



Stratham Planning Board Meeting Minutes
June 22, 2022
Stratham Municipal Center
Time: 7:00 pm

Member Present: Thomas House, Chair
Mike Houghton, Selectmen's Representative
Chris Zaremba, Regular Member
Pamela Hollasch, Regular Member (by telephone)
John Kunowski, Alternate Member

Members Absent: David Canada, Vice Chair

Staff Present: Mark Connors, Town Planner

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Mr. House called the meeting to order and took roll call. Mr. House appointed Mr. Kunowski as a voting member for the meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes

a. June 1, 2022

The approval of minutes from June 1, 2022. Mr. House corrected the spelling of Mr. Zaremba's name in the draft minutes. Mr. Houghton made a motion to approve the draft minutes as amended. Mr. Zaremba seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

b. March 16, 2022

Mr. Kunowski asked if the approval of minutes from April 20, 2022 is outstanding. The minutes are not in the package and will be presented at the July 13, 2022 meeting.

3. Public Meeting:

a. Route 33 Heritage District and potential scheduling of public hearing for Route 33 Heritage District application fees.

Mr. House asked Mr. Connors to provide an update. The Route 33 committee held their first meeting on June 16, 2022. The committee approved an application and rules and procedures as to how the committee will be run. Their meetings will be held the first Wednesday of each month. The timing will work well with the Planning Board meeting schedule. The committee will

41 prepare their comments within one week to be included in the packet for the following Planning
42 Board's meeting. They discussed application fees. The Planning Board approves all Planning
43 Board application fees, so the committee can only recommend the fee amounts. Planning Boards
44 have to hold a public hearing to set the fees. Mr. Connors presented the recommended fees. Any
45 application relating to a residential or agricultural property, that does not result in new housing
46 units, would be a \$50 fee. This is also the base fee so anything that is non-applicable like
47 demolition without new construction or an application for a commercial sign that does not meet
48 the requirements would also fall under this amount. A residential application for new housing
49 units would be \$100 plus \$75 per new housing units. Adding an ADU to a house would be \$175.
50 A commercial application applying to a small area less than 1,500 square feet would be \$100. A
51 commercial or mixed use application that is larger than 1,500 square-feet would be \$200. These
52 fees would be in addition to the Planning Board fees. Mr. Zaremba asked if these fees are lower
53 than fees in other parts of town to encourage development in the district, how do they compare to
54 other parts of town? Mr. Connors replied that generally speaking, the fees are low, they are
55 much lower than building permit fees. For example, a building permit application was just
56 processed for the new medical office building and the building permit fee was \$13,000. The
57 committee is trying to keep the fees nominal.

58
59 Mr. Zaremba asked if the intent is to encourage development by keeping the fees low. Mr.
60 Connors replied yes. Mr. Kunowski stated that we still need to consider the administrative
61 process of reviewing the applications, but agreed that the fees should be as low as possible. Mr.
62 House stated that the goal is to cover the work of the planning staff. Mr. House stated that the
63 second fee is standard. Mr. Houghton asked if any of this is pertinent to new construction or is
64 this all additions or modifications? Mr. Connors replied that it can be either. Mr. House stated
65 that one of the fees is for a new residential application and that the commercial application can
66 include an addition. Mr. Connors said that if it a big development, like a 5,000 square foot
67 development, the site plan fee is \$100 per 1,000 square feet. Mr. Houghton stated that if you put
68 a value on a few hours worth of someone's time, it's not \$50, so he would advocate ensuring the
69 fees cover costs. Mr. House asked if Mr. Connors is seeking approval tonight because two
70 members are not present. Mr. Connors replied that the Board could schedule a public hearing
71 and debate the fees at the hearing. The Board does not need to make a final decision on the fees
72 tonight. We would advertise the intent to set fees at the hearing, but not publish the proposed fee
73 schedule.

74
75 Mr. Kunowski asked if the same fee categories apply to development in other parts of town or
76 are these categories applicable to the Route 33 Heritage District? Mr. Connors replied that
77 applications in the Heritage District would need to pay these application fees which are only
78 applicable to the Heritage District. But the fees have been kept low so as not to discourage
79 applications. Mr. Kunowski asked if something was happening in another part of town, an
80 application fee would not apply? Are there across the board application fees? Ms. Hollasch
81 joined the meeting via telephone. Mr. Connors replied that there are across the board fees, for
82 example a site plan for a new store would be \$250 for the base fee for the Planning Board plus
83 \$100 per 1,000 square feet. That applies to any site plan of this nature regardless where it is
84 located in town. Mr. Houghton is interested in seeing the actual costs for the Town. Mr. House
85 asked Ms. Hollasch if she reviewed the proposed Heritage District application fees. Ms. Hollasch

replied only cursorily. Mr. House asked if Ms. Hollasch has any questions on the fees. Ms. Hollasch replied no.

Mr. House asked Mr. Connors to go over the application form. Mr. Connors replied that it is similar to the site plan application. The owner must sign the application. If the applicant is a different person from the owner, they must also sign the application. We ask for permission to visit the property. Mr. Zaremba said the application looks straight forward. Mr. Zaremba asked once the application comes in, it is a two-step process that first goes to the Route 33 Heritage Committee and then come to the Planning Board? Mr. Connors replied yes. The Committee would give the Planning Board their meeting minutes with comments and recommendations, but the Planning Board ultimately makes the decision. Mr. House stated that there is a little bit of vetting before the project is submitted to the Planning Board. Mr. House stated that one of the goals is to help save time at the Planning Board. Ms. Hollasch has no questions on the application. Mr. House named the three members of the Heritage Committee: Alex Dardinski is the chair, Jeff Hyland is the co-chair, and Mr. House as the Planning Board representative. Mr. Connors said that Mr. Dardinski would like to send a letter to all property owners notifying them of the application process.

Mr. Houghton made a motion to set the first public meeting date to set site plan application fees for the Heritage District as July 13, 2022. Mr. Kunowski seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion was approved.

b. Stratham Open Space Plan

Mr. Connors discussed the presentation from the introductory meeting last week. He said he would briefly run through the same Powerpoint that was presented at that meeting.

The Capital Improvement Program budgets about \$45,000 for Open Space and Connectivity Plan in addition to the Town's other funding towards land conservation. The Town has put between \$15,000 and \$35,000 toward land conservation from 2009 through 2019. The Town's commitment to Open Space conservation intensified in 2002 when the Town passed a \$5 million bond for open space preservation. A lot of land preserved in Stratham came out of that bond commitment. There is also some modest funding in the CIP for pedestrian improvements. Mr. Connors went through the recommendations from the 2019 Master Plan related to Open Space Planning. The Master Plan recommended Management Plans for individual large open space parcels. The Plan recommended a specific long range plan for Stratham Hill Park. The Town has started that effort thanks to the work of the Trail Management Advisory Committee (TMAC). The Plan recommends preserving the remaining historic buildings in Stratham and continuing to use Conservation Easements where appropriate. Mr. Zaremba asked if using Conservation Easements changes the tax base of the land? Mr. Connors replied yes because development of the property is limited. Typically, the Town purchases the development rights which reduces the value of the property. Mr. Connors showed how population in Stratham evolved. There was little impact from the Industrial Revolution. The population doubled in the 1980s. Approximately 1,700 acres of land are protected under Conservation or Agricultural Easements in Stratham. The NH Fish and Game owns 115 acres and the Town of Stratham owns 486 acres, excluding properties like the Town Hall. About 24% of land in Stratham is protected. There are also

protected open space subdivisions with smaller lots and open space set aside. However, not all of the open space parcels are formally protected via an easement or some other permanent tool. Mr. Zaremba asked if the open space at Treat Farm is protected. Discussion amongst the members is that they believe there is a protected easement. Mr. Connors said yes, he stated that it was more in the 1970s and 1980s that land protection was not always formalized when these subdivisions were approved. Stratham has done a better job with protecting agricultural land compared to other towns in New Hampshire. Mr. Connors showed a map of the different protected lands. There are a number of utility easements as well on the open space land and at the meeting last week it was discussed if the Town could acquire some rights to that land for hiking and pedestrian connections. Steve Whitman attended the meeting last week to present different types of open space plans. The presentation was recorded and Mr. Connors is working on getting the video online. It would be good for Stratham to get an inventory of open space and make it available to the public that details what can be accessed and what cannot. Complete an analysis of our baseline and where we want to go and complete public outreach and planning for what comes next. Mr. House requested a paper copy in the library for people without computers. Mr. Connors reiterated that creating a map with symbols of what the public can and cannot do on lands is important.

Mr. Connors presented the Open Space Plan for the City of Portsmouth. There is a Greenway from downtown to the protected land on the outskirts of town. Mr. Connors presented the Open Space Plan for Burlington, Vermont. There was a lot of outreach to people being better stewards of the land. Moose Mountain, New Hampshire got a grant for a Greenways plan with neighboring towns.

There was a question as to what Board and Committee members want the plan to focus on. Responses included protecting agricultural land, prioritizing environmentally sensitive land, clarifying the Town's and landowners responsibilities and Conservation Commission's roles, and clarifying where residents can access public land. Ms. Hollasch suggested inventorying the open space based on how the land benefits us, for example, flood control, public recreation, education, wildlife habitat etc. Mr. House suggested including maintenance of the open space properties as part of the plan. Discussion continued on suggestions for mapping Stratham's conservation areas. Mr. Connors would like the Town to work with the property owners who have easements that don't require public access but previously allowed access to their land. Ideally the Town could work with the landowners to see what Stratham can do to promote better stewardship and respect of the property so public access could be regained? Mr. House suggested also talking to landowners who are considering adding trails. Ms. Hollasch noted the complication with easements held by an entity who is different from the entity managing the land therefore there are two entities that might have an opinion on how the land is used and maintained. It was suggested a new temporary committee might be needed to look at some of the items discussed. Mr. Connors stated the RFP would be released soon with Planning Board input, then to the Select Board, and then public outreach in the Fall.

c. Discussion of potential source water protection and stormwater (MS4) mitigation measures.

Mr. Connors stated there is nothing new from the last meeting.

176
177 **d. Master Plan Implementation**
178

179 Mr. Connors stated this was generally covered in the PowerPoint presentation earlier in the
180 meeting relative to the Open Space Plan but I have printed out the recommendations relating to
181 conservation right from the Master Plan if the Board has any questions. There were no questions
182 or additional discussion.
183

184 **Miscellaneous Community Planning Issues**
185

186 Mr. Connors said the Regional Planning Commission reached out to Stratham as they update the
187 long-range transportation plan. There are two plans to keep in mind, a Ten Year Plan where all
188 projects slated for the next ten years are budgeted for. The Portsmouth Avenue/Route 33 safety
189 improvements in Stratham and Greenland and the Bunker Hill Avenue/Portsmouth Avenue
190 signalization project is in the plan. Those projects are budgeted for and moving forward. The
191 second is the long range transportation plan which is like a master plan. There are five projects in
192 that plan -- the Portsmouth Ave pedestrian/bicycle improvements, reconfiguration of the
193 Stratham Traffic Circle, Squamscott Road bicycle lanes, Frying Pan Lane/Portsmouth Avenue
194 intersection improvements, and Marin Way intersection improvements. The RPC would like the
195 Town's input as to what one of these projects represents a highest priority. This is something to
196 keep on your radars, I will prepare more information for you for the next meeting.

197 **e. Adjournment:**
198

199 Mr. Houghton made a motion to adjourn at 8:30 pm. Mr. Zaremba seconded the motion. All voted in
200 favor and the motion was approved.
201