



Stratham Planning Board Meeting Minutes
October 19, 2022
Stratham Municipal Center
Time: 7:00 pm

Members Present: Thomas House, Chair
David Canada, Vice Chair
Chris Zaremba, Regular Member
Pamela Hollasch, Regular Member (arrived at 7:10 pm)

Members Absent: Mike Houghton, Select Board's Representative
John Kunowski, Alternate Member

Staff Present: Mark Connors, Town Planner

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Mr. House called the meeting to order and took roll call.

2. Approval of Minutes

a. October 5, 2022

Mr. Canada made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from October 5, 2022. Mr. Zaremba seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

3. Public Meeting:

- a. Mark and Chison Boren (Applicants), Carol Klesaris (Owner) - Route 33 Heritage District**
Application request to demolish a residence at 297R Portsmouth Avenue (Tax Map 22, Lot 23), Zoned Route 33 Heritage District.

Mr. Connors stated that the proposed project is a house demolition in the Route 33 Heritage District on the west side of the road near the Lovell Road and Portsmouth Avenue intersection. The house has been vacant for some time and has fallen into a state of disrepair. There is a current real estate transaction pending between the Applicants and the Owner. The Route 33 Advisory Committee met yesterday and did not express any objections to the demolition.

Mr. House asked if the current owner is aware of the request or otherwise represented at the meeting. There is a letter electronically signed by the Owner in the meeting packet authorizing demolition of the house, but does not specifically grant authority to any third parties to represent

the Owner at the Planning Board meeting. Mr. Connors stated it is good practice to have that written authority but there is no NH RSA requiring it.

Mr. Boren explained he wants to demolish the house so that he can purchase the land. The bank is requiring the demolition prior to closing on the property transfer. Construction on a new home would not begin until 2023 or 2024.

Mr. House stated he sees no historical value to the house (e.g. windows, etc.) and stated that care should be taken to remove the old automobile as well. Mr. House asked what the plans are for the existing drinking water well and septic system. A new well and septic system are proposed.

Ms. Hollasch arrived at the meeting.

Mr. Canada made a motion to approve the application. Ms. Hollasch seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion was approved.

b. Discussion with RPC regarding source water protection requirements

Jennifer Rowland, the Land Use Program Manager at the Rockingham Planning Commission presented the topic. RPC had funding to work with municipalities on amendments to zoning ordinances related to coastal resilience work the RPC was doing. RPC is working under a follow-up grant for this project. Ms. Rowland presented a document of proposed changes to Stratham's Aquifer Protection District.

There are three main changes that follow the State's model ordinance for the protection of groundwater resources for drinking water sources. The changes would help to protect drinking water from future contamination but would not correct existing contamination issues. The first suggested change is to strengthen the authority and purpose statements with regards to the importance of the Aquifer Protection District.

Secondly, there are a number of definitions proposed to be added for clarification for the Town and applicants to align with State law changes or administrative definition changes.

The most significant proposed change is to increase the bounds of the Aquifer Protection District to include wellhead protection areas for all public water systems (PWSs) in Stratham. Ms. Hollasch asked if the proposal is an all or nothing situation. Ms. Rowland responded that the Town could choose which areas would be included if they don't want to include them all and gave examples of how it can be a dynamic overlay district without amending the zoning ordinance or the zoning map. NHDES is tasked with permitting PWSs and tracks the presence of wellhead protection areas.

Mr. Canada expressed concern with proposed size of the district and its potential impact on commercial properties and raised an objection. Ms. Hollasch is also concerned the ramifications and increase in restrictions on landowners and would like to strike a balance. Ms. Rowland responded there are some suggestions to reduce the impact primarily on residential properties, but also on commercial properties. Mr. Connors suggested that some of the restrictions could be removed to lessen the burden, but apply the zoning to the entire town.

Ms. Rowland presented a few changes. The first is to allow residential lots less than 1 acre in the Aquifer Protection District to exceed the 20% lot coverage limitation up to a maximum of 40% if

stormwater from the site is recharged to the ground. Approximately 18% of lots in Stratham are less than 1 acre. A second change is to allow sites larger than 1 acre to exceed the 20% lot coverage limitation if they meet certain performance standards concurrent with Stratham's existing stormwater regulations.

Ms. Rowland presented four Performance Standards proposed to be required of all construction in the Aquifer Protection District. They include 1) a four-foot vertical separation between the bottom of the septic system and the average seasonal high water table *[note written materials discuss the separation to a stormwater practice that infiltrates or filters stormwater and not to septic systems]*; 2) the requirement for a Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasure Plan for certain facilities using, storing or handling regulated substances; 3) use of deicing chemicals; and 4) the requirement for a hydrogeologic study for all development within the Aquifer Protection District that disturbs more than one acre or increases the impervious surface coverage on a lot by more than 20,000 square feet. Other minor housekeeping changes were presented.

The Board determined they need to contemplate the proposed changes and have some working sessions to discuss the changes.

c. Discussion of Congestion Management and Air Quality (CMAQ) program opportunity

Mr. Connors presented the topic. NHDOT has notified the Town that they are releasing a funding round of \$30 million for projects that meet the CMAQ program goals. Projects put forth by the Town are subject to a 20% match. The maximum amount for a project is \$3 million. This is an opportunity to get a large project funded more quickly than through NHDOT's Ten Year Plan. Letters of Interest are due to NHDOT by November 4, 2022.

Eligible activities include alternative fuel projects; projects that improve traffic flow (e.g. signal system optimization, construct HOV lanes, streamline intersections, add turning lanes, etc.); transportation-focused (non-recreational) bicycle transportation and pedestrian improvements that provide a reduction in single-occupant vehicle travel; and transit investments, including transit vehicle acquisitions and construction of new facilities or improvements to facilities that increase transit capacity.

Mr. Connors presented four suggested projects: 1) synchronization of traffic signals along Portsmouth Avenue in Stratham to prioritize through-traffic; 2) Portsmouth Avenue pedestrian and bicycle improvements centered in the Gateway District of Stratham; 3) improvements to the Marin Avenue/Route 111 intersection and potential signalization of the Route 101 on- and off-ramps at Exit 12 and Route 111; and 4) the installation of electric charging infrastructure at Town-owned sites, including the Municipal Center/Library/Police Station, Stratham Hill Park, and the Fire Station/Historic Society building.

After a discussion of the projects, the Board determined that the synchronization of traffic signals project along Portsmouth Avenue would be a top priority to recommend to the Select Board for a letter of interest with the Portsmouth Avenue pedestrian/bicycle improvements as the second choice.

d. Discussion of Squamscott Road culvert replacement improvements

Mr. Connors presented the topic. NHDOT held a public hearing in Stratham on October 13, 2022

to present traffic flow options for a culvert replacement project on Squamscott Road. NHDOT is pursuing funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to replace two culverts on Squamscott Road in the summer of 2023. The replacement will greatly improve wildlife passage, should improve or eliminate fresh water flooding, but will not solve a tidal surge from a large storm. The construction would result in closure of the road for about four weeks (except for local traffic and emergency vehicles) or a four month partial closure alternating one way. Members of the public that attended generally preferred the four week proposal.

NHDOT is seeking further comments or support on adding shoulders to the road and a decorative railing (as requested by the public). The Planning Board supports those suggestions.

e. Appointment of member to serve as Planning Board liaison to the Connectivity & Open Space Plan Steering Committee

Mr. Connors presented the topic. This is a consultant led project looking for a member to commit to approximately 10 meetings. The Planning Board members present nominated John Kunowski as the liaison pending his approval. If Mr. Kunowski is not available, then Mr. Zaremba will accept the position.

f. Discussion of 2023 zoning amendments

Postponed until more Planning Board members are present.

g. Miscellaneous Community Planning Issues

No issues discussed.

4. Adjournment:

Ms. Hollasch made a motion to adjourn at 8:35 pm. Mr. Canada seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion was approved.