

Danbury Planning Board

January 13th, 2026

Un-Adopted

The Danbury Planning Board met on Tuesday, January 13th, 2026 in accordance with the schedule adopted and posted. Gary Donoghue called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone present. Gary asked if anyone had a conflict of interest and hearing none, proceeded with the meeting.

Present:

Gary Donoghue, Vice Chair

Maggi Winn

Frances Bliss, Selectmen ex-officio

Jim Phelps

Edward Esty

Kristen McKenna

Anna Offen, clerk/alternate

Katelyn Setterlund, clerk

Not Present: John Taylor, Chair, Caelan Taylor -alternate,

Guests: Jeffrey Hertel, Donna & Phillip Sprague, Tony & Mary Lane, and Carl Rominger

The Board resumed discussion of the Spear Hill subdivision **Tax Map 412 Lot 4**. Jeff Hertel, as authorized representative, was present for the hearing. Gary Donoghue asked members to summarize the outstanding issues, which included electrical service, wetland delineation, cistern, and the non-conforming lot. Jeff provided an update, stating quotes have been received for the cistern and electrical installation; quotes and plans provided to the Board via email. Jeff concluded total infrastructure costs are expected to exceed \$250,000, based contingencies set by the Board for subdivision approval; not including any exaction fee the town may impose. Jeff expressed interest in exploring a fire pond instead of a cistern to reduce expenses and noted that due to high electrical costs, he was proposing that power be installed in two phases. The first phase would serve 50–60% of the lots, with the full contract still established with Eversource. Jeff reiterated to the Board that they are trying to make good sized, rural lots, at an affordable price. Jim Phelps worked with Alan Huntoon, Road Agent, and proposed a \$100,00 exaction fee for the Board to approve the subdivision. Based on prior estimates to bring the road up to town standard, Jeff stated that 75% of the road improvement infrastructure costs would be paid by him, noting it was a class V road, and he was going to do some of his own research into it. Jeff

asked whether the town would consider allowing him to sell up to three lots with the condition that building permits be withheld until infrastructure improvements were completed, allowing him to recoup capital needed to continue. Jeff also asked the Board if they would be ok if he went directly to Jeremy Martin, Fire Chief, to consider other fire suppression options; the Board had no objections. Maggi Winn proposed Jeff revise the subdivision application to only include Lots 1, 2, and 2, along with the non-conforming lot, removing the five remaining lots from the plan for the time being. Jim Phelps agreed with the two-phase subdivision approach. Anna Offen asked whether this revision would require a new application. Gary confirmed that it would require a new application and plans. Jeff noted he will take some time to consider if the new approach is feasible and make a determination in the coming weeks. Kristen McKenna inquired about the non-conforming lot; Jeff said they are undecided still but may gift it to an abutter or the Rail Trail. Maggi suggested it could be paired with another lot. Jim recommended labeling the lot as non-buildable and expressed preference in it being donated to the Rail Trail. Jim made a motion to continue the public hearing on 2/10/26, Maggi seconded. **Roll call vote Gary Donoghue – Yes, Maggi Winn – Yes, Frances Bliss – Yes, Jim Phelps – Yes, Edward Esty – Yes, Kristen McKenna – Yes; motion passed unanimously.** Closed the hearing at 7:21pm.

Jeff Hertel commented that Eversource had been attempting to contact the Danbury Road Agent about an easement. Considering the electrical to be installed, Donna Sprague asked whether the town's right-of-way changed when the road was widened. Jim Phelps was unsure; noting the road would need to be reviewed by a road surveyor.

Donna Sprague reiterated concern from prior meetings that Spear Hill Road becomes very muddy, impacting travel, and inquired how the Board plans to address such issues. Gary Donoghue acknowledged the challenge, noting that the Board tries to address these concerns during review. Maggi Winn questioned that as a Class V road, the town is responsible for its condition, not the current residents or those attempting to subdivide property. Jim Phelps explained that Class V is a legal designation and does not mandate a certain physical standard. Jim confirmed the town receives state funds for road improvement based on mileage, but the town may allocate those funds as deemed appropriate. Maggi asked why only one estimate had been obtained for road improvements, suggesting three bids would be more appropriate. Jim replied that the subdivision applicants may perform improvements, with town concurrence using town road specifications. Donna stated that while the road is currently adequate for existing residents, she worries about increased traffic. Phil Sprague asked why the developer should not be responsible for the full cost. Jim looped back to Donna's initial question, noting that imposing the exaction is the Board addressing these concerns.

Fire suppression was further discussed. Jim Phelps noted that the town has never required a cistern before and has no established standards for one, such as thresholds for number of units or water volume. Jim noted that cisterns are expensive and require ongoing maintenance. Gary Donoghue noted that the applicants had previously inquired about speaking with the Board;

however, they did not attend any meetings prior to submitting the current application. Kristen McKenna asked where a fire pond would be located. Jim suggested placing it near the lowest point of the road. Maggi Winn noted a dry hydrant would be necessary with a fire pond. Jim estimated the cost of a dry hydrant to be a few thousand dollars. Maggi noted that the pond might need to be on a separate parcel, and Jim said it could be handled with an easement, as the town would not want to own it.

Anna Offen noted that two Board Member terms were expiring this year and reminded the members with expiring terms to file with the Town Clerk between January 21, 2026 and January 30, 2026.

The meeting minutes were reviewed from 12/9/25. Jim Phelps made a motion to approve the minutes, Kristen McKenna seconded. **Roll call vote Gary Donoghue – Yes, Maggi Winn – Yes, Frances Bliss – Yes, Jim Phelps – Yes, Edward Esty – Yes, Kristen McKenna – Yes; motion passed unanimously.**

At 7:54 pm Maggi Winn made a motion to adjourn, Jim Phelps seconded. **Roll call vote Gary Donoghue – Yes, Maggi Winn – Yes, Frances Bliss – Yes, Jim Phelps – Yes, Edward Esty – Yes, Kristen McKenna – Yes; motion passed unanimously.**

