



Stratham Planning Board Meeting Minutes
October 5, 2022
Stratham Municipal Center
Time: 7:05 pm

Members Present: David Canada, Vice Chair
Mike Houghton, Select Board's Representative
Chris Zaremba, Regular Member
Pamela Hollasch, Regular Member

Members Absent: Thomas House, Chair
John Kunowski, Alternate Member

Staff Present: Mark Connors, Town Planner

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

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

2. Approval of Minutes

a. September 21, 2022

Mr. Houghton made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from September 21, 2022. Mr. Zaremba seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

3. Public Hearing:

- a. Tulip Tree, LLC (Owner), Kyle & Sophie Saltonstall (Applicants) - Request for approval of a site plan amendment to allow for modifications to the landscape plan associated with an event venue, non-profit lodge, and private school use at 61 Stratham Heights Road (Tax Map 5, Lot 81) approved by the Planning Board on March 6, 2019, Zoned Residential Agricultural.**

Mr. Connors stated that the Applicants submitted a landscape plan for review by the Board and in his opinion it is superior to the previously approved plan and he recommends that the Board approve the plan. Mr. Saltonstall presented the plan and mentioned he has an additional plant with many more deciduous trees, but that Stratham's and mentioned that the site plan review regulations require that deciduous trees be a minimum 3-inch caliper and that size is difficult to find. The plan submitted for approval includes many more evergreen trees particularly along the property boundary.

Mr. Zaremba asked Mr. Saltonstall if the trees selected are appropriate for the drainage issues faced previously at the location. Mr. Saltonstall confirmed they are appropriate.
Mr. Connors commented that he would like the Town Planner to be authorized to approve minor changes to the plan in the future if an issue arises.

Ms. Houghton made a motion to open the public hearing. Ms. Hollasch seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion was approved.

There were no comments from the public.

Ms. Houghton made a motion to close the public hearing. Ms. Hollasch seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion was approved.

Mr. Zaremba asked for confirmation that the original plan contained only screening around the parking. Mr. Connors confirmed. Mr. Zaremba asked if there is any issue with the trees in the northwest and that they seem excessive and asked for clarification on what would constitute a minor change that the Town Planner can approve. Mr. Connors stated that he would hold them to the number of plantings, but would review a change to the locations if submitted.

Mr. Canada emphasized that note 4 on the plan which states “Existing trees and forest to remain are to be protected” will apply to existing and future plantings. Mr. Saltonstall agreed.

Ms. Hollasch made a motion to approve the revised Landscape Plan for 61 Stratham Heights Road, prepared by Whole Systems Design Collective last revised September 28, 2022, subject to the following conditions:

- 1. The Town Planner may approve minor modifications to the Landscape Plan provided that topographical conditions merit a modification and that adequate screening is maintained.**
- 2. The revised landscape plan so shown will be completed as shown by June 1, 2023.**

Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion was approved.

4. Public Meeting:

- a. Michael Flanagan, James Flanagan, and Ellis S. Grossman (Owners), James Flanagan (Applicant) - Route 33 Heritage District Application request to demolish a barn at 249 Portsmouth Avenue (Tax Map 2, Lot 6), Zoned Route 33 Heritage District.**

Mr. Connors presented the topic. This is the first application submitted under the new Route 33 Heritage District Zoning that was adopted in March 2022. The Building Inspector and the Fire Chief issued a letter to the owner on July 25, 2022 stating that the barn was a fire hazard to the principal dwelling on the property and requested that the owner obtain a demolition permit to raze the barn. The property is known as the Cornet Thomas Wiggin House, dates back to the late-1700s and is on the National Register of Historic Places. There were comments from the Heritage Advisory Committee that Mr. Connors summarized. A site walk was performed on the property in September 2022 that confirmed that the barn had deteriorated beyond repair. The Committee requests the preservation of any good structural materials from the barn during the demolition. There is a cement portion of the structure that the Applicant would like to retain and in the future build a new structure around it while retaining the historic period architecture. The Committee

would like to review the future plans.

The Board discussed the written comments submitted by Drew Bedard of the Demolition Review Committee specifically with regards to his comment to retain a historic restoration specialist to assess the barn's condition. Mr. Connors stated it is within the Planning Board's authority to require that. Mr. Houghton believes that effort should be made to preserve portions of the barn that can be preserved or cataloged and taken away. Ms. Hollasch and Mr. Zaremba had no comments.

Mr. Zaremba made a motion to open the public meeting. Ms. Hollasch seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion was approved.

Mr. Flanagan addressed the Board. He has worked at the Navy Shipyard for almost 50 years in failure analysis and believes the barn is a perfect example of a failure. The barn was built on dirt with no field stone or other foundation. Mr. Flanagan's brother has tried to maintain it for the past 40 years, but despite his efforts to reinforce the base, it has rotted. It is Mr. Flanagan's opinion that the construction of the barn is not the same time period of the house and gave specific examples of the differences in construction between the barn and the house. Mr. Flanagan does not believe the barn is as old as described by Mr. Bedard and the family does not have the funds to restore the barn. Mr. Flanagan gave specific examples of their efforts to save the barn over the years, e.g. the main carrying beams for the roof continued to rot and break after shoring them up. Mr. Flanagan stated the rot is coming from the outside and the inside is in good shape indicating their efforts to maintain the barn. Mr. Flanagan added that any major restoration effort would be expensive and it would need to be constructed on a foundation instead of dirt. There is an 8' by 8' lean-to on the barn that could be preserved and finished. If the barn is approved for demolition, they would install a fascia on the outside to make it look like a carriage shed. Mr. Flanagan has a contractor who can remove the barn and preserve as much wood as possible, but he may not be able to start until after the winter.

Rebecca Mitchell spoke on behalf of the Heritage Commission. The Commission requests a delay in issuing the demolition permit until the property owners can work with a preservation specialist. Mr. Flanagan has no objection to allowing a specialist to assess the barn's condition, but reiterated that the family does not have the funds for a major restoration. Mr. Flanagan stated that extreme care should be taken if anyone wanted to enter the barn and added that some areas are probably not safe for entry. Power has been cut to the barn.

Ms. Hollasch commented that the barn is a fire risk and the property owners were demanded to demolish the barn. However, the property has been flagged as historic importance and is concerned if the property owners receive a large bill from Mr. Bedard who provided the comments on behalf of the Demolition Committee, but also owns a preservation and restoration company. Ms. Mitchell does not believe that Mr. Bedard was going to charge for his inspection, but will verify that. Mr. Flanagan reiterated that he is happy to hear suggestions from Mr. Bedard on what to do with the salvageable building materials, but reiterated again that the family cannot pay to restore the barn.

Ms. Hollasch made a motion to close the public meeting. Mr. Zaremba seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion was approved.

Mr. Houghton made a motion to defer the decision on the demolition permit to the first meeting in November and provide a reasonable number of subject matter experts to access the property to examine and make recommendations on the potential salvage and reuse of

materials and those individuals who do so at their own cost. Ms. Hollasch seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion was approved.

b. Discussion of 2023 zoning amendments

Mr. Connors stated that the second November meeting is the first time the Board can discuss zoning amendments for 2023. Mr. Connors submitted to the board some suggested amendments and example of how they apply in town that include:

1. In the Gateway Commercial Business District, change the zero-foot front setback to a 15-foot minimum and the maximum setback from 15 feet to 40 feet.
2. In the Professional/Residential District reduce the front setback from 20 feet to 10 feet.
3. Update footnotes in the Table of Dimensional Requirements.
4. Establish minimum standards for sidewalks, driveways, and bicycle facilities in the Gateway District.
5. Amend the Gateway Commercial Business District conditional use permit section to clarify that a use that is not allowed would require a variance as opposed a conditional use permit.
6. Add a definition for religious uses or places of worship and make places of worship a permitted use in all zoning districts.
7. Establish maximum density standards for all zoning districts.
8. Update the sign ordinance to meet the legal changes necessary regarding sign content.
9. Update the sign standards discussed at previous Planning Board meetings.

c. Miscellaneous Community Planning Issues

NH DOT is holding public hearing on October 13th to discuss the replacement of two culverts on Squamscott Road. The work may require the closure of Squamscott Road.

There is a grant available for congestion management projects that have not advanced into the NH DOT 10-year plan through the Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality program. There is a 20% municipal match required. Letters of interest need to be submitted by early November.

5. Adjournment:

Mr. Zaremba made a motion to adjourn at 8:25 pm. Ms. Hollasch seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion was approved.