



Stratham Planning Board Work Session Meeting Minutes

October 8, 2025

Stratham Municipal Center

Time: 6:00 pm

Members Present: David Canada, Vice Chair
Mike Houghton, Select Board's Representative
Chris Zaremba, Regular Member (arrived 6:48 pm)
John Kunowski, Regular Member
Nate Allison, Alternate Member

Members Absent: Thomas House, Chair

Staff Present: Vanessa Price, Director of Planning and Building

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Mr. Canada called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and took the roll call.

2. Approval of Minutes

A. October 1, 2025, regular meeting minutes
The Board tabled the meeting minutes to the next meeting.

3. Public Meeting (New Business):

A. Planning Board Work Session on proposed 2026 Zoning Amendments.

Ms. Price presented proposed amendments starting with the Route 33 Heritage District. She met with Nate Merrill, chair of the Heritage Commission, to hear his comments. The first changes are housekeeping to add the Heritage District to Sections 3.1 and 3.4. Additional amendments include adding dimensional requirements for the Heritage District and clarifying one primary dwelling or duplex per half an acre. Ms. Price explained the current allowed density with regard to mixed-use development and asked the Board's input on the original intent of the Route 33 Heritage District. Mr. Canada replied that the intent was to save old houses by allowing redevelopment of them for commercial purposes. He suggested a maximum number of residential units per parcel. Ms. Price read through residential uses in the Table of Uses for this District and asked for comments from the Board. Mr. Canada noted for a future section, he believes the definition of multi-family should be amended to include multiple duplexes. The Board agreed to a two-acre minimum lot size, one single-family or one duplex per lot, and 200 feet of frontage. Mr. Houghton suggested adding a requirement that new construction must not exceed the footprint of historical structures and retain the architectural character of the historic structure. Mr. Allison agrees with Mr. Houghton but is concerned that there may be very small existing structures that would not be allowed to expand. The Board agreed to a maximum gross footprint size of 2,500 square feet per structure. Mr. Allison questioned where the existing language in 3.10.9.a.i.1 that references a 4,200-square-foot lot came from, as it is a very small lot size. Ms. Price will look into that.

45 Mr. Canada likes Mr. Kunowski's suggestion to mimic the R/A frontage requirements. Ms. Price
46 listed and explained the dimensional requirements she drafted. She asked for Board input on the
47 current Route 33 Heritage District front setback. She noted that Nate Merrill, the Heritage
48 Commission Chair, commented that he is in favor of the existing setback of no more than 35 feet,
49 as he doesn't want to see primary structures set too far back. Mr. Canada commented that he thinks
50 a minimum setback is better than a maximum. He thinks that most structures will be behind the
51 house, and as long as accessory structures don't encroach on the back or side, they don't need to
52 worry about the front. Mr. Canada stated he thinks the existing setback language is sufficient. Mr.
53 Zaremba asked if it applies only to the primary structure. Ms. Price replied that it applies to all
54 structures. Mr. Canada commented that he believes the intent of the Heritage District is to be
55 eclectic with houses that are 200, almost 300 years old, built when there were no permits. Ms.
56 Price summarized that the Board is in favor of mimicking the R/A District dimensional
57 requirements for the Route 33 Heritage District with the exception of limiting the maximum
58 building footprint to 2,500 square feet.

59
60 Ms. Price asked the Board if they wanted to continue to allow mixed-use properties in the Route
61 33 Legacy Highway Heritage District. Mr. Houghton is in favor of allowing it. Mr. Canada is in
62 favor of allowing it as it keeps with the original intent of the District which was that Route 33 has
63 a lot of traffic and in order to entice developers to save existing homes, the Town allowed mixed-
64 use. The Board discussed a new maximum residential density for mixed-use projects and are
65 leaning towards one unit per acre. Ms. Price will research it and provide more information to the
66 Board. The Board discussed amending the frontage requirements to 150 feet instead of 200 feet.

67
68 Ms. Price discussed principal uses on a lot and a proposed new amendment that prescribes it. Mr.
69 Allison asked if principal use has been defined. Ms. Price replied no, but it could be added. The
70 Board suggested edits to the draft language that Ms. Price will incorporate.

71 Ms. Price described a proposed housekeeping amendment to Table 4.3(a). The Board agreed.

72 Ms. Price described proposed changes to the definition of an accessory dwelling unit in accordance
73 with state law and the addition of definitions for attached unit and detached unit.

74 Ms. Price described proposed changes to solar energy systems to clarify Conditional Use Permit
75 criteria. Mr. Canada commented that the Route 33 Legacy Highway Heritage District is currently
76 not listed in Table 5.13.3. The Board agreed to add it to the column with R/A, MH, RPC, and
77 FMU. Mr. Allison commented that "X" in Table 5.13.3 should be defined as not permitted. Ms.
78 Price agreed.

79 Ms. Price described new definitions, including conventional subdivision, lot, lot area, lot/corner,
80 lot coverage, lot depth, lot line, lot width, setback, setback line, yard, yard/front, yard/rear, and
81 yard/side, and a revision to non-buildable area. Mr. Kunowski asked how the new conventional
82 subdivision definition relates to the current definition of subdivision in 2.1.85. Ms. Price replied
83 that the current definition in 2.1.85 relates to the process of subdivision. The new definition is
84 similar, but specific to one type of subdivision. Mr. Zaremba asked if the new definition of setback
85 means it will apply to every structure; he is thinking about where there is a maximum setback. He
86 believes the intent might be for minimum setbacks. The Board discussed the location of sheds and
87 pools as examples. Mr. Kunowski questioned the changes to the existing yard definitions.

88
89 Ms. Price stated that she is skipping for tonight the discussion on impact fees.

95 Ms. Price described an amendment to reestablish a Technical Review Committee. Mr. Kunowski
96 asked if this is another hurdle for the applicant. Ms. Price explained how it is supposed to facilitate
97 a Planning Board Review. Mr. Zaremba asked if the TRC will have authority to approve anything.
98 Ms. Price replied it would be advisory unless the Board wants to allow the TRC to have minor site
99 plan review authority. Mr. Canada noted that the language “signed off by the Technical Review
100 Committee” does not mean approved. Ms. Price agreed. Mr. Canada does not want the TRC to
101 prevent projects from reaching the Planning Board. He asked what the threshold for TRC review
102 is and expressed concerns with a small project expending resources for consultants to attend a TRC
103 review that might not be necessary. Mr. Zaremba gave the example of a traditional subdivision
104 with no waivers. Ms. Price replied that the example would still go to the TRC. Mr. Canada asked
105 there is an example of a small project that would not go. Ms. Price replied that is up to the Board.
106 Mr. Houghton commented that it should not be the roll of the TRC to enter into negotiations with
107 an applicant; that they should simply state whether or not a project meets the ordinance or
108 regulations.
109

110 Mr. Allison commented that the subdivision regulations should be revised to improve final lot
111 shapes as more easily recognizable by an owner and less odd-shaped. Mr. Zaremba noted that an
112 Ordinance change was made in 2025 to help with that. Mr. Canada agreed and added that perhaps
113 the town is relying too much on that one criterion in the Ordinance. Mr. Allison read the existing
114 language in the subdivision regulations regarding lot configuration. Mr. Houghton added that the
115 Board needs to be more disciplined as well.
116

117 Ms. Price offered to postpone the discussion on proposed changes to Residential Open Space
118 Cluster Subdivisions to a future meeting. The Board agreed to start the October 15th meeting at
119 6:00 pm.
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121 8. Adjournment 122

123 **Mr. Zaremba made a motion to adjourn at 8:14 pm. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All
124 voted in favor, and the motion passed.**
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126 *Respectfully submitted by Susan Connors*