



Stratham Planning Board Meeting Minutes

June 4, 2025

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: 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. Mr. House appointed Mr. Allison as a voting member for the meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes

a. May 21, 2025

Mr. Canada corrected the word 'must' to 'much' on line 120. Mr. Kunowski made a motion to approve the May 21, 2025 Planning Board meeting minutes as amended. Mr. Canada seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

3. Ongoing Business:

- a. Land Bank Properties, LLC (Applicant and Owner) request for approval of a Condominium Subdivision, Conditional Use Permit, and Route 33 Heritage District Application at 217 Portsmouth Avenue, Tax Map 21, Lot 88 in the Route 33 Legacy Highway Heritage District.

Tim Phoenix of Hoefle, Phoenix, Gormley & Roberts, spoke on behalf of the Applicant. He stated that on May 30, 2025 the comments from town staff and CMA Engineers were submitted to the Emanuel Engineering. He requested a continuance to the June 18th meeting to for Emanuel Engineering to have time to review the comments. There were no comments from the Board.

Mr. Canada made a motion to continue the Land Bank Properties application to June 18th. Mr. Kunowski seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

Ms. Price noted that the 65-day application timeframe needs to be extended as well. Mr. House asked if it can be part of the original motion. Mr. Phoenix stated that they do not need a separate motion.

b. 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

45 subdivision of 80 and 80R Winnicutt Road, Tax Map 14, Lots 56 and 57, Zoned
46 Residential/Agricultural, into a Residential Open Space Cluster Development with 28 single-
47 family residential lots, and five (5) joined-array lots each with four (4) separate single-family units,
48 for a total of 48 units.

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50 Tim Phoenix of Hoefle, Phoenix, Gormley & Roberts, spoke on behalf of the Applicant. He
51 requested a continuance to July 2nd. The project team is waiting to receive outstanding engineering
52 comments and they need time to review and address the comments when received. He requested
53 that the continuance include an extension to the 65-day application timeframe.

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55 **Mr. Canada made a motion to continue the Copley Properties/Helen Gallant proposal to July**
56 **2nd. Mr. Kunowski seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.**

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58 **4. CMA Engineers, Inc.**

59 Ms. Price introduced Ben Clark of CMA Engineers, the Town's consulting engineering firm. He
60 is here to answer questions from the Board on certain engineering practices such as single-pitch
61 roads, retention systems and grading.

62 Ben Clark, senior project manager at CMA Engineers, stated that he was asked to present his
63 opinions on superelevated roads and bioswales that have been proposed on projects in town that
64 require waivers. He described that superelevated roads have one consistent slope across the road
65 which differs from the Town's requirement of a center crowned road. He stated they are designed
66 to increase driver comfort at high speeds like highways, off and on ramps, race tracks, and on
67 curves. They are generally not used on smaller subdivisions unless there are site constraints that
68 necessitate the use, such as ledge or other existing features that affect grade. On smaller roads like
69 cul-de-sacs and roads that are not collector streets, he does not see a safety issue for constructing
70 a superelevated road. However, in his opinion, to grant a waiver for that type of construction, there
71 should be some site constraints that require the road to be built like that. There are issues with tie-
72 ins where two roads that are superelevated intersect. The tie-in can be awkward and can create a
73 low point with drainage issues. Another issue is in the winter when there is snow on the high side
74 of the road and as the snow melts, it will cross the road as designed. There will be melting and
75 freezing cycles that could result in ice across the road. Additionally superelevated roads are
76 generally not used for two-way traffic, they are used for one-way unless it is a high-speed curve.
77 He stated that on a cul-de-sac or a dead end it is not a safety issue. Mr. House asked what is the
78 normal percentage for something like that. Mr. Clark replied that a crowned road typically has a
79 cross slope of 2% on either side. Mr. House asked if there could be a concern with two way traffic
80 and ice freezing on a superelevated road. Mr. Clark replied that his opinion is that it is not a safety
81 issue at slower speeds but it is an annoyance. Mr. Allison commented that with a crowned road
82 when driver's hand is off the steering wheel, the vehicle will drift towards the side of the road, but
83 without a crowned road, the car might drift into the other lane. Mr. Allison defines a high-speed
84 road as 15-20 mph or more. Mr. Clark agreed with Mr. Allison's safety concern example and stated
85 that in his opinion, center-crowned roads are better for drainage and are an expected condition for
86 any vehicles on the road and should be the standard unless there is a site-specific constraint. Mr.
87 Kunowski asked if there is a trend towards one type of road design in New Hampshire and are
88 municipalities looking to adopt superelevated roads. Mr. Clark replied that crowned roads are
89 preferred almost everywhere. Ms. Price added that crowned roads are easier to maintain. Mr.
90 House commented that a private road could be constructed whichever way, but a road proposed to
91 be maintained by the Town should be designed to town standards. Ms. Price replied that the
92 Town's regulations state that private roads must be built to town standards. Mr. Allison added that
93 in a state where he lived previously, the state made a determination that municipalities should be
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95 responsible for private roads. Mr. Canada stated that he does not want to inhibit new and improved
96 designs and questioned if this is a new and improved design since the bioswale treatment is part of
97 the design. Mr. Clark replied that with superelevated roads he does not believe the town is
98 thwarting innovation because they are well established for safety on highways. Mr. House asked
99 why would someone propose a superelevated road and what are the pros and cons. Mr. Clark
100 replied to control the drainage to one side. Mr. House stated there could be more cost to have
101 bioswales on both sides of the road.

102 Regarding bioswales, Mr. Clark stated that he believes bioswales are a good idea when constructed
103 properly. In general, if the drainage calculations show a project is meeting the town standards, then
104 he does not think there is an issue. He stated that any project proposing bioswales is likely going
105 to need an AOT permit and NHDES has a rigorous review process above and beyond the town
106 regulations and there may be some requirements in AOT regulations that need to be met that could
107 potentially change how a bioswale is constructed. He thinks bioswales are a good idea in general
108 but one thing to consider is maintenance. Bioswales, rain gardens, and gravel wetlands all have
109 thorough operation and maintenance requirements, for example, clean out after certain rain events
110 and ongoing inspections either once or twice per year. The more complex a system is, the more
111 likely there is an issue to arise. For example, if a driveway interrupts a bioswale, the underdrains
112 under the driveway may need to be replaced at some point. Mr. Clark stated that if the bioswales
113 are maintained properly, then they are a good idea. Mr. Canada stated that the Board usually asks
114 for the HOA to be responsible and requires an O&M manual. Mr. Clark added NHDES has AOT
115 requirements that may be difficult to meet without outlet control structures or other systems. Mr.
116 Allison stated a concern with frost depths being as deep as five feet and the possibility of
117 stormwater than cannot infiltrate because of that and flooding that occurs. He stated that happened
118 in his development in Stratham. He stated that the Board does not review the HISS maps and
119 wonders if all parts of a site are not suitable for bioswales. Mr. Clark agreed. Mr. Allison stated
120 that he believes there should be a secondary mechanism for release when there is a back up of
121 water. Mr. Clark replied that is why he suggested an outlet control structure and believes that the
122 AOT process will review that. It could be as simple as a catch basin where the underdrain is
123 connected with an outlet from the catch basin and directed somewhere and the grate on the catch
124 basin is the failsafe if the ground is frozen. Regarding HISS, Mr. Clark said that NHDES will
125 require that an applicant prove that the soils will infiltrate if infiltration is proposed. Additionally,
126 there is a separation required from the seasonal high-water table.

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128 There were no further questions from the Board.

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131 **5. Ongoing Business**

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

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136 Ms. Price explained that the applicant would like to present the proposed architectural details at
137 tonight's meeting. She updated the Board that there is a pending application for this project before
138 the Zoning Board of Adjustment to allow vehicle storage on the part of the parcel that is zoned
139 Residential/Agricultural. The Applicant will also submit a Conditional Use Permit application to
140 waive the requirement for the buffer between the R/A and Gateway districts. Town Council is still
141 working through the vesting question with the applicant/owner. Ms. Price noted that a continuance
142 will be needed to extend the application beyond the 65-day RSA provision.

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148 Mr. House asked if the Applicant has seen the public comments that were submitted on the
149 application that are in the Board's packet this evening. Ms. Price replied that she forwarded the
150 comments to the applicant who confirmed receipt.

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158 Chris Lane of 41 Portsmouth Ave LLC and McFarland Ford Stores is the applicant and introduced
159 JJ MacBride of Emanuel Engineering and Dunja Suljicic, architect with PRAXIS3 and Brian
160 Tanner of PRAXIS3. He stated that tonight they will present the proposed architecture. Ms. Suljicic
161 presented the building design. It is a two-story building. She stated that they tried to accommodate
162 the requirements of the Gateway Commercial Business District, some of them being gabled roofs
163 and symmetry with the central mass of the building and the entrance. There are smaller volumes
164 to the left and right of the entrance and high-speed service doors on the north side. The rest of the
165 overhead doors are not facing the front. The amount of glass is within the standards, not more than
166 70% of the façade. She stated they tried to meet window trim requirements with a different color
167 EIFS that surrounds the glazings, and the signage will not be lit per the design requirements and is
168 below the lower roof line of the center mass of the building.

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177 Mr. Kunowski asked what is the material of the garage doors and is it solid, transparent, or opaque.
178 Ms. Suljicic replied they plan on it to be transparent. They are high speed doors which sense the
179 cars coming in. She stated they can be solid if that is desirable, but they usually plan on them being
180 transparent so daylight can come in.

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187 Ms. Suljicic described the elevations. The showroom or retail front area wraps around both sides
188 of the building. There are a few overhead doors on the side facing River Road. The side facing the
189 existing Nissan dealership is pretty plain. Regarding materials, it is mostly EIFS and fiber cement
190 panels up below the roof line with some roofing shingles visible from the front. The curtain wall
191 system is not reflective glass and is a fairly standard and transparent glass that allows about 60%
192 of the visible light to come into the building. Ms. Suljicic stated that Kia asked for a variance from
193 the fiber cement panel to instead use an aluminum composite material that is not reflective, but
194 would allow for durability. Mr. Kunowski asked for clarification on where that material would be.
195 Ms. Suljicic replied it is the dark material that you see below the roof line. Mr. Kunowski asked if
196 it is the aluminum product. Ms. Suljicic replied yes, they are asking to use an aluminum composite
197 material that is not reflective. She added that with fiber cement, the edges can erode over time and
198 aluminum holds up much better. Mr. Kunowski asked where the aluminum is proposed. Ms.
199 Suljicic replied they originally had the dark material under the roof line as a fiber cement panel but
200 would prefer to use aluminum panels instead which would also be dark and non-reflective.

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207 Ms. Suljicic continued that the other request is to have an angled edge of the storefront instead of
208 straight because that aligns better with Kia's prototypical image. She presented renderings showing
209 their requests. She stated the total amount of material on the front façade is just below 20%.

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213 Mr. House asked how tall is the building from the ridge to the grade. Ms. Suljicic replied 45 feet
214 at the ridge. Mr. Kunowski replied 39' 6", Ms. Suljicic agreed.

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221 Mr. House asked if Ms. Suljicic has reviewed the regulations for the Gateway Business District.
222 Ms. Suljicic replied yes. Mr. House replied that the goal for the Gateway District is to make
223 buildings more traditional looking and there is quite a lot of glass on the front that he thinks is too
224 much. In his opinion three panels high would be enough and requested the rest of the board to
225 weigh in. Mr. Lane replied that they could bring everything down a little bit. Mr. House commented
226 that EIFS materials are not allowed anywhere in town. Mr. House asked how the Board
227 feels about the flat roof in the back. Mr. Houghton said he would like to see the parapet extended

194 back; looking at the south elevation, he would like to see it at least as far as the four doors or
195 further. Mr. House asked Mr. Houghton what about the north elevation. Mr. Houghton replied he
196 would like it on both sides. Mr. Canada asked Mr. Houghton what is the theory behind stopping at
197 the four doors. Mr. Houghton replied he would be equally happy to see it go the length of the
198 building especially if there will be mechanical equipment on the roof. Ms. Suljicic stated the
199 parapet extends about four feet above the roof at the back of the service shop, so any equipment
200 should not be visible. And for the main part of the roof, it's not covering the entire front of the
201 building; it would have been much taller if it did. There is a place for the flat roof, for the
202 mechanical equipment beyond the shingled portion of the roof that you see. Mr. Kunowski asked
203 if there are any mechanicals on the roof for the service area. Ms. Suljicic replied there will probably
204 be some rooftop equipment for the HVAC but it will not be visible from the street. Mr. Kunowski
205 stated that adding some type of angled roof element would potentially shield any equipment even
206 more. Mr. Houghton agreed that it depends on which way one is traveling along Route 108, for
207 example coming from the town center, the elevation is higher. Mr. Canada commented that with
208 regards to enlarging the parapet, it is kind of industrial without something changing the roof line a
209 bit, it's just a straight box. Mr. Kunowski agreed and likened it to an Amazon warehouse with a
210 big, solid façade. He asked if the Kia design standards could be altered so it is not so rigid and
211 regular. Ms. Suljicic replied they can improve on it, but it is not that visible because there is a
212 Nissan building right next to it. Mr. House replied that it will be visible and originally when the
213 building was shorter, it wasn't as bad, but now with the elongated back end, it's become really
214 obvious. Mr. Kunowski added that they hear from residents all the time about protecting the
215 agricultural aspect of town and someone driving south on Route 101 is going to pass the Scamman
216 Farm and then see what he calls the Amazon warehouse. He knows it is not easy to camouflage a
217 volume like that and he understands the space is necessary for the functioning of the business, but
218 it creates a very visible wall. Ms. Suljicic replied she understands. Mr. Kunowski said he's not
219 sure that is seen in other dealerships along that stretch of road. He added that maybe some of it
220 will be shielded by landscaping. Mr. House said that he doesn't think the landscaping will be any
221 taller than the garage doors. Mr. Allison stated he assumes it is a flat roof with inlets and an
222 alligator back that collects run off and runs it to the interior and out into the stormwater system.
223 Mr. House replied they will probably have roof drains. Mr. Allison asked if there will be a crown
224 to the center and then out, because they might want a parapet in there anyway. Ms. Suljicic replied
225 the initial plan is to have the roof drain at the internal roof drains on either the north or south side
226 that would be collected and directed away from the building. Mr. Allison asked if they run down
227 the columns and under the floor and out. Mr. House replied yes, interior, they show down spouts
228 in the front, not the back.
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230 Mr. House requested that the building be redesigned a bit to make it look more traditional like the
231 rest of town. Because it is such a long building, parapets out back might be needed. The biggest
232 concern is to hide mechanical units and make it look more traditional. That big, long garage in the
233 back is too much. Mr. Canada added that the Subaru dealer and McFarland have facades that are
234 broken up very nicely with, he presumes, false gables.
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236 Mr. House asked for the Board's opinion on the north and south elevations with the diagonal wall
237 detail that interrupts the storefront. The board had mixed reviews on it. Mr. House noted that the
238 EIFS material needs to go. Ms. Suljicic asked for clarification on the Board's thoughts on the
239 diagonal walls. Mr. House summarized that two members think it is too contemporary and the
240 others are not concerned or undecided at this time. Mr. Houghton stated it requires a waiver. Mr.
241 House replied correct and that it doesn't meet the design standards and if that is something the
242 applicant really needs to have, it can't be EIFS, which might take away the angle. Ms. Suljicic

243 asked if the aluminum composite panels require a waiver. Ms. Price looked at the site plan
244 regulations and stated that prefabricated metal is not allowed.
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246 Mr. House asked Ms. Suljicic to go over the elevation sheets. Ms. Suljicic explained that they
247 received comments late from the brand (Kia), so that's why two drawings were submitted. She
248 described some of Kia's comments. Mr. House asked what the black banding is on the south
249 elevation, and Ms. Suljicic described that. He stated it cannot be EIFS. Regarding the diagonal, the
250 Board is undecided on that, and for some members it is too contemporary. For the north elevation,
251 he asked Ms. Suljicic to describe the storefront. Ms. Suljicic replied that Kia wants to add a
252 storefront on that elevation as well because they thought a little more daylight into that space would
253 be good. Mr. Kunowski asked if storefront means glass. Ms. Suljicic replied yes, similar to what's
254 happening at the front of the building, just not as tall. Mr. House moved to the west elevation. He
255 suggested that if they add a few lines in the background to pick up the gables on the east elevation,
256 then that might make it clear that mechanicals won't be visible from the road. Mr. House asked for
257 an explanation on the note regarding adding storefront or relocating overhead doors. Ms. Suljicic
258 explained that the doors are the ones that a customer will leave from when they purchase a new
259 vehicle. Her understanding is that the Town does not want overhead doors on the front side, so
260 additional glass is proposed if that is acceptable. Mr. Kunowski confirmed that doors should not
261 be on the front side. Regarding additional glass, Mr. House replied that he doesn't mind some
262 glass, but it looks like a lot of glass for a traditional look and requested that the applicant review
263 that.
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265 Mr. House asked about the comment on the plans, "ACM required request variance". Ms. Suljicic
266 replied that is the aluminum composite material suggested on the plans. Mr. House replied that
267 metal is not allowed. Ms. Price confirmed that metal is not allowed in the District.
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269 Mr. House asked about the comment on dropping signage. Ms. Suljicic stated that she believes the
270 Town requires that signage needs to be the lowest roof line which is where they placed it. There is
271 another requirement for the top of the signage, like the maximum height of the signage. In this
272 case, it would be on the glass and they think it would look much better if it was above the glass.
273 Mr. House agreed. She stated that based on comments heard tonight, they will need to lower the
274 glass line anyway. The comment on the plans is that they believe the signage will be better off the
275 glass, but that it could be lowered onto the glass if required.
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277 Mr. Allison asked if the Kia and McFarland signs are lit. Ms. Suljicic replied no.
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279 Mr. Canada commented that there is way too much glass and when compared to Nissan and Subaru
280 on the opposite sides of the parcel, it will stick out like a sore thumb. He continues to hear negative
281 comments about another building in the District and he would like to see a much more traditional
282 New England look similar to Subaru or Nissan.
283

284 Mr. Kunowski commented that some of the other dealerships have a lot of glass. Mr. House replied
285 that the glass on most of the designs was reduced from the original ask and that the Porsche
286 building pre-dates the Gateway District. He noted when compared to Audi, the difference is
287 noticeable.
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289 Mr. Canada asked how the size of this building compares to the Nissan building. Mr. Lane replied
290 it is about 7,000 or 5,000 square feet larger because of the service department. He noted that Nissan
291 only has about eight bays which is not enough and this design has 18 bays. Mr. Lane stated that

292 any dealerships that have remodeled recently would put new bays in because people are keeping
293 their cards longer and they are doing a lot more repair work than in the past.
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295 Mr. House invited the public to speak.
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297 Kyle Hollasch of 15 Greta's Way spoke in favor of sidewalks. He wanted to reiterate how
298 important it is that when these parcels are developed, even if they're noncontiguous, that sidewalks
299 are prioritized. He stated there is about 1,000 residents on Rt 108 and to the west and from a
300 pedestrian perspective, we're trapped. It is unsafe to try to cross Rt 108, and it's not much safer to
301 travel up and down. He knows that it looks a little odd to have a beautiful sidewalk in one space
302 and then nothing, and then beautiful sidewalk and nothing, but he sees the vision slowly coming
303 together. He believes a crosswalk at a light at Bunker Hill would be the perfect location to provide
304 a safe crossing for those of us on that side. He reiterated that he thinks it's extremely important,
305 even though it's piecemeal, even though it's going to take another decade or two to connect them
306 all, that the Town holds developers both at 41 Portsmouth and at 57 Portsmouth as well to put in
307 those sidewalks. Mr. Hollasch continued that the Town is going to resurrect the Open Space and
308 Connectivity Plan, which kind of stalled for a year or two, and this was all addressed in the draft
309 of that. Route 108 is a major North South corridor, and we really need to be pedestrian friendly.
310 The time to do it is obviously now as it is much harder to ask an existing business to rip up their
311 property. He is aware that the Rockingham Planning Commission has it on their long-term radar
312 to do some funding up and down, but the more we have in place with new businesses, the more
313 likely that that's going to happen going forward.
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315 Ms. Price noted for the record that three public comment emails were submitted from people to
316 support sidewalks along 41 Portsmouth Avenue and 57 Portsmouth Avenue in the future. These
317 comments will be in the record for the 41 Portsmouth Avenue record.
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319 Mr. House asked if there were any additional comments or questions from the applicant's architect.
320 Ms. Suljicic replied no.
321

322 Mr. House began a discussion on a continuance. Ms. Price stated that the town is continuing to
323 discuss the vesting issue with the applicant's attorney and a variance application has been
324 submitted for this project that will be heard by the ZBA on July 1. Because of the need for a
325 variance, the application is not considered ready for approval. She recommended that the applicant
326 return on July 2 but is welcome to return on June 18. Mr. House stated that they can discuss
327 revisions to the architecture on June 18. Ms. Price noted there are comments from the fire
328 protection engineer and CMA Engineers as well. Mr. MacBride replied that he believes he can
329 address CMA's comments by Friday, 10 days before the meeting, but he hasn't reviewed the fire
330 protection comments yet. Ms. Price noted that she discussed the comments from the fire protection
331 engineer with the fire chief and the chief said that he concurred with all of the comments and where
332 the engineer questioned if something is needed, his answer is yes.
333

334 Mr. Lane requested a continuance on the decision to July 2, 2025. **Mr. Houghton made a motion**
335 **to continue the application to July 2, 2025. Mr. Allison seconded the motion. All voted in**
336 **favor and the motion passed.**
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338 **6. Miscellaneous**

339 **a. Review of Site Plan Regulations**

340 This topic was postponed to the next meeting.
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342 7. **Approval of Minutes**
343 a. May 7, 2025 Non-Public Session
344 **Mr. Houghton made a motion to approve the non-public meeting minutes from May 7, 2025.**
345 **Mr. Kunowski seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.**
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347 8. **Adjournment**
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349 **Mr. Kunowski made a motion to adjourn at 8:43 pm. Mr. Allison seconded the motion. All voted**
350 **in favor and the motion passed.**