, noting the challenges of the Green Square and Exchange Street intersection and the truck route. With two-way traffic, trucks could go up Pleasant Street, and Green Square could remain one-way to preserve the park and green space. If the City chooses the two-way traffic design, they will need to do to a

traffic count for the traffic signals. With two-way traffic, there would be parking on only one side of the street.

Stantec shared conceptual drawings of the Woolworth site with the building removed, which could be used for additional parking and another connecting side street. Plans for the downtown area would include spaces for benches and is designed barrier free, with no curbing.

Michel Salek asked about parking and considerations for northbound traffic. Stantec advised that parking was designed on the left of Pleasant Street to tie it to the core, but it could be on either side.

When asked about paving, Stantec advised that the street would be paved with bituminous and the sidewalks would be concrete. The plan includes wayfinding signage.

Mr. Roberge compared the number of parking spaces for each design, and possible angled parking in some areas. Main Street would not have enough space for angled parking. Mr. Roberge advised that the two-way traffic design does impact the number of parking spaces, from 202 with one-way traffic to 177 with two-way traffic. Developing parking at the old Princess Theater site was discussed to increase the number of spaces.

Mr. Roberge listed the Planning Board's considerations, which are whether they would prefer a one-way system, a two-way system with extended project area, a two-way system on just Main and Pleasant Street, or two-way on Pleasant Street only. A member noted that although the two-way idea comes from the Economic Development Consultant, development can happen no matter what proposal is chosen.

Pamela Laflamme advised that the municipal parking lots are all part of the project. When asked about other uses for parking lots in the downtown area, Ms. Laflamme advised there is nothing that prevents the City from selling that property or using that space for a different purpose. It was noted that the best place to invest in is downtown, and if parking is lost it should be made up elsewhere. Ms. Laflamme noted that once the Woolworth property is opened up, and you can see the parking areas on Pleasant Street, people will be more likely to use the downtown lots.

Jeffrey Quackenbush stated that he would prefer to see more emphasis on people in the downtown space, not cars. The street is narrow and there is not a lot of sidewalk space. Mr. Quackenbush noted that Berlin's downtown area is not the same as Gorham, which has a lot of through traffic. The City should make sure people can move around safely, encourage them to spend time in the downtown, and make it a pleasant place to be. Mr. Quackenbush listed the problems he sees with the 2-way traffic design, including it being less hospitable for pedestrians, a safety hazard, more congested, and less parking available. Mr. Quackenbush advised he also heard from a former merchant, who shared concerns with two-way traffic, and he believes it would be a disappointing direction and a mistake for the City.

Henry Noel noted that he remembers the downtown being a walkable area, and stated he believes that should be emphasized.

Michel Salek asked about the Tondreau parking lot, and Ms. Laflamme advised the City does not own the property, however they had a long-term lease agreement with Smith Hydro to use it as a public parking area.

Ms. Laflamme advised the final decision on the plan will be left to the Council in two weeks. The importance of informing the public of the upcoming decision was discussed.

Dan Whittet asked about underground wiring, and Ms. Laflamme advised they would need to meet with Eversource about the poles downtown but that is was likely a cost prohibitive project.

Clarence Sawyer, of 20 Haskell Street, shared his perspective on vehicles in the downtown area, noting that if the emphasis is on roads he tends to drive by. An emphasis on people walking and green spaces is a good, healthy focus.

Peter Higbee, of Norway Street, stated that he has a hard time seeing Main Street as better off with two-way traffic. Mr. Higbee suggested Pleasant Street being the main artery, and leaving Main Street just one-way. This would make Main Street a destination, a beautiful walkable downtown.

Ms. Laflamme shared concerns over people bypassing the downtown, and the resulting lack of traffic to support local businesses. If the two-way plan does not work, it is much easier to go back to one-way traffic later. Also, the two-way traffic pattern signals that something different is happening in the area. Dan Whittet noted that the economic consultant, Ilana Preuss, was thinking of other types of cities with her suggestion of two-way traffic. Mr. Whittet noted that the design will be new and different even with one-way traffic.

Eamon Kelley, of Grafton Street, stated that he agreed with a lot being said, but stated that with 2-way traffic you could not make an impulsive stop, as parking is not readily available. Mr. Kelley suggested two-way traffic on Pleasant Street, along with two-way traffic north of Mason Street on Main Street; however, keeping the area on Main Street from Green Square to Mason Street one-way. This would also allow the Fire Department to go down Main Street from the Fire Station. Mr. Kelley also shared concerns about losing parking spaces on upper Pleasant Street, which is a residential area. Mr. Kelley stated that he hopes the traffic lights system will quickly adapt to any issues. Ms. Laflamme noted that the traffic lights will operate together and have one central control. Ms. Laflamme also noted that consistency is important, and that Main Street should be one-way all the way, if it remains that way.

Clarence Sawyer noted that as a driver, if roads are designed with more focus on traffic, he tends to focus on that and not the businesses. If the area is designed more toward pedestrians, traffic tends to be slower and gives drivers time to look at the surroundings.

Stantec reviewed placemaking in the design, noting parking on both sides of Main Street in staggered areas. This provides friction along the pathway to slow down traffic.

Lori Langlois noted that she was originally in favor of one-way traffic, but does understand the benefit of the two-way design.

Jeffrey Quackenbush asked if all three options will be presented to the Council for their vote, and Ms. Laflamme advised that the City Manager will be making the presentation.

### **Draft Review of Zoning Ordinance Changes**

Pamela Laflamme advised that she has received some feedback from Board members on the zoning ordinance changes and encouraged others to share their comments by February 17. Ms. Barrett provided a form to use for comments which was shared with the Board. The Board will discuss the draft at the meeting in March.

Ms. Laflamme advised that she received a model solar ordinance from Clean Energy NH. It will be shared with the Energy Committee before adding it to the ordinance. Ms. Laflamme also advised that the updated signage section is not yet in the draft. This will be added for the March meeting.

Cassandra Mason stated that she believes the ordinance is well laid out and structured, however there were a few sections that were confusing. It was noted that the tables are very helpful.

Michel Salek advised that he did look at the nonconforming section and did not have any proposed changes. Mr. Salek advised that he provided some suggestions on fencing and pools.

### **Member Comments**

There were no member comments.

### **Public Comments**

Pamela Laflamme advised that she did receive a call from David Morin, who was a former business owner on Main Street, who shared concerns about the two-way traffic design.

### **Project Updates**

Pamela Laflamme advised that they are submitting Multi-Purpose Brownfields grant to EPA for the assessment and cleanup of vacant City owned downtown parcels. Any leftover funds could be used for other City owned properties outside the downtown area.

Ms. Laflamme thanked Cassandra Mason for her help with the Moose Plate grant to reassemble Mr. Jean Bartoli's sculpture in the downtown sculpture park. They will be working with a preservationist, who will also look at the existing sculptures. HEB will help with technical assistance for reassembly. Professional movers will be needed to move the sculpture to the park.

Ms. Laflamme advised that FEMA was here last week to discuss the updated flood maps. Ms. Laflamme noted that it is likely there will be more floodways on the map instead of floodplains. This may affect development, as construction is not allowed in the floodway.

Ms. Laflamme advised that there will be a meeting on February 26 with the Small Business Development Center, North Country Community Loan Fund, Coos Economic Development Council, NH Employment Security, and others to make the process more accessible to those looking to open or expand a business in Berlin.

Ms. Laflamme advised that the solar project at Brown Farm is complete. Michel Salek advised the final electrical inspection was done today.

Ms. Laflamme advised that she has received a few calls from abutters of the Dummer Yard property who received letters from the company interested in developing that site. The City also received the same letter, which concerns an application to DES for a determination of covenant eligibility. The application should be on file at DES, but is not part of the process for the Planning Board should an application be submitted to them.

#### **Other**

Cassandra Mason asked if photos of the solar project could be shared and Ms. Laflamme advised she could send them out. When asked about sharing the new flood maps, Ms. Laflamme advised that those are not public information until the second stage of the process, however she will share the PowerPoint presentation.

Dan Whittet asked about GIS for the stormwater system. ESRI does provide free training for employees, and Ms. Laflamme stated she has not yet had a chance to contact them.

#### **Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the board, Micah Bachner moved to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Dan Whittet. All in favor, the motion carried.

The Planning Board meeting ended at 8:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Shelli Fortin