



Stratham Planning Board Meeting Minutes
September 18, 2024
Stratham Municipal Center
Time: 7:00 pm

Members Present: Thomas House, Chair
David Canada, Vice Chair
Mike Houghton, Select Board's Representative
Chris Zaremba, Regular Member (arrived at 7:02 pm)
John Kunowski, Regular Member
Nate Allison, Alternate Member

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Mark Connors, Director of Planning and Community Development

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

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

2. Approval of Minutes

a. September 4, 2024

Mr. House made a motion to approve the September 4, 2024 meeting minutes. Mr. Canada seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

3. Public Meeting:

a. 2025 Zoning Amendments Workshop

Mr. Connors presented rough draft language for potential zoning amendments.

1. Residential Open Space Cluster Development

Mr. Connors explained that some subdivision plans have shown buildable area located in the part of the parcel that requires wetland crossing for access. Language could be added that requires the buildable area to be in an area of the lot that is accessible by vehicle without having to cross a wetland or otherwise disturb wetlands. Another suggestion is to create a new section that on all residential lots within a residential open space cluster subdivision, the wetland area makes up no more than 20% of the surface area of each individual lot and that the wetland buffer areas be physically marked so that homeowners know the buffer locations. Last year the Town capped the amount of wetland area in the open space parcels, but that allows a developer to shift the wetlands to individual lots which is not helpful as homeowners tend to make improvements to lots. Mr.

Kunowski asked if Mr. Connors is referring to the final lots or the yield plan. Mr. Connors replied he means the final cluster lots. Mr. Connors suggested another change could be that the “Baskerville boxes” currently required on yield plans be clarified to require that the boxes must be buildable areas that exclude property line and wetland setbacks. Mr. Allison agrees with that change. He believes that an applicant should present a yield plan that is approvable and that the boxes should depict buildable areas with regards to terrain (e.g. wetlands, easements, etc.). Mr. Canada agrees as well and stated that the history of the boxes was to address irregular lots. Mr. Allison understands addressing irregular lots and feels strongly about requiring that plans include sufficient buildable lots. Mr. Houghton agrees with the 20% suggestion and that the Baskerville square must fit on a lot in a buildable area. Mr. House asked if the Baskerville square is defined. Mr. Connors replied it is defined as 75% of the required frontage. The required frontage is 175 feet so that would result in about 130 feet. To meet the current requirement the lot has to fit a box that is 130 feet by 130 feet. The Board agrees with suggestions.

Mr. Connors stated that Mr. Allison drafted some definition amendments. Mr. Allison explained that he believes the original intent of the ordinance in terms of the yield plan has been bypassed simply because it wasn’t clearly defined. Mr. Allison presented a draft definition. Mr. Zaremba asked if the intent is to tighten up that a yield plan should be what would actually be built under a conventional subdivision. Mr. Allison replied absolutely, because what is being presented is a wish list that doesn’t have to be justified. Mr. Zaremba agrees with the intent. He asked if tightening the square helps the Board get to the intent and noted an issue that an applicant could depict a two-acre lot with a 10’ by 10’ house. Mr. Connors asked if the yield plan should be stamped by a surveyor. Mr. Allison replied not on a concept plan but absolutely for the yield plan for the final application. He added that his opinion of the advantage of clustering is to create workforce housing, but that isn’t happening in Stratham and the developer is getting a benefit in cluster subdivisions with tremendous cost savings in infrastructure.

2. Accessory Dwelling Unit requirements

Mr. Connors described some minor changes to the ADU section of the Ordinance. The first is to add a maximum number of two bedrooms. The intent is to make it clear that the ADU is incidental to the primary dwelling unit. The second is to add a maximum height of a detached ADU of 1.5 stories. Mr. House asked if the height should be limited in feet as one story could be 12 feet. Mr. Canada suggested adding that a septic design should be required even if the existing system was deemed to be adequate to add a new ADU. Mr. Canada asked what kind of evidence is required to provide evidence of potable water. Mr. House replied whatever the standards are from the State. Mr. Connors replied he can talk with the Building Inspector about that. Mr. Allison stated that well capacity should be proven.

Mr. Connors explained that a requirement was added in 2022 that a detached ADU cannot be located in the front yard except an existing structure can be renovated into an ADU. He added that the new 1.5 story limitation would not apply to existing structures being renovated.

3. Wetland Conservation District

Mr. Connors described some changes to the Wetlands Ordinance. Some references to state requirements need to be updated. He will review proposed changes with the Conservation Commission. Changes include updating the definition of wetlands to the State’s definition, removing some unnecessary language related to wetland delineation, removing reference to a

Wetlands District map, updating permitted uses within wetland areas (separate from buffer areas), clarifying requirements for sediment and erosion control, and clarifying setback requirements and sizes. Mr. Connors noted that the draft sent to the Planning Board proposed removing agriculture as a permitted use in wetlands; he noted that there is a ZBA application pending that has highlighted that some clarifications to the ordinance may be necessary. However, he noted that there was opposition to this – he noted that an e-mail from a resident was included in the packets – and that the draft language would likely be revisited. The Board was generally in agreement with suggested changes and decided to include a 25-foot no disturbance buffer, 75-foot building setback for wetlands (including the 25-foot no disturbance buffer), and updates to the section regarding rebuilding an existing non-conforming structure. The Board noted that they did not agree with removing agriculture as a permitted use but that modifications may be advisable.

4. Sign Ordinance amendments

Mr. Connors described changes to the Sign Ordinance including prohibiting feather flags and allowing subdivision signs. Mr. Connors believes that subdivision signs were inadvertently removed from the ordinance during the last update to this section. Another change is reduce the number of allowed temporary signs per year and the number of days allowed. The Board was generally in agreement with potential changes, but felt the size of residential subdivision signs should be reconsidered and perhaps reduced.

5. Potential Historic Preservation Overlay District along Portsmouth Avenue

Mr. Connors presented a new overlay district along Portsmouth Avenue that would require Planning Board approval to demolish any historic building or part of a historic building. Mr. Kunowski asked if this has to be an overlay or can it be addressed in existing districts. Mr. Connors replied that he believes it needs to be an overlay because it is a type of restriction that must be part of a heritage or historic district. The Board agreed with Mr. Connors drafting an overlay district and with the requirements applying to buildings constructed prior to 1950.

6. Professional Residential Zoning District

Mr. Connors will draft some architectural standards for this district for review by the Board.

7. Rezoning

Mr. Connors presented a list of split-zoned parcels to be rezoned either fully in the Professional Residential District or in the Residential Agricultural District. The Board agreed with the proposed changes. Mr. Connors noted that the affected property owners would be notified by mail.

4. Miscellaneous Community Planning Items

Mr. Connors stated that the Scamman Farm garden and nursery property appears to have been sold to McFarland Ford.

Mr. Connors stated that the Aberdeen West court hearing for their proposed solar project was cancelled due to a conflict with the judge.

Mr. Connors stated that the Stoneybrook project hearing has been postponed to December from August because the parties are in settlement discussions.

143 Mr. Connors stated that he has accepted a position in another community closer to his home and his
144 last day will be October 16, 2024.

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146 **5. Adjournment**

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148 **Mr. Canada made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 pm. Mr. Zaremba seconded the**
149 **motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.**