



**Stratham Planning Board Meeting Minutes
October 2, 2024
Stratham Municipal Center
Time: 7:00 pm**

Members Present: Thomas House, Chair
David Canada, Vice Chair
Mike Houghton, Select Board's Representative
John Kunowski, Regular Member
Nate Allison, Alternate Member

Members Absent: Chris Zaremba, Regular Member

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 18, 2024

Mr. Canada stated that his name should be removed from the comment regarding well capacity on line 81. **Mr. Canada made a motion to approve the September 18, 2024 meeting minutes as amended. Mr. Kunowski seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.**

3. Public Meeting:

a. 2025 Zoning Amendments Workshop

Mr. Connors presented draft language for potential zoning amendments.

1. Table of Dimensional Requirements and Explanatory Notes

A minor update to the dimensional table was suggested by Mr. Connors to add a note to the table that the Flexible Mixed-Use and Heritage Districts are not listed in the table and the note will direct the reader to where to find that information in the Zoning Ordinance.

A second change is to add language to Explanatory Note (i) that the square must also not encroach into non-buildable areas including lot line setbacks and wetland buffer or setback areas. Mr. Connors asked the Board if they want to include buffer areas or perhaps just the wetland resource area instead. Mr. Allison asked if the buffer is a buildable area. Mr. Connors replied that the wetlands setback is 75 feet for structures, but other things like a patio are allowed in that setback.

45 Mr. Allison stated that he would like to have a further discussion on the 150' by 150' square and
46 how it applies to two-acre minimum lots. He voiced concern that developers could allow the area
47 beyond the square to include wetlands and he does not believe that was the intent of the
48 requirement. Mr. Kunowski asked if proposed Article 2 applies to a single lot development or
49 potentially a subdivision. Mr. Connors replied it will apply to any new lot. Existing lots would be
50 legally non-conforming, but it could come up during a lot line adjustment. Mr. Connors asked the
51 Board if footnote (i) should apply to all lots in town or just to residential lots. The Board discussed
52 Mr. Connors's first question as to whether to include only wetlands or also wetlands buffers and
53 setbacks in the lot square requirement. The Board discussed how much land disturbance occurs
54 during construction. Mr. Allison stated that when constructing a foundation, there will be
55 equipment working and staging within a 25-foot area. He added that if you drive through any
56 construction site, you won't see anything within 25 feet of a house, you may see trees 30 feet away
57 but their roots may have had some issues. Mr. Allison likes the square requirement and described
58 an example large home that could be 60 or 80 feet long plus 25 feet on each side. He feels strongly
59 that the square should be all buildable in some form. He thinks it is smart and protects the
60 homeowner and the town. Mr. Houghton stated he thinks the 25 feet is adequate. Mr. Allison and
61 Mr. Canada agreed.

62

63 2. Residential Open Space Cluster Development

64

65 Mr. Connors presented new definitions for the Zoning Ordinance for yield plan and conventional
66 subdivision. He stated that these changes can also be made directly in the subdivision regulations
67 through a public hearing. Mr. Connors presented a soils-based lot size determination and described
68 that developers need to meet the minimum lot size by soil type, but it allows a developer to include
69 some non-buildable areas in the minimum lot size. He referenced paragraph 4.3.1.b.i. of the
70 subdivision regulations. Mr. Connors suggested additional language that the minimum buildable
71 area shall not encroach into setback areas required under the Table of Dimensional Requirements
72 or under the wetland buffer areas in Section 11.5.3. The Board was in agreement with updating the
73 subdivision regulations. Mr. Connors stated that the definitions can be repeated in the Ordinance.
74 Mr. Allison is in favor of changes that protect the consumer by ensuring that new two acre lots
75 have at least two acres of functional land, which might mean that the lot has to be four acres.

76 Mr. Connors presented other draft changes including that the buildable area has to be accessible
77 by car and that the individual lots have not more than 20% wetland area and increasing the wetland
78 threshold on the open space lot to 30% wetlands from 20% wetlands as a compromise.

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80 3. Accessory Dwelling Unit requirements

81

82 Mr. Connors presented an amendment to change the 50-foot front setback for detached ADUs to
83 instead exclude them from the front yard and front yard is defined in the Zoning Ordinance. Mr.
84 Connors addressed questions from the previous meeting on potable water and septic requirements.
85 He spoke with the Building Inspector who said that septic system designs are based on the number
86 of bedrooms. If, for example, a septic system was constructed for four bedrooms and the existing
87 home has only three bedrooms and the ADU will have one bedroom, then no changes are needed.
88 However, if the home and proposed ADU have more bedrooms than the existing septic system was
89 designed for, then NHDES requires that a new septic system be designed but not installed.
90 Regarding potable water, it is determined under building code and there are thresholds that should
91 be met for nitrite, nitrate, lead or total coliform bacteria and for new structures (e.g. a detached
92 ADU) the well should deliver at least 3.5 gallons per minute, but for attached ADUs it is assumed
93

94 that was proven with the existing home.
95

96 Mr. Houghton asked what the definition of one and a half stories is. Mr. Connors didn't have the
97 exact definition available but replied that it must have a gable roof and the total height is limited
98 to 35 feet. He suggested that the Board could limit ADU height to 25 feet. The Board discussed
99 limiting the first floor height to 10 feet and determined that because the maximum size of an ADU
100 is 1,000 square feet, then it probably won't be 35 feet tall.
101

102 4. Wetland Conservation District
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104 Mr. Connors updated the Board on the Conservation Commission's comments on proposed
105 changes. The Commission was in favor of the 75-foot setback for all wetlands and they prefer that
106 agricultural activities be prohibited in wetlands. Mr. Connors stated that last year the Town voted
107 to approve a zoning amendment that allows small sheds to be closer to setback lot lines and within
108 15 feet of a wetland. The Commission is in favor of requiring that sheds be at least 25 feet from
109 the edge of a wetland. The Board members agree with the change to 25 feet for sheds but will
110 continue to allow agricultural use in a wetland.
111

112 5. Sign Ordinance amendments
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114 Mr. Connors presented a definition of feather flag signs; language to allow signs for residential
115 developments that do not exceed 32 square feet and a height of six feet; and a reduction in the
116 number of days for a temporary sign from 120 days to 60 days and no more than three times per
117 year. Mr. Houghton commented that he thinks the 32 square-foot size seems large. Mr. Canada
118 asked if it includes the stonework around it. Mr. Connors replied that it is the part of the sign with
119 the wording. The Board discussed the size and agreed with a 24-foot size restriction.
120

121 6. Potential Portsmouth Avenue Heritage Overlay District
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123 Mr. Connors consulted with the Town's attorney on a potential Heritage Overlay District. The
124 attorney needs to research the legality of it. Mr. Connors will draft language if it can be allowed.
125

126 7. Professional Residential (PRE) District
127

128 Mr. Connors presented new building, site, and architectural standards in the PRE District. Board
129 members offered some minor comments and will review the draft and provide additional comments
130 at the next meeting. Another suggested amendment is to include a requirement for an outdoor
131 shared congregation space.
132

133 8. Potential re-zoning of split-zoned PRE and R/A parcels
134

135 Mr. Connors explained he does not believe this will be a controversial amendment as it will
136 make managing the zoning requirements easier particularly for the properties with single-family
137 homes. Mr. Connors stated that he will send a letter to the property owners affected by the
138 potential rezoning of the split-zoned parcels. If they have questions, they can attend the next
139 meeting. Mr. House suggested having a list of differences between the districts for that meeting.
140 Mr. Canada asked why it is suggested to rezone 10 Bunker Hill Avenue as R/A instead of PRE.
141 Mr. Connors replied that it doesn't really affect the property as long as the town owns it. Mr.
142 Canada stated that although the town doesn't have to meet the requirements, it might save some

143 controversy if there is a change proposed in the future. Mr. Houghton agreed that putting it into
144 the PRE District would promote flexibility of future use. Mr. Canada does not see any advantage
145 to putting it into the residential district, but there is advantage with PRE.

146

147 **b. Public notification/outreach for some amendments**

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149 Mr. Connors stated that property owner notification by regular mail is required for changes to
150 rezoning when it affects fewer than 100 properties. The proposed Heritage Overlay District
151 would affect more than 100 properties and would not require the same notification.

152

153 **4. Miscellaneous Community Planning Items**

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155 Mr. Connors announced that Carol Ogilvie, a retired planner, will fill in as an interim Town Planner
156 until the position is filled. She has acted as interim planner for Stratham in the past as well.

157

158 **5. Adjournment**

159

160 **Mr. Kunowski made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 pm. Mr. Allison seconded the**
161 **motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.**