

CITY COUNCIL

Timthoy J. Jordan, *President*
John A. Michitson, *Vice President*
Thomas J. Sullivan
Colin F. LePage
Melissa J. Lewandowski
Catherine P. Rogers
Shaun P. Toohey
Michael S. McGonagle
Daniel R. Diodati
Devan Ferreira
Ralph T. Basilliere



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CITY OF HAVERHILL

HAVERHILL, MASSACHUSETTS 01830-5843

MINUTES/SUMMARY OF THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

March 2, 2026

A Planning and Development Committee Meeting was held on Monday, March 2, 2026 at 6:00 PM in the City Council Chambers, Room 202

Committee Members: Committee Chair, John Michitson, Councilor Catherine Rogers and Councilor Daniel Diodati

Councilors Present: President Timothy Jordan, Councilor Devan Ferreira and Councilor Lewandowski

City Officials: Mayor Melinda Barrett, Robert Moore, Conservation Department, Robert Ward, DPW Director

The following items were discussed:

- **Doc. 94-B Motion by Councilor Ferreira to look at updating the standards of Ch. 250 Article VI of the Haverhill Zoning Code regarding water use restrictions established in 2016.**
- **Doc.1-F Motion by Councilor Lewandowski to send for discussion relative to establishing or formalizing an ordinance regarding water conservation program.**

Councilor Ferreira proposed strengthening the water conservation ordinance by tightening restriction triggers, implementing earlier and clearer color-coded levels, increasing enforcement and fines, requiring irrigation moisture sensors, applying regulations to private wells, reconsidering deduct meter credits, and potentially adopting year-round watering limits. She emphasized that the city's designation as a Green Community and adoption of stretch code standards already require higher efficiency in new construction, often making newer homes more water efficient than older ones, and noted that drought remains a significant contributing factor. Councilor Lewandowski supported enhancing conservation efforts through mandatory summer watering restrictions, stronger ordinance language requiring conservation plans for large or multi-unit developments to support neutral growth objectives, identifying high-volume users for targeted reductions, reviewing water impacts during renovations or changes of use, and possibly establishing a dedicated water commission. She also highlighted the need for clearer public education and outreach.

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President Jordan expressed support for forming an advisory committee that could include expert volunteers while leaving final decisions to the City Council. Councilor Diodati inquired about the frequency of water audits and how homeowners are notified of leaks it was noted by Robert Ward they are conducted every three years, that letters are typically sent and most residents respond promptly. Councilor Diodati suggested sharing comparative usage data with residents and encouraging drought-tolerant landscaping in new developments. Councilor Rogers had concerns about not having the full proposal in writing, stating that it was unclear exactly what would be voted on.

Christine Kwitchoff (14 Colby's Lane) suggested replacing large lawns with pollinator-friendly plantings, citing Cedardale as an example of a company that could benefit from that. Demi Costarides (14 Mendum Road) stated she has lived near Crystal Lake her whole life and has seen the lake dry up many times, expressing concern that increased development, particularly new condominiums, is placing additional strain on the water supply despite drought conditions. Al Perreira (39 Smith Street) asked about current water levels, typical daily water consumption for households of two to six people, how residents can track their usage, and whether home monitoring solutions are available. David Monson (26 John Street) questioned characterizing the situation as a drought, citing regional rainfall data from Blue Hill showing above-average precipitation in five of the past seven years and arguing that water scarcity is driven more by consumption than natural conditions.

Robert Ward reported that daily water use has remained relatively stable at approximately 5 to 5.5 million gallons per day since 2000, with efficiency improvements in older homes offsetting the impact of new development. Average residential use is about 52 gallons per person per day, or roughly 130–150 gallons per household and has slightly declined in recent years. Current reservoir levels were shared, and officials noted minimal snowmelt contribution this season. Robert Moore reported no significant impacts from beaver dams, though gradually declining water levels have affected some mussels and shellfish while helping control invasive Chinese mystery snails. A new well was identified as necessary to maintain sustainable lake levels for residents and wildlife. Chair Michitson requested a more detailed analysis of the causes of current water conditions, particularly the impact of development versus drought, and suggested inviting state representatives to a future meeting given pending related legislation. The committee agreed to compile questions and responses for further review and to continue the discussion at a subsequent meeting.

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Proposed ordinance/policy changes to consider

- Tighten drought restriction triggers.
- Implement earlier, clearer, color-coded restriction levels.
- Increase enforcement measures and fines.
- Require irrigation moisture sensors.
- Apply watering restrictions to private wells.
- Reconsider or modify deduct meter credit policies.
- Consider year-round outdoor watering limits.
- Adopt mandatory summer watering restrictions.
- Strengthen ordinance language overall.
- Require conservation plans for large or multi-unit developments.
- Require conservation plans for currently exempt properties.
- Review water impacts during renovations or changes of use.
- Identify and target high-volume users for demand reduction.
- Consider establishing a dedicated water commission or advisory committee.
- Improve and expand public education and outreach efforts.
- Share comparative water usage data with residents.
- Promote drought-tolerant landscaping in new developments.
- Consider citywide mailing comparing residential growth to water usage trends.
- Conduct deeper analysis of development impacts on water supply.
- Invite state representatives to align with pending state legislation to next P&D meeting

Committee Member Rogers motioned to adjourn. Second by Committee Member Diodati.

YEAS 3, NAYS 0

ADJOURNED: 19:19

Respectfully submitted:

John A. Michitson

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Chair Planning and Development Committee