



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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Scamman asked what is the relief they need to request. Ms. Price replied from Section 5.1.3 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.

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

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

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

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

Mr. Scamman thanked the Board for the direction.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Board discussion concluded.

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

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

Mr. Houghton made a motion to continue the public hearing for Stratham Subdivision Regulation review to the next meeting of October 15th. Mr. Zaremba seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

5. Miscellaneous: Public Meeting (New Business):

- a.** Discussion on update for the Open Space Committee Framework goals, strategies, and action items.

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

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

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

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

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

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

b. Discussion of Zoning Amendments.

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

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

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

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**

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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*