

HAMPTON PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
HAMPTON TOWN HALL, 164 ROUTE 97

REGULAR MEETING

Monday, March 16, 2026 7:00 PM
Meeting held both in person, in Town Hall Conference Room,
and virtually via Zoom – see link at bottom

DRAFT MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Chairman Kevin Grindle called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. Roll Call/Seating of Alternate Members

In attendance at the meeting were members Ev Hyde, Stan Crawford, and Sue Hochstetter. Seated for Gary DeCesare was Kathy Thompson. Also in attendance was Alternate Peter Serafin, Town Planner John Guskowski and consultant Manuel Medina.

3. Audience for Citizens: *Citizens may address the Commission on items not otherwise on the agenda*

There were no comments from citizens.

4. Approval of Minutes- February 16, 2026 PZC Meeting

Motion to approve minutes of February 16, 2026 by Ev Hyde, seconded by Sue Hochstetter.
Motion carried unanimously.

5. Old Business

a. 2026 Plan of Conservation & Development – Review of Plan Background/Vision

Manuel Medina presented the details of the relatively short chapters on the process for the development of the PoCD and the vision statement. He discussed the initial results of the community survey, including input on open space and conservation. Chairman Grindle suggested moving the section on the community review of the “customer service” of the Town Hall until lower in the survey summary. Ev Hyde stated that the survey results should express what residents believe is good about Hampton, as a “selling” point and the tone could be adjusted. He suggested that the Plan should be more forward looking and anticipate that circumstances will continue to change despite public views against it. He believes that change has happened, and the Commission and the Town should acknowledge that. He noted that there are fewer working farms than there were a decade ago, but there is a recent increase in interest in wineries, and the Town continues to be a draw for rural character and recreational opportunities. He suggested that some introductory language would be useful to help frame the role that the Commission should play in developing a visionary document. Chairman Grindle and John Guskowski discussed the place and content of such an introduction.

Sue Hochstetter stated that she believed that more participation would be useful and asked whether she could assist in getting the word out. She discussed her outreach with the Senior Committee and the Library Board, many of whom were not aware there was a survey. Chairman Grindle stated that he would ask the Selectman's Assistant to print and distribute the survey flyers that had been developed earlier. The Commission stated that they would assist with distribution.

Chairman Grindle focused on the survey summary that was provided and went through a few editorial suggestions he had. Overall, he thought the results were well presented. The Commission generally agreed. Manuel Medina stated that the results may change with additional input, but the Commission believed that the overall thrust was likely to remain relatively consistent. Ev Hyde suggested some more direct communications between residents and town leadership, and Chairman Grindle noted that this would need to be contingent on a robust response from leadership. He and John Guskowski will raise this with the First Selectman's office. Ev Hyde noted that communicating via text or email is the preferred method of a generation of residents.

Manuel Medina discussed the overall response tenor of numerous residents that expressed appreciation and priority for the rural, natural environment, and Chairman Grindle wondered whether that was a driving reason for people moving to and living in Hampton or if that was secondary to why people live in Hampton. He noted that Goodwin State Forest is seldom "busy" with hikers or other visitors and it's not clear that it is a "draw" to Hampton. Peter Serafin stated that Hampton is so quiet and bucolic that there is not much reason to have to go spend time at Goodwin when the Town's atmosphere was pervasive. He further sought to clarify the need for a statement of the Commission's mission and the purpose and role of a Planning & Zoning Commission. Stan Crawford noted that there was a reason that two wineries recently chose to grow in Hampton, and the VIP Auto used-car dealership on Route 6 did not thrive in Hampton. He suggested that the Economic Development Commission should be on the search for other businesses of the sort that would fit and succeed in Hampton. Chairman Grindle stated that the survey's priorities for economic development focused on supporting agriculture and existing businesses, but did not rank eco-tourism and recreation-based tourism promotion as highly. He questioned whether there was an opportunity (if it was favored) to note that the Town's commercial district is crossed by the Air Line Trail and there could be some modest niche that could be filled there. He thought that would be a positive addition to the business district and the town broadly.

Ev Hyde stated that some key destinations were still important, and he thought that the Stonehurst event facility and the wineries were destinations of that type. Sue Hochstetter stated that the EastCONN headquarters is in many ways a lost opportunity. Chairman Grindle stated that the State – specifically the DEEP – could be doing a better job of promotion and assisting the Town leverage their assets. Stan Crawford stated that the Friends of Goodwin was increasingly active and he believed that more attention and activity would be drawn to the park. Chairman Grindle stated that the Air Line Trail and Goodwin should both be prominently noted in the PoCD as assets that should be built upon.

Manuel Medina summarized the previous planning efforts, which included the continued commitment to open space acquisition and conservation and was seen through the acquisition and efforts to improve the Little River Preserve. He also noted the achievements of the Commission in developing its first Affordable Housing Plan and revising the Zoning Regulations to encourage more housing diversity. This included modifying the accessory apartment regulations and establishing the multifamily development regulations. Chairman Grindle stated that the fact that the Town had not seen any multifamily developments did not surprise the Commissioners. Hampton has not been a clear market for much residential development, and particularly for multifamily development, in the last two decades. The Commission discussed the regulations for "middle housing" and small multifamily developments.

The Commission then reviewed the consensus Vision and Goals of the Plan, which had been developed and adopted several months ago. Ev Hyde discussed the promotion of housing in a way that focused on affordability and developability. John Guskowski explained some of his understanding of the “summary review” requirements of the new Public Act concerning allowing middle housing in commercial or mixed use districts still gave municipalities a great deal of discretion in framing their regulations to ensure that there was a high level of development quality and standards. He stated that the regulations could be restrictive, but did need to be objective standards. Elements such as landscaping, façade design, and materials were still fair game for the Commission.

John Guskowski then reviewed the elements of the Vision statement, and Chairman Grindle stated that the first and third vision statements fit together broadly in terms of “conservation” and the second and third statements were broadly combined as “development” elements. He stated that he had begin to think of the housing statement as the “second most important” in terms of priorities. John Guskowski did not disagree but noted that the order of vision statements was not necessarily intended to represent a ranking. Ev Hyde discussed the importance of underscoring the Town being responsive to those who sought to remain in Hampton throughout their lives and live in a variety of housing types.

Stan Crawford stated that he noted that there are fewer and fewer dairy farms in Connecticut, and the Town has reduced its tax abatements for dairy farms and was concerned that the Town was being penny wise and pound foolish. He believed that the Town Board of Finance should be more supportive of agricultural operations through tax abatements. John Guskowski stated that the agricultural elements of the PoCD could certainly recommend stronger support for increased tax abatements on farmland, farm equipment, and buildings. The Commission discussed the language approach for this recommendation.

John Guskowski discussed next steps for the Plan drafting, and the Commission generally supported proceeding in the outline’s order, so the chapter concerning Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Historic Preservation would be drafted in advance of the next PZC meeting in April.

6. New Business

There was no new business for discussion.

7. Staff Report & Enforcement Issues

John Guskowski shared the report from ZEO Jay Gigliotti. Sue Hochstetter asked about a seasonal camper at Old Town Pound. John Guskowski stated that this was essentially a camping situation that involved a trailer or RV being parked on a privately owned piece of property for a matter of weeks at a time, and he and the ZEO had no objections to this, as long as it was truly temporary. Ev Hyde asked about how farms are defined, and John Guskowski noted that there are different standards based on the type of “farm” or agricultural benefits the property owner is seeking. The Commission discussed “right to farm” ordinances.

8. Correspondence

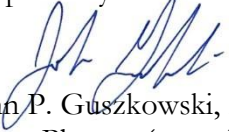
There was no correspondence. John Guskowski noted that if anyone wanted more information about Public Act 25-1, the Tyche website had a variety of resources that included the recording from last week’s webinar.

9. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Kathy Thompson, seconded by Ev Hyde. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



John P. Guskowski, FAICP, CZEO
Town Planner (consulting)