

CITY OF LEWISTON
PLANNING BOARD MEETING
MINUTES for March 23, 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, Michael Marcotte, Alexander Pine, Amy Smith, Penthea Burns and Zoë Lidstrom.

Associate Members in Attendance: Heidi Bertels

Associate Member Absent: Darren Gallant

Staff Present: Shelley Norton, Deputy Director, Craig Thibeault, Land Use Planner and Linda Tripp, Administrative Assistant

- II. **ADJUSTMENT TO THE AGENDA:** None

- III. **CORRESPONDENCE:** 3/10/26 email from Rick Cailler of the Lewiston Firefighters Association re: Lisbon Street Fire Station.

- IV. **PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

- a. Tree Street Youth, Inc. has submitted a development review application for the construction of a new 7,250 sf building at 143 -145 Howe Street on a 0.33-acre parcel.

Craig Thibeault provided a review of the request then welcomed and answered clarifying questions from the board.

Mark Lee of Harriman and Julia Sleeper of Tree Street Youth joined in presenting before the board then welcomed questions. Michael Marcotte spoke about the proposed changes in parking rights and inquired if the Superintendent of Schools was in agreement. He stated his concern is perpetuity and that things can change. Mark Lee stated that he believes they received a letter of support from the Superintendent and that the applicants will be working closely with staff to ensure an agreement is in place. Amy Smith complimented the applicants on their achievement of getting to this point in the process and then stated she would recuse herself from voting on this item as her daughter is an abutter to the site of the proposed project. Amy stated that her daughter had not received the abutters' notice and inquired when they were sent out. Craig Thibeault answered that notices go out at least 7 days prior to the meeting. Amy inquired about financing, phasing and construction details which were provided by Julia Sleeper. Michael Marcotte expressed his frustration and serious concern that financial capacity was once again not addressed within the packet provided to the board. He stated he was disappointed that Director Connor was not present to hear him once

again express his frustration over the lack of financial capacity information provided to the Planning Board. Shanna Cox pointed out that the second condition of approval addresses the documentation demonstrating financial capacity. Michael reiterated that Article XIII, Section IV of the Zoning and Land Use Code clearly states that review of financial capacity falls to the Planning Board and not to staff as they alone have decided to address as part of staff review.

Heidi Bertels was appointed a full voting member for this agenda item only.

Shanna Cox opened the discussion to the public. No public spoke.
The public session was closed.

The following motion was made:

MOTION: by **Lucy Bisson** that the application submitted by Julia Sleeper of Tree Street Youth for the construction of a new 7,250 sf single-story educational building on an approximately .3-acre parcel at 143-145 Howe Street meets all of the necessary criteria contained in the Zoning and Land Use Code, including, but not limited to Article XIII, Section 4, Approval Criteria, and that approval be granted with the following conditions:

1. The applicant will coordinate with Public Works on the sewer and water connections.
2. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall provide documentation demonstrating financial capacity.
3. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant provide staff with documentation from the registry of deeds verifying the granting of the 15' sewer easement.
4. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant provide staff with documentation from the registry of deeds verifying that the lots have been combined.
5. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall demonstrate that sufficient off-street parking, on-site or off-site through an agreement, has been provided meeting the standards of Article XII, Section 17(e)
6. Prior to the issuance of a certificate of occupancy, a professional engineer shall provide a stamped statement indicating all site improvements have been completed in accordance with the approved plan.

Second by **Zoë Lidstrom**.

VOTED: **6-1 (Passed)** Michael Marcotte Opposed.

Michael Marcotte stated that his vote in opposition was due to a lack of documentation demonstrating financial capacity, concern about abutter notices and parking as well as the role of the school department.

- b. The Planning Board sending a recommendation to the city council for the creation of a Contract Zone at 860 Lisbon Street (former Martel School).

Craig Thibeault provided a review of the request then welcomed questions from the board. Zoë Lidstrom inquired how much of a compromise the 5' setback would be. Craig answered that the zone normally requires 10' side and rear setbacks and a 15' front setback. Shanna Cox inquired that if the board approved the request for a contract rezone, they would not be approving a specific use or application as that would come before them at a future date. Craig confirmed that she was correct and that any specific proposals that come from the contract rezone would come before the board for development review. Michael Marcotte inquired about previous zoning for the site and spoke in opposition stating that things have mutated substantially. Alexander Pine expressed concern about the depth of the lot as it compares to the surrounding lots. Craig provided details for surrounding lot depths as requested. A discussion regarding past actions on zoning for the area took place.

Penn Lindsay of Lewiston Housing Authority and Craig Burgess of Acorn Engineering presented to the board, providing several clarifying details for the three-phase project then welcomed questions.

Lucy Bisson expressed concern for elderly residents and pedestrians attempting to board buses on Lisbon Street. She feels that crossing the drive entrance creates a dangerous situation.

Shanna Cox opened the discussion to the public. No public spoke. The public session was closed.

Shanna Cox expressed concerns about walkability and encouraged the applicants to be prepared to address such concerns when returning to a future meeting for phase three. Alexander Pine feels that there are a lot of things happening at once on the site and that future pedestrian travel will be challenging. Penthea Burns also expressed concern for the safety of tenants and pedestrians in the area. Michael Marcotte spoke in opposition, stating that he cannot support the request as he feels life safety will be an issue.

Shanna Cox requested that Shelley Norton bring up a map indicating how neighboring properties are zoned. The board reviewed neighboring zones and discussed the impact of the contract zone request.

The following motion was made:

MOTION: by **Lucy Bisson** pursuant to Article VII, Section 4 and Article XVII, Section 5 of the Zoning and Land Use Code to send a favorable recommendation to the City Council for the request by Martel School Senior Housing LP for a contract zone amendment for the property located at 860 Lisbon Street to utilize the land use and space and bulk allowances of the Community Business zoning district with the exception of reduced front, side, and rear setback requirements to 5 feet. Second by **Pentheia Burns**.

Alexander Pine spoke in favor of cleaning up zones in the area but is worried about how the lot will be developed in the future. Michael Marcotte wants a neighborhood feel for the area and not more traffic, more congestion and more accidents. He said this proposal feels like a bait and switch.

Shanna Cox requested clarification of setbacks as previously discussed. Craig provided details as requested. Shanna Cox spoke in favor.

VOTED: **6-1 (Passed)** Michael Marcotte Opposed for reasons expressed above.

- c. The Planning Board sending a recommendation to the city council for amendments to the Zoning and Land Use Code, Article XI for changes to day care, mobile home, and to allowed uses and dimensional space and bulk requirements.

Shelley Norton reviewed the board's previous actions regarding the request before them.

Shanna Cox opened the discussion to the public. No public spoke. The public session was closed.

The following motion was made:

MOTION: by **Zoë Lidstrom** pursuant to Article VII, Section 4 and Article XVII, Section 5 of the Zoning and Land Use Code to send a favorable recommendation to the City Council for amendments to Appendix A, Zoning and Land Use Code, Article XI District Regulations including repealing and replacing the Land Use Table and Space and Bulk Table. Second by **Lucy Bisson**.

VOTED: **6-1 (Passed)** Michael Marcotte Opposed.

Michael Marcotte stated that his opposition was due to underutilizing limited land and the fact that the board worked hard on their recommendation for a minimum height restriction in NCB.

- d. The Planning Board sending a recommendation to the city council for amendments to the Zoning and Land Use Code, Article XI for a change to the No Name Pond Overlay District.

Shelley Norton provided a review of the request then welcomed questions from the board. Alexander Pine said he feels the text changes proposed are significant and do not reflect what the board had been looking for. Shelley Norton agreed and stated that the text changes presented reflect the desire to provide more clarity. The board overwhelmingly expressed their surprise at the proposed wording and how it differs from what was discussed at their last meeting. Heidi Bertels expressed concern for the inclusion of "etc." as it can open the door to trouble. Michael Marcotte stated that No Name Pond is a backup water source for the city when an emergency need arises, and he feels that making changes to accommodate a request to develop one piece of property is going backwards. Zoë Lidstrom provided some clarity by pointing out that the importance is not where the drainage is coming from, but where it drains to. Alexander Pine proposed possible wording that he feels better reflects the board's desire. Zoë Lidstrom also provided a possible compromise for wording.

Shanna Cox opened the discussion to the public.

Diane Chasse of 56 No Name Pond Road spoke in opposition. She spoke of the water issues in her yard she has had over the years and feels the proposed changes will only make things worse. She expressed concern over the long-term effects of the proposed changes and feels that no amendments should be made and that the overlay should remain as is.

Daniel Bernier, owner of both 25 and 26 Water's Edge Drive, spoke in opposition. He said that the retention pond, which has not been touched in over 20 years, is doing its job perfectly and should be left alone as it is today. He feels that the parcel of concern is being addressed as a city infill parcel that should be developed, as opposed to a rural lake impact lot inside a protected watershed. He requested that protection efforts not be decreased.

The public session was closed.

Michael Marcotte asked Daniel Bernier if his preference would be to keep things as they are and not to make amendments. Mr. Bernier answered yes.

A discussion regarding potentially tabling the item took place and how that action might affect things going forward. The majority of board members felt

additional information was needed for them to make an informed decision. Shelley Norton provided the board with details in an attempt to meet the need for additional information. She assured the board that staff had met with and clearly communicated with residents who expressed concerns.

The following motion was made:

MOTION: by **Michael Marcotte** to table the item to the May 11, 2026, Planning Board meeting, with the desire to see additional or new language as well as some additional scientific information and backdrop on the rational with direction from staff and HOA neighbors.
Second by **Penthea Burns**.

VOTED: 7-0 (Passed)

V. OTHER BUSINESS:

a. Discussion on the Lisbon Road Fire Station and LCIP.

Shanna Cox asked Michael Marcotte to introduce the item as it was placed on the agenda at his request. Michael stated that he was made aware of a one-million-dollar grant by Rick Cailler of the Lewiston Firefighters Association that he feels should have been considered when the board was making their recommendation to council.

Chief Mark Caron addressed the board stating he would be happy to answer any questions they may have regarding the grant. Shanna Cox read from the LCIP in order to provide clarification to Chief Caron and the board as to what information was used when the board made its recommendation. Chief Caron provided a review of how the Fire Department was made aware of the grant, how the grant would be applied and what funds would have to be returned to the federal government if the project was not completed timely. A discussion took place about how the board came to its recommendation. Shanna Cox then invited former City Councilor, Lee Clement, resident of Ward 6, to the podium if he would like to address the board. Lee Clement spoke about the city plan from several years ago to address the need for new fire stations and stated that the city is about 2 years behind that schedule. He asked the board to revisit and reconsider their FY27 recommendation as the cost to the city and its residents would be great.

Shanna Cox proposed that due to additional information provided and the timeliness of a one-million-dollar federal government grant the city received in 2023, the board offer an updated recommendation to the City Council that the Lisbon Street Fire Station be strongly considered for approval in the FY27 Capital Improvement Plan.

Shanna took a straw poll that indicated all board members were in favor.

Michael Marcotte expressed his appreciation that the same station construction template is being used for all new stations with minor modifications as necessary. Chief Caron stated that a study performed indicated that response times warrant the need for the new station.

VI. READING OF MINUTES:

The following motion was made:

MOTION: by **Lucy Bisson** to accept the March 9, 2026, draft minutes as amended. Second by **Alexander Pine**.

VOTED: 6-1 (Passed) Michael Marcotte Opposed.

VII. ADJOURNMENT:

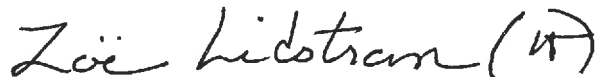
The following motion was made to adjourn.

MOTION: by **Lucy Bisson** that this meeting adjourns at 7:45 p.m. Second by **Alexander Pine**

VOTED: 7-0 (Passed)

The next regularly scheduled meeting is on Monday, April 13, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zoë Lidstrom" followed by a stylized mark in parentheses.

Zoë Lidstrom, Secretary