

For Immediate Release

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Forward Sunapee Launches as New Nonprofit Initiative to Support the Future of Sunapee Harbor

SUNAPEE, N.H. - A new chapter for Sunapee Harbor is officially underway. Forward Sunapee, a newly formed New Hampshire nonprofit corporation, has launched with a mission to preserve the character, strengthen the economy, and enhance the year-round vitality of Sunapee Harbor and surrounding areas.

Formed in January 2026, Forward Sunapee is currently awaiting IRS approval of its 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. Once approved, the organization will be positioned to accept charitable donations, pursue grants, and more fully implement the community's shared vision for the Harbor

Forward Sunapee's mission is centered on preserving the Harbor's charm and heritage while encouraging sustainable growth and year-round engagement. The nonprofit is committed to:

- Preserving Sunapee Harbor's history, culture, and commercial vibrancy
- Encouraging year-round vitality for businesses, residents, and visitors
- Strengthening economic resilience through thoughtful development
- Enhancing the lakeside village while safeguarding Lake Sunapee and the Sugar River's water quality
- Maintaining public access to the Harbor area
- Supporting recreation, education, cultural, and charitable programs that enrich community life

"This is about building on what makes Sunapee special," organizers shared. "Forward Sunapee is focused on collaboration, transparency, and responsible stewardship to ensure the Harbor thrives for generations to come."

As part of its formalization, the Steering Committee will transition into a Board of Directors, with plans to add two to four new members to broaden representation and diversity. The organization is also reviewing its committee structure to ensure it remains focused on tangible, community-driven outcomes.

Forward Sunapee expects to receive its IRS Determination Letter later in 2026. In the interim, fundraising efforts will remain limited and targeted in compliance with federal guidelines

The nonprofit also anticipates collaboration with Sunapee Harbor Riverway (SHR), whose Board has passed a resolution to pursue shareholder approval to transfer its assets and liabilities to Forward Sunapee, contingent upon 501(c)(3) approval

Even in its early phase, Forward Sunapee's committees are advancing several priority initiatives:

Route 11 & Connectivity:

Working in partnership with NHDOT and the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission, the committee is planning a 10-day traffic-calming demonstration project this spring using temporary medians, signage, landscaping, and other visual elements to improve safety and pedestrian experience along Route 11 from Sargent Road to Main Street.

Riverwalk Improvements:

Short-term 2026 priorities include enhanced trail signage, landscaping improvements, retaining walls, and expanded public space near Harbor House. The committee is also gathering community input on potential trail naming options, including Sugar River Walk, Sugar River Trail, and Sugar River Heritage Trail.

Economic Development:

Forward Sunapee has launched new programming initiatives, including a successful 5K Poker Race that helped fund a nearly full summer music schedule. Business collaboration and harbor marketing efforts are underway to strengthen year-round vitality. The committee is also evaluating development scenarios for 34–36 River Road, comparing mixed-use retail and residential models with boutique hospitality concepts to assess long-term sustainability.

Harbor Reconfiguration:

The Harbor Reconfiguration Committee continues to explore adaptive reuse of town-owned waterfront land, including additional parking solutions, expanded green space, a potential new stage area, and additional public docking slips to increase Harbor access and visitation.

Planning & Zoning and Housing:

Committees are reviewing zoning frameworks, waterfront district proposals, and broader housing strategies to align local policy with Forward Sunapee's goals around commercial growth, housing affordability, and community sustainability.

Guiding Principles

Forward Sunapee has adopted a clear set of guiding principles that emphasize respect, constructive engagement, fact-based decision-making, transparency, and long-term stewardship. The organization is committed to bridging economic and social divides, encouraging diverse viewpoints, and ensuring responsible communication, including on social media.

Community Engagement Ahead

Looking ahead, Forward Sunapee plans to host full community meetings to gather input, refine priorities, and ensure that Harbor initiatives reflect the voices of residents, businesses, and stakeholders.

“This is a collaborative effort,” organizers said. “Forward Sunapee belongs to the community. We invite residents, business owners, and partners to join us as we shape a Harbor that honors its past while embracing its future.”

The public is invited to attend a Forward Sunapee Community Meeting on Wednesday, April 8th at 6pm at the Sunapee Middle High School Gym - 10 North Road, Sunapee. For more information or to get involved, community members are encouraged to follow upcoming announcements regarding public meetings and volunteer opportunities on social media at www.facebook.com/visitsunapeeharbor or www.forwardsunapee.org.

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