

MERRIMAC PLANNING BOARD

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson David Cressman called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM

ATTENDANCE: Chairperson David Cressman, Member Bill McGowan, Member Thomas Abisalih, Member Bronwyn Crocker, Member Dennis Brodie and Town Consultant Denise McClure

Absent: n/a

Motion made by Thomas Abisalih to approve the minutes for February 24, 2026, 2nd by Member Bill McGowan. All in favor 5-0, unanimous.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

APPROVED PROJECT UPDATES:

All are moving along.

NEW BUSINESS:

1 Bear Hill

Thomas Abisalih motioned to open the public hearing, Dennis Brodie seconded the motion. All in favor 5-0, unanimous.

David Nader of TEC opened the presentation accompanied by Doug Reymore of Jewett Construction and Dr. Amer Avdagic, owner of Greater Essex Dental for a site plan review and a storm water and land disturbance permit application. The site had previously been approved for a 15,000 sq. foot gymnastics facility with parking. They are proposing a 3800 sq. dental office and a 2800 sq. foot space for a future tenant. All of the infrastructure for the entire building will be completed as phase one of the project. Proposed parking would be thirty-eight spaces. The total size of the building would be 6600 square feet. The dental office, in comparison to the previously proposed gymnastic facility, has the following benefits: reduced business hours, reduced traffic, reduced lighting. The smaller building provides for a larger buffer and more plantings. The proposed storm water will be treated and fully contained on site with a three-foot infiltration basin which fully infiltrates for a one-hundred-year storm.

Doug Reymore added that the appearance of the building will be more residential in appearance. Dr. Avdagic introduced himself, described his dental practice and his growing connection to the town of Merrimac. One reason to move the practice is for better visibility. Denise spoke to more site specific conditions. If Bear Hill Road is ever widened the practice would make the space available for the town. The practice also agreed to create a connection from the property out to the route 110 sidewalk for access. The phase two part of the project the engineering and parking plans will be completed as if phase two was happening now and will not have to come back in the future for any new site plan review. In affect we are also approving phase two.

Bill McGowan presented some community questions.

- The berm towards 110 – will it be left as a visual shield from the road?

It will be shaved down, grass and landscaping planted, but with a little bit of a swale to leave a pitch for storm water to flow into the storm drains. A walkway will be place all around the exterior of the building. David Cressman got some clarity of the elevation of the ground of 110ft and the building elevation of 112ft – so a two-foot buffer. Signage will be on the entrance as well as the Bear Hill side. Sign permitting is done separately. An existing crosswalk is already on Bear Hill Road.

David Cressmen explained that the town peer review engineer sent in her revised comments and all previous issues have been resolved.

Motion to close the public hearing: Bronwyn Crocker motioned to close, Bill McGowen seconded the motion. All in favor 5-0, unanimous.

Denise McClure drew up a decision, with the agreed upon conditions. The final elevations will have to be added before it will be signed.

Motion to approve the site plan review: Thomas Abisalih motioned to approve, Bronwyn Crocker seconded the motion. All in favor 5-0, unanimous.

Motion to approve storm water management and land disturbance permit: Bill McGowen motioned to approve, Thomas Abisalih seconded the motion. All in favor 5-0, unanimous.

Accessory Dwelling Unit – 4 Judkins Court:

Owner – Cynthia Campbell

Denise gave an overview of the project.

- The property includes an existing garage that would be rehabbed into an ADU that will consist of two floors. The square feet on the plans appear as over 900 square feet. Only 900 square feet will be used for the ADU. The remaining space is not usable so the ADU requirement of 900 square feet is met. There is ample parking on the site
- We will add the condition that the attic space is unlivable so that at some point if someone was living in that space that they would be in violation.
- Structural drawings will have to be submitted when the get to the building permit stage so that it is clear that the structure will be able to hold the updated living space.
- The attic space will be used for storage and is accessible through an interior staircase.

Motion to approve the ADU plans with the two conditions state above: Thomas Abisalih motioned to approve, Bill McGowen seconded the motion. All in favor 5-0, unanimous.

Stormwater Management and Land Disturbance at 1 High Street Extension:

(Public hearing was already open.)

Phil Parry on behalf of John Cormier. Phil spoke with one of the engineers at Millenium Engineering and they informed him that they had not yet completed addressing their comments for Janet Carter yet. They expect that they should be ready to go before the next meeting. Hoping for the board to consider an extension until next months planning board meeting.

Motion to continue the public hearing until the April 21, 2026 planning board meeting: Thomas Abisalih motioned to approve, Bill McGowen seconded the motion. All in favor 5-0, unanimous.

Denise McClure asked for clarification that the response to the peer review comments will, in fact, be completed by next month as it has been several months. Phil Parry assured the board that the comments will be answered and addressed by the next meeting.

Continuation of public hearing for 9 West Main Street Special Permit and Site Plan Review:

Phil Parry asked for an extension for another month. He has been promised revised plans by the next planning board meeting. Denise McClure stated that the engineer was not able to successfully send the revised plans via email. She asked that a hard copy of the plans be given to the town's peer review engineer and the engineer agreed. As of today, those documents have not been given to her. Phil Parry will schedule a meeting with the engineer and encourage him to follow through. There also has to be an accepted plan for the easement with Mr. Crane, one of the abutters. Phil Parry will meet with Mr. Crane before he engages with the engineer again.

David Cressman stressed that the owners and engineers for this project are being put on notice that this is the last extension that they will be granted for this project as it has been many months.

Motion to continue the public hearing until the April 21, 2026 planning board meeting: Thomas Abisalih motioned to approve, Dennis Brodie seconded the motion. All in favor 5-0, unanimous.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

WARRANTS/FINANCIAL:

- Legal Ad for \$548.80. **Dennis Brodie motioned to approved, Bob McGowen seconded the motion. All in favor 5-0, unanimous.**

COMMUNICATIONS, NOTICES & ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The town administrator has notified the board that the finance committee has reviewed the budget and all departments' budgets have been cut by 10%. We will continue as is as we can move funds from one category to another. We have no new growth as all of the larger projects in town are still under construction.

MBTA zoning bylaw: Denise McClure explained that the map was not included in the warrant. We spoke to town council. We are in compliance with the MBTA and we will provide the map on the back end. We will get the map separately approved at the spring town meeting.

The 150th committee asked the board to take a picture for the time capsule.

OTHER BUSINESS: None

ADJOURNMENT: There was no further business to come before the Board, a motion was made by Thomas Abisalih to adjourn the meeting at 8:01 PM, second by Bill McClure, all in favor 5-0, unanimous.

Next town meeting is confirmed to be on Tuesday, April 21, 2026.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dot Pineiro