



**Stratham Planning Board Meeting Minutes**  
**July 21, 2021**  
**Municipal Center, Meeting Room A**  
**Time: 7:00 pm**

Member Present: Tom House, Chair  
David Canada, Vice Chair  
Mike Houghton, Selectmen's Representative  
Chris Zaremba, Alternate Member

Members Absent: Robert Roseen, Member  
Pamela Hollasch, Member  
Joe Anderson, Alternate Member

Staff Present: Mark Connors, Town Planner

**1. Call to Order/Roll Call**

Mr. House called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and called roll call. Mr. House appointed Mr. Zaremba as a voting member.

**2. Review/Approval of Meeting Minutes**

June 2, 2021 and July 7, 2021

Mr. Houghton made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of June 2, 2021 and July 7, 2021. Mr. Canada voted to second the motion. All voted in favor.

**3. Public Meeting:**

a. Workshop - Proposed Revisions to the Flexible Mixed Use Zoning District

Mr. Connors noted that had incorporated some revisions to the draft Flexible Mixed Use Zoning District based on the most recent Planning Board discussion at the last meeting. None of the proposed changes is a major change. The most significant change is that based on the last discussion it was clear that the Planning Board wanted housing to be incorporated into any development of the site, so he included language that would require at least 30% of the floor space developed include housing. He said that it would be permissible to construct commercial uses as a primary use, but that housing would also need to be incorporated into the

42 development. Similarly, if you wanted to pursue a housing development as the primary use,  
43 you could do that, but at least 15 percent of the floor area of the development would need to  
44 include commercial uses. Previously that was 20 percent but I reduced it a bit based on the  
45 feedback from the previous meeting.

46  
47 Mr. Connors said he did include a brief article about the zoning revisions in the last Select  
48 Board newsletter. Nate Merrill submitted his feedback and I've printed his comments out for  
49 you. Mr. Connors said Mr. Merrill was mostly in favor of the direction the zoning is taking  
50 although he did recommend several changes. The Board discussed Mr. Merrill's comments.  
51 There was agreement that warehousing uses and public utilities should be eliminated as  
52 permitted uses and that agricultural uses should be permitted. Mr. Canada said that gas  
53 stations and automotive uses in this day and age tend to be larger scale and that he would be in  
54 favor of keep those uses prohibited. Mr. Houghton said he agreed. Mr. Houghton said he  
55 envisioned commercial uses on the property as being smaller scale directly serving residents  
56 right there and in the surrounding neighborhoods.

57  
58 Mr. Connors noted that another change is that the existing zoning allows anything that is  
59 permitted in the Residential Agricultural District. So it would be permissible to construct a  
60 traditional residential subdivision. He took that out of the zoning as permitted uses, but did not  
61 add them as prohibited uses. So by default, they would be permitted by Conditional Use  
62 Permit. In the multi-family section, I did add broaden that language that a range of different  
63 housing styles would fall under that definition. He said the zoning now notes that multi-  
64 family may take a variety of forms including garden-style, townhouses, and triplexes. Single-  
65 occupancy residences and duplexes are permitted only if part of a condominium style form of  
66 development and only if they do not exceed 50 percent of the housing units constructed within  
67 the development. Mr. House said the wording should be broadened to permit rental housing  
68 and not just a condominium-style development. There was some discussion about the  
69 condominium-style restriction. Mr. Connors said there was originally a proposal for a senior  
70 housing community that included single-family housing as a component. That was part of  
71 what he was envisioning when he included the language. He said he would take a second look  
72 at the language so as not to prohibit rentals.

73  
74 Mr. Houghton said he would like to encourage smaller, more affordable housing units. He  
75 noted that Rollins Hill originated as a more affordable development but morphed into one that  
76 is not affordable for most families. He would like to keep the form of ownership flexible and  
77 affordable to young couples and families. Mr. House noted that as we've discussed workforce  
78 housing is not low income housing. Mr. Houghton said that it would include people who work  
79 for him who make good money but are not top wage earners. The Seacoast has a very high  
80 cost of living. Mr. Canada said it would include firefighters and town planners who can't  
81 afford to live in the town. Mr. Houghton questioned if single-occupancy units and duplexes  
82 could accommodate more affordable housing. The newer single-family houses and duplexes  
83 Stratham has are not affordable. The other way to get there would be to limit the square-  
84 footage of the housing. Mr. Zaremba asked if the zoning required workforce housing. Mr.

85 Connors said no as currently written it does not, but the Board could require it. The challenge  
86 in writing the zoning Mr. Connors said is that there is a danger in making it too specific that  
87 we might discourage redevelopment and investment. However, it would not be a bad idea to  
88 require a percentage of housing be developed as workforce housing. Mr. Zaremba said he did  
89 not have a strong position either way.

90  
91 There was some discussion of what constituted workforce housing. Mr. Connors said for  
92 ownership housing the price is currently capped in approximately the high-300,000s. That  
93 changes every year based on inflation and the median income for the area. Mr. Houghton said  
94 that he felt there was a real need for housing in that range.

95  
96 Fred Emmanuel joined the meeting as an audience member at approximately 7:35 pm. Mr.  
97 Connors noted other minor changes he had made to the zoning, including a requirement for  
98 more traditional architecture.

99  
100 Mr. Canada asked if there was support on the Board for prohibiting senior housing in the  
101 district. Mr. Connors said the way the zoning is written now, you could build senior housing  
102 but only for 20% of the housing units. Mr. Canada indicated he didn't think age requirements  
103 should be placed on any housing in the district. Mr. Houghton agreed. He said based on the  
104 current strong need for more housing for members of the workforce, and because this housing  
105 would not restrict any age groups including senior and retirees, he would not object to  
106 prohibiting age-restricted housing. Mr. Connors said he would incorporate that change.

107  
108 Mr. House asked about a news article relating to tax breaks for affordable housing that was  
109 included in the Planning Board packets. Mr. Connors said the Legislature just changed a law  
110 allowing for tax breaks for workforce housing projects. Previously this allowance was limited  
111 to town centers and Downtowns, but the Legislature broadened the language to include any  
112 zone that a town or city designates. So the former Tech College parcel could be eligible for the  
113 tax break. That would be more of a Select Board action, but if the Planning Board felt strongly  
114 they could ask the Select Board to consider it. In order to be eligible, a third of the housing  
115 units would need to be reserved as workforce units.

116  
117 Proposed housing related zoning amendments

118  
119 Mr. Connors said that the Board has been discussing how to encourage more affordable  
120 housing units not just on the former Technical College, but more broadly in the community.  
121 He has been working on drafting language to encourage workforce housing and smaller  
122 housing units within traditional subdivisions. He passed around drafts of the zoning language  
123 but noted that it was in very preliminary form. Mr. Connors explained that the draft language  
124 was provided to give you an idea of the direction we are looking at. Incentives for workforce  
125 housing and small/cottage-style developments would be incorporated into the Open Space  
126 Residential Cluster Development zoning language. The developer would have to submit a  
127 yield plan showing the maximum number of units allowable under a traditional subdivision

128 and a density bonus formula would be applied for that in which either 40% of the homes are  
129 reserved as workforce units or where all of the homes are limited in size to between 800 to a  
130 maximum of 1,350 square-feet. Mr. Connors noted that development of a Cottage Housing  
131 Ordinance was a recommendation of the 2019 Master Plan. There was some discussion about  
132 the appropriate size limitation on cottage-style developments and the appropriate density  
133 formula. Mr. Connors said he likes the idea of keeping this under the Open Space Cluster  
134 Developments because the Town is very familiar with how those work and we already allow  
135 bonuses for workforce housing in that section, but they have not been utilized. The intent  
136 would be to replace that language, in part, with the newly written language.

137  
138 Mr. House asked how the draft language was developed. Mr. Connors said he looked at a  
139 couple different communities with Cottage-style housing ordinances for ideas. It's still very  
140 much a work in progress. Mr. Emanuel noted that one of his first projects was townhouses that  
141 were approximately 868 square-feet and three-bedrooms. The zoning back in 1975 allowed  
142 that. He has never had a vacancy. People love them. Couples move in without kids, then they  
143 have a child and they find a house to buy in Stratham. The rents are average Rockingham  
144 County rates. You cannot build that today. The duplexes they're building today are not  
145 affordable. Mr. Connors asked, when you say average Rockingham County rents,  
146 approximately how much is that? Mr. Emanuel said approximately \$1,600 to \$1,700. Mr.  
147 Connors noted that he would return to the Board with more refined language for a future  
148 meeting in August. The biggest variable in housing costs in development, aside from lumber  
149 costs skyrocketing today, is the cost of the land, Mr. Emanuel said. Mr. Emanuel said one of  
150 the best things the Town did is lot sizing by soil type. More density is often needed, but  
151 there's only so much you can build on some parcels. You need to protect water and waste  
152 water.

153  
154 b. Proposed Revisions to the Site Plan Regulations relating to Planning Board Site Plan Review  
155 of applications.

156  
157 Mr. Connors explained that we discussed this at the last meeting and the Board was broadly in  
158 agreement that expanding the Planning Board's site plan oversight was needed. The Board did  
159 recommend reviewing language for an Administrative Approval process that would waive  
160 public hearings and Planning Board review for very minor projects. He briefly described how  
161 an Administrative Approval process would work, including what types of projects would be  
162 eligible and how projects would be reviewed and approved. He noted that the main benefit is it  
163 would streamline and expedite the process for property owners. Mr. Connors noted that this is  
164 not the only option to expedite approvals for small projects. Some towns have a consent  
165 agenda for small projects, where a public hearing and abutter notification is waived, and the  
166 Planning Board can more quickly approve an application. There are other models available.

167  
168 Mr. Canada said he was strongly in favor of the intent behind the expedited Administrative  
169 Approval process and said it was needed. He does feel as though some oversight is needed and  
170 that requiring the Planning Board Chairperson to be included in the review would accomplish

171 that. Mr. Zaremba asked if a time limit should be incorporated into the reviews. Mr. Connors  
172 said that is probably a good idea. About one week would be reasonable. There was some  
173 discussion of what a reasonable time frame would be. Mr. House said since we have a small  
174 Board tonight, he would like to discuss it further at the next meeting. Mr. Connors said he  
175 would update the language for the next meeting.

176  
177 c. Adoption of Temporary waiver of Site Plan Regulations for Stratham restaurants operating  
178 under Temporary Outdoor Seating Permits

179  
180 Mr. Connors noted this would simply formalize waiving the site plan regulations for Stratham  
181 restaurants operating with Temporary Outdoor Seating Permits through October 31, 2021. The  
182 Board previously discussed this and agreed with the intent. Mr. Houghton made a motion to  
183 waive the site plan regulations to allow Stratham restaurants operating under a Temporary  
184 Outdoor Seating Permit to do so through October 31, 2021. Mr. Canada seconded the motion.  
185 All voted in favor.

186  
187 d. Nomination of Joseph Johnson to serve as Rockingham Regional Planning Commissioner

188  
189 Mr. Connors noted that Joseph Johnson, a traffic engineer, had submitted an application to  
190 serve as a Commission member on the Rockingham Planning Commission. There has been a  
191 vacancy for some time for this seat and Lucy Cushman helped recruit Mr. Johnson for the  
192 position. Mr. Johnson is very well qualified to serve in this role and should be a great addition  
193 to the Commission. He previously served on the Town's Technical Review Committee. Mr.  
194 Canada agreed that his background makes him a very strong fit to serve on the Rockingham  
195 Planning Commission. Mr. Canada voted to nominate Joseph Johnson for consideration by the  
196 Select Board of appointment to serve as a Rockingham Regional Planning Commission  
197 member for a two-year term. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

198  
199 e. Discussion of Proposed 2022 Zoning Amendments

200 Mr. Connors said that he had discussed recently with the Select Board potential 2022 zoning  
201 amendments and wanted to update the Planning Board. He indicated it is still quite early and  
202 the amendments may change. He briefly went through the amendments which include the  
203 housing related amendments discussed tonight, the FMUD zoning changes, the Route 33  
204 Heritage District re-zoning, the second part of the revisions to the Gateway and Town Center  
205 zoning that the Board initiated and passed through the ballot this year, minor changes to the  
206 Solar Energy Systems Ordinance, potentially clarifying the Porkchop Lot provisions,  
207 tightening up the ADU requirements particularly related to detached ADUs, a housekeeping  
208 amendment to eliminate the Growth Management Ordinance language, and potentially  
209 clarifying the zoning definition of structure. This was followed by a brief discussion of the  
210 porkchop lot provisions. A porkchop lot, if approved, can have as little as 50-feet of frontage.  
211 Mr. Emanuel asked if Amherst allowed porkchop lots. Mr. Connors said he wasn't sure. In  
212 Bedford, they are not permitted, however the zoning requirements were a bit less stringent

213 than Stratham. There, a minimum lot size of 1.5 acres and a minimum of 150-feet of frontage  
214 is required.

215  
216 f. Discussion of Time Limits on Planning Board Approvals

217  
218 Mr. Connors said he would like to look into tightening up the requirements associated with time  
219 limits on Planning Board approvals. Currently we give applicants 120 days to finalize plans after  
220 the Planning Board approves them. But he first would like to review how other Towns handle  
221 this and what their time limits are. He asked if this could be postponed to another meeting for  
222 more discussion. The Board agreed to table discussion on this item.

223  
224 g. Miscellaneous Community Planning Issues

225  
226 Mr. House asked if there was anything else to discuss. Hearing nothing, he asked if there was a  
227 motion to adjourn.

228  
229 **4. Adjournment**

230  
231 Mr. Houghton made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 pm. Mr. Canada seconded the  
232 motion. Motion carried unanimously.

233  
234  
235  
236  
237  
238  
239  
240  
241  
242  
243  
244  
245  
246  
247  
248  
249  
250  
251  
252  
253  
254 *Note(s):*

- 255 1. *Materials related to the above meeting are available for review at the Municipal Center during normal business hours. For more*  
256 *information, contact the Stratham Planning Office at 603-772-7391 ext. 147.*  
257 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*  
258 *agenda.*