



## Stratham Planning Board Meeting Minutes

May 21, 2025

## 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  
John Kunowski, Regular Member  
Nate Allison, Alternate Member

### Members Absent: None

**Staff Present:** Vanessa Price, Director of Planning and Building

## 1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Mr. House called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and took roll call.

## 2. Approval of Minutes

a. May 7, 2025

Mr. House commented that the date of the minutes should be corrected to May 7, 2025. Mr. Kunowski made a motion to approve the May 7, 2025 meeting minutes as amended. Mr. Allison seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

### 3. Ongoing Business:

a. Copley Properties LLC (Applicant) and Helen E. Gallant Revocable Trust of 1995 (Owner), request for approval of a Subdivision application and Conditional Use Permit for a proposed subdivision of 80 and 80R Winnicutt Road, Tax Map 14, Lots 56 and 57, Zoned Residential/Agricultural, into a Residential Open Space Cluster Development with 28 single-family residential lots, and five (5) joined-array lots each with four (4) separate single-family units, for a total of 48 units.

Bruce Scamman of Emanual Engineering requested a continuance to the June 4, 2025, meeting. Ms. Price explained that CMA Engineers is in the process of completing their second review and the fire protection review is continuing as well.

**Mr. Houghton made a motion to continue the application to June 4, 2025. Mr. Zaremba seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.**

b. 41 Portsmouth Avenue LLC (Applicant) and 41 Portsmouth Avenue Realty LLC (Owner) request for a Site Plan Review for a new 30,000 square foot auto dealership at 41 Portsmouth Avenue, Tax Map 9, Lot 4 in the Gateway Commercial Business and Residential/Agricultural Districts.

45 Ms. Price stated that the fire inspector and town consulting engineer are still reviewing the April  
46 23<sup>rd</sup> plan set and application documents. She anticipates receiving comments by the end of this  
47 week and will forward them to the applicant. The staff memo notes changes needed to the plan set  
48 including a tractor trailer turning template, flat roofs are not supported in the District, sign details  
49 are needed for all the signs, drinking water supply, sidewalks and streetlights, and there may be  
50 additional items from the staff memo dated April 9 that may not have been addressed. Ms. Price  
51 recommended continuing the application to July 2<sup>nd</sup> due to the outstanding ZBA variance request.  
52 She stated that the applicant is here to present the landscape plan to the Board.

53 Bruce Scamman with Emanuel Engineering and James Verra & Associates introduced the project  
54 team which includes Chris Lane, the owner; John Arnold from Orr & Reno; and Vicky Martel  
55 from Woodburn and Company. Mr. Scamman stated that if there is anything new on the vesting,  
56 Mr. Arnold could talk about that, but Mr. Arnold is still in discussions with the town council.  
57

58 Ms. Martel presented the landscape plan. There are shade trees along the frontage with Portsmouth  
59 Avenue; those are elms with a higher canopy so the front of the building will be visible, but the  
60 trees will help to soften the building. There are two stormwater structures along with a sign in the  
61 middle, and those detention basins will be filled with perennials and low shrubs that will tolerate  
62 the inundation. There is a gas line easement along the southern property line so there is a lack of  
63 trees in that area. To buffer the building in that area, there is a mix of shrubs: spireas and forsythias.  
64 Closer to the residential use, there is a robust evergreen screening at the bottom of a retaining wall.  
65 Around the back, there will be more shade trees in the islands. The center island is used for  
66 stormwater retention. On the northern side of the building there is a small planter with some  
67 ornamental trees and a line of arborvitae along the solid wall of the building and other areas of  
68 solid walls.  
69

70 Ms. Price noted that the plans submitted to the Board in their packet are the original plans and are  
71 significantly different than the plan Ms. Martel presented. Mr. Scamman apologized for the  
72 confusion.  
73

74 Ms. Martel continued that from the north, the overhead service bay doors would be screened by  
75 shade trees and three ornamental trees. Mr. Scamman stated that a waiver was submitted for the  
76 project 10 years ago for the garage doors facing Portsmouth Avenue and that's an important part  
77 of the landscaping – the amount of trees along the road and the secondary trees down at the garage  
78 elevation. The doors are glass roll-up, so they don't look like garage doors.  
79

80 Mr. Kunowski asked if the catch basin in the back moved because of the extension of the proposed  
81 building. Mr. Scamman replied that one pond is relocated, and he doesn't have his design drawings  
82 to answer if the catch basin moved.  
83

84 Mr. Kunowski stated that he does not see the proposed parking in the rear of the building that was  
85 on the original plan and asked what landscaping will be there. Mr. Scamman replied that is to be  
86 determined. They wanted to show the Board tonight the main frontage. There was a large pond in  
87 the original development with some retaining walls, and the ponds have been expanded in the back  
88 and one pond was eliminated. He believes that allows for more vegetation along one side. He  
89 described the location of the gas pipeline that precludes some landscaping.  
90

91 Mr. House asked Mr. Scamman to elaborate on the description of the pond. Mr. Scamman replied  
92 he is referring to bioretention ponds that will have water flow into them and will be grassed. They  
93 will typically be dry year-round except during rain events where they back up. There will be a sand  
94

95 filter in them, so the water gets treated as it percolates down to storage in the stone layer. He stated  
96 that originally a traditional pond in one corner was proposed that would hold water that wasn't a  
97 biopond and didn't have treatment. Mr. Scamman added that one area of the parking lot will have  
98 a pond underneath it as well that is new in this go-round as part of the drainage design that will be  
99 reviewed by the CMA Engineers. Mr. House asked if there is pervious pavement. Mr. Scamman  
100 replied that he believes there is pervious pavement, but they may have designed it so that water  
101 flows to the swale, is stored, and then would slowly flow out. He would have to check the design  
102 plans on that.

103  
104 Mr. Kunowski asked if the addition of the pond with permeable pavement was added because some  
105 of the original stormwater system had to change in this new scheme. Mr. Scamman replied there  
106 was a bioretention swale in one area and some of the new regulations didn't quite meet current  
107 NHDES requirements, so they redesigned that area of the site to ensure better quality.

108  
109 Mr. Allison asked if this is a different building than was originally submitted. Mr. Scamman replied  
110 correct.

111  
112 Mr. Kunowski asked if the project has abandoned the notion of a sidewalk on Portsmouth Avenue.  
113 Mr. Scamman replied the plan submitted is what they are proposing and no sidewalk is proposed.  
114 They believe they are vested and that is being worked out with the Town.

115  
116 Mr. Canada asked how sustainable elm trees are. Ms. Martel replied they are disease resistant elms  
117 that are not susceptible to Dutch elm disease and they seem to do really well in commercial settings.  
118 They are in the Target parking lot in Greenland and are doing really well there. They establish  
119 quickly and then grow fast. Mr. Canada asked when was the variety was developed. Ms. Martel  
120 replied over 10 years ago. Mr. Canada replied that is not much of a track record for trees. He  
121 recognizes that the owner has to maintain them but wanted to point that out. Ms. Martel replied 10  
122 years is how long she has been using them regularly, but not the point that they were developed;  
123 she doesn't have a year for that. She added that Dutch elm disease would usually effect trees very  
124 early in the lifespan and she believes she would have seen it by now in plantings. Mr. House asked  
125 what is the height of the trees. Mr. Martel replied at maturity they can get 30 to 40 feet tall, but in  
126 this setting that is not likely, so easily over 20 feet tall. Mr. House asked if under the canopy will  
127 be clear. Ms. Martel replied yes, they have a vase shaped canopy, so the lower limbs grow up and  
128 out.

129  
130 Mr. House asked if there are any comments from the public. Nobody from the public asked to  
131 speak.

132  
133 Ms. Price recommended continuing the application and the applicant requested returning for the  
134 June 4<sup>th</sup> meeting to discuss the architecture plans.

135  
136 **Mr. House made a motion to continue the application to June 4, 2025. Mr. Kunowski**  
137 **seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.**

138  
139 c. Land Bank Properties, LLC (Applicant) and Dorothy P. Thompson (Owner) request for approval  
140 of a Condominium Subdivision, Conditional Use Permit, and Route 33 Heritage District  
141 Application at 217 Portsmouth Avenue, Tax Map 21, Lot 88 in the Route 33 Legacy Highway  
142 Heritage District.

144 Ms. Price explained that CMA Engineers is in the process of completing their second review. The  
145 Applicant requested a conditional approval and that is not recommended by staff since the  
146 engineering review is not complete. Some outstanding items include typical road section, driveway  
147 details, and a number of waivers were submitted today. She discussed with Mr. Scamman  
148 comments from the fire chief that they will address. Ms. Price stated that because the entrance is  
149 under the jurisdiction of NHDOT certain items were not provided like traffic studies and site  
150 distance. She did not ask the Applicant to provide waivers but would like direction from the Board  
151 on that. Mr. House agreed that waivers are not needed in that case. Ms. Price noted there are revised  
152 architectural plans that were submitted. The 65-day timeline for action on the application is June  
153 6, 2025.

154  
155 Tim Phoenix of Hoefle, Phoenix, Gormley & Roberts is the attorney for the Applicant. Mr. Phoenix  
156 stated he is confused as to the difference between a street and a driveway in Stratham and he'll  
157 turn the discussion over to Mr. Scamman to discuss that. Mr. House replied that it looks like a  
158 street and off that street, there are driveways going to the houses, so the project has both.

159  
160 Mr. Scamman described that he has been working with town staff on the project. They submitted  
161 ten waivers after meeting with town staff today. Mr. Scamman described each of the waivers.

162  
163 Mr. House asked Mr. Phoenix to explain his concern with driveways and streets. Mr. Phoenix  
164 explained that the Town's requirement for a 60-foot right-of-way is excessive for this project and  
165 if the Board grants the waiver, then there will be no concern from the applicant. Mr. House replied  
166 that his understanding is that whether it is private or public, it is a street that will need to have  
167 emergency response access. Ms. Price added that CMA Engineers is under the impression that it  
168 is a private road that would follow the design standards in the regulations. Additionally, for three  
169 or more units, 911 requires naming whether it is a road, driveway, private or whatever, it needs to  
170 be named. Mr. House stated that private or public road names require approval from the Select  
171 Board.

172  
173 Mr. Allison asked for clarification on the septic system with regard to its setback to wetlands and  
174 if grading can occur within 75 feet. Mr. Scamman replied that only 25 feet is a non-disturbance  
175 area, and the next 50 feet is a structure setback.

176  
177 Mr. House asked if anyone from the public wanted to speak. Nobody from the public asked to  
178 speak.

179  
180 Mr. Scamman stated that he is finalizing discussions with the fire chief on how much paving is  
181 needed around the cistern and finalizing changes to landscaping near the cistern.

182  
183 Mr. Zaremba noted for the record that he was not at the previous meeting, but he fully reviewed  
184 the meeting minutes and is comfortable participating in the discussion.

185  
186 Tim Mason, member of the public, spoke and stated that he does not have a stake in the project,  
187 but this looks like a perfect subdivision to require sprinklers because of the cistern and the length  
188 of the road. There would be immediate protection with sprinklers, and it would address trying to  
189 get a tanker truck navigating around that tiny little road. Mr. House thanked him for his comment.

190  
191 Ms. Price stated that with regards to the septic system and wetlands setback, she doesn't believe  
192 grading is considered part of the septic system where the ordinance states that no subsurface

193 wastewater disposal system shall be constructed within the 75-foot setback; and septic is exempt  
194 from the definition of structure.

195  
196 Mr. Scamman stated that he was asked to provide turning templates for both the Exeter and  
197 Portsmouth ladder trucks and to include the entire truck over pavement. The Portsmouth ladder  
198 truck is 109 feet and Exeter ladder truck is 100 feet. He provided templates for both that show the  
199 entire truck over pavement.

200  
201 Mr. House called for a motion to continue. **Mr. Houghton made a motion to continue the**  
202 **application to June 4, 2025. Mr. Zaremba seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the**  
203 **motion passed.**

204 **4. New Business**

205 A. 219 Portsmouth Avenue. Ficara Family Revocable Trust (Owner), request for review of proposed  
206 siding materials for a detached accessory dwelling unit at 219 Portsmouth Avenue, Tax Map 21,  
207 Lot 89, Zoned Route 33 Heritage District.

208  
209 Ms. Price described that the contractor dropped off two samples of siding materials for the Board's  
210 review for which they are requesting approval in lieu of the required materials. She also provided  
211 the Board with a comment letter from the chair of the Heritage Commission that opposes the use  
212 of vinyl siding.

213  
214 Tim Mason spoke on behalf of the owner. He described a composite siding (Celect) that shiplaps  
215 in the back so that it locks together as one option. The required siding itself is \$14,000 for this  
216 building, that's only 1,000 square feet, plus painting is another \$6,000 so it's a \$20,000 siding  
217 option. The second option is LP siding. He compared it to Hardie Plank siding and described that  
218 if Hardie Plank is dropped in a bucket of water, it swells up on all the butt joints which causes  
219 problems if it isn't painted very well. The LP siding has a warranty on the color; it's pretty close  
220 to cedar siding, and it is technically wood siding, so he believes it meets the intent of the ordinance.  
221 Mr. Houghton asked how long has the compressed wood siding been out. Mr. Mason replied there  
222 was an earlier version of it from another company that was substandard. This version is sealed on  
223 the back. He stated the joints need to be painted if cut, but that is a minimal task. The LP siding is  
224 the owner's first choice, but he brought the other composite example as he believes the Board  
225 should look forward beyond cedar or Hardie Plank. Mr. House replied the Board's concern is with  
226 standard vinyl siding.

227  
228 Mr. Canada asked what is the surface of the LP siding. Mr. Mason replied it is painted and comes  
229 with a fade warranty. It is applied in a controlled environment. Cedar siding even if it is purchased  
230 primed, two coats of paint might only last six or seven years.

231  
232 Mr. Zaremba asked if traditional clapboard is proposed. Mr. Mason replied yes, 4 inches and they  
233 will use Azek trim.

234  
235 Mr. Allison commented that the LP siding is similar to pressed board, and asked if it would  
236 delaminate if water got inside. Mr. Mason replied it would need to be painted on the ends if it was  
237 cut, but the same is required of cement board. He noted that the back of cement board is not sealed  
238 and if moisture gets behind it, it can pucker.

239  
240 Mr. Allison asked Mr. Mason to describe the Celect composite siding product. Mr. Mason replied  
241 it is a composite that is thicker and heavier than standard, but they are proposing the LP siding.

243 Mr. House called for a motion on the LP siding. **Mr. Zaremba made a motion to allow LP siding**  
244 **as presented at the meeting for the Accessory Dwelling Unit being constructed at 219**  
245 **Portsmouth Avenue. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion**  
246 **passed.**

247  
248 Mr. Mason asked if a full basement can be constructed to house the mechanics for the ADU with  
249 a deed restriction that the basement can never be finished. They are limited to pouring a 5-foot 5-  
250 inch basement and six-foot one is needed for an electrical panel in the basement. He doesn't  
251 understand the rationalization and said that if the certificate of occupancy includes the condition  
252 that it can't be finished, then that can be on the tax card and deed as well. He stated that it will be  
253 very difficult for mechanical contractors to work on it, and it can't have electricity if it was 5 feet  
254 five because six feet one is required for a panel. Mr. Mason added that the purpose of the ADUs is  
255 to keep families together.

256  
257 The Board was in agreement that a full basement is prohibited in the current ordinance.

258  
259 B. Review of Site Plan & Subdivision Regulations

260  
261 Ms. Price described updates to the regulations with regards to preliminary consultations, design  
262 reviews, and minor site plan reviews. The Board will review the edits and discuss them at the next  
263 meeting.

264  
265 **5. Adjournment**

266  
267 **Mr. Canada made a motion to adjourn at 9:08 pm. Mr. Zaremba seconded the motion. All voted**  
268 **in favor and the motion passed.**