



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

Members Present: Thomas House, Chair
David Canada, Vice Chair
Nate Allison, Alternate Member

Members Absent: Chris Zaremba, Regular Member
John Kunowski, Regular Member
Mike Houghton, Select Board's Representative

Staff Present: Carol Ogilvie, Interim Town Planner
Susan Connors, Planning Project Assistant

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

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

2. Approval of Minutes

a. December 4, 2024

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

3. Public Meeting (New Business):

- a. Voluntary Lot Merger of 8 Country Farm Road and 101 Stratham Heights Road. Owners Russell W. Fitch, Jr. and Marie Jeannette Fitch, Trustees of the Russell W. Fitch, Jr. and Marie Jeannette Fitch Family Revocable Living Trust.**

Ms. Ogilvie introduced the lot merger request as a simple process that is allowed by statute and does not require a public hearing. If the merger would not create any non-conforming issues, then the Planning Board chair signs the form along with the owners and it gets recorded at the Registry of Deeds.

Mr. House invited Mr. Fitch to speak. Mr. Fitch explained that he purchased the lot at 101 Stratham Heights Road to provide privacy from Stratham Heights Road for their home at 8 Country Farm Road. They have paid taxes on it for over 30 years and the land requires no town services. They have no plans to develop the land and therefore would like to merge it into the lot at 8 Country Farm Road to reduce taxes and to preserve the land.

Mr. Canada asked if they have considered a conservation easement on the land. Ms. Connors replied that she spoke with Bill McCarthy, the Conservation Commission chair and passed along the benefits of and process for a conservation easement to Mr. Fitch and that the process can be

completed before or after the merger. In order to take advantage of the next tax reduction, the merger needs to be completed by April 1, 2025.

Mr. Allison commented that he went through a similar process and discovered that once the lots are merged, any work completed for the lot (e.g. test pits) are voided once the merger is completed. Mr. Fitch thanked him for the comment.

Ms. Connors asked Mr. Fitch to confirm there is no mortgage on either lot. Mr. Fitch confirmed.

Mr. House signed the form and Mr. Fitch stated he will come to the Planning Office with his wife to sign the form.

- b. Discussion regarding conditions of approval for the Site Plan Review at 89 and 91 Portsmouth Avenue (Tax Map 13, Lots 22 and 23).

Ms. Ogilvie explained that this project received Site Plan approval in August and the deadline for precedent conditions is December 19, 2024. The applicant requested a 90-day extension to comply.

Drew Goddard, the Applicant, stated that he does not believe he will need the entire 90 days, but would like to avoid another extension request. He explained that the lead consultant on the project has been on a grand jury which has limited his available time. Mr. Goddard requested that obtaining the driveway permit from NHDOT be removed as a precedent condition. He stated that the application has been submitted to NHDOT and is under review. They received communication from NHDOT that is a minimal change which they will comply with, but he can't control how long it takes NHDOT to issue a permit.

Mr. Canada made a motion to grant the 90-day extension and to delete the condition that the applicant obtain a driveway permit from NHDOT. Mr. Allison seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

- c. Clarification of the number of residential units allowed in the Route 33 Legacy Highway Heritage District, Sections 3.10.9 and 4.1.4.

Ms. Ogilvie explained that the Planning Office has received numerous questions on the number of residential units allowed per lot in the Route 33 Legacy Highway Heritage District. The Board discussed Section 4.1.4 of the Ordinance and determined that Section 4.1.4 applies only to mixed-use properties and suggested that a minor amendment be added to the 2025 zoning amendments to clarify.

4. Public Meeting (Old Business):

- a. Discussion of Potential Zoning Amendments

- 1. Professional/Residential District architectural and site design standards

Ms. Ogilvie presented the final edits to this amendment and the Board agreed with the edits.

- 2. Wetlands Ordinance

Ms. Ogilvie presented the edits to this amendment and the Board agreed with the edits including adding a section of prohibited uses as recommended in the NH Innovative Land Use Planning Techniques handbook.

94 **5. Miscellaneous Community Planning Items**

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96 Ms. Ogilvie notified the Board that at the next meeting there will be two Preliminary Consultation
97 applications for properties in the Gateway District for auto dealerships to be reviewed and the final
98 subdivision application with Conditional Use Permit for the proposed residential open space cluster
99 subdivision at 80 and 80R Winnicutt Road.

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101 **6. Adjournment**

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103 **Mr. Canada made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 pm. Mr. Allison seconded the motion.**
104 **All voted in favor and the motion passed.**