

2022

TOWN MEETING VOTER INFORMATION GUIDE

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Town Meeting

Voter Information Guide

This guide is presented to the residents of Stratham as a resource in preparing for the 2022 Town Meeting. The Town Meeting Warrant contains the articles to be voted on during Town meeting. This guide is intended to provide introductory information to the articles and explain their essence as well as inform residents where more information can be found.

Each section (where applicable) ends with where to find more information about each article.

The Town of Stratham operates under the "Traditional Town Meeting" form of government, the default form of government prescribed by law in New Hampshire Government. In this form, the legislative body is the Town Meeting and the governing body is the Select Board. The Town Meeting meets each year. In Stratham, the Town Meeting, at which the legislative body acts in two sessions. The first session is an election (this year on Tuesday March 8th) and at a second session (this year, Saturday March 12th). In the Town Meeting form, the residents – Stratham's registered voters – are the legislators.

This year, Articles 1-11 (election of officers and zoning articles) are to be acted upon at the Town election (first session). Articles 12-18 are to be acted upon at the second session.



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Important Dates

Monday, March 7, Stratham School District Meeting¹
6:00 p.m., Stratham Memorial School

Tuesday, March 8, Town and School Districts Elections, Ballot Voting
Polls open: 7 a.m. – 7 p.m., Stratham Memorial School (39 Gifford Farm Road)

Saturday, March 12, Town Meeting
9:00 a.m., Cooperative Middle School (100 Academic Way)

Town Meeting, Voting & Election Information

Town Clerk/Tax Collector's website
<https://www.strathamnh.gov/certified-town-clerk-tax-collector>
(603) 772-7741 ext. 140

Summary of Additional Resources Listed in this Guide

You can find the following documents and information pertaining to Town Meeting at the Town's [2022 Town Meeting page](#) (see black tab at top of Town's homepage).

- This 2022 Voter Information Guide;
- 2021 Town Report;
- Town Warrant and NH DRA Form MS-636;
- 2022 Town of Stratham Budget Summary, line item detail;
- 2022-2027 Capital Improvement Plan; and
- The Planning Board's [Route 33 Legacy District web page resource](#) (Article #6).

For more information about Warrant Articles pertaining to zoning, please consult this guide, pages 43-87 of the Town Report, or contact the Planning Department by calling (603) 772-7391 ext. 147.

Don't Forget

Voter Information Night hosted by the Wiggin Memorial Library
7:00 p.m., Tues. March 1st at the Stratham Municipal Center. [See Library for details on how to attend remotely.](#)

¹ The Local Stratham School District is its own political subdivision and, like the Town, also operates under the Town Meeting form of government.



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2022 Town Warrant Articles 1 through 11

These articles are to be voted on at the Town Election to be held on Tuesday, March 8th from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., at the Stratham Memorial School (39 Gifford Farm Road).

ARTICLE 1: To choose all Town Officers for the year ensuing.

- Select Board - 1 position, three year term
- Town Moderator- 1 position, two year term
- Town Clerk- 1 position, one year term
- Supervisors of the Checklist- 1 position, six year term
- Library Trustee - 2 positions, three year term
- Trustee of the Trust Funds - 1 position, three year term
- Cemetery Trustee - 1 position, three year term
- School District Moderator- 1 position, three year term
- School District Treasurer- 1 position, three year term
- Local District School Board Member- 1 position, one year term
- Local District School Board Member- 1 position, two year term
- Local District School Board Member- 1 position, three year term
- Stratham Member, Exeter Region Cooperative School District Budget Advisory Committee – 1 position, three year term

For more information: See the Town Clerk's office for links to sample ballots and attend the March 1st Voter Information Night.

ARTICLE 2: Removing a section of the Ordinance which has expired

To amend the Zoning Ordinance, by deleting Section XV *Growth Management & Innovative Land Control* and renumbering subsequent sections of the Ordinance. This is a housekeeping amendment as Section XV of the Ordinance includes a sunset provision to expire in March 2014 and is therefore no longer enforceable.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.

The purpose of this amendment is to address a 'housekeeping' issue and remove a section of the Ordinance that expired in 2014 and is no longer applicable and enforceable by the Town.



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ARTICLE 3: Updating Flexible/Mixed Use Development District

To amend the Zoning Ordinance, Section III, by deleting Sub-Section 3.7 *Flexible/Mixed Use Development District* in its entirety and to replace it with a revised Sub-Section 3.7 *Flexible/Mixed Use Development District*. The purpose of this amendment is to better clarify permitted and prohibited land uses and other land use requirements in the district, which is limited to the parcel housing the former New Hampshire Technical College.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.

The purpose of this amendment is to modernize the Flexible/Mixed Use Development District regulatory language and ensure consistency with other provisions of the Ordinance. This amendment would update permitted and prohibited uses, provide additional flexibility through the Planning Board's Conditional Use Permit process, and establish new regulations related to pedestrian/bicycle access and electric vehicle charging stations.

ARTICLE 4: Clarifying Requirements for Accessory Dwelling Units

To amend the Zoning Ordinance, Section V, Sub-Section 5.4 *Accessory Dwelling Units* in its entirety and to replace with a revised Sub-Section 5.4 *Accessory Dwelling Units* to clarify the requirements associated with accessory dwelling units and to enact additional requirements for detached accessory dwelling units to ensure that such uses do not create the appearance of two primary residences on a single lot.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.

The purpose of this amendment is to clarify requirements associated with accessory dwelling units, including to prohibit the construction of new driveways to serve them, to ensure that such uses do not create the appearance of two primary residences on a single lot. The amendment incorporates additional design and dimensional requirements for detached accessory dwelling units and clarifies that attached accessory dwelling units are permitted in all residential areas of Stratham consistent with state law.



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ARTICLE 5: Setbacks for Solar Energy Systems

To amend the Zoning Ordinance, Section V, Sub-Section 5.14.4.2 *Setbacks for Solar Energy Systems* in its entirety and replace with a revised Sub-Section 5.14.4.2 in order to require all ground-mounted solar energy systems meet the minimum property setbacks of the applicable zoning district and to require medium- and large-scale systems be set back a minimum of 60 (sixty) feet from the front property boundary.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.

The purpose of this amendment is to require that new ground-mounted solar arrays meet the minimum structural setbacks of the applicable zoning district and to require medium- and large-scale systems be set back a minimum of 60 (sixty) feet from the front property boundary.

ARTICLE 6: Creation of the Route 33 Legacy Highway Heritage District

To amend the Zoning Ordinance, Section III, to establish a new zoning district, the *Route 33 Legacy Highway Heritage District*, codified as Section 3.10, for parcels with frontages along the Route 33 corridor from the Town Center District to the Greenland town line. The intent of the District is to encourage historic preservation and adaptive re-use of structures through both greater regulation of demolitions and major building alterations as well as through greater flexibility in land uses.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.





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The purpose of this amendment is to establish a new zoning district, the *Route 33 Legacy Highway Heritage District*, for parcels with frontages along the Route 33 corridor in Stratham from the Town Center District to the Greenland town line. The new zoning district would include additional design regulations for new structures and safeguards related to the demolition or substantial modification of historic structures. The new district would allow for additional uses, including those that are compatible with residential uses, to provide additional flexibility to property owners and to encourage adaptive reuse projects.

The proposed Route 33 Legacy Highway Heritage District implements recommendations of the 2019 Stratham Master Plan and builds off the guidance and findings of the Route 33 Legacy Highway Ad-Hoc Committee. The Master Plan and Ad-Hoc Committee Report expressed concerns that vital parts of Stratham's history were falling into disrepair. The Route 33 Legacy Highway Heritage District establishes incentives for property owners to invest in properties, particularly in historic buildings, by expanding the number of permitted uses in the District. It also establishes safeguards and design standards to ensure that the district retains its residential and agricultural character and regulates the demolition of historic buildings. The objectives of this article are to encourage private investment, promote the preservation, rehabilitation, and adaptive re-use of historic structures, to provide additional flexibility for property owners, and to provide additional opportunities for residents of the community to gather and interact at small community-centered businesses and organizations.

Residents can learn more about the proposed Heritage District, including the proposed zoning language and answers to frequently asked questions at
www.strathamnh.gov/route33.

ARTICLE 7: Revisions to the Table of Uses

To amend the Zoning Ordinance, Section III, by deleting Table 3.6 *Table of Uses* and *Footnotes to Table 3.6* in its entirety and to replace with a revised Section 3.6 *Table of Uses* and *Footnotes to Table 3.6* in order to better clarify permitted and prohibited land uses by zoning district. This amendment would also permit Personal Services in the Professional/Residential District and, if passed, would account for land uses in the Route 33 Legacy Highway Heritage District.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.

The purpose of this amendment is to better define uses permitted by zoning district and to ensure that listed uses are consistent with current trends and practices. This amendment would also designate Personal Services, which includes barbers, salons, spas, photographers, and similar uses, a permitted use in the Professional/Residential District.



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ARTICLE 8: Updating Land Use Definitions in Zoning Ordinance.

To amend the Zoning Ordinance, Section II *Definitions*, to provide definitions for land uses included in Table 3.6 *Table of Uses* to better define and clarify the permitted nature and scope of land uses.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.

The purpose of this amendment is to define, or better define, zoning uses that are listed in the Table of Uses and to clarify the nature and scope of such uses. This amendment would add definitions for art studios or galleries, bed and breakfasts or inns, brew pubs, small and large conference centers, educational facilities, hotels or motels, nursing homes and rehabilitation centers, and small and large restaurants.

ARTICLE 9: Amendments to Table of Dimensional Requirements.

To amend the Zoning Ordinance, Section IV, Section 4.2 Table of Dimensional Requirements and Section 4.3 Explanatory Notes to clarify that 'porkchop lots' which do not meet the minimum frontage requirements are prohibited and to clarify that the minimum frontage requirement for parcels in the Professional/Residential District shall be 150-feet.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.

The purpose of this amendment is to clarify that new subdivisions of land which create 'porkchop lots' with frontages under the minimum frontage requirements are prohibited in Stratham. There is currently conflicting language in the Ordinance regarding porkchop lots. This amendment would also clarify that the minimum frontage requirement for parcels in the Professional/Residential District is 150-feet.

ARTICLE 10: Eliminating Duplicative Land Use Term.

To amend the Zoning Ordinance, Section V, by deleting Section 5.7 *Affordable Senior Housing* and re-numbering subsequent sections of the Ordinance, because the Ordinance already provides for Elderly Affordable Housing and this section is duplicative. This is a housekeeping amendment to eliminate inconsistencies related to the land use in the Ordinance.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.



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The purpose of this amendment is to address a 'housekeeping' issue and remove a zoning use and associated regulations that are already provided for under the Ordinance. The zoning use proposed for deletion, Affordable Senior Housing, is duplicative with Elderly Affordable Housing.

ARTICLE 11: Requiring Safety Inspections for Previously Issued Outstanding Building Permits.

To amend the Building Ordinance, Article XVI, by amending Section 16.2.1 in order to prohibit the issuance of building permits for a property if existing un-inspected or expired permits have been outstanding for a period of one year or more. This amendment would require property owners to address any outstanding safety issues related to previously issued building permits and allow for necessary inspections before a new building permit for the same property could be issued.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.

The purpose of this amendment is to require property owners to address previously issued longstanding building permits, and remedy any outstanding safety issues, before a new building permit can be issued for the same property. This amendment would not require property owners to complete work associated with the previously issued permit, but only to allow for an inspection and to address any outstanding safety issues associated with such permit before a new permit for the same property could be issued.

For more information about zoning-related articles: See pages 30-64 of the Town Report or contact the Planning Department by calling (603) 772-7391 ext. 147 or e-mailing planning@strathamnh.gov.



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2022 Town Warrant Articles 12 through 18

As noted in the introduction, the following articles will be voted upon at the second session of the Stratham Town Meeting to be held on Saturday March 12th at 9:00 a.m. at the Cooperative Middle School, 100 Academic Way Stratham, NH 03833.

ARTICLE 12: 2022 Operating Budget

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Eight million fifty thousand one hundred and eighty-five dollars (\$8,050,185) to defray general town charges for the ensuing year. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately.

The Select Board recommends this Article by unanimous vote.

The Town's operating budget includes all of the expenses and revenues associated with running the Town government on an annual basis. It includes the required level of investment to meet the needs and service-level expectations of our residents and business owners and addresses other factors that influence the budgeting process. These factors include the strategies and goals in the Master Plan, contractual and debt obligations, federal and state mandates, and other operational needs.

The proposed FY 2022 General Fund operating budget totals \$8,050,185, which represents an increase of approximately \$161,065 or 2.04% over FY 2021. This total brings the six year average operating budget increase to 2.25%.

This year's budget reflects guidance from the Select Board that emphasized minimizing budget increases during a time of economic uncertainty for all, while maintaining current services. The Board also prioritized competitiveness in the employment market and planning proactively for natural attrition in our organization. Investments in staffing resources are explained in detail in the 2022 Budget Summary document on the Town Meeting 2022 webpage; these include the full year funding for the full-time police officer added at 2021 Town Meeting, addressing staffing needs in public works, and salary adjustments to maintain competitiveness in today's employment market. These costs are offset in part by a second year of nearly double digit savings in our health care costs as well as the reduction of two full-time equivalents in our Assessing function made possible through a restructuring of that function in 2021.

Overall, these changes (along with the proposed capital and capital reserve appropriations), as well as a proposed doubling of a tax credit for those who suffered permanent disabilities as a result of military service (see Article 17 below), result in an



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estimated Town tax rate of \$3.15 (a zero percent increase over last year), which is a 15 cent decrease since 2019 (5% annual average decrease since 2019).

For more information: The Town's budget information is presented in a **2022 Town of Stratham Budget Summary** located at the 2022 Town Meeting page. The summary explains budget drivers, a description of where the Town spends the funds, and historical information and trends are presented in a document.

ARTICLE 13: Capital Improvements Program

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Four hundred and seventy-three thousand dollars (\$473,000) to implement the Capital Improvements Program for 2022 as presented in the Town Report and recommended by the Planning Board. This is a special warrant article which will be non-lapsing until the specific items are completed or obtained but shall in no case be later than five (5) years from this appropriation per NH RSA 32:7 (VI).

The Select Board recommends this Article by unanimous vote.

The Town's Master Plan guides development and land use decisions for the Town. In addition, it identifies strategies, visions, and projects which often require long range capital investment. Long-term financial planning ensures the Town has the needed resources to maintain current services, replace equipment, and upgrade or rehabilitate facilities as needed. The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is the tool used to plan these investments, and this Article appropriates funding for the "year one" projects (2022).

The 2022-2027 Capital Improvement Plan document located at the Town Meeting 2022 website includes information about the Town's current and future capital needs to support its rolling stock, buildings, recreational facilities, and information technology over a six-year time horizon.

This year the Town's CIP reflects investments in the Town's capital assets that are projected to be funded by the American Recovery Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA). In short, more work is getting done for a similar (slightly smaller) level of investment in years past. One such project funded with ARPA funds is the \$135,000 salt shed roof replacement. ARPA funds will also be used for road reconstruction and implementation of a building permit software system that will increase the efficiency and user access to our building permit systems, including facilitating online payment, process improvement and coordination between Assessing, Building and Planning functions.

A summary of the projects is included on page 78 and 79 of the Town Report.



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For more information: Please see the **2022-2027 Capital Improvement Plan** at the 2022 Town Meeting page.

ARTICLE 14: Appropriate Funds to Several Capital Reserve Funds

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Two hundred and ninety thousand dollars (\$290,000) to be added to the following capital reserve funds previously established with One hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) to come from the unassigned fund balance and One hundred forty thousand dollars (\$140,000) to be raised through general taxation.

Fire Department Capital Reserve Fund	\$110,000
Radio Communications Capital Reserve Fund	\$5,000
Historic Preservation Capital Reserve Fund	\$50,000
<u>Highway Vehicle/Equipment Capital Reserve Fund</u>	<u>\$125,000</u>
Total	\$290,000

The Select Board recommends this Article by unanimous vote.

The Town has a number of financial tools used to plan for large purchases. These tools represent a “best practice” in municipal finance. If funded appropriately, these tools can ensure the Town can fund large purchases for capital items when they are needed and avoid “spikes” in a tax rate in any given year.

For example, the Town projects future costs for replacing ambulances and fire trucks as well as heavy equipment and trucks in the Public Works department. These projections are based on replacement schedules informed by life cycle expectations and condition of the assets. Annual funding is set aside through this article in order to meet the needs of future replacements. Generally, money is set aside each year even if expenditures are not required in that year. These funds are also used to establish repositories to be used to respond to opportunities for conservation and historic preservation projects.

This year, ARPA funding will be utilized for the salt shed roof replacement, which has a direct impact of avoiding the need to appropriate the annual \$100,000 contribution to the Town Buildings and Grounds Maintenance Trust, this is a direct savings in 2022.

For more information: Please see the reserve fund descriptions and more on pages 31-36 and Appendix A of the **2022-2027 Capital Improvement Plan** at the 2022 Town Meeting page.



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ARTICLE 15: Raise and Appropriate from the EMS Special Revenue Fund

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) for the following purposes:

2022 EMS/EMT/First Responder Training	\$10,000
2022 ALS Services Contract	\$10,000

and to further authorize the withdrawal of Twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) from the Stratham Fire Department EMS Special Revenue Fund created for these purposes during the March 17, 2000 Annual Town Meeting and as amended during the March 11, 2005 Town Meeting. No additional funds from general taxation are to be used.

The Select Board recommends this Article by unanimous vote.

The NH Municipal Budget Act requires the Town's legislative body (in Stratham, this is the Town Meeting) to appropriate from Special Revenue Funds. Special Revenue Funds are repositories for dedicated funding sources; in this case, Town's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Special Revenue Fund funded from proceeds stemming from the Town's ambulance billing. In turn, these funds are available to support the needs of the Fire Department including the Towns EMS service function. This year, as for several years past, the Town has voted to appropriate funds for EMS Training (\$10,000).

This fund is also used to pay Exeter Advanced Life Services (ALS) which provides EMS services on an as needed basis. Since, Medicare/Medicaid only permit the transporting agency (the Stratham Fire Department) to bill patients, the Town collects all EMS payments and in turn pays Exeter ALS for its services (\$10,000). Because of the "pass-through" nature of this transaction, it is "net neutral" to the fund.



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ARTICLE 16: Raise and Appropriate from the EMS Special Revenue Fund (Equipment)

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Three hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$350,000) for the following purposes:

Replacement of Ambulance #2	\$350,000
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and to further authorize the withdrawal of Three hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$350,000) from the Stratham Fire Department EMS Special Revenue Fund created for these purposes during the March 17, 2000 Annual Town Meeting and as amended during the March 11, 2005 Town Meeting. No additional funds from general taxation are to be used.

The Select Board recommends this Article by unanimous vote.

This article is the second of two articles appropriating funds from the Fire Department EMS Fund (see explanation in Article 15). This equipment purchase is for the replacement of our current Ambulance 2, which is a 2008 Ford E-450. This ambulance has become less reliable with an increase in out-of-service time due to repairs; suspension and other components are starting to wear. At replacement, A2 will be 15 years old; the Department is currently anticipating a 13-month lead time. The new vehicle will be a Horton F-550; the same vehicle as the current Ambulance 1. The Special Revenue Fund is managed in such a way as to ensure 100% funding availability for ambulance replacements.

ARTICLE 17: To Raise the Service-Connected Total Disability Tax Credit

To see if the Town will vote to modify the Tax Credit for Service-Connected Total Disability in the Town of Stratham, in accordance with RSA 72:35 from its current tax credit of \$2,000 per year to \$4,000 per year.

The Select Board recommends this Article by unanimous vote.

Effective January 1, 2019, RSA 72:35 was changed to allow Towns to vote to adopt or modify an increase in the Tax Credit for Service-Connected Total Disability allowing for a maximum credit of \$4,000. Previously, the range of the credit was \$701 - \$2,000 per year; Stratham is currently at the \$2,000 level. During 2021, the Board was asked to review this issue with an eye toward offering the highest level credit in the newest legislation (\$4,000). Currently, 15 Stratham residents receive this credit. Under the RSA, those who are honorably separated from the military service of the United States and who have a total and permanent service-connected disability, or are a double amputee or paraplegic because of a service-connected injury, are eligible for the tax credit. The surviving spouse



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of a deceased person who qualified for the tax credit is also eligible to receive it. Approval of this increase would increase the value of credits awarded under the credit from \$30,000 to \$60,000.

ARTICLE 18: To transact any other business that may legally come before this meeting.

This Article allows for other business that may be legally be acted upon by the Town meeting to be done so.