



Stratham Planning Board Meeting Minutes
June 22, 2022
Stratham Municipal Center
Time: 7:00 pm

Member Present: Thomas House, Chair
Mike Houghton, Selectmen's Representative
Chris Zaremba, Regular Member
Pamela Hollasch, Regular Member (by telephone)
John Kunowski, Alternate Member

Members Absent: David Canada, Vice Chair

Staff Present: Mark Connors, Town Planner

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Mr. House called the meeting to order and took roll call. Mr. House appointed Mr. Kunowski as a voting member for the meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes

a. June 1, 2022

The approval of minutes from June 1, 2022. Mr. House corrected the spelling of Mr. Zaremba's name in the draft minutes. Mr. Houghton made a motion to approve the draft minutes as amended. Mr. Zaremba seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

b. March 16, 2022

Mr. Kunowski asked if the approval of minutes from April 20, 2022 is outstanding. The minutes are not in the package and will be presented at the July 13, 2022 meeting.

3. Public Meeting:

a. Route 33 Heritage District and potential scheduling of public hearing for Route 33 Heritage District application fees.

Mr. House asked Mr. Connors to provide an update. The Route 33 committee held their first meeting on June 16, 2022. The committee approved an application and rules and procedures as to how the committee will be run. Their meetings will be held the first Wednesday of each month. The timing will work well with the Planning Board meeting schedule. The committee will

41 prepare their comments within one week to be included in the packet for the following Planning
42 Board's meeting. They discussed application fees. The Planning Board approves all Planning
43 Board application fees, so the committee can only recommend the fee amounts. Planning Boards
44 have to hold a public hearing to set the fees. Mr. Connors presented the recommended fees. Any
45 application relating to a residential or agricultural property, that does not result in new housing
46 units, would be a \$50 fee. This is also the base fee so anything that is non-applicable like
47 demolition without new construction or an application for a commercial sign that does not meet
48 the requirements would also fall under this amount. A residential application for new housing
49 units would be \$100 plus \$75 per new housing units. Adding an ADU to a house would be \$175.
50 A commercial application applying to a small area less than 1,500 square feet would be \$100. A
51 commercial or mixed use application that is larger than 1,500 square-feet would be \$200. These
52 fees would be in addition to the Planning Board fees. Mr. Zaremba asked if these fees are lower
53 than fees in other parts of town to encourage development in the district, how do they compare to
54 other parts of town? Mr. Connors replied that generally speaking, the fees are low, they are
55 much lower than building permit fees. For example, a building permit application was just
56 processed for the new medical office building and the building permit fee was \$13,000. The
57 committee is trying to keep the fees nominal.

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59 Mr. Zaremba asked if the intent is to encourage development by keeping the fees low. Mr.
60 Connors replied yes. Mr. Kunowski stated that we still need to consider the administrative
61 process of reviewing the applications, but agreed that the fees should be as low as possible. Mr.
62 House stated that the goal is to cover the work of the planning staff. Mr. House stated that the
63 second fee is standard. Mr. Houghton asked if any of this is pertinent to new construction or is
64 this all additions or modifications? Mr. Connors replied that it can be either. Mr. House stated
65 that one of the fees is for a new residential application and that the commercial application can
66 include an addition. Mr. Connors said that if it a big development, like a 5,000 square foot
67 development, the site plan fee is \$100 per 1,000 square feet. Mr. Houghton stated that if you put
68 a value on a few hours worth of someone's time, it's not \$50, so he would advocate ensuring the
69 fees cover costs. Mr. House asked if Mr. Connors is seeking approval tonight because two
70 members are not present. Mr. Connors replied that the Board could schedule a public hearing
71 and debate the fees at the hearing. The Board does not need to make a final decision on the fees
72 tonight. We would advertise the intent to set fees at the hearing, but not publish the proposed fee
73 schedule.

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75 Mr. Kunowski asked if the same fee categories apply to development in other parts of town or
76 are these categories applicable to the Route 33 Heritage District? Mr. Connors replied that
77 applications in the Heritage District would need to pay these application fees which are only
78 applicable to the Heritage District. But the fees have been kept low so as not to discourage
79 applications. Mr. Kunowski asked if something was happening in another part of town, an
80 application fee would not apply? Are there across the board application fees? Ms. Hollasch
81 joined the meeting via telephone. Mr. Connors replied that there are across the board fees, for
82 example a site plan for a new store would be \$250 for the base fee for the Planning Board plus
83 \$100 per 1,000 square feet. That applies to any site plan of this nature regardless where it is
84 located in town. Mr. Houghton is interested in seeing the actual costs for the Town. Mr. House
85 asked Ms. Hollasch if she reviewed the proposed Heritage District application fees. Ms. Hollasch

86 replied only cursorily. Mr. House asked if Ms. Hollasch has any questions on the fees. Ms.
87 Hollasch replied no.

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89 Mr. House asked Mr. Connors to go over the application form. Mr. Connors replied that it is
90 similar to the site plan application. The owner must sign the application. If the applicant is a
91 different person from the owner, they must also sign the application. We ask for permission to
92 visit the property. Mr. Zaremba said the application looks straight forward. Mr. Zaremba asked
93 once the application comes in, it is a two-step process that first goes to the Route 33 Heritage
94 Committee and then come to the Planning Board? Mr. Connors replied yes. The Committee
95 would give the Planning Board their meeting minutes with comments and recommendations, but
96 the Planning Board ultimately makes the decision. Mr. House stated that there is a little bit of
97 vetting before the project is submitted to the Planning Board. Mr. House stated that one of the
98 goals is to help save time at the Planning Board. Ms. Hollasch has no questions on the
99 application. Mr. House named the three members of the Heritage Committee: Alex Dardinski is
100 the chair, Jeff Hyland is the co-chair, and Mr. House as the Planning Board representative. Mr.
101 Connors said that Mr. Dardinski would like to send a letter to all property owners notifying them
102 of the application process.

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104 **Mr. Houghton made a motion to set the first public meeting date to set site plan application**
105 **fees for the Heritage District as July 13, 2022. Mr. Kunowski seconded the motion. All**
106 **voted in favor and the motion was approved.**

107 **b. Stratham Open Space Plan**

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109 Mr. Connors discussed the presentation from the introductory meeting last week. He said he
110 would briefly run through the same Powerpoint that was presented at that meeting.

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112 The Capital Improvement Program budgets about \$45,000 for Open Space and Connectivity Plan
113 in addition to the Town's other funding towards land conservation. The Town has put between
114 \$15,000 and \$35,000 toward land conservation from 2009 through 2019. The Town's
115 commitment to Open Space conservation intensified in 2002 when the Town passed a \$5 million
116 bond for open space preservation. A lot of land preserved in Stratham came out of that bond
117 commitment. There is also some modest funding in the CIP for pedestrian improvements. Mr.
118 Connors went through the recommendations from the 2019 Master Plan related to Open Space
119 Planning. The Master Plan recommended Management Plans for individual large open space
120 parcels. The Plan recommended a specific long range plan for Stratham Hill Park. The Town has
121 started that effort thanks to the work of the Trail Management Advisory Committee (TMAC).
122 The Plan recommends preserving the remaining historic buildings in Stratham and continuing to
123 use Conservation Easements where appropriate. Mr. Zaremba asked if using Conservation
124 Easements changes the tax base of the land? Mr. Connors replied yes because development of
125 the property is limited. Typically, the Town purchases the development rights which reduces the
126 value of the property. Mr. Connors showed how population in Stratham evolved. There was little
127 impact from the Industrial Revolution. The population doubled in the 1980s. Approximately
128 1,700 acres of land are protected under Conservation or Agricultural Easements in Stratham. The
129 NH Fish and Game owns 115 acres and the Town of Stratham owns 486 acres, excluding
130 properties like the Town Hall. About 24% of land in Stratham is protected. There are also

131 protected open space subdivisions with smaller lots and open space set aside. However, not all of
132 the open space parcels are formally protected via an easement or some other permanent tool. Mr.
133 Zaremba asked if the open space at Treat Farm is protected. Discussion amongst the members is
134 that they believe there is a protected easement. Mr. Connors said yes, he stated that it was more
135 in the 1970s and 1980s that land protection was not always formalized when these subdivisions
136 were approved. Stratham has done a better job with protecting agricultural land compared to
137 other towns in New Hampshire. Mr. Connors showed a map of the different protected lands.
138 There are a number of utility easements as well on the open space land and at the meeting last
139 week it was discussed if the Town could acquire some rights to that land for hiking and
140 pedestrian connections. Steve Whitman attended the meeting last week to present different types
141 of open space plans. The presentation was recorded and Mr. Connors is working on getting the
142 video online. It would be good for Stratham to get an inventory of open space and make it
143 available to the public that details what can be accessed and what cannot. Complete an analysis
144 of our baseline and where we want to go and complete public outreach and planning for what
145 comes next. Mr. House requested a paper copy in the library for people without computers. Mr.
146 Connors reiterated that creating a map with symbols of what the public can and cannot do on
147 lands is important.

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149 Mr. Connors presented the Open Space Plan for the City of Portsmouth. There is a Greenway
150 from downtown to the protected land on the outskirts of town. Mr. Connors presented the Open
151 Space Plan for Burlington, Vermont. There was a lot of outreach to people being better stewards
152 of the land. Moose Mountain, New Hampshire got a grant for a Greenways plan with
153 neighboring towns.

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155 There was a question as to what Board and Committee members want the plan to focus on.
156 Responses included protecting agricultural land, prioritizing environmentally sensitive land,
157 clarifying the Town's and landowners responsibilities and Conservation Commission's roles, and
158 clarifying where residents can access public land. Ms. Hollasch suggested inventorying the open
159 space based on how the land benefits us, for example, flood control, public recreation, education,
160 wildlife habitat etc. Mr. House suggested including maintenance of the open space properties as
161 part of the plan. Discussion continued on suggestions for mapping Stratham's conservation areas.
162 Mr. Connors would like the Town to work with the property owners who have easements that
163 don't require public access but previously allowed access to their land. Ideally the Town could
164 work with the landowners to see what Stratham can do to promote better stewardship and respect
165 of the property so public access could be regained? Mr. House suggested also talking to
166 landowners who are considering adding trails. Ms. Hollasch noted the complication with
167 easements held by an entity who is different from the entity managing the land therefore there are
168 two entities that might have an opinion on how the land is used and maintained. It was suggested
169 a new temporary committee might be needed to look at some of the items discussed. Mr.
170 Connors stated the RFP would be released soon with Planning Board input, then to the Select
171 Board, and then public outreach in the Fall.

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173 c. Discussion of potential source water protection and stormwater (MS4) mitigation measures.

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175 Mr. Connors stated there is nothing new from the last meeting.

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d. Master Plan Implementation

Mr. Connors stated this was generally covered in the PowerPoint presentation earlier in the meeting relative to the Open Space Plan but I have printed out the recommendations relating to conservation right from the Master Plan if the Board has any questions. There were no questions or additional discussion.

Miscellaneous Community Planning Issues

Mr. Connors said the Regional Planning Commission reached out to Stratham as they update the long-range transportation plan. There are two plans to keep in mind, a Ten Year Plan where all projects slated for the next ten years are budgeted for. The Portsmouth Avenue/Route 33 safety improvements in Stratham and Greenland and the Bunker Hill Avenue/Portsmouth Avenue signalization project is in the plan. Those projects are budgeted for and moving forward. The second is the long range transportation plan which is like a master plan. There are five projects in that plan -- the Portsmouth Ave pedestrian/bicycle improvements, reconfiguration of the Stratham Traffic Circle, Squamscott Road bicycle lanes, Frying Pan Lane/Portsmouth Avenue intersection improvements, and Marin Way intersection improvements. The RPC would like the Town's input as to what one of these projects represents a highest priority. This is something to keep on your radars, I will prepare more information for you for the next meeting.

e. Adjournment:

Mr. Houghton made a motion to adjourn at 8:30 pm. Mr. Zaremba seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion was approved.