

FINAL

Bridgewater Planning Board
April 21, 2026 Work Session Minutes

Board members present: Vice Chair- Ken Weidman, Steve Hering, Joe Wilkas, Paul Wilson, Jeff Bird, Ex-officio- Terry Murphy

Public present: None

Ken called the meeting to order at 7pm and it was decided that minutes would not be approved during a work session. Terry distributed information from the town's attorney regarding Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), Ken dispersed the Town of Hebron's ADU draft, and Joe passed out existing regulations regarding duplexes.

Terry stated that expanding the town will not reduce taxes. He explained that growth is more likely to increase the tax burden because additional residents place greater demands on public services. Terry continued that population growth raises costs for welfare programs, public safety and crime response, congestion management, and education.

Extensive discussion was held regarding the need to make ADU regulations clear, enforceable, and wellunderstood by residents. Members emphasized the importance of educating the public about both state requirements and the Town of Bridgewater's. Discussion also focused on the differences between lakefront lots and larger acreage lots. Smaller lake lots may have limited capacity to accommodate ADUs, while larger parcels offer more flexibility. It was noted that overregulation could reduce public support. The board also discussed whether the town should adopt stricter standards than the State of New Hampshire, including increasing the minimum ADU footprint from the state's "no less than 750 square feet" to "no less than 1,000 square feet." This would remain compliant with state law while adding local safeguards. Steve noted that increasing the minimum square footage requirement could make setbacks harder to meet and would prevent tiny houses, campers, or mobile homes from qualifying as ADUs, helping preserve the town's character and aesthetic.

Discussion was also held regarding the possibility of an annual compliance officer, a possible penalty clause, land in current use designations, the selling of properties with an existing ADU, and ensuring that ADU regulations apply equally across all zoning districts. Members discussed the need to define "residential" clearly so that ADUs cannot be used seasonally. Hebron's draft language was referenced, which specifies that "owneroccupied" cannot mean parttime or seasonal occupancy.

It was decided that board members would take home the materials provided (resources from the state, the town's attorney, Joe's printout, Hebron's draft, and the NH Planning and Land Use Regulation) to review before the next meeting. Joe recommended that each

member create a list of what they do and do not want included in the ADU regulations, using these resources as guidance.

Ken, Steve, Jeff, Paul, and Joe signed the Planning Board Member Oath of Office forms. The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 PM.