



## Stratham Planning Board Meeting Minutes

October 1, 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 the roll call.

## 2. Approval of Minutes

a. September 17, 2025, regular meeting minutes

Mr. Zaremba made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from September 17, 2025. Mr. Kunowski seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

**b. September 3, 2025, non-public meeting minutes**

Mr. Kunowski made a motion to approve the non-public meeting minutes from September 3, 2025. Mr. Canada seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

### **3. Public Meeting (New Business):**

a. Bruce Scamman (Applicant) and Stella D. Scamman Revocable Trust (Owner) request a Preliminary Consultation for an expansion of use on a residential structure to include a 16'x24' addition and septic located at 69 Portsmouth Avenue (Tax Map 9, Lot 7), in the Gateway Commercial Business Zoning District.

Ms. Price described that the Applicant corresponded with the Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer to discuss a proposed addition and increase in septic use. The plan reviewed by the Building Inspector showed two residential units. It appeared to be a request for an ADU, but after discussion with the Applicant, it was determined to be an expansion of use in an existing residential building. There are currently three residential units on the lot. The property is listed as residential use and not mixed-use. The Building Inspector reviewed a revised plan showing three residential units. He provided a staff memo with information on his findings for the Board's review. The property is located in the Gateway Commercial Business District where single-family and two-family residential units are not permitted in the zoning district. The homes were constructed before the zoning ordinance was in effect for that district. The use and the structure

45 are considered non-conforming and the lot cannot be expanded without relief from the Zoning  
46 Board of Adjustment per section 5.15 of the Zoning Ordinance. The Applicant is here to seek  
47 feedback from the Planning Board.

48  
49 Mr. House stated that this application is a preliminary consultation and is non-binding by both the  
50 Applicant and the Board.

51  
52 Bruce Scamman of Emanuel Engineering and James Verra & Associates spoke on behalf of the  
53 Owner. He introduced Matt Lara from Emanuel Engineering. Mr. Scamman provided the Board  
54 with a septic plan that was submitted to the Rockingham County Conservation District for a  
55 replacement system. He described the property as having a main residence and a smaller, one-  
56 bedroom residence in the back. The Owner would like to continue the use of the one-bedroom  
57 residence. There are three residential units on the lot: 1) the main house, 2) an apartment in the  
58 upstairs of the main house, and 3) the existing one-bedroom unit. In the separate one-bedroom  
59 unit, the bedroom is in a loft that must be accessed by a ladder. The proposal is to construct a single  
60 bedroom off the back as a dimensional change and not a use change. Regarding the septic system,  
61 Mr. Scamman said that by State Law, if you put in a new footprint, then you have to design  
62 something if it is over 20 years old. Mr. Scamman has started that process. The corner of the  
63 structure is over 44 feet from the property line and meets all setbacks. Mr. Scamman would like to  
64 know what is needed to obtain a building permit to construct the addition. He was told that the  
65 project requires Planning Board approval of a site plan. He would like to know the parameters on  
66 that because a site plan in the Gateway District could cost more than the addition is valued. He  
67 asked if it can be called agricultural housing, which is allowed by right. Mr. Scamman discussed  
68 that with the Building Inspector, who did not think that was an ideal way of characterizing it for  
69 the future.

70  
71 Mr. House asked if the occupants are all one family or are the apartments are rented out. Mr.  
72 Scamman replied that one unit is a friend, and the other is Mr. Scamman's nephew. Mr. House  
73 stated that he has never heard of agricultural housing. Mr. Scamman replied it is under State Law  
74 in RSA 21:34-A. He read aloud some definitions of agriculture that allow owners and farm workers  
75 to live onsite, and agrees that in the future it would be difficult for the Town to enforce that.  
76 However, he believes this is not a change of use, it is only taking an upstairs bedroom and moving  
77 it to the first floor. Mr. House asked if they are relocating the tool shed. Mr. Scamman replied that  
78 is a misprint on the plan.

79  
80 Mr. Houghton stated that there is a non-conforming use that has existed forever and asked Ms.  
81 Price to explain the issue. Ms. Price replied that the request is an expansion of a non-conforming  
82 structure. It is also a non-conforming use. They are allowed to continue to operate as it currently  
83 exists. The District does not allow multiple primary dwellings on a lot as well as multiple units.  
84 Regarding whether or not it is family, you cannot discriminate against who lives in the quarters.  
85 The Site Plan Regulations in Section 3.3 require site plan review for any modification of any  
86 existing non-residential or multi-family use. She added that she doesn't necessarily think the  
87 project requires site plan review due to the zoning compliance issues. She believes that only ZBA  
88 approval may be necessary to move forward with a building permit. A site plan review would be  
89 required to convert to mixed-use or to add additional structures. Mr. Houghton stated that he  
90 doesn't have a problem with the proposal, and it seems the answer is that they need to seek ZBA  
91 approval.

92  
93 Mr. Scamman asked what is the relief they need to request. Ms. Price replied from Section 5.1.3  
94 Expansion of Non-Conforming Structures. Mr. Scamman replied that it is not a non-conforming

95 structure because it meets all setbacks. Non-conforming structure is usually a dimensional  
96 requirement, which they meet. He added that there are non-conforming uses, and those are existing.  
97 Ms. Price corrected herself and replied that it is Section 5.1.2 Expansion of Non-Conforming Uses.  
98 Expanding the home is expanding the use, and basically once you make a change, you have to  
99 come into compliance with different regulations and zoning.

100  
101 Mr. Allison asked how does the assessor recognize the uses. Ms. Price replied that the tax card for  
102 this property lists only a two-family residential unit and does not address the third residential unit.  
103 Mr. Allison summarized that it sounds like there are two residential buildings, one of which has  
104 two residential uses within it, and the assessor is not recognizing the additional residential building.  
105 Mr. Allison asked for confirmation that the assessor is not aware of the non-conforming use in the  
106 second building. Ms. Price replied that she asked the assessor if the information she has is correct,  
107 and if the assessor is incorrect, then she can't speak to why that is.  
108

109 Mr. Scamman suggested they could also come in with a Site Plan for review and request a number  
110 of waivers.  
111

112 Mr. House asked if there were chickens in the building they call the chicken coop. Mr. Scamman  
113 replied no. Mr. House asked for confirmation that their request is to improve an existing condition  
114 so someone can live there without a bedroom in the attic space. Mr. Scamman replied: Yes.  
115

116 Mr. Allison asked how many years ago the chicken coop was converted to a residence. Mr.  
117 Scamman replied approximately 50 years. Mr. Allison asked if building permits were sought. Mr.  
118 Scamman does not know, but assumes so.  
119

120 Mr. Kunowski stated that he doesn't see the use as fundamentally changing, and it feels like the  
121 Town created zoning that postdates the use and wonders if it can fall under Section 5.1.5  
122 Continuance in the Ordinance. Mr. Zaremba asked if staff considered the request as an expansion  
123 of a non-conforming use. Ms. Price replied yes. Mr. Zaremba asked if the project would fall under  
124 Section 5.1.2 where it references the Gateway District in relation to a non-conforming use. Ms.  
125 Price replied she thinks that alludes to needing a site plan review due to a change on the site. She  
126 believes they have the option to seek ZBA approval prior to requesting a building permit, or they  
127 can seek approval from the Planning Board as a site plan approval, if the Board does not think a  
128 variance is required. She added a third option is the Applicant petitions to change the zoning of the  
129 property. Mr. Zaremba asked if a variance is granted, then a site plan is not needed. Ms. Price  
130 replied not necessarily. Mr. Scamman replied that in the Gateway District up to five residential  
131 units per acre are allowed. Ms. Price replied that is for multi-use structures or sites. Mr. Scamman  
132 replied it is a multi-use site with the agriculture. Ms. Price replied by definition of the zoning  
133 ordinance it is not.  
134

135 Mr. Scamman summarized that what he's hearing is he can either return to the Planning Board  
136 with a site plan review for three residences that have existed with a new addition with a bunch of  
137 waivers or he can go to the ZBA to get a variance which might result in a site plan review anyway.  
138 Mr. House asked if they get approval from the ZBA, why would the Planning Board review it. Ms.  
139 Price replied she discussed the project with the Building Inspector and for the proposed new septic  
140 and expansion of the building, those are an expansion of a non-conforming use. The Applicant can  
141 come back to the Planning Board for a mixed-use development or add things to the site plan that  
142 are currently not approved. However, there are three residential units which are not allowed in the  
143 zoning. Mr. House asked Mr. Scamman if they are trying to make the property mixed-use. Mr.  
144 Scamman replied no, they are just trying to find a way to get through this to move the bedroom.

145  
146 Mr. House replied that it seems that ZBA approval is needed because they are adding on to a non-  
147 conforming condition. Ms. Price added that the expansion of the building is the trigger. If it was a  
148 conforming use, it would be different.

149  
150 Mr. Houghton summarized that the entire site is non-conforming and there is one piece that is  
151 proposed for expansion which triggers ZBA. In his opinion, if the ZBA approves it, then they can  
152 move to the building permit process. Mr. Scamman asked if he obtains ZBA approval, then does  
153 he need to return to the Planning Board. Mr. House replied that the discussion is non-binding, but  
154 he agrees with Mr. Houghton.

155 Mr. Canada commented that this is a case of zoning gone bad and hopefully the ZBA will approve  
156 it.

157 Ms. Price stated that they could petition to have the zone changed, but that would take probably  
158 longer than one year.

159  
160 Mr. Scamman thanked the Board for the direction.

161  
162  
163 b. Eric Salovitch of Northam Survey, LLC (Applicant) for Towne Family Revocable Trust (Owner)  
164 requests a Preliminary Consultation for the creation of two condominium lots from the existing  
165 structure with no changes to the land area located at 6 Fifield Lane (Tax Map 6, Lot 127), in the  
166 Residential/Agricultural Zoning District.

167  
168 Mr. House reminded the Applicant that the discussion is non-binding. Mr. Salovitch replied yes,  
169 and they are on the Planning Board agenda for October 15<sup>th</sup>, and thought it would be a good  
170 opportunity to get in front of the Board before that.

171  
172 Mr. Salovitch began his presentation by stating that the condominium documents are currently  
173 being drafted by Attorney Brett Allard. They have a few waivers that he would like go over with  
174 the Board. Mr. House replied this is just a consultation at a 5,000-foot view. Mr. Salovitch asked  
175 then if there are any questions from the Board on the condominium proposal.

176  
177 Mr. Kunowski asked if the structure currently operates as a two-family structure and there are no  
178 changes to the building itself, that the request is just an ownership change. Mr. Salovitch replied  
179 yes. They delineated some limited common areas for parking, and the garage has some limited  
180 common space for one parking space for Unit 6A and two parking spaces for Unit 6B, along with  
181 some limited common area for each unit in the back, one being the deck and one being a patio.  
182 There is a septic designer on board to dig some test pits and confirm the status of the existing septic  
183 system. Mr. Kunowski asked if all utilities are divided between the units. Mr. Salovitch replied  
184 yes, that will be expressed in the condominium documents. He submitted a waiver for an existing  
185 conditions plan and a subdivision plan because they have a condominium site plan and a floor plan.

186  
187 Mr. House asked if the two units are currently apartments that will be transferred as condominiums.  
188 Brenda Towne, the owner, replied they are two little post and beam houses that are attached by  
189 about 10 feet. They would like to separate the two post and beam homes to individual condos with  
190 the limited common space of the deck, the patio, and garages. Mr. House asked what is the area in  
191 the corner labeled as LCA. Mr. Salovitch replied that is one of the limited common areas for  
192 parking spaces. They added bearings and distances so it can be tied to the ground so there are no  
193 arguments over where parking is. Mr. House asked if the garage will remain as a garage. Mr.  
194 Salovitch replied yes. Mr. House asked if anything will change on the inside that will increase the

195 occupant load. Ms. Towne replied no, it is identical to what it is today.  
196

197 Mr. Canada asked if this is a duplex of record. Mr. Salovitch replied yes, the tax card represents a  
198 two-family home.

199  
200 There were no further questions from the Board.  
201

202 **4. Public Hearing (New Business)**

203 **a. Adoption of Subdivision Regulations.**

204  
205 Ms. Price explained the majority of changes are proposed to match the site plan regulations that  
206 were recently amended. She stepped through the proposed amendments including removing  
207 numbering of the definitions, adding a driveway definition, adding a town meeting reference in the  
208 preliminary consultation section and further explaining the purpose of the consultation, the  
209 timelines, and the submission documents.

210  
211 Mr. Kunowski stated that there have been questions about width of roadways and driveways and  
212 asked if there is any value in specifying a driveway width or could one be 100 feet wide or 20 feet  
213 wide. Ms. Price replied the Board can specify that but this just defines a driveway. She is looking  
214 at updating the regulations for roads in general to say what a driveway is compared to a road, but  
215 it is not in this revision.

216  
217 Ms. Price continued with the changes including adding a design review. Mr. Kunowski suggested  
218 adding a caveat that a design review is not an architectural review or of other specific standards.  
219 Mr. House asked if Mr. Kunowski is suggesting a site design review. Mr. Kunowski replied yes,  
220 that would be helpful. He explained that many times the Board is not reviewing architecture at the  
221 preliminary stage and he does not want an applicant leaving a design review thinking their vision  
222 of the architecture, height, roof pitch, windows, percentage of glass, façade, etc. is acceptable. Ms.  
223 Price suggested adding something in the submission documents. Mr. Houghton suggested  
224 clarifying it in the paragraph regarding the number of copies required. Ms. Price described the  
225 difference between a design review and a preliminary consultation and said that the Board has the  
226 option to require a design review if they think it is necessary to iron out more issues before the  
227 formal application.

228  
229 Mr. House stopped the staff presentation and suggested the hearing be opened to the public. **Mr.**  
230 **Zaremba made a motion to open the hearing to the public. Mr. Kunowski seconded the**  
231 **motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.**

232  
233 Ms. Price continued with the proposed changes. She noted a change needed to the draft  
234 amendments under the formal application process where it implies a preliminary consultation is  
235 optional. Mr. Houghton suggested striking the words 'preliminary conceptual consultation or'. Mr.  
236 House agreed.

237  
238 Mr. Zaremba asked if a design review allows for public comment. Ms. Price replied yes, and  
239 abutters are notified; that is one difference between preliminary consultation and design review.  
240 Mr. Zaremba asked for confirmation that the Board cannot hear public comment on a preliminary  
241 consultation. Ms. Price replied that is correct; a preliminary consult is a public meeting where the  
242 public can attend but not comment.

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249  
250 Mr. Houghton asked if there should be something in the design review section about public  
251 comments similar to what is in the formal application process. Ms. Price replied she can add  
252 language that mirrors what is under formal application. She asked if the Board considers that a  
253 minor change. Mr. Zaremba replied that it is already allowed and they are just adding clarity and  
254 guidelines to something that exists.  
255

256 Ms. Price continued with the amendments which mimic what was approved for the site plan  
257 regulations regarding submission information, exhibit required, initial processing, public hearing  
258 notice, formal review procedure, board action, vesting updates due to RSA changes from this year,  
259 concurrent and joint hearings with the ZBA, fees and charges which lower the notice cost to  
260 remove newspaper notification, modification of plans, expiration of approved plans, and adding  
261 wetland buffer signage requirements.  
262

263 Mr. Zaremba asked if the wetland buffer signage requirements specify which line the signs need  
264 to be located. Ms. Price replied that it requires signs be place 50 feet on center, at all property line  
265 intersections, and at corners or abrupt changes in the course direction of the buffer perimeter  
266 boundary line. Where properties are less than 100 feet wide and 50 feet on center is not feasible, a  
267 sign will be placed at the center of the line at the property line intersections. Mr. Zaremba asked if  
268 it can be clarified that the signs should be on the wetland buffer line. Ms. Price replied yes.  
269

270 Mr. Allison asked if the Board agreed to simplify the language of the sign. Ms. Price replied that  
271 was simplified for a specific project and asked if the Board wants to do that in the regulations. The  
272 Board discussed the size and determined 8 by 12, portrait is sufficient. The Board discussed the  
273 language of the sign. Mr. Kunowski suggested referencing the section of the zoning ordinance with  
274 the buffer prohibitions. Brendan Sheehan of 210 Portsmouth commented that he thinks the sign is  
275 a little offensive in the sense that instead of enjoy the wetlands, it implies be afraid of the wetlands.  
276 He agrees with Mr. Kunowski's comment on referencing the Ordinance.  
277

278 Ms. Price asked if the Board would like to hold off on approving the wetlands sign amendments  
279 so she can provide changes to Addendum E. The Board agreed.  
280

281 The Board discussion concluded.  
282

283 **Mr. Zaremba made a motion to close the hearing to the public. Mr. Kunowski seconded the  
284 motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.**  
285

286 **Mr. Houghton made a motion to accept the subdivision regulations review this evening with  
287 the date at the top struck out as November 20, 2024, with the exception of Addendum E  
288 wetlands buffer signage details. Mr. Zaremba seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and  
289 the motion passed.**  
290

291 **Mr. Houghton made a motion to continue the public hearing for Stratham Subdivision  
292 Regulation review to the next meeting of October 15<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Zaremba seconded the motion.  
293 All voted in favor, and the motion passed.**  
294

295 **5. Miscellaneous: Public Meeting (New Business):**

296 a. Discussion on update for the Open Space Committee Framework goals, strategies, and action  
297 items.  
298

293 Ms. Price explained that as the revised open space and connectivity plan updates come to a close,  
294 it will probably come before the Planning Board to adopt as either a new chapter or as part of a  
295 document for long-range planning for our open space and lands. There are a number of goals and  
296 actionable items for the Town to achieve. The formation of a subcommittee was suggested that  
297 would include a member from the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Heritage  
298 Commission, Recreation, etc., to work on the goals. She is seeking feedback from the Board if this  
299 is something they would be interested in.  
300

301 Mr. Kunowski commented that, as the Planning Board member of the Open Space Committee  
302 discussion, he was not in favor of the Planning Board owning this. While open space and  
303 connectivity comes before the Board in the context of applications, the Board's purview is the  
304 application. He struggles with the Planning Board owning something that's already in existence,  
305 and in an open space setting. He welcomed Board input on his opinion. Mr. Allison asked if the  
306 committee is reviewing the plan as an overall picture of the whole town and connecting it as a plan  
307 that can be reviewed. Mr. Kunowski replied there was an inventory completed that shows  
308 easements and public lands, but it is a challenge in some cases where the easement does not include  
309 public access. He believes there is work to be done to connect the dots and align an open space  
310 path from Greenland to Exeter.  
311

312 Mike Houghton added that it was born out of the Master Plan and is a fundamental tenant of our  
313 Master Plan and part of the long-term vision for the Town. He believes it is a planning initiative  
314 that should be integrated into our subdivision regulations so that the Town makes progress with  
315 the utilization of open space, particularly with cluster subdivisions. He believes it is a Planning  
316 Board task and would prefer to see a subcommittee take it on rather than the entire Board. Mr.  
317 House added it could be similar to the Route 33 Heritage District subcommittee. Mr. Allison agrees  
318 with Mr. Houghton.  
319

320 Mr. Zaremba asked if the idea is to set up a separate subcommittee for this from the Open Space  
321 Committee and would the members be Planning Board members or appointees. Mr. Houghton  
322 suggested appointees and noted that the current committee will be disbanded at the end of the  
323 consultant's contract.  
324

325 Mr. Houghton commented that the regulations need to be strengthened to require certain aspects  
326 of the Master Plan.  
327

328 Ms. Price summarized that the Board is in favor of forming a subcommittee.  
329

330 **b. Discussion of Zoning Amendments.**

331 Ms. Price presented topics for 2026 zoning amendments, including changes to the Route 33 Legacy  
332 Highway Heritage District; defining principal uses of a lot; modifying definitions of ADUs in  
333 accordance with suggestions from NHMA and NHDES; adding solar to the table of uses; and  
334 residential open space cluster subdivisions and array homes.  
335

336 Mr. Houghton commented that the Board should continue to include soil-based lot sizing. Mr.  
337 Allison agreed. Mr. Houghton would also like to look at road length.  
338

339 Mr. Allison suggested the Board discuss if the Town should allow basements in ADUs and should  
340 be more restrictive on granting density bonuses.  
341

343 Mr. Zaremba asked Ms. Price to review the minimum lot sizes for cluster subdivisions and  
344 requiring sidewalks in cluster developments.

345  
346 Mr. Kunowski commented that Portsmouth recently approved co-living space and asked if  
347 Stratham wants to allow that and if not, does it need to be specifically excluded in zoning. Ms.  
348 Price replied that ZBA would be required for that as it is not in the Table of Uses. Mr. Canada  
349 suggested adding it to the Table of Uses as prohibited in all districts as a hardship at the ZBA could  
350 be that there is nothing against the use in zoning.

351  
352 **8. Adjournment**

353  
354 **Mr. Canada made a motion to adjourn at 9:06 pm. Mr. Zaremba seconded the motion. All voted**  
355 **in favor, and the motion passed.**

356  
357 *Respectfully submitted by Susan Connors*