



Stratham Planning Board Meeting Minutes
March 2, 2022
Stratham Municipal Center
Time: 7:00 pm

Member Present: Tom House, Chair
Mike Houghton, Selectmen's Representative
Pamela Hollasch, Member (via phone)
Joe Anderson, Alternate Member

Members Absent: David Canada, Vice Chair
Chris Zarembo, Regular Member

Staff Present: Mark Connors, Town Planner

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Mr. House called the meeting to order and took roll call.

2. Approval of Minutes

a. February 2, 2022

Mr. House announced that the February 2, 2022 Minutes would be provided for review and approval at the March 16, 2022 Planning Board meeting.

3. Public Meeting:

a. Special Event Permit Discussion

Mr. House asked Mr. Connors to discuss this item. Mr. Connors said that there is a property owner in the Town Center District who would like to host a series of Art Shows in the Spring and Summer. This was discussed among Town Staff and while it is agreed that it would be a beneficial event for the Town, there is not a permit program for such events. It would be helpful for the Police Chief and others to review the plans for larger special events to ensure that there is safe vehicular access to the site and that sanitary requirements are accounted for. Mr. Connors said that a draft application form is included in the Planning Board packets. Mr. Connors explained that he used the Outdoor Dining Permit application as a starting out point and tailored the application to apply to Special Events. The intent is not to create a burdensome new application process but something that could be approved by staff on an administrative level. Similar to the Outdoor Dining Program, a Special Event Permit would be reviewed and

41 approved by the Town Planner, Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer, Police Chief,
42 and Fire Chief. Mr. Anderson said that he had reservations about starting a new process that
43 would apply to events like weddings and block parties. Mr. Anderson also said it was likely
44 that applications would not be submitted at least two weeks before the event. Mr. Connors said
45 the program could be tailored so that it only applied to commercial events and that personal
46 events were exempt.

47
48 Mr. Houghton said he felt the permit process should be similar to what the Town requires for
49 Yard Sales. Mr. Houghton said he believed the Town requires a permit for Yard Sales. The
50 Special Event Permit could be expanded to account for other larger events. We should not
51 reinvent the wheel, he said. He agreed with Mr. Anderson that the application process should
52 be straight-forward and that family events and such activities should be exempt and not require
53 a permit. Mr. Connors said he would look into the permit requirements associated with yard
54 sales. Ms. Hollasch discussed potential hypothetical events and whether or not such events
55 would require a permit under the program. She said that she did not believe that personal social
56 gatherings should be regulated by the Town. Mr. Connors said it was very clear from the
57 discussion that personal/family events should not be regulated or permitted by the Town. He
58 would tailor the language so that a permit program does not apply to those types of events. Mr.
59 Connors said he was in favor of the idea for art shows in the Town Center and was trying to
60 come up with a more formalized process that would be simple for the applicant, but it would
61 not be unusual for the Town to get calls the next day complaining about certain aspects of an
62 event. It would be helpful for the Town to have the contact information for the event organizer
63 to communicate with on the day of the event.

64
65 Mr. Houghton noted that Portsmouth Avenue is a state road so there would be limited Town
66 involvement for events along Portsmouth Avenue in the Town Center. Mr. Connors said that is
67 true but the Police Department still patrols the road and Police and Fire might need to respond
68 if there are any issues. It would be helpful for the Town Departments to be aware of these
69 events in advance and to discuss traffic flow and details if necessary. Mr. House said that
70 traffic and safety/security issues are legitimate concerns for large events and could understand
71 the need for a permit program if it was not overly bureaucratic. Mr. Houghton agreed. Mr.
72 Anderson said that the Town of West Newbury, Mass. has a similar program and Stratham
73 could consult their regulations. Mr. Connors said he will look into modifying the permit
74 program based on the Board discussion and return to the Board to discuss this further at the
75 March 16, 2022 meeting.

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77 **b. NHDES Coastal Program Grant**
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79 Mr. House noted that the Rockingham Regional Planning Commission sent a letter offering to
80 implement the town's Source Water Protection Plan recommendations with proposed new zoning
81 language and/or amendments to the Site Plan or Subdivision Regulations. The RPC would
82 implement grant funding from the NH Department of Environmental Services to assist the Town
83 with this. Mr. Connors said this would be a good opportunity for the Board to ensure that the
84 Source Water Protection Plan is implemented. This is an especially salient with all the recent
85 discussion in Stratham regarding the PFAS contamination of private wells in the Town Center.

86 Mr. Anderson said he agreed that this would be a good opportunity. The Board discussed the
87 general time commitment of the effort and ways that the Regional Planning Commission would
88 assist staff and the Board. Mr. Connors noted that there were many recommendations in the plan,
89 so the Board would likely have to narrow down what represents the highest priorities for the
90 Town. Mr Anderson noted that this is something many of the Homeowner and Condominium
91 Associations would be interested in as many of them in Stratham must maintain community well
92 and or septic systems. Some of these communities have to address well contamination issues and
93 it can be expensive and time-consuming commitment. Mr. Anderson said that there were many
94 recommendations in the plan and it would be helpful to send it out to the Board so that they
95 could narrow down which recommendations are most important and deserve immediate
96 attention.

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98 **c. Governor's Housing Grant Program**
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100 Mr. Connors said that Governor Sununu recently announced that a significant share of the State's
101 America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money would be allocated to housing. Mr. Connors said
102 Governor Sununu believes that Towns and Cities in New Hampshire regulate housing too
103 stringently and that current zoning does not allow for the types of new housing to support the
104 economy. The Governor, and many others, believe the state's lack of housing is preventing
105 employers from growing their workforces and impeding the growth of the economy. The
106 Governor has set aside \$100 million to support housing initiatives, including \$60 million of
107 which would go to benefit communities. A total of \$5 million would be set aside to support
108 amendments to municipal zoning ordinances to encourage more housing. The application process
109 has not started but Mr. Connors thought the board should have this on the radar to see if there are
110 certain areas the Planning Board is interested in pursuing. He said he would like the Town to
111 take advantage of these funds as much as possible. Mr. Connors shared the list with the board.
112 Mr. Houghton would like greater outreach to the community to determine the community's
113 wants and needs. He said that as a business owner, the lack of affordable or workforce housing is
114 a huge issue that affects all employers. We cannot expect people to commute one hour or more to
115 get to work. The entire Seacoast Region housing market is pricing out a significant share of the
116 population. Mr. House asked the board if they would like a meeting with Workforce Housing
117 Coalition of the Greater Seacoast to gain a better understanding of the values and answer any
118 questions the board has. The Planning Board agreed that would be helpful.
119

120 **d. Updates regarding Town Meeting & Town Election, Stratham Open Space Plan, NHDOT**
121 **Ten Year Plan, Planning Board Handbook**
122

123 Mr. Anderson questioned if there was any feedback regarding zoning articles at the Voter
124 Information Night. Mr. Connors stated there were four to five questions; what incentives will
125 be given for Route 33 residents to invest in their properties, a question regarding eliminating
126 pork chop lots, questions regarding the process, but none of the questions or comments were
127 adversarial. He noted that several Pheasant Run residents would like the speed limit reduced on
128 Route 33 and he has notified NHDOT, but it is a state issue outside the Planning Board's
129 control. Mr. Connors stated if Mr. Anderson was elected to the Select Board a Planning Board
130 member would need to be found as a replacement as only one Select Board designee can serve
131 on the Board.

Mr. Connors explained the Stratham Open Space Plan project will be coming up which is funded through the CIP and will start up this year. The Conservation Commission and Planning Board will have a public event to describe what public space plan is and to get the community's recommendation on what they would like the board to focus on.

Mr. Houghton stated all boards and commissions should get together to discuss the Open Space Plan prior to a larger event designed for the general public. The Board agreed that should occur before a larger public outreach event. Mr. Connors explained the Rockingham Country Age Friendly Survey is headed up by a subcommittee in which Allison Knab and Chris Zaremba serve on. The survey itself was finalized yesterday and the town will be promoting it as much as possible to receive feedback from the community on how age friendly the town is. The survey focuses on six towns and has some questions regarding Stratham. Ms. Hollasch recommended the "older adult" verbiage on the website be changed to receive larger feedback.

Mr. Connors noted that one of Mr. House's priorities is to develop a Planning Board Handbook. Through some research Mr. Connors dug up the 2005 version of the Planning Board Handbook which has not been updated in many years. But it is helpful to have as we can use this as a starting point. Mr. Connors stated the board can use the current Planning Board Handbook as a starting point to update a new one. Mr. House said this would be a good project for the current Planning Board.

e. Miscellaneous Planning Issues

4. Adjournment

Mr. Anderson made a motion to adjourn at 8:10 pm. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Note(s):

- 1. Materials related to the above meeting are available for review at the Municipal Center during normal business hours. For more information, contact the Stratham Planning Office at 603-772-7391 ext. 147.*
- 2. The Planning Board reserves the right to take item, out of order and to discuss and/or vote on items that are not listed on the agenda.*