

TOWN OF SKOWHEGAN
PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES
February 3, 2026
Council Room, Municipal Building
6:00 pm

PRESENT:

Steve Conley, Chairman
Jeff McCabe, Vice-Chairman
Erin Scally
Michelle Kelso
Tonja Lary, Recording Secretary

Andrew Thorpe, Secretary
Randall Franck
Turner Allen, Town Planner
Dan Luce

ABSENT: Anjanette McFarlin

PUBLIC PRESENT: Aaron Crocker, Code Enforcement Officer; Kristina Cannon, Main Street Skowhegan; Dan Shea, McLaughlin Whitewater; Steven Walton, McLaughlin Whitewater; Nicole Martin, VHB; Cynthia Kirk, Transfer Station Supervisor; Janet Mayhew.

Public Hearing at 6:00 pm, to hear any comments on the following projects:

A) Site Plan Review submitted by Main Street Skowhegan for Phase 1 of the Skowhegan Whitewater Park located on Map 26, Lots 3-7 & 70.

Steve Conley opened the Public Hearing at 6:00 pm. Kristina Cannon from Main Street Skowhegan gave a brief overview of the Whitewater Park noting that the River Park is one of the projects that was named in previous Strategic Plans for the town to work toward revitalization of the community. This is in collaboration with the Town. The park will allow for surfing and kayaking in the downtown river gorge. It will provide better access to the river and a significant economic benefit because of the project.

Steve asked if there were any questions from the public. Janet Mayhew wanted to know if there would be a similar position for Clerk of the Works for this project. She also wanted to make sure that there was no additional funding coming from the public for ambulance, fire and police services. Kristina answered that the purpose of the lease between Main Street and

the Town is to protect the taxpayers as she had noted. The lease is for 10 years.

No other public comments. Public Hearing was closed at 6:04 pm.

1) QUORUM

The Planning Board Meeting was called to order. A quorum was present.

2) MINUTES OF THE January 6, 2026, PLANNING BOARD MEETING TO BE APPROVED.

A motion was made by Jeff McCabe to approve the meeting minutes of January 6, 2026. The motion was seconded by Dan Luce. The motion was approved 7-0.

3) SITE PLAN/SUBDIVISION/FLOOD HAZARD/SHORELAND ZONING

- A) Discussion and Decision on a Major Site Plan Review application submitted by Main Street Skowhegan for Phase 1 of the Skowhegan Whitewater Park. Phase 1 includes construction of one whitewater rapid feature located approximately 500 feet northeast and downstream of the existing pedestrian bridge, along with a maintenance access trail from the southern riverbank. (Assessor's Map 26, Lot 3-7 and 70)
- B) Discussion and Decision on a Shoreland Zoning Permit application submitted by Main Street Skowhegan for Phase 1 of the Skowhegan Whitewater Park. Phase 1 includes construction of one whitewater rapid feature located approximately 500 feet northeast and downstream of the existing pedestrian bridge, along with a maintenance access trail from the southern riverbank. (Assessor's Map 26, Lot 3-7 and 70)
- C) Discussion and Decision on a Flood Hazard Permit application submitted by Main Street Skowhegan for Phase 1 of the Skowhegan Whitewater Park. Phase 1 includes construction of one whitewater rapid feature located approximately 500 feet northeast and downstream of the existing pedestrian bridge, along with a maintenance access trail from the southern riverbank. (Assessor's Map 26, Lot 3-7 and 70)

Dan Shea from McLaughlin Whitewater gave a presentation of the project to the Board. The proposal is to install a whitewater feature in the river, about 300-400 feet downstream of the existing dam. He described the site plan, including the installation of an access roadway, emergency access and user access roadways. Dan detailed the wave shaper control shed, a small building containing pumps and bound equipment. The road transitions from asphalt to concrete, with a turnaround and emergency access turnaround. He explained the ADA compliant put-in area and the proposed whitewater rapid number two, a drop structure constructed of sculpted concrete. The installation of a river berm will hydraulically separate the drop from the main river. A concrete structure downstream of drop number two was described as hydraulic control to set the tailwater. The wave shaper, a metal plate attached to a tube with hydraulic cylinders, is described as adjustable to create different hydraulic conditions. The primary takeout ramp is ADA-compliant for users to exit.

Dan welcomed questions from the Board. Andrew Thorpe inquired about the annual maintenance costs, noting they would likely be assumed by the Town in the future. Kristina Cannon explained that the current Main Street recreation program budget of \$500,000 would cover these expenses. When Andrew asked if the budget would increase by 25% in subsequent years, she confirmed and added that staff will be trained specifically to maintain the project.

Jeff McCabe expressed appreciation for the checklist provided by Planning Staff, noting that it was helpful in guiding questions related to the site plan review process. He inquired whether identifying signage would be installed, as he did not observe it on the plan. Kristina responded that they are coordinating with their insurance provider to develop signage that will be clearly visible at park entry points and will include safety recommendations, river rules, notice of no lifeguard on duty, and requirement for personal flotation devices and helmets.

Steve Conley reminded everyone that they are looking to decide on all three permits at once since they are all the same projects.

Andrew inquired about the size of the Hydraulic system and the volume of oil it contains, and whether any leaks would be reportable to the Maine DEP, including who would be responsible for monitoring and reporting. Dan explained that the system uses food-grade vegetable oil and that any leaks would not be reportable. The system typically contains between 10 and 20 gallons.

Andrew also asked whether individuals could access the area beneath the plate on the first device. Dan responded that a wave shaper rack is installed on the downstream side to prevent debris or people from getting underneath.

Andrew raised concerns about river debris during winter and flood events, particularly potential damage to the polyethylene covers on steel components. Dan noted that similar wave shapers in Colorado, Oklahoma and Des Moines regularly encounter heavy debris, including logs and boulders, without damage. He stated that panels have not bent, the protective coating is designed to withstand impacts and abrasions, and in 20 years they have never had to replace a wave shaper panel. He added that the steel structure is difficult to deform and that the cover serves as a safety feature rather than a performance component.

Andrew asked about the potential impact of removing the West Dam on the system. Steve responded that dam removal is not expected to affect hydraulics. As this is a bedrock river, they anticipate the wave shaper system's flexibility will allow continued operation, with only minor operational adjustment if hydraulic conditions change.

Jeff McCabe noted that there are no scheduled releases from the dam, as reflected in the design. Steve Walton confirmed this, explaining that it is currently a free-flow dam and that flows will remain consistent before and after removal. Dan added that the project is in a more stable downstream area, where flows are expected to remain relatively unchanged.

Dan Luce asked whether removal of the Shawmut Dam impoundment would affect the project. Steve responded that tailwater impacts would not be affected due to sufficient river gradient.

Andrew inquired about the sanitary sewer line near the footbridge, noting an upstream outfall and asking whether it remained active. He expressed concern that it discharges into the river upstream of the project. Dan explained that it is part of a combined system typically handled by the water treatment plant during normal flows. Sanitary discharge would occur only during extreme stormwater events and is not routine. Andrew asked whether public notification would be required during such discharges to prevent recreational use. Jeff noted that notifications are not currently issued and that people use the river regardless. Steve Walton added that the facility would likely not be used during flood conditions.

Andrew requested additional details on component construction. Dan stated that the wave shaper is fabricated from 304-grade stainless steel, with all bolts and hardware also stainless steel and marine-rated for submersion.

Andrew asked whether area lighting would be installed along ramps and walkways. Dan said lighting could be added but the facility is intended for daylight use; installing light posts below the high-water mark would expose them to debris. Jeff characterized the operation as dawn-to-dusk and noted that, in past projects such as Lake George, coordination with local police was used to enforce hours. Steve Walton reiterated that it is a daytime operation.

Andrew asked about the sculpted concrete, specifically erosion, corrosion, and minimum cover over reinforcing steel. Dan stated the concrete has a design strength of 4,500 psi, typically testing higher, and that they have not experienced performance issues. When asked whether the rebar would be epoxy-coated, Dan was uncertain. Andrew recommended epoxy coating to reduce spalling risk. Steve Conley asked about known adhesion issues between epoxy and concrete; Dan acknowledges there is some history of bonding concerns. He noted they do not typically use epoxy coating, have not encountered problems, and instead increase rebar size.

Jeff asked Aaron whether the Staff Review process had identified any issues for the Board's consideration. Aaron responded that staff reviewed each requirement and found all to be in order. Steve inquired about the requested waiver related to the application fee. Aaron explained that this waiver must be approved by the Selectboard. He also referenced additional waiver items, including the medium-intensity soil survey, (with no drainage or septic design required), daily and peak hour vehicle trips, and the performance guarantee, noting the project is publicly funded.

Andrew asked a final question regarding sanitary sewer access, specifically whether portable toilets would be provided. Kristina stated that the plan is to rely on existing downtown public facilities.

Jeff asked about large Main Street events where portable toilets are typically brought in. Kristina confirmed that this practice would continue for such events.

Steve asked if there were any further questions regarding the Shoreland Zoning or Flood Hazard applications. Hearing none, Jeff McCabe made a motion to approve the major Site Plan, Shoreland Zoning, and Flood Hazard applications for Main Street Skowhegan, including the requested waivers, with the application fee waiver contingent upon Selectboard approval. Erin Scally seconded the motion. Steven confirmed that Board members had completed the checklist and that all requirements were met. With no further discussion, the motion passed 7-0.

D) ITEMS BY PUBLIC

None

E) COMMUNICATIONS

F) UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A) Updates to the Solid Waste Management Ordinance.

Discussion occurred regarding the addition of the word “commercial” in Section 9: Permitting. It was determined that the term was already adequately defined within the section and the Board agreed to remove the entire paragraph.

Cindy commented that Turned had done an excellent job drafting the ordinance and noted that Aaron had also completed a review.

Jeff asked whether the Town Manager had reviewed the document. Cindy responded that it would now go to the Town Manager and Selectboard, and then to Town Meeting for a vote.

Jeff McCabe made a motion to recommend adoption of the Ordinance to the Selectboard. Dan Luce seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0.

G) NEW BUSINESS

H) ITEMS BY:

A) Selectmen – none present

B) Department Heads -no reports

C) Members –

Jeff noted that he appreciated the work the Staff is doing.

Andrew suggested that the Solar Ordinance be revisited.

D) Chairman – no report

E) Staff – Turner said that when he came onboard, they were talking about the Solar Ordinance, and he can provide an update at the next meeting.

A motion was made by Dan Luce and seconded by Andrew Thorpe to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed 7-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:22 pm.

Minutes approved on February 17, 2026

Chairman
