



Stratham Planning Board Meeting Minutes
September 15, 2021
Municipal Center, Meeting Room A
Time: 7:00 pm

Member Present: Tom House, Chair
David Canada, Vice Chair
Mike Houghton, Selectmen's Representative
Pamela Hollasch, Member
Joe Anderson, Alternate Member
Chris Zaremba, Alternate Member

Members Absent: Robert Roseen, Member

Staff Present: Mark Connors, Town Planner

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Mr. House called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and called roll call. Mr. House appointed Mr. Zaremba as a voting member. Mr. House noted that Ms. Hollasch joined the meeting at 7:04 pm.

2. Review/Approval of Meeting Minutes

September 1, 2021

Mr. House asked if there was a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Houghton made the motion to approve the minutes of September 15, 2021. Mr. Canada seconded the motion. All members voted in favor.

3. Public Hearing:

Aberdeen West Cooperative (Owners) - Request for approval of a Conditional Use Permit and Site Plan to construct a 90 kilowatt ground-mounted solar array at the Aberdeen West Cooperative, Lovell Road and Aberdeen Drive (Tax Map 19, Lot 36), Zoned Mobile Home District. Applicant's representative is Horizons Engineering Inc., 34 School Street, Littleton, NH 03561.

Mr. House noted that he would recuse himself from consideration of this application because he is an abutter. Mr. Canada took over the Chairmanship. He requested Mr. Connors introduce the application.

Mr. Connors noted that this application is for a medium-sized ground-mounted solar array on the common land for the Aberdeen West Cooperative mobile home park community off of Lovell Road. Medium-size ground-mounted solar arrays are permitted but only through the granting of a Conditional Use Permit by the Planning Board. He said that on Friday September 10, the applicant submitted a request that the application be postponed to the October 6, 2021 meeting. Today, the applicant updated that request and asked that the application be postponed to October 20, 2021. He said that in the course of researching the property, it emerged that the Planning Board placed a condition on the 1988 approval of the mobile home park restricting further development of the site. The applicant will need to address that condition with the Planning Board. The applicant has decided to postpone and re-notify the application to address the limitations placed on the property by the condition the Board placed on the property back in 1988.

Mr. Canada said that it is regrettable that the abutters are here ready for the meeting but the applicant is not. Mr. Connors said that unfortunately the request to postpone the application did not come until after the application was posted for public hearing and the abutters were notified. However, he did notify all of the abutters who contacted the Planning Department in advance regarding the application that the application had been postponed and it was not necessary to attend the meeting.

Mr. Canada said he would be interested to hear from any of those in the audience who wished to speak. Michael Daley, of Epping, noted that he owned property directly across the street from the property where the solar panels are proposed. He said he has concerns about the wetlands on the property. He is concerned that the wetland is not fully shown on the plan and that the development of the property will impact the stream on the property and affect abutting property owners.

Mr. Connors noted a couple abutting property owners had expressed concerns with the plans and it was his understanding that the applicant planned to reach out to them to see if they could address their concerns. He said he also believed that the applicant planned to consult with the Conservation Commission to hear their comments on the plan. Mr. Houghton made a motion to postpone the application to the October 20, 2021 Planning Board meeting. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All members voted in favor.

4. Public Meeting:

a. Age Friendly Communities Grant

Mr. House returned to the meeting as the Chairman and asked Mr. Connors to introduce the Age Friendly Communities Grant. Mr. Connors explained that the Rockingham Planning Commission recently received a grant from AARP to implement an Age Friendly Communities Grant in the Region. Mr. Connors said he and the Recreation Director, Seth Hickey, recently met with Scott Bogle from the RPC who is heading up this initiative. He said that the purpose of the program is to help communities re-calibrate their services to meet the needs of a much larger senior community. New Hampshire's share of the population that is over the age of 65 is

growing and projected to continue growing through the upcoming decades into 2040. Those over the age of 65 will make up a larger share of the community's population than we've ever seen in the past. This raises several issues regarding the types of services provided in the community and how they are offered and delivered. The Tufts Health Plan Foundation and Rockingham Meals on Wheels will also be participating in the program. He said that the initiative will focus on eight core issues including Outdoor Spaces Buildings, Transportation, Housing, Social Participation, Social Inclusion, Work & Civic Engagement, Communication & Information, and Health & Nutrition Services.

Mr. Connors said this lines up nicely with some of the work that we're doing here in Stratham because we have been talking all year about the need for housing, including more diverse housing options with lower maintenance needs that might be attractive to seniors. He said that while these option might be attractive to senior, the direction the Planning Board is going is not to limit these options to seniors. They would also be attractive for younger people and young families.

Mr. Anderson asked what is being asked of the Town. Mr. Connors said that the RPC is interested in the Town participating in Phase I of the Initiative. Phase I will include six municipalities in the region. It will consist of an Age Friendly Survey and a Public Forum. A local advisory committee will help direct this effort. He said that he did not believe that this would require many resources or costs from the community aside from staff time.

Mr. Canada said that it made sense to look at these issues and better orient our services and that he was supportive. He asked if a motion was necessary? Mr. Connors said that in October the RPC will be asking the Select Board for its endorsement of the Town's participation so it may be helpful to make a motion supporting Stratham's participation. Mr. Anderson made a motion to support Stratham's participation in the Age Friendly Communities program. Mr. Canada second the motion. All voted in favor.

b. 2020 Census Update

Mr. Connors said that the initial 2020 US Census results at the community level have finally been released. He said that the Census is required under the US Constitution and is undertaken every 10 years. The results are kept confidential. The results determine the redistricting of federal and state legislative districts and are used to allocate funding for a number of different federal programs. The response rate to the Census was 79.3% in Stratham which is much higher than the state and US averages.

Mr. Connors said that the Census only asks about ten very basic questions. One household member can complete the Census for every member in a household. The questions include the number of persons in the household, the relationship of people within the household, the gender and race of household members and if they are of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. The Census also asks for the birthdates of all household members and if the home is rented, owned, or occupied. Mr. Connors said the preliminary results from the Census have been released which will allow State Legislatures the ability to begin the process of redistricting in time for the 2022 mid-term election.

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135 Mr. House stated Rob Roseen requested a personal leave of absence for September and
136 October. Mr. Canada questioned if the board was allowed to grant the leave since members are
137 Select Board appointed. Mr. Houghton stated it would be the Select Board to provide and file
138 final decision but the planning board could offer their views on the leave. Mr. Anderson stated
139 Mr. Roseen is a valuable contributor and supports granting the leave. Mr. Zaremba, Ms.
140 Hollasch, Mr. Canada, and Mr. House agreed. Mr. Houghton requested the board make their
141 recommendation to the Select Board to grant the leave. The growth rate for really all
142 geographies including the United States, New Hampshire, and for the Town of Stratham is
143 down from previous decades. We are continuing to grow, but at a much slower pace. Stratham
144 grew by 5.4 percent between 2010 and 2020 and the country grew by 7.3 percent. There are
145 only two contributors to population change, including the rate of natural change (births over
146 deaths) and the rate of migration, or people moving here from other states or countries versus
147 those moving out. In this part of the country, we have a low rate of natural change or even a
148 negative rate as deaths increase and births have not increased. However, we have a reasonably
149 high rate of migration, so that has allowed us to continue to grow.
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151 Mr. House asked what the next step was for the Census. Mr. Connors said we are anticipating
152 updating Census results at the community level and when we have those, I will give the
153 Planning Board an updated presentation.
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155 c. Route 33 Heritage District
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157 Mr. Connors provided the Planning Board a refresher regarding the Route 33 Heritage District
158 process. He said that staff is in the process of drafting the zoning language and that he recently
159 attended the Heritage Commission meeting in order to get their input. He said one of the
160 concerns the Commission noted was that the process should not be 'over-regulated' or too
161 burdensome for homeowners. The Town is concerned about demolitions, but there are several
162 types of projects that homeowners might undertake that we don't have any issues with, and
163 there is a concern that we not implement roadblocks to implementing those types of projects.
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165 One of the concerns revolves around the two-step process of an applicant having to appear
166 before an Advisory Committee and the Planning Board to have an application reviewed and
167 approved. He said there was support from the Heritage Commission to allow it to approve
168 applications without the need for Planning Board approval. He said there were a few options to
169 address this. One would involve exempting most types of projects from review on residential
170 properties, so only major proposals like demolitions, or the construction of large new buildings
171 would require approval. A second option would be to create a small advisory committee to
172 advise the Planning Board that could potentially be made up of only three members with the
173 Planning Board and Heritage Commission appointing members. This review could potentially
174 be voluntary for the applicant so they need to attend only one meeting. He said the small size
175 of the committee would address some of the bureaucracy concerns that have been raised. The
176 third option would be to continue exploring allowing the Heritage Commission to review
177 applications and approve applications. Mr. Connors said this would require further
178 investigation. The Heritage Commission has not traditionally been a regulatory body and it is

unclear if we have the ability under the enabling legislation to make it one. But it is worth further exploring.

Mr. House said that he did not agree with allowing meeting attendance to be voluntary for applicants. Ultimately, this is their project and they need to be able to present it and answer questions that come up. Mr. Zaremba said that he did not agree with the first option in that if it exempted so many projects, it raised the question of why pursue the effort. Mr. Canada said there are many types of projects that we probably aren't concerned with. Mr. Anderson said ideally it probably some type of hybrid between these options. He said that he didn't agree with excluding the Planning Board from the process. Mr. Houghton said that he liked the idea of a small committee. It could be made up of a Planning Board appointee, a Heritage Commission appointee, and another appointee, potentially the Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer to review applications. He said he also saw no issue with the Committee being able to approve applications on their own. Mr. Canada said he agreed. Mr. House asked if this input was sufficient. Mr. Connors said yes it was helpful and I will do my best to incorporate this input into the draft zoning language for the Planning Board to review.

d. Miscellaneous Planning Issues

Mr. House asked if there were any further items. Mr. Connors said the only thing is the Transportation Survey, which I've sent around and a couple of you have provided comments for. He said we was also expecting comments from Mr. Hollasch. Ms. Hollasch said that she had already sent her comments in. Mr. Connors said he would check his spam folder. Ms. Hollasch said she would send her comments again. Mr. Connors said the Town is anticipating the Ten Year Plan hearings to start up soon, so he would get the Transportation Survey out in the community as soon as all the edits are delivered and incorporated.

5. Adjournment

Mr. Anderson made a motion to adjourn at 8:21 pm. Ms. Hollasch seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Note(s):

1. *Materials related to the above meeting are available for review at the Municipal Center during normal business hours. For more information, contact the Stratham Planning Office at 603-772-7391 ext. 147.*
2. *The Planning Board reserves the right to take item, out of order and to discuss and/or vote on items that are not listed on the agenda.*