

Town of Bowdoin
Planning Board Minutes
August 11, 2026

Members Present:

Michaeline Mulvey, Chair

Tom Giggey

M. 8 September 2026
Tom Giggey

Helen Watts, Vice-chair

Lauren Leclerc

LL

Absent:

Gwen Thomas, Dennis Douglass, Code Enforcement Officer

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm. No meeting minutes were reviewed.

Members of the Public Present:

Michael Stansfield, Sheila Wenger, Roy Wenger, Carmen Williams, Dianne J. Bouchard, Roland G. Mill, Tim Williams, Helen Watts, Austin Watts, Andrew Hardy, Leanne Hardy, Raymond (Cliff) Zimmerman, Jen Meader, Stacie Daley, Tina Hart, Wayne C. Hart, Brandt McCollett, Eileen Johnson, Michael Roux, Lori Brackett, Susan Talbot, David Talbot, Bret Bowley, Helen Watts (for the Wenger Site Plan Review Public Hearing)

New Business:

Michael Stansfield, Civic-Chain, LLC

Michael Stansfield came in to discuss with the Planning Board whether his transparent municipal tracking software business requires a Site Plan Review. He has only online employees, has no clients on-site and has been in business since April. Watts moved that the Planning Board draft a letter to the Town Clerk and Stansfield stating that his business, Civic-Chain, LLC, does not require Site Plan Review as all of the workers are remote, there will be no increase in traffic and no impact on town services. If these plans change, and employees or customers travel to the business, Stansfield will need to come back in to the Planning Board to determine if a Site Plan Review permit is needed. The Secretary will send a letter via email to Stansfield and copy the Town Clerk with this information.

Old Business:

The Public Hearing for the Wenger's Site Plan Review application was called to order at 7:30 pm.

Sheila & Roy Wenger, 17 Liberty Lane, Map 8, Lot 28-01

Helen Watts recuses herself from the Planning Board as she is a neighbor of the Applicants. Mulvey is abstaining from voting because she wasn't at the meeting where the Site Plan Review application was found complete.

The Applicants brought in two additional full-size site plans and an email from the Road Commissioner stating that he has "met with Sheila and Roy on site. Looked at their driveway and parking and approved it to be acceptable for their intentions. Signed Town of Bowdoin Road Commissioner, Seth Skelton, July 17, 2026."

Members of the public proceeded to ask questions of the Wengers and the Board. Questions are in **bold** and discussion/answers follow in regular text.

Roy Wenger introduced the couple to members of the public. Sheila Wenger talked to most of their abutters prior to the meeting. She was taken aback by some of the neighbors' responses. Roy read the letter they presented to their neighbors.

The Wengers are proposing rustic family camping and a location for enrichment homeschooling activities. The Site Plan Review application includes offering enrichment opportunities on the property to approximately 20-30 participants per class, to limit unnecessary traffic. Yurts are proposed for use on winter and rainy days. The Wengers are hoping to periodically rent the yurts nightly, to offset the costs of building them. They are proposing less than five yurts as five or more facilities would be considered by the state to be a campground and would be regulated as such. Camp sites would have fire pits and the cabin would potentially have a woodstove.

Teachers will make determinations of the size of the classes. Class size would probably be 20 kids at most. The Wengers are planning to start with 2 days a week for the homeschool coop, potentially on a Wednesday and Thursday 9am – 12pm and 12pm – 3pm, staggered so vehicles won't coming or leaving at same time. Parents can stay on-site or may also drop off. The children will unload at the parking area, and take the gravel path out to the learning areas, supervised by adults/teachers. Hours per day will be limited because if children are on property 4 hours per day, it would be considered childcare. Therefore, children will be limited to 3 hours onsite per day for the homeschooling enrichment classes.

Parking is proposed toward the end of Liberty Lane, adjacent to the Wengers' house. This area has been approved by the Road Commissioner.

Does the Town have a Zoning Ordinance and/or a Comprehensive Plan? No, the Town does not have a Zoning Ordinance. Site Plan Review is required when residential land is converted to commercial or business use. If a business has no employees, no traffic in and out, sometimes a Site Plan Review is not required. The Town has a Comprehensive Plan, but it is not regulatory.

Requested/suggested considering buffers for adjacent properties. The proposed parking is in the best spot according to the Applicants and has been approved by Road Commissioner.

Conditions/limits can be placed on the Site Plan Review approval by the Board to create parameters such as: could include planting buffers on Litchfield Road and Liberty Lane, condition limited to less than 5 sites/yurts, number of homeschool days three times per week, require steel fire rings, etc.

Discussion of requirements for fires onsite. Brandt McCollett runs a campground at Spencer Bay and indicated by state law you allowed to have a fire, as long as there is a steel ring around it. Caesar Pond was identified as an emergency water source as a dry hydrant by the Fire Chief.

Concerns about fire risk and insurance for fire. The Wengers indicated that they have not gotten insurance yet but they will get insurance as it will be required for state approval. A member of the public stated the Fire Department has an ATV for fire access to remote locations. The Haven Home Collective, the non-profit coop they are a part of, will cover insurance for the homeschooling enrichment classes.

Concerns about decreased home and property values. The homeschool and rental yurts will have limited signs; there will be an office sign on the house and a parking sign. The Applicants don't plan to put any big signs by road. People would sign-up on-line for the yurt rentals. The Board indicated that documentation and references of the decreases in property values of homes/properties abutting campgrounds would need to be submitted to the Board and reviewed for credibility.

Concerns about emergency fire truck access down Liberty Lane. The Road Commissioner indicated 12-20 cars would fit in the proposed parking lot. Liberty Lane was built to the Town Road Design Ordinance standard, to give the Wengers Town road frontage to build their house.

Concerns about who is to be marketed for customers at the camp sites. Renters could come from the homeschoolers association. The Wengers are looking for family rentals; the sites will have water and composting toilets provided. Yurts are mainly for the homeschooling program but could be rented nightly. Word of mouth advertising with no online website is proposed.

Lack of buffer between Applicants' home, proposed parking and neighbors' houses. Neighbors at 419 Litchfield Road purchased their home in 2010. There is no buffer between their property and Wengers. Neighbors brought in a visual trifold of photos from their house and an AI-generated image of 12-20 cars in the proposed parking area.

Chair Mulvey indicated that the Board could require a buffer to be planted between the Applicants' property and the abutters and along the right-of-way (ROW) for Liberty Lane. The ROW is 50 feet wide and the travel width of the road is 20 feet. The Board Secretary read Road Design Standard 7A and 7R to clarify the ROW requirements versus travel surface required by the Road Design Ordinance.

Concerns about PFAS contamination into groundwater. Waste water and solid waste will be stored on the Wengers' property to compost before disposal. A site evaluation, signed by a Professional Site Evaluator, was provided for composting toilets.

Concerns with limitations being placed on hunting/firearm discharges by neighbors. Neighbors are concerned in the change in use to a campground and for the safety of the kids. If this is deemed a "school," discharge of a weapon won't be allowed within 500 feet of land with being part of a homeschooling program. The Wengers have indicated that they have opted out of state-certification of education and have no need or desire to claim the exemption, as they are part of a homeschool cooperative.

Public concerns included increased traffic, unfamiliar visitors, and establishing incompatible uses precedence in Town.

Property lines to be marked? Students are not intended to cross the road to Caesar Pond. No fencing is proposed around the property boundary, but property line markers could be installed if needed. The boundaries are already posted with "permission only" signs.

The Board Secretary requested copies of the statements that were read during the Public Hearing. Three statements/letters were received from the following abutters: Raymond (Cliff) Zimmerman; Wayne and Tina Hart; and Michael Roux.

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Cliff Zimmerman – Urges the Board to deny the application. His family doesn't feel it is in the best in of the Town or him as a neighbor.

Michael Roux – The Project will impact home and property values. Roux requests a Site Visit so the Board can see the proximity of the proposed parking lot to existing homes, areas that have been cleared already, and the existing entrance.

Wayne and Tina Hart – Concerns include increased traffic, noise and disturbance, privacy, safety concerns, and neighborhood character.

The Planning Board will meet on-site on the property at the start of the next Board meeting Tuesday, August 25th at 7 pm. The Site Visit won't be a Public Meeting and won't be for public input.

The public hearing was closed at 9:18 pm.

The Secretary will ask the Webmaster to put a notice of the Town website of the on-site meeting at Liberty Lane for the August 25th Planning Board meeting. After the site walk, the Board will return to the Town Office to complete the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lauren Leclerc, Secretary

Cc: Selectmen, Code Enforcement Officer, Fire Chief, Webmaster, Planning Board files