

Minutes

PLANNING BOARD

Regular meeting

7 p.m. March 19, 2026

Town Hall Annex Board Meeting Room, 105 E. Corbin St.



Present

Planning Board: Chair Hooper Schultz, Vice Chair Sherra Lawrence, and members Jeanette Benjey, Robert Iglesias, Kimberly Landaverde, and Carrie Winkler

Absent: Planning Board member Sean Kehoe

Staff: Assistant Town Manager Matt Efird, Planning and Economic Development Manager Shannan Campbell, Senior Planner Tom King, Senior Planner Molly Boyle, Town Attorney Bob Hornik, and Jay McLeod and Erin Anderson with Inspire Placemaking Collective

1. Call to order, confirmation of quorum, and public charge

Chair Hooper Schultz called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM, confirmed that a quorum was present, and noted the public charge on the agenda.

2. Agenda changes and approval

Chair Schultz asked for a motion to approve the agenda or to approve the agenda with changes.

Motion: Planning Board member Robert Iglesias moved to approve the agenda as presented. Vice Chair Sherra Lawrence seconded.

Vote: 6-0. Motion passed.

3. Minutes review and approval

Chair Schultz confirmed that all members had reviewed the minutes from both the January regular meeting and the February joint public hearing.

A. Minutes from the Planning Board Regular Meeting on January 15, 2026

Motion: Planning Board member Jeanette Benjey motioned to approve the minutes. Iglesias seconded.

Vote: 6-0. Motion passed.

B. Minutes from the Joint Public Hearing on February 19, 2026

Motion: Iglesias motioned to approve the minutes. Seconded by Vice Chair Lawrence.

Vote: 6-0. Motion passed.

4. Public comment period for matters not on the agenda

Senior Planner Molly Boyle noted that two members of the public had signed up to speak on an agenda item, and they would be heard at the appropriate time. No members of the public signed up to speak on any non-agenda topics.

5. Business meeting

Items 5A and 5B were discussed together and decided with one motion and one vote.

A. Appointment of Board of Adjustment representative

Boyle explained that, unlike the chair and vice chair elections, the rules of procedure allow for volunteers to fill representative positions. Board Member Iglesias confirmed his willingness to continue serving as the Board of Adjustment representative. Staff noted that the Board of Adjustment meets on the second Wednesday of each month, though meeting frequency varies based on caseload. The prior year was relatively quiet, while the current year had seen increased activity.

B. Appointment of Parks and Recreation Board representative

Boyle noted that Chair Schultz had been serving as the Parks and Recreation Board representative and that, given his new role as chair, it might be desirable to have another member volunteer. Vice Chair Lawrence expressed interest but was uncertain about the time commitment. Boyle described the Parks and Recreation Board as meeting monthly on Tuesday evenings, with meetings rarely exceeding one hour. Given the anticipated addition of two new Planning Board members, including one expected to be appointed the following Monday, the board agreed to temporarily reappoint Chair Schultz and revisit the matter once the new members joined.

Motion: Vice Chair Lawrence motioned to reappoint Robert Iglesias as the Board of Adjustment representative and Chair Schultz as the Parks and Recreation Board representative. Seconded by Planning Board member Carrie Winkler.

Vote: 6-0. Motion passed.

6. Closed session

Motion: Chair Schultz motioned to enter closed session as authorized by North Carolina General Statute Section 143.318.11(a)(3) to consult with the town attorney in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege. Seconded by Winkler.

Vote: 6-0. Motion passed.

The Planning Board, Town Attorney Hornik, Assistant Town Manager Matt Efird, and Planning and Economic Development Manager Shannan Campbell left the room at 7:07 pm to go into closed session. The group returned to open session at 7:18 pm.

7. Old business

A. Rezoning and development agreement requests for 715 US Hwy 70 East; PIN 9874-49-0155 (applicant-initiated)

Chair Schultz announced that the board had returned to open session and was proceeding with Item 7A. Boyle explained that, as this matter had been heard at the joint public hearing in February, staff and applicant presentations would not be repeated. The board was to discuss, ask questions, and make its recommendation. Boyle noted that two members of the public had requested to speak, and while the public hearing was closed, the board had the discretion to allow public comment if it wished. The board members decided to hear the comments.

Lynn Parker, president of the Corbinton Commons Homeowners Association, addressed the board. She reiterated concerns raised at the hearing about the pedestrian bridge, specifically that the Homeowners Association thinks the bridge needs reconstruction, not repair, and that the cost of the reconstruction should be borne by the developer. She further stated that when residents purchased their homes in Corbinton Commons, the adjacent property had been marketed by the same developer as a future 55+ retirement community of similar character, which she thought would still be a more appropriate use of the property.

Bruce Chinery, also a Corbinton Commons resident, echoed Ms. Parker's comments. He recalled a prior development nearby that had been scaled back following significant community opposition and suggested the current proposal could face similar scrutiny. He expressed that while he did not oppose development outright, he believed the site should be developed as a 55+ community, given that it had been zoned for assisted living for the past twenty years. He raised concerns about increased traffic through the community and the character of the surrounding area.

Shannan Campbell, Planning and Economic Development Manager, clarified for the board that the existing special use zoning allowed only the construction of either a Medicaid-Approved Housing Services (MAHS) facility or a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC), which were uses the developer no longer wanted to pursue. The applicant was therefore seeking to rezone to multi-family residential to construct an alternative product. Without rezoning, the property would either need to remain undeveloped or the applicant would need to modify the special use permit.

In response to questions from Iglesias, Campbell noted that the prior assisted living plan had projected approximately 200 to 300 units. The current proposal called for 67 townhome units, which she indicated was a reduction in density.

The board discussed the possibility of a 55+ age restriction. Campbell explained that age-restricted communities are governed through deed restrictions enforced by the Homeowners Association, not through local zoning. It was confirmed that the developer had already considered this and declined to pursue a 55+ restriction, as it would significantly limit the pool of eligible renters.

Iglesias observed that the board's role was to assess whether the proposed rezoning was consistent with the town's future land use goals, and not to dictate what the developer must build. He noted that 67 units represented a more manageable outcome than the 200–300 units that had been projected under the prior plan, and that keeping the land undeveloped was not an ideal outcome either.

Winkler acknowledged the difficulty of the decision and expressed genuine empathy for residents who had been promised a different outcome when they purchased their homes. She nonetheless noted that the site's proximity to a high school and a grocery store made it a reasonable location for multi-family housing.

Chair Schultz raised the question of whether conversations had occurred with the developer regarding the Homeowners Association's requests, particularly relating to the pedestrian bridge and a contribution toward the existing pedestrian connection to downtown.

Town Attorney Bob Hornik confirmed that the proposed development agreement would require the developer to either repair, restore, or construct a new pedestrian bridge meeting all applicable building codes. Campbell noted that the draft development agreement specified "necessary repairs or restoration of the existing pedestrian bridge or construction of a new pedestrian bridge."

The board noted that the development agreement added meaningful restrictions beyond a standard rezoning, including the 67-unit cap, water and sewer timing requirements, and the affordable housing payment-in-lieu obligation. Hornik confirmed that the payment-in-lieu provision meant the units themselves would be market-rate, with a financial contribution to be made to the town's affordable housing fund.

Motion: Winkler motioned to recommend approval of both the rezoning request for the parcel at 715 US Highway 70 East to the multi-family district and the associated development agreement. Chair Schultz seconded.

Vote: 6-0. Motion passed.

Boyle reminded the public in attendance that no final decision was made at the meeting. The Planning Board's recommendation, along with staff analysis and public input, would be presented to the town board for final decision at an upcoming town board meeting.

8. New business

A. Discussion of potential zoning district changes with UDO consultant

Senior Planner Tom King introduced Jay McLeod and Erin Anderson of Inspire Placemaking Collective, the consulting firm engaged to assist with the town's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) update. King said the presentation was intended to solicit early reactions to the direction proposed. [Inspire Placemaking's PowerPoint presentation from the meeting is enclosed with these minutes.]

McLeod opened by noting that Hillsborough currently has a significant number of zoning districts. He said the goal of the UDO update is to simplify the zoning structure, provide flexibility, and support a diversity of housing types and price points while preserving community character.

The consultants proposed consolidating the existing residential districts into four primary categories:

- Suburban Neighborhood Residential (SNR):
Larger-lot development, primarily in the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), where water and sewer availability limits density. Lot sizes of approximately one-half acre; single-family detached use is the expected predominant outcome.
- Traditional Neighborhood Residential (TNR):
Reflects the character of the historic core residential neighborhoods; generally 8,000 to 12,000 square foot lots with primarily single-family use and some allowance for duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes under appropriate design standards.
- Compact Neighborhood Residential (CNR):
A denser pattern suited to new greenfield development, where townhomes, quadplexes, and small apartment buildings (up to twelve units) would be the expected development type.
- Urban Neighborhood Residential (UNR):
A new, higher-density district intended for locations where concentrated density is appropriate, such as near transit nodes or adjacent to the commercial core.

McLeod noted that while all housing types are technically permitted in each district, the lot size requirements, setbacks, and widths are calibrated so that the market will naturally gravitate toward certain housing types in each zone. He also emphasized that rezoning to any of these districts would still require a town board decision.

McLeod walked through sample dimensional tables and development scenarios for the proposed districts. Winkler asked where in Hillsborough these districts would realistically apply, particularly the quadruplex and apartment housing. McLeod said that most of the new construction would likely occur in the Compact

Neighborhood Residential district on greenfield sites, while the Traditional Neighborhood Residential district would likely see smaller infill projects.

Erin Anderson then presented the proposed commercial zoning districts. She noted that Hillsborough currently has eleven commercial or non-residential zoning districts, which is likely cumbersome to administer for a town of this size. The proposed update would consolidate these into four categories:

- Core Commercial (formerly Central Commercial):
The traditional downtown character district (*e.g.*, buildings pulled to the street, walkable, mixed-use). The renaming to "Core" was proposed to signal that this form could appropriately extend to other walkable commercial areas such as West Hillsborough, rather than being perceived as exclusively downtown.
- High Intensity Commercial:
Auto-oriented uses along major transportation corridors; large-scale retail and light industrial.
- Industrial:
Supports industrial and manufacturing uses.
- Urban Activity Center (UAC):
A new district emerging from the Comprehensive Sustainability Plan's vision for transit-oriented development. Intended for high-density residential and commercial development near high-traffic transit nodes, particularly in anticipation of the new train station area. Maximum height in this district is proposed at seven stories, reflecting the economic "sweet spot" for mid-rise construction. This district would not be applied broadly; its placement would be subject to board rezoning decisions at specific, appropriate nodes.

Anderson noted that all proposed commercial districts would permit upper-story residential uses, and that the Urban Activity Center would additionally allow high-density apartment buildings at ground level.

Winkler expressed curiosity about the visual impact of a seven-story building relative to existing structures, noting the town's relatively low-rise skyline. McLeod acknowledged that such a development would require substantial private investment and would almost certainly be accompanied by structured parking and a public investment anchor, such as a transit stop; it would not be a routine occurrence.

Anderson then introduced the concept of "corner stores" as permitted uses in every residential zoning district. The concept, modeled on establishments such as the Village Diner, would allow small-scale commercial uses on corner lots without requiring rezoning to a commercial district. She covered suggested development standards for corner stores, such as operating hours of 6:00 am – 10:00 pm and a maximum gross floor area of 3,000 square feet. Permitted types of corner stores would include restaurants, cafes, retail boutiques, personal services, art studios, and fitness studios; prohibited uses would include bars, drive-throughs, gas stations, and vape stores.

Campbell noted that the Planning Department regularly receives inquiries from residents and entrepreneurs wanting to open small neighborhood businesses. The corner store provision is intended to increase opportunities for such businesses. She also noted several examples of existing corner stores in Hillsborough that had been established under prior zoning but would not be permissible today.

Board members noted that Homeowners Association covenants in many subdivisions would effectively prevent corner stores regardless of the zoning change. Campbell confirmed this possibility.

Winkler raised a question about whether tattoo parlors would be considered analogous to art studios under the permitted uses. Anderson acknowledged the ambiguity and indicated that the list of permitted and

prohibited uses remained a work in progress. McLeod confirmed that this feedback was exactly the type of input sought at this stage.

Lawrence asked whether the proposed framework incorporated any provisions for green space or conservation uses. McLeod noted that parks are generally permitted in almost any district, and that the subdivision standards include open space requirements for new neighborhoods. Campbell added that while the town does strategically acquire properties for parks when possible, the primary intent of the UDO update is to concentrate development on the town's available land to help prevent sprawl.

The board discussed parking minimums, acknowledging a tension between the planning trend of removing mandatory parking minimums and the reality that Hillsborough is currently a suburban, auto-dependent community.

Chair Schultz asked about the timeline for the Unified Development Ordinance update. McLeod said the staff review of the first draft was still underway. This would be followed by a second full draft for broader review, and ultimately an adoption draft that would undergo public input, hearings, and town board decision. Staff and consultants discussed the merits of presenting the document to the Planning Board for review in sections rather than all at once. No formal action was taken.

9. Updates

A. Board of Adjustment

Iglesias reported the Board of Adjustment had not met since the last Planning Board meeting, so there were no updates.

B. Parks & Recreation Board

Chair Schultz reported that the Parks and Recreation Board had met on Tuesday and recommended approval of the Kings Highway Natural Area master plan (formerly referred to as the Riverwalk master plan). No updates were available on the Ridgewalk project, though Senior Planner King noted that Ridgewalk had received an updated stormwater management plan approval earlier that day.

C. Staff and board members

Staff noted that Planning Board member Tiffney Marley had resigned due to PhD study commitments. Megan Kimball, an attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center with prior service on the town's Historic District Commission and Tourism Board, had volunteered to fill the vacancy and was expected to be appointed by the town board at its Monday meeting.

10. Adjournment

Motion: Iglesias motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Lawrence.

Vote: 6-0. Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:59 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Molly Boyle

Senior Planner

Staff support to the Planning Board

Approved: August 20, 2026