



## About the Planning Board

### Overview

Planning Board: Seven Members (3-year terms)

Planning Board webpage: <https://www.amherstma.gov/197/Planning-Board>

Planning Board Rules and Regulations: <https://www.amherstma.gov/501/Planning-BoardRules-Regulations>

Planning Board in the Zoning Bylaw, Appointments (Section 10.02, page 97): [Zoning-Bylaw-Complete-Nov-2020 \(amherstma.gov\)](#) [Zoning Primer](#)

Most decisions of the Planning Board, no matter how many members are present at the meeting, are by a simple majority. Decisions on special permits are by 2/3 vote with a minimum of 5 members needed to pass a motion to approve. Site Plan Review decisions require a simple majority vote to approve.

Meets two Wednesdays per month, from 6:30 pm – 10:00 pm, in the Town Room, plus one annual workshop on administrative practices.

Meetings are live broadcast, and are also taped for later viewing on Channel 17 and [AmherstMedia.org](http://AmherstMedia.org). During the COVID-19 emergency, meetings are held via Zoom, with links available on the Town's Board and Committees calendar and video recordings are available on the Town of Amherst, MA YouTube channel.

Work between meetings is limited to site visits, reading materials provided by Town staff, and to sending questions to Town staff. Members cannot email each other about pending applications, decisions, bylaws, or issues as all deliberations must be held at a posted meeting to comply with the Open Meeting Law.

Operating under various sections of MGL Ch. 41 beginning at Sec. 70, the Planning Board studies the resources and needs of the community and prepares plans that involve land use, including development, cluster developments, housing, transportation, and zoning.

Under Ch. 40A Sec. 5, the Planning Board reviews the Town Zoning Bylaw and can propose amendments to improve it. The Planning Board is required to hold public hearings and make a report to Town Council on all proposed zoning changes.

Under Ch. 41 Sec. 81K-81GG, the Planning Board approves subdivisions and promulgates rules and regulations for subdivision construction, including the construction of roads, sidewalks, as well as water and sewer lines in subdivisions.

The Planning Board approves site plan review applications for cluster developments and other types of development. It conducts site plan reviews for commercial, office, and other non-residential uses of



land. The Board approves special permits for open space community developments and other selected uses, and makes recommendations to the Zoning Board of Appeals on special permits, variances, and appeals.

Under Ch. 41 Sec. 81D, the Planning Board developed the Master Plan which was adopted by the Planning Board on February 3, 2010 and adopted by the Town Council on November 9, 2020.

The Planning Board advises the Town Council on the release for general use of property taxed as forest, farm, or recreation land (See MGL Ch. 61). It also advises the Town Council on the granting of special tax status for qualifying developments (See MGL Ch. 121A). The Planning Board must approve proposed changes regarding stone walls and trees in all town ways designated locally as scenic roads (See MGL Ch. 40 Sec. 15C).

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