



**Stratham Planning Board Meeting Minutes**  
**October 18, 2023**  
**Stratham Municipal Center**  
**Time: 7:00 pm**

**Members Present:** Thomas House, Chair  
David Canada, Vice Chair  
Mike Houghton, Select Board's Representative  
Chris Zaremba, Regular Member  
Nate Allison, Alternate Member

**Members Absent:** John Kunowski, Regular Member

**Staff Present:** Mark Connors, Director of Planning and Community Development

**1. Call to Order/Roll Call**

Mr. House called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and took roll call.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

**a. October 4, 2023**

**Mr. House made a motion to approve the October 4, 2023 meeting minutes. Mr. Canada seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion was approved.**

**3. Public Hearing:**

- a.** Public hearing to adopt amendments to Stratham Site Plan Regulations including to Sections III Scope & Requirements, Section IV Application Procedures and Requirements, Section V Design & Construction Requirements. The proposed amendments relate to application processes and notification fees, criteria qualifying projects for site plan review, and required materials for site plan applications.

Mr. Connors presented a summary of proposed amendments including:

- Update the definition of abutter to include reference to the NH RSA abutter definition.
- Add regular mail abutter notification for preliminary consultation applications for which no abutter notification currently exists and also add regular mail abutter notifications for applications that require certified mailing. The net effect would be a \$2 new or additional fee for each abutter.
- Clarify the required preliminary consultation application materials.
- Require that the preliminary consultation takes place prior to submittal of a site plan application.

- Establish a submittal deadline for written abutter comments.
- Updates to abutter and public notice fees for preliminary consultations and site plan reviews.
- Clarify that the Board has the right to call upon a technical expert and charge to the applicant the costs of doing so.
- Update the recording costs to include the cost of town staff delivering materials to the Registry of Deeds.
- Removing outdated language that references the Rockingham Planning Commission Circuit Rider Planner.
- Require all plans under review to be stamped by a licensed surveyor and a professional engineer.
- Clarify plan requirements to include compliance with parking requirements, locations of fire hydrants/ponds/cisterns, and wetlands stamped by a certified Wetlands Scientist.
- Remove the requirement for a licensed landscape architect to stamp plans.
- Clarify the lighting plan should be a photometric plan.
- Add a 95-day review period for regional impact projects in accordance with State Law.
- Remove the requirement that the Select Board has to approve an application extension.

Mr. Houghton asked for clarification on the removal of the requirement for a licensed landscape architect. He asked if a landscape architect is still required. Mr. Connors replied that a landscape plan is required but it can be submitted by another professional such as an engineer. Mr. Canada asked if an amended landscape plan approved for a project on Stratham Heights Road was implemented. Mr. Connors replied yes. Mr. House asked what the value of a landscape architect is. He added that the site plan is prepared with topographic and drainage information. Mr. Houghton replied that a landscape architect is a person with a level of education regarding plant varieties and what is applicable for the climate. Mr. Houghton is fine with a designer not being licensed but it is beneficial for the person to be part of a landscaping organization. Mr. Allison stated that a landscape architect is a 4-year degree program with courses related to dendrology, layouts, and conceptual drainage. He added that the primary expertise is knowing what each individual tree proposed needs for soils, water, planting depth, etc. He agrees that a licensed landscape architect isn't necessary in all projects, but he recognizes the education involved with being licensed. Mr. Canada has personal knowledge of a person without a license who completes landscape design in conjunction with other projects and is completely competent. He added that the plan is ultimately up to the owner and if the owner chooses plantings that require a lot of care, then that is their choice as they will need to replace the plantings if they die. He agrees that a licensed landscape architect is not needed. Mr. Allison stated the requirement has been removed, so it is not an issue. Mr. Connors and Mr. House replied that the requirement for a stamp has been removed, but the regulations still have landscape criteria. Mr. House asked if that addresses Mr. Houghton's comments. Mr. Houghton replied that he believes the requirement was added years ago because the Board was not pleased with the landscaping completed in some developments. He added that there are people without licenses who are capable, but there are many that are not. He agrees that the licensing and stamp may be more than what is needed for many projects, but someone with competence should design the plan. Mr. Zaremba asked when a landscape plan is required, for example is one required for someone adding a garage. Mr. Connors replied not for a garage and that a plan is required for commercial, multifamily, or subdivision projects. Mr. Zaremba replied that based on that perhaps a licensed individual should be required. Mr. Connors added that the landscape standards are not changing, just the requirement for a licensed person. Mr. Zaremba asked if, for example, he could create a landscape plan not knowing what would

92 survive. Mr. Connors suggested a change that would list other professions that could create a plan.  
93 Mr. Zaremba stated that landscaping is more important for site plan projects where screening is  
94 necessary vs. for a subdivision. Mr. Houghton suggested changing landscape architect to landscape  
95 professional. Mr. House stated that the Board needs to review the landscape design standards  
96 before December. Mr. Houghton agreed and reiterates that he thinks some sort of landscape  
97 professional needs to prepare the plan.  
98

99 **Mr. Zaremba made a motion to open the public hearing. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion.**  
100 **All voted in favor and the motion was approved.**  
101

102 No members of the public requested to speak.  
103

104 **Mr. Canada made a motion to open the public hearing. Mr. Zaremba seconded the motion.**  
105 **All voted in favor and the motion was approved.**  
106

107 **Mr. Zaremba made a motion that the Planning Board adopt amendments to the Stratham**  
108 **Site Plan Regulations including to Section 3 Scope and Section 4 Application Procedures and**  
109 **Requirements relating to site plan application processes and notification fees, criteria**  
110 **qualifying projects for site plan review, and required materials for site plan applications, as**  
111 **stipulated in the staff memorandum dated October 18, 2023. Mr. Canada seconded the**  
112 **motion. All voted in favor and the motion was approved.**  
113

#### 114 **4. New Business:** 115

##### 116 **a. Discussion of proposed zoning amendments for 2024** 117

118 Mr. Connors presented an updated staff memo on proposed zoning amendments. One amendment  
119 will exempt small sheds from property line, Shoreland Zone, and wetlands setback requirements.  
120 Mr. Canada asked if the Building Inspector would inspect the location when complete. Mr.  
121 Connors replied yes.  
122

123 The next amendment is to clarify when a property survey or wetlands delineation is required for  
124 small building projects. The Board discussed this in September and the consensus was discretion  
125 should be given to the Building Inspector to determine when a survey or wetlands delineation  
126 would be required. Mr. Connors presented draft language to incorporate the building inspector's  
127 authority. Mr. Canada asked if language could be added that the Building Inspector would require  
128 surveys when it is reasonable as opposed to requiring it for every application. Mr. Allison added  
129 that a site visit by the building inspector might be warranted to determine when a wetlands  
130 delineation would be required. Mr. Canada suggested the phrase 'when it's not self-evident'. Mr.  
131 Allison stated that would require the Building Inspector to review the property in person. Mr.  
132 Houghton agreed that upon a site review the Building Inspector could use their discretion to  
133 warrant additional actions and that the Inspector would need to substantiate their decision in  
134 writing or with photographs. Mr. House agrees with a site observation. Mr. Connors summarized  
135 that he will draft language on this topic for the next meeting. He added that the decision could be  
136 appealed if it is the Building Inspector's sole decision.  
137

138 Mr. Connors presented two options for proposed changes to the Route 33 Heritage District in  
139 relation to the three residential units per acre allowance: 1) exclude wetlands, steep slopes, and  
140 conservation easements from the lot area used to calculate the maximum density potential of a

141 parcel or 2) lower the maximum density to two units per acre on parcels that are greater than 1.5  
142 acres, require a Conditional Use Permit to approve up to three units on a lot less than 1.5 acres,  
143 and require that all multi-family structures be located within 800 feet of the Route 33 frontage. Mr.  
144 Canada stated that he did not think the purpose of the District was to increase density, so he agrees  
145 with reducing it to two units per acre and suggested also excluding the wetlands, steep slopes, and  
146 conservation easements exclusion. Mr. Zaremba and Mr. Houghton are supportive of Mr. Canada's  
147 suggestion. Mr. Zaremba asked the significance of 800 feet. Mr. Connors replied that he chose a  
148 distance that is approximately one-third of a depth of a particular parcel in the District that could  
149 have significant development and that only about six properties would be affected.  
150

151 Mr. Canada suggested another zoning change to allow ground-mounted medium-sized solar arrays  
152 by right if they follow certain qualifications. He believes this is a use that should be encouraged.  
153 Mr. Zaremba would entertain it under certain conditions. Mr. House agrees it can be reviewed. Mr.  
154 Allison reviewed the current process and commented that currently the Board could deny the  
155 project if sufficient screening is not allowed. If the projects are reviewed only by the Building  
156 Department, then there could still be some level of review of screening or location. The problem  
157 with allowing by right means that it can be placed in a location that harms a neighbor's visual  
158 impact, so Mr. Allison would like to ensure some level of town review is completed for that  
159 purpose, but agrees it can be allowed by right. Mr. Canada gave the example that the construction  
160 of a garage doesn't require review by the neighbors and it is reviewed by the Town and must meet  
161 certain requirements such as setbacks. He suggested that the conditions to allow it, such as greater  
162 property line setbacks, could be created that are specific to solar arrays. Mr. House suggested that  
163 a property owner might not be aware of certain restrictions, for example the Shoreland Zone. Mr.  
164 Allison and Mr. Canada replied it would be the responsibility of the Building Inspector to find  
165 those restrictions. Mr. Zaremba asked the size difference between small and medium and asked  
166 what size has been recently approved by the Planning Board. Mr. House replied that both sizes  
167 have been before the Board recently. Mr. Connors replied that all ground-mounted solar arrays  
168 need Planning Board review. Mr. House asked if solar is in the Master Plan. Mr. Connors replied  
169 that the Master Plan broadly encourages alternative energy. Mr. Canada stated that 1,750 to 40,000  
170 square feet is a medium system. Mr. Houghton was surprised at the 40,000 SF maximum. Mr.  
171 Canada suggested that the definition could be changed to reduce the maximum size classified as a  
172 medium-scale system. Mr. Connors will draft some language for review.  
173

## 174 **b. Miscellaneous Community Planning Issues**

### 175 1. 2023 PREP State of Our Estuaries Report

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177  
178 Mr. Connors presented a summary of the 2023 State of Our Estuaries reported prepared by the  
179 Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership. Stratham is on the southern area of Great Bay and the  
180 Town is almost completely in the Great Bay Watershed with the eastern portion of Stratham in the  
181 Winnicutt River Watershed which also drains into Great Bay. Great Bay and Little Bay are the  
182 only bays in New Hampshire. They are unusual in that they are far from the coastline (almost 8  
183 miles), where bays are normally an inlet off the ocean. PREP tracks 20 indicators related to water  
184 quality and rates the trends as positive, cautionary, or negative. Six of the 20 indicators are positive  
185 which include seaweed, conserved lands, shellfish harvesting, nitrogen loading, nutrient  
186 concentrations, and bacteria. Areas identified as negative are salt marsh, beach advisories, and  
187 softshell clams. Mr. Connors segued the presentation into MS4 Requirements.  
188

### 189 2. MS4 Requirements

190 In Stratham, Parkman Brook is impaired for chloride and as part of Stratham's MS4 permit issued  
191 by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Stratham needs to implement a Salt Reduction  
192 Plan. Mr. Canada asked what the alternative to salt is. Mr. House and Mr. Allison replied sand.  
193 Mr. Connors added that pre-treating with brine before storms is a suggestion to reduce salt usage.  
194 Mr. Connors displayed a map showing very few town-owned roads within 500 feet of Parkman  
195 Brook and notes that Route 101 and Route 108 which are maintained by the State both cross the  
196 brook. Mr. Zaremba asked if the Town follows State green salting guidelines and what are the  
197 guidelines. Mr. Connors replied that a requirement of the permit is that the Town has to implement  
198 pre-treatment. The Town also needs to look at roads within 500 feet of Parkman Brook to  
199 determine where salt can be reduced.

200  
201 A culvert project on Squamscott Road will replace two 18-inch pipes with an 8-foot crossing with  
202 a natural bottom. Construction is proposed for the summer of 2024.

203  
204 The Federal government regulates water quality in surface waters. Industrial waste disposal in the  
205 1950s and 1960s severely degraded water quality. The federal Clean Water Act was passed to  
206 address point source discharges to surface waters. The biggest remaining contributor to water  
207 quality issues is stormwater pollution. Therefore the EPA passed an administrative measure which  
208 issues permits to municipalities for their stormwater systems. Some of the requirements include  
209 annual reporting to EPA, street sweeping, catch basin cleanings, enacting stormwater pollution  
210 land development requirements, monitoring and inspecting construction activities, ensuring proper  
211 maintenance of stormwater facilities, and performing public education. Mr. Allison asked if the  
212 Town is planning to inspect the oil and water separators in the stormwater infrastructure in his  
213 development and if there are companies that can be hired to clean them. Mr. Connors replied that  
214 he is aware of some companies that could be contracted and he can provide a list to Mr. Allison.

## 215 216 **5. Adjournment**

217  
218 **Mr. Zaremba made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:09 pm. Mr. Canada seconded the**  
219 **motion. All voted in favor and the motion was approved.**