



Stratham Planning Board Meeting Minutes
January 7, 2026
Stratham Municipal Center
Time: 7:00 pm

Members Present: Thomas House, Chair
David Canada, Vice Chair
Mike Houghton, Ex-Officio Select Board Member
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. December 17, 2025, Planning Board meeting minutes

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

3. Public Hearing Extension Request

A. Land Bank Properties, LLC (Applicant and Owner) request for extension to the conditional approval of a Condominium Subdivision at 217 Portsmouth Avenue, Tax Map 21, Lot 88 in the Route 33 Legacy Highway Heritage District.

Ms. Price announced that the Applicant is requesting an extension. The Applicant is close to finalizing the plans and other conditions precedent; primarily finishing document review from legal counsel. The Applicant requested a 90-day extension.

Ms. Price read an email from an abutter, Forrest Barker regarding tree preservation and work hours associated with the project. Shamus Quirk, the Applicant replied that the noise ordinance is from 10:00 pm to 6:00 am. Ms. Price stated that she showed Ms. Barker the landscape plan and Ms. Barker thought there were going to be more trees preserved. Ms. Price noted that trees can be removed prior to issuance of a building permit.

Mr. Scamman stated they would love to have the mylar signed and recorded as soon as possible. He stated the final revisions are minor in nature and largely related to the legal documents.

Mr. House asked for questions or comments from the Board.

Mr. Canada stated that it has been mentioned to the Board in the past that projects need more time before expiration, and he thought the Board recently updated that requirement. He asked Ms. Price to confirm. Ms. Price replied that it has not yet been implemented overall, but has been for some specific projects. Mr. Canada stated that there is no point in having an artificial deadline that is automatically renewed, so for this purpose, he would advocate for an extension.

There were no other comments from the Board. Mr. House requested a motion to open the discussion to the public.

Mr. Canada made a motion to open the hearing to the public. Mr. Zaremba seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed. No members of the public spoke.

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

Mr. Zaremba made a motion that the Planning Board grant a 90 day extension to April 12, 2026 for the conditionally approved Notice of Decision of July 16, 2025 for the subdivision plan application and Route 33 Heritage District application for condominium subdivision located at 217 Portsmouth Avenue, Tax Map, 21, Lot 88 in Route 33 Legacy Highway Heritage Zoning District, subject to the site plans by Emanuel Engineering last revised June 6, 2025. Mr. Kunowski seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

5. Public Meeting

A. Rockingham Planning Commission Presentation on Impact Fees.

Ms. Price explained that Jen Rowden, land use program manager at the Rockingham Planning Commission, is here tonight at the request of the Planning Board to describe impact fees.

Ms. Rowden explained that impact fees were established in 1988 as a tool for municipalities to collect money from new development. They can be collected to deal with capital expenditure related to new development and are not intended to be used for routine maintenance or basic infrastructure needs. They can be used for a variety of things with schools being the most common in this region. Other uses are safety facilities and roads and less common uses are recreation, water and wastewater infrastructure, stormwater, libraries, etc. In adopting impact fees, the basic premise is that the municipality has a Master Plan and an active Capital Improvement Plan. Then to adopt an impact fee, the municipality first must adopt an ordinance. They are commonly contained in zoning ordinances, but doesn't have to be, but impact fees are under the purview of the Planning Board so the zoning ordinance is a logical place. If adopted, the impact fees must be specified and that's a discussion coming out of the CIP. Just because the ordinance is adopted, does not mean a municipality starts collecting impact fees. The final step is establishing a cost basis for growth and there is no prescribed methodology for doing that.

Mr. Kunowski asked if new development must be from raw land or does it include redevelopment. Ms. Rowden replied it includes redevelopment.

Mr. Kunowski asked if the development must be specifically related to population growth. Ms. Rowden replied no.

Ms. Rowden continued her presentation that the Planning Board is ultimately responsible for assessing and collecting impact fees and fees are typically collected when there is an occupancy permit for a residential unit or during the first building permit for a non-residential use. Impact fees, when they are charged, must be reasonably proportional to the development. There are very predictable, justifiable, proportionate ways of applying impact fees like based on single-family, duplex, or multi-family units for the number of children expected in the housing units; based on square footage for non-residential uses; or building height if it is attributable to a fire truck.

Mr. Zaremba asked if the reasonable cost is based on the cost for the student or for the renovation. Ms. Rowden replied it is based on the cost of the renovation.

Ms. Rowden continued that when fees are collected, the Town has to account for every fee collected from every development in its own separate account over the whole time that the town keeps that money. The Town must publish at the end of the year the accounts for every development that collected impact fees and the status.

Mr. Canada asked what if a project is a want and a not a need. Ms. Rowden replied there needs to be a need identified. Mr. Zaremba asked who is the arbitrator of that. Ms. Rowden replied there must be sound justification for how a municipality came up with what projects will be funded by impact fees.

Mr. House asked, using a school as an example, how does a town project six years if there is going to be growth for the kids. Ms. Rowden replied certain things must be reviewed – housing stock; how many kids have been in the school over the past 10, 20, 30 years; how has that changed over time vs. how many housing units are proposed; what's the occupancy of houses on average; age demographics; application pool, etc.

Ms. Rowden continued that one administrative issue is that if a town doesn't expend fees collected after six years, they must return them plus interest. That can be challenging if a developer went bankrupt or an LLC was dissolved. Mr. Canada commented that if a developer passed the fee onto a homeowner and the money is returned, it would go to the developer. Can that be structured so the original homeowner gets the money? Ms. Rowden replied no unless the fee was collected at the time of first occupancy and the homeowner paid the fee directly. Mr. Kunowski commented that the town would need to possibly track down the original owner.

Mr. Kunowski asked how specific the project must be. Ms. Rowden replied with the example that it must be earmarked for 'schools' but not necessarily for a 'new roof on a school'. Fees collected for one purpose, like a school, can't be used for roads. The reason for this goes back to the methodology used to collect that fee.

Ms. Price asked if fees can be used for police and fire personnel. Ms. Rowden replied with an example in Epping that the Walmart and Lowes complex helped pay for a new safety complex. Mr. Kunowski asked if it can be used for a staff position. Ms. Rowden replied no, it must be a capital investment.

Mr. Zaremba asked if roads include DPW or is it just literally roads. Ms. Rowden replied it can be used for a public works garage and in theory for trucks. Mr. Canada asked if it would have to be

for an additional truck as opposed to replacing an old truck. Ms. Rowden replied correct, but if a town can prove that existing trucks are needing replacement at a faster rate because of a project, then that is reasonable.

Ms. Rowden listed other tools including TIF districts, 79-E Community Revitalization Tax Relief, capital reserve funds, stormwater utility fees, etc., that aren't restricted to growth. About 35% of municipalities have impact fees enabled. She provided examples of towns that have collected fees including Salem, Danville, and Raymond.

Mr. Canada asked if the RPC does cost studies. Ms. Rowden replied no, but they have helped municipalities with the ordinances. There is one planning commission that has done some and there was one person who calculated almost all of the impact fees in New Hampshire and some surrounding states, but he retired. She is aware of two consultants who currently prepare them. Mr. Canada said he is interested in what the cost would be. Ms. Rowden replied that the City of Concord is projecting \$200,000 in their budget for review and update of the impact fees. She added that they collect them for a couple of things and the more things collected for results in more studies needed. Ms. Price added that she is aware that the Town of Barrington estimated \$65,000 for a study.

B. Planning Board Rules of Procedure

Ms. Price introduced an updated version of the Rules of Procedure from the draft presented to the Board at the last meeting.

The Board discussed application fees. Mr. Canada commented that it is reasonable for the town to pick up part of the cost of reviewing a project, as it benefits the town at large. He believes there should be an analysis completed of what a project costs the town during the review process. Mr. Houghton believes the fees are extremely low compared to the cost of town staff's time and that 65% of the Town's budget is staff.

The Board agreed to move the drafted Rules of Procedures to a public hearing. **Mr. Houghton made a motion to move the Rules of Procedure to a public hearing. Mr. Zaremba seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.**

6. Public Hearing

A. Proposed 2026 Zoning Ordinance Amendments.

Ms. Price presented changes from the last meeting to the Route 33 Legacy Highway Heritage District and Residential Open Space Cluster Subdivision proposed amendments.

The Board discussed and agreed to remove multi-family housing as an option in Residential Open Space Cluster Subdivisions and limit them to single-family homes and duplexes.

Mr. Canada made a motion to remove multi-family housing in Residential Open Space Cluster Subdivisions. Mr. Zaremba seconded the motion. Vote 4-1: the motion passed.

The Board had no comments on the final language for the Route 33 Legacy Highway Heritage District.

192 **Mr. Zaremba made a motion that the Planning Board approve to substantially amend**
193 **Section 3.10 Route 33 Legacy Highway Heritage District, and update 4.1.1 and 4.2 the Table**
194 **of Uses, and move to the town ballot. Mr. Kunowski seconded the motion. All voted in favor,**
195 **and the motion passed.**

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197 **Mr. Zaremba made a motion that the Planning Board approve to move to the town ballot**
198 **the definition of historic structure. Mr. Canada seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and**
199 **the motion passed.**

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201 **7. Adjournment**

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203 **Mr. Zaremba made a motion to adjourn at 8:49 pm. Mr. Canada seconded the motion. All voted**
204 **in favor, and the motion passed.**

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206 *Respectfully submitted by Susan Connors*