

CITY OF LEWISTON
PLANNING BOARD MEETING
MINUTES for January 12, 2026

- I. **ROLL CALL:** The meeting was held in the City Council Chambers on the first floor of City Hall and was called to order at 5:30 p.m. Chairperson, Shanna Cox chaired the meeting.

Members in Attendance: Lucy Bisson, Shanna Cox, Zoë Lidstrom, Michael Marcotte, Alexander Pine, and Amy Smith.

Associate Members in Attendance: Penthea Burns

Staff Present: Shelley Norton, Deputy Director

Penthea Burns was elevated to full voting member for the meeting.

II. **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Chairperson

Nominations were made for Chairperson: Alexander Pine nominated Shanna Cox. Nominations were closed. Shanna Cox stated she is willing to serve.

Shanna Cox received a unanimous vote for Chairman with a **vote of 7-0**.

Vice-Chair

Nominations were made for Vice-Chair: Michael Marcotte nominated Lucy Bisson. Shanna Cox nominated Amy Smith for Vice-Chair. Nominations were closed. Both Lucy and Amy stated they are willing to serve.

The following roll call vote was made:
Zoë Lidstrom voted for Amy Smith
Michael Marcotte voted for Lucy Bisson
Lucy Bisson voted for Lucy Bisson
Shanna Cox voted for Lucy Bisson
Amy Smith voted for Lucy Bisson
Alexander Pine voted for Lucy Bisson
Penthea Burns voted for Lucy Bisson

Lucy Bisson received a majority vote for Vice-Chair with a **vote of 6-1**.

Secretary

Nominations were made for Secretary: Alexander Pine nominated Zoë Lidstrom. Nominations were closed.

Zoë Lidstrom stated she is willing to serve.

Zoë Lidstrom received a unanimous vote for Secretary with a **vote of 7-0**.

III. REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF 2026 POLICIES AND PROCEEDURES AND PROTOCOL

The following motion was made:

MOTION: by **Lucy Bisson** to accept the 2026 Policies, procedures and protocol in the handbook as provided.

Second by **Amy Smith**.

VOTED: 7-0 (Passed)

IV. ADJUSTMENT TO THE AGENDA: None

V. CORRESPONDENCE:

A memorandum from the Director of Public Works, Kevin Gagne, was handed out regarding the Complete Streets and FY2027 LCIP.

VI. PUBLIC HEARINGS: None

VII. WORKSHOP WITH THE COMPLETE STREETS COMMITTEE

Shanna Cox thanked the Complete Streets members and the support staff for attending and they introduced themselves:

Paul Niehoff, Project Engineer with Public Works

Jeremiah Bartlett, Outgoing Complete Streets Chair and former member of a Bicycle-Pedestrian Committee.

Brad Pineau, ATRC, technical advisor to Complete Streets Committee

Karen Blakelock (Volunteer Member – Lewiston)

Katherine Truitt (Volunteer Member – Auburn)

Paul Josephson (Auburn Public Health Representative)

Ted Walworth (Volunteer Member – Lewiston)

Kevin Gagne, Director of Public Works

Shanna Cox began by framing the conversation as a dialogue between the Board and Complete Streets Committee (CSC) to better understand the priorities for development and planning for development between the two boards.

Kevin Gagne discussed the memo he prepared for the meeting which summarized the guidance for the Public Works Engineering Division. He then explained that the goal of the Engineering Division and CSC is to plan for all modes of transportation through opportunistic planning with a long-range focus and collaboration with various entities to achieve their goals. He stated that the purpose of the memo is to highlight projects that are funded and ready for implementation, projects in the planning phase, and then what is being proposed in the Lewiston Capital Improvement Plan (LCIP).

Alexander Pine asked staff to discuss the recent changes in how the committee engages with projects. Shelley Norton described the process for how a traffic movement permit (TMP) is reviewed and how the public and CSC provide comments. The board asked about how the CSC is involved in projects that don't have a TMP like larger multi-family projects. Shelley Norton explained that Planning staff flags projects that have potential for pedestrian improvements and which should be reviewed by the CSC. She then stated that there could be considerations made to revise the Complete Streets ordinance to clarify the role of the committee.

Penthea Burns asked how other stakeholders such as local business owners may be involved in discussions about pedestrian improvements. Shelley Norton explained that the public is invited to provide input through the public comment portion of the Planning Board meetings for proposed projects. She said additionally that there are further opportunities for public engagement when a TMP is required and the public is invited to scoping meetings to share input.

Katherine from the CSC stated they also are engaged in mill and fill and other road maintenance projects that Public Works brings to them.

Kevin Gagne provided background on the process Public Works has for engaging with the CSC.

Jeremiah Bartlett stated that there appears to be a gap in the ordinance which is about eight years old and was a compromise to get two municipalities to adhere to the same ordinance. He then provided some context about how that gap in the ordinance has led to some inconsistency with implementation of the policy.

Shanna Cox identified that there is also a gap in the planning and that the role of the Planning Board in implementing complete streets policy is not tied to a specific response to an application. This came up recently on East Ave with LHA doing housing directly across from the Lewiston Mall. She stated that the Planning Board has found themselves asking for all of the changes that would lead to pedestrian connectivity, but their only option for enforcing the requests is to put it on the back of the most recent applicant. She then discussed that if you look at the Comprehensive Plan there was a beautiful concept for that intersection and surroundings. She then said that for both the Planning Board and the CSC, the only leverage either group has for requesting implementation of pedestrian connectivity is when there is a TMP that triggers the policy mandates. There's a gap where we aren't planning but are looking through the silo of the development. She wants to know how we become more proactive in pedestrian planning. Alex Pine also included that they had a really great discussion about storefronts on the streets surrounding Lisbon Street and how the construction and the design of those streets really change how they think about how to implement design standards. He wants to think about how longer-range street planning can be improved.

Shanna Cox asked what opportunity this committee has to be planful based around pedestrian ideals and goals rather than planning improvements based primarily on geographic considerations. Kevin Gagne stated there are significant studies that he listed in his memo that are investigating ways of fundamentally changing the way the streets are functioning. Further studies will be coming out that will provide guidance. He explained that Public Works is incorporating such items as speed bumps and analysis projects into the budget. He then said that a lot of what engineering is working on involves evaluating the conditions of sidewalks and major arterials, stating that sidewalk encroachments are a major problem facing Public Works.

Shanna Cox asked the CSC members if they want the committee to be more planful or if they are satisfied with the policy implementation as it is. Jeremiah Bartlett stated the ordinance will only be so prescriptive about things and that there is flexibility for the CSC committee to function in a way that is most comfortable for those who comprise it. He then stated that over the years their focus has been driven by the people serving the committee as well as the fluctuation of staff capacity between the two cities. Sometimes the committee does meet to discuss their goals and longer-range visions, but some compositions of membership over the years have been more interested in having project proposals brought before them for review, being more oriented on the nuts and bolts of policy implementation. He stated that there may be another gap between what various city entities are prioritizing and their communication of those priorities with the CSC for their input. He also emphasized a point made by Shanna Cox, that often times the burden is placed on those projects that do trigger a TMP since that is where the complete streets policy has clear authority. He said that this may expose gaps in other ordinances that could tie in the CSC, but currently don't.

Brad Pineau said the committee is designed as more of a reactive committee rather than a planning committee. They meet maybe five times a year and give input on the projects coming up in the two cities. Speaking to the gap between projects that require a TMP and those that don't but will have an impact on pedestrian movement, there is an opportunity to address that. He said that the Androscoggin Transportation Resource Center (ATRC) created a plan of identifying gaps in bike and pedestrian infrastructure and explained that one approach to incorporating the CSC more would be to include them in the review process for projects located in the identified gap areas. Brad stated that a developer typically provides a description of all types of trips being generated by a project including vehicle trips, internal trips, bike trips, pedestrian trips.

Karen Blakelock explained that her primary concern is with bike and pedestrian safety on streets like Sabattus. Karen stated that they are excited about opportunities to be more planful and talked about a proposal the CSC reviewed for a project in Auburn to install sidewalks in a neighborhood located near a

school that the committee found great, however, residents of the neighborhood opposed the installation. She ended by expressing a desire for the committee to have a long-range focus.

Katherine Truitt stated that there are volunteers who want to see more walkable streets. They described their process for project review and the challenges of trying to be involved in review of street projects between the two cities. They also cited public opposition to complete street ideals as a challenge to the committee. Katherine then said they aren't sure how proactive they can be with goal setting given how infrequently they meet.

Paul Josephson explained that the Chair and committee have a lot of leeway with what they put on the agenda. They have been meeting more often and do have the ability to vote on projects and recommend modifications. They really benefit from the technical support from the staff of each city and ATRC. They then stated that there are challenges associated with working between two cities.

Ted Walworth stated that one of his priorities as a committee member is to evaluate public health and safety. He then said that the public is invited to meetings and their input is valued by the committee.

Shanna Cox and Lucy Bisson thanked the committee for joining the Planning Board meeting. Shanna Cox stated she heard as take-aways that they meet a handful of times a year and are limited in time, though they have been meeting more often; that the current CSC members do have an appetite for more planning discussions; that they are bound by life experiences and limited time as volunteers; and maybe a yearly dialogue and exchange of ideas between the Planning Board and CSC to establish priorities could be an effective way of establishing alignment between the two entities. Shanna Cox also brought up that there may be some way for them to look into trips that aren't vehicle trips that don't trigger a TMP so that the Planning Board would have data to strategically inform them when they should involve the CSC in project review. They then said that committee members are always welcome to attend Planning Board meetings to provide input on projects.

Shanna Cox then called for a five-minute break.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS:

- a) Review questions with Administration on the Lewiston Capital Improvement Plan (LCIP). The LCIP can be accessed [here](https://www.lewistonmaine.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=39&Type=Recent) (<https://www.lewistonmaine.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=39&Type=Recent>)

Shanna Cox stated that we are ahead this year compared to the schedule last year. At the January 27, 2025, meeting she had asked the board members to bring three items they wanted to propose be cut and three items they wanted

to keep. She asked if the board was comfortable with doing that again this year instead of going line by line and the board agreed.

Shelley Norton then reminded the board that their questions for the department heads are due Wednesday, the 14th, so they can be brought to the finance director before the end of the week.

Bryan Kaenrath stated that a presentation was given last week and he would entertain any questions.

Lucy Bisson asked about take-home vehicles for the Police Department for \$5 million and the allocation will be \$6 million but that doesn't make sense. She then followed this by asking if this is a complete update of the fleet or is it an additional 65 vehicles? Bryan Kaenrath stated there will be a presentation at the City Council meeting on the 20th and that this will be a new initiative for additional vehicles so all officers can have take-home vehicles. We have a significant recruiting issue and public safety is the number one priority. Many officers find that providing take home vehicles is a big recruiting benefit. Bryan Kaenrath stated that when you look at what is spent over a five-year period, with the current program of replacing vehicles versus the take-home program, the latter program results in much less mileage on vehicles and is expected to result in a savings of \$200,000 over this time. Additionally, he stated there would be more visibility of Police in the community with this program. Shanna Cox asked about this being the only item the Police Department has in the LCIP for their 5-year plan and she would like to see the Department plan out five years. Administrator did state that this is the only impact. Shanna Cox asked what the impact would be spreading out the budget for additional police vehicles over two years instead of one year.

Alexander Pine asked about grant opportunities and stated when he brought this up before there were constraints on the allocation of staff time that limited what grants we could go after. Bryan Kaenrath agreed that applying for more grants is important and more time should be committed to the effort of applying for grants.

Alexander Pine asked about stormwater management projects and if projects are being thought of through a recreational lens, especially naturally existing stormwater management resources that could have recreational components. Kevin Gagne stated the streams that are open are open for a reason, those made of concrete in the 70's were created to facilitate flooding in built up areas, but some of those that are more rurally located, like Hart Brook, are being evaluated for potential to make them natural.

Michael Marcotte stated he had several questions. According to his own calculations over the weekend, the police vehicles may be valued at \$70,000-80,000 per vehicle. Are we facing a threat that requires us to move our fleet out of Lewiston and our new Police Department to where officers live? He raised concerns about the efficacy of the take-home program to save costs in the long term, as well as raised concerns about Lewiston property being stored outside of the municipality. He went on to state that given the proposed size of the fleet, this would not be cheap. His main concern is with the financial capacity of the municipality. He would like to focus on the city debt that is continuing to soar. With a 34-million-dollar request and 6-million-dollar debt limit there's a large discrepancy between what is being asked and what is within the debt limit. He then stated that in the end a lot gets funded, and the city gets deeper in debt. Michael Marcotte then said he likes the trail connectivity, that comes with a big price tag, that's an area that could use grants. He then said that the new Public Works facility is a huge cost, it may be needed but he wonders how the current property will be redeveloped after being vacated and how it will bring money back into the community.

Regarding the Police vehicles, Amy Smith asked why everyone needs a new vehicle in one year? Bryan Kaenrath stated it would not be a replacement all in one year, the presentation will help provide context. Shanna Cox asked what our current gap in recruitment between patrol and admin is. Bryan Kaenrath stated it is typically a patrol recruitment challenge. He then went on to give a brief explanation on the cost savings associated with a take-home vehicle program, that instead of a cruiser being in use at all hours, it would be used only during the shifts of the assigned officer. He stated that the current life expectancy of a police vehicles is in the 2-3-year range, while the proposed program could extend that to 7-8 years. Shanna Cox asked what our current gap in recruitment between patrol and admin is and requested that this feedback be given to those responsible for the City Council presentation on this LCIP item. Amy Smith added that showing the spending as a one-year item while the intention is to roll it out over the next 2-3 years is confusing and she requested that it be brought to the attention of those giving the presentation as well.

Michael Marcotte stated that if vehicles were going to be taken home, wouldn't more vehicles be needed? He then stated that if the vehicles were to be bought within a relatively short time span of each other, then this may cause issues in the future where they all need to be replaced at once, called it a bad financial policy to buy all the vehicles at once, and suggested a rotation program which would allow the cost to be spread out over more years.

Alexander Pine stated that he hoped there would be more data in the presentation regarding failure rates and other figures relevant to the need of these vehicles. He then asked, for all the road-related repairs, is there place where the Board can review files and plans for each project?

Alexander Pine explained that it may be helpful for the Board to have a better understanding of what's being asked for funding. Kevin Gagne asked if he wanted a scope summary and said that it's probably going to be something they could request from Public Works. Alexander Pine then asked what the process is for Public Works when determining road repair priorities. Kevin Gagne explained that Public Works has a condition rating for street and sidewalks and have priorities for hospitals and schools. If the condition is poor, they are looking at which side would be easier to maintain. The sidewalks are mapped and they do know where they are going next, but there are too many asks for resources. He also explained that Public Works is working on creating systems for tracking street and sidewalk repairs.

Alexander Pine asked about page 61, the Bridge Street abutment repair. Alexander then asked if the city has ever retired public rights-of-way from the responsibility of the city and moving them to private status, related to page 56-57 and the street maintenance program, especially roads that don't benefit the community, like dead end streets. Kevin Gagne stated that they avoid taking on new public roads, but they do see that private roads and associations do dissolve. They balance the issues, where potholes act as street calming and newly paved roads can encourage people to go fast and then they need to do speed bumps.

Shanna Cox pointed out on page 10 that the Riverfront Island implementation projects appear not to have a 2027 ask. She wonders if that was a formatting error as there appears to be some items for the Riverfront Island implementation on page 18. Kevin Gagne stated we have congressionally delegated funding that covers the costs and no additional funds were needed to be requested. The city is making improvements to the canals for upkeep, and have existing funds they are using, so they aren't asking for more money this year. Shanna Cox then addressed an error related to a school department request and stated that on page 77 the request appears to be \$10 million but on page 11 it appears to be a \$5 million request in the plan. Bryan Kaenrath stated it was revised to \$5 million. Shanna Cox then stated that it is unclear what the proposal is and asked is the need for more space due to growing enrollment or is it required for administrative needs? She also asked for more details about the facility plan for 287 Main Street, and what the specific plans are.

Shanna's overarching question is what is the most important thing for each department head that they believe moves the city forward and maintains services? She then stated that this will help board members to make recommendations for what to cut from the LCIP.

Amy Smith would like to understand how shovel ready we are to move these projects forward, asking as an example if we are ready to spend \$7 million

dollars on a fire station in one year. She then requested that for larger projects, they provide expected timelines for completion.

Michael Marcotte raised a question regarding the Riverfront Island implementation and mentioned some items we are taking on entirely should have State and Federal resources allocated. He then explained that he was involved when the debt ceiling was established, and it was a serious thing to be considered in 2010/2012 and there's still a very serious debt issue. He stated that only a fifth vote by City Council is needed to breach that cap. He stated that with these requests, we are probably going to exceed the 80% debt limit, and that is not good financial planning.

Shanna Cox addressed the debt conversation stating that 80% of last year's is always going to get smaller. Michael Marcotte discussed the chart in the back of the book regarding debt. She appreciated there being a debt limit and an override vote, asking what the historical debt amount is, what the amount financed in the last five years is, what 80% of that figure is, and how that compares to what is being projected, asking generally for an updated debt service chart that she wants to be brought back to the board.

Reminder that questions for Department Heads are due this Wednesday to staff. Reminder that the police vehicles program will be presented at City Council as the first item at the meeting on January 20, 2026.

Michael Marcotte thanked Bryan Kaenrath and Kevin Gagne for their presence at the meeting and stated that it would have been nice to have the School Department Superintendent present.

- b) Report on recent de minimis change to 128 Farwell Street, Gendron Active Living Estates, to reduce the 16-unit four-story buildings to 12-unit three-story buildings and the 32-unit four-story buildings to 37-unit four-story buildings with no change to building footprint or site design.

IX. READING OF MINUTES:

The following motion was made:

MOTION: by **Lucy Bisson** to accept December 22, 2025, draft minutes as presented. Second by **Zoë Lidstrom**.

VOTED: **7-0 (Passed)**

- X. **ADJOURNMENT:** The following motion was made to adjourn.
MOTION: by **Lucy Bisson** that this meeting adjourns at 7:40 p.m. Second by **Penthea Burns**.
VOTED: 7-0 (Passed)

The next regularly scheduled meeting is for January 26, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Zoë Lidstrom" followed by a circled number "10".

Zoë Lidstrom, Secretary