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5 **Stratham Planning Board**  
6 **Meeting Minutes**  
7 **September 19, 2012**  
8 **Municipal Center, Selectmen's Meeting Room**  
9 **10 Bunker Hill Avenue**  
10 **Time: 7:00 PM**  
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13 **Members Present:** Mike Houghton, Chairman  
14 Bob Baskerville, Vice Chairman  
15 Jeff Hyland, Secretary  
16 Bruno Federico, Selectmen's Representative  
17 Jameson Paine, Member  
18 Mary Jane Werner  
19

20 **Members Absent:** Tom House, Alternate  
21 Christopher Merrick, Alternate  
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23 **Staff Present:** Lincoln Daley, Town Planner  
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26 **1. Call to Order/Roll Call.**

27 The Chairman took roll call.  
28

29 **2. Review/Approval of Meeting Minutes.**

- 30  
31 a. August 15, 2012  
32 b. September 5, 2012  
33

34 Mr. Paine noted one error in the August 15, 2012 minutes. Mr. Daley's first name had  
35 been used instead of his last name. Mr. Hyland made a motion to accept the minutes from  
36 August 15, 2012. Motion seconded by Mr. Paine. Motion carried unanimously. The  
37 Board agreed to review the September 5, 2012 minutes by the next meeting.  
38

39 **4. Public Meeting(s).**

- 40  
41 a. **Joe Falzone/ Harbor Riverwalk, LLC, 7B Emery Lane, Stratham for the property**  
42 **located at Tax Map 13 Lot 43.** Preliminary consultation to discuss development  
43 options for said parcel.  
44

1 Mr. Scott Gove introduced himself and Mr. Joe Falzone, property owner. He was  
2 before the Board to explore options and asked if the Town would be considered  
3 rezoning the property from R/A to PRE.  
4

5 Mr. Gove described the property and said depending on the results of the parcel survey,  
6 the lot is anywhere from half to three quarters of an acre. He explained that the is  
7 currently zoned Residential/Agricultural, but it is surrounded by properties in the  
8 Professional / Residential Zoning District (PRE). Mr. Gove said that Mr. Daley had  
9 advised him to begin the process by conducting test pits witnessed by the Town. All  
10 test pits met the standard requirements of the Town and State. Mr. Gove stated that  
11 within the R/A Zoning District, a single-family, 2-3 bedroom residence could be  
12 constructed on the Property. Mr. Gove mentioned that due to the setback requirements,  
13 they might need to go before the Zoning Board to get a variance. Mr. Gove continued  
14 that the Town would have a more regulatory oversight if rezoned to the PRE as any  
15 commercial/retail use allowed in the PRE would require a Site Plan Review Permit.  
16

17 Mr. Falzone said it made no that this lot was not zoned PRE. Ms. Werner commented  
18 that it would be hard to sell a house in that current. Mr. Gove disagree and said that  
19 due to the price of the lot and the fact that it is in Stratham makes it fairly easy to sell.  
20

21 Ms. Werner mentioned that the church wanted to purchase extra land for more parking  
22 spaces. Mr. Gove said he reached out to them, but he never got a response.  
23

24 Mr. Baskerville asked what they could build on this lot if it was PRE. Mr. Gove said  
25 probably a small office. Ms. Werner asked about room for parking. Mr. Gove said it is  
26 a reasonably sized lot. Mr. Houghton said that if you took a long term view of this lot,  
27 the Town would be better served if it was in the PRE zone. Ms. Werner reminded  
28 everybody to keep in their minds that this was located in an historic neighborhood.  
29

30 Mr. Daley said the Board might want to consider a landscaped buffer to provide a  
31 visual buffer from Portsmouth Avenue to the interior portion of the roadways.  
32

33 Mr. Baskerville then asked what the process was to get the lot rezoned. Mr. Daley  
34 replied that either Mr. Gove and Mr. Falzone could submit a Warrant Article or if the  
35 Board supports this, it would be the Board's responsibility to put this forth for the  
36 Town meeting. Ms. Werner asked what the cut off date for Warrant Articles was. Mr.  
37 Daley said November, so should the Board wish to move forward with this, it will need  
38 to be done fairly quickly.  
39

40 Mr. Houghton asked if anybody on the Board was not in support of the rezoning. All  
41 members were in support. The Board directed Mr. Daley to work with the applicants to  
42 prepare the rezoning Warrant Article for the Town Meeting in March 2013.  
43

44 **b. Zoning and Land Use Amendments – Workshop**  
45

1 Mr. Daley began the workshop by briefing the Board on amendments to Section VII  
2 Signage of the Zoning Ordinance and genesis for the proposed changes. Mr. Daley  
3 stated that the proposed amended are in direct response to the concerns/comments  
4 raised residents and business owners .  
5

6 Mr. Daley reminded the Board that they had discussed replacing the General  
7 Commercial District (GCM) in its entirety with the Gateway Commercial Business  
8 District (GCBD). He continued that there was an approved revised sign ordinance for  
9 the GCBD in 2011, but it mainly applied to the interior roadway network of the GCBD.  
10 Mr. Daley explained that the revision to the sign ordinance tries to incorporate and  
11 implement the Gateway Business District design element to all the signage in Town.  
12 Another concern raised by business owners and residents is that signs aren't big enough  
13 and there isn't enough flexibility. Mr. Daley explained that he looked at the  
14 methodology used when determining an appropriate size allowance.  
15

16 Mr. Daley distributed the most current version of the draft sign ordinance and handouts  
17 illustrating various types of signs. He then proceeded to summarize the proposed  
18 changes to the Section VII of the Ordinance.  
19

20 A short discussion then ensued involving the location of awnings and canopies on  
21 buildings. Members raised the questions with regards to the limiting awnings and  
22 canopies to the first floor of buildings. Ms. Werner questions why awnings and  
23 canopies are allowed only the first in the Gateway District. She then asked what  
24 happens if there is a business on the second floor. Mr. Daley said a projecting sign  
25 could be used. Ms. Werner said the same applied for window signage, it is only  
26 allowed on the first floor.  
27

28 Mr. Paine suggested rather than allowing signs in the window, perhaps a variance could  
29 be allowed. Mr. Daley said his preference would be to avoid asking applicants to seek  
30 additional relief. Mr. Paine suggested a review panel as another option. Mr. Daley  
31 suggested having the Town Revitalization Committee (TRC) to look at signage for the  
32 entire business corridor which would include the Town Center also. Ms. Werner feels  
33 there should be standardized signage throughout the entire district. Mr. Houghton  
34 agreed that uniformity of signage is what they should be striving for. He feels that it  
35 would be better to have flexibility rather than a separate committee to review signs.  
36

37 Mr. Baskerville asked why it says in the ordinance that awnings/canopies and window  
38 signage is only allowed on the first floor. He said that if the upstairs business is  
39 different to the bottom floor, he is fine with signage being permitted on the second  
40 floor. He did agree however, along with Ms. Werner that he understood the ruling  
41 about awnings, but not window signage.  
42

43 Mr. Daley detailed the current methodology used for computing signage allowance for  
44 free standing. He explained that it is based on the linear frontage of a property and  
45 number of businesses on site. This methodology was employed Salem, MA He  
46 mentioned that there are some lots in Town that are very narrow and long and

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consequently they don't have a very big frontage. They looked at Salem, Mass., which allows also for the depth of a lot from the roadway itself to add additional signage as necessary. It is broken down into freestanding and building signs. Freestanding signs are broken down by lot frontage less than 250 feet and more than 250 feet and by zone. For a business that has less than 250 feet of linear frontage, one sign of 65 square feet and 25 feet tall is allowed. If there are more businesses on that lot that are less than 250 feet, they have can have sign of 125 feet. If a lot has more than 250 feet for 1 – 3 businesses, there can be 2 signs of 65 feet and 25 feet tall and if 4 or more businesses, 2 signs of 125 feet and each 30 feet tall. Mr. Daley referred to the Stratham Plaza signage and said their concern is that it doesn't advertise all the businesses in the plaza very well. Freestanding signs are also allowed in the Town Center and PRE. Mr. Daley continued that in a lot less than 250 feet would be afforded one sign of 32.5 square feet and 15 feet tall and if 4 or more businesses, one sign is 62.5 square feet and 15 feet tall. Mr. Daley put it in perspective by referring to the Stratham Village Market sign which is about 30 feet big.

Mr. Daley talked about building signs next which include 2 components; one is the linear frontage itself and then a multiplier. The multiplier is based on the distance that a building is physically set back from the primary road of access. This would allow narrower lots that are set back far away, to have a larger building sign affixed to their building.

Registered trade marks such as Dominos, Burger King, etc were discussed. The logos would be restricted to 25% of the area of the total sign to try to keep the character of the area of the Town Center or Gateway District as much as possible. This would also encourage the chain businesses to become creative with their signage. Mr. Baskerville asked if the 25% referred to both building and freestanding signs. Mr. Daley said that hadn't been clarified yet. Mr. Daley asked the Board if they had a preference whether it should apply to both or just to one of the categories. Mr. Hyland asked about businesses like Staples, whose font is their trade mark. Mr. Baskerville made the observation that if one of the chains is allowed a 100 feet sign, the sign would not look good if only 25% was the logo and 75% is left blank. He likes the idea but feels the Board need to rework it. Mr. Hyland asked about the ruling that allows a corner lot to have double the signage allowance. He felt that was a little excessive even though he understood there would be two frontages. The Board then had a short discussion about the different kind of frontages and how the speed limit of a street can play a role too. Mr. Daley agreed to incorporate road speeds into the calculation method. Mr. Baskerville suggested that the Board decide what would be the primary frontage and that the secondary frontage should qualify for half of what is approved for the primary side. Mr. Paine said they would need to keep in mind the shape of the building also. Mr. Daley said that this methodology doesn't put a cap on the size allowed for a sign. Mr. Daley said he has a concern that there could be do much signage, causing a visual clutter among a long corridor like the Route 108. The Board then discussed window signage.

1 The Board then talked about one of the businesses in the Town Center and looked how  
2 the revised ordinance could possibly help it. The conversation returned to buildings on  
3 corner lots and the Board discussed if the same methodology should apply to building  
4 signs.

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6 The new Highway Agent, Mr. Colin Lavery was at the meeting so Mr. Daley took the  
7 opportunity to introduce him to the Planning Board.  
8

9 Mr. Paine asked about the percentage allowed for window signage. Mr. Daley  
10 responded with up to 15% of the total area of the window would be permitted and  
11 awning area also. The Board discussed the most appropriate approach dermining  
12 window signage. Mr. Daley asked if the Board still wanted him to incorporate the types  
13 of roads and make that a determining factor for the size of signs. Mr. Houghton said  
14 he thought it might be difficult to get into the definition of roads. Mr. Daley said other  
15 towns look at the speed of a roadway. Mr. Houghton agreed that made more sense.  
16 Mr. Baskerville asked if it wouldn't be better to consider zoning and use. Mr. Daley  
17 confirmed Mr. Baskerville would like freestanding signs on the Route 108 and Route  
18 33.  
19

20 Mr. Daley asked if the trademark regulations discussed earlier should pertain to both  
21 freestanding and building signs. The Board members agreed.  
22

23 Prohibitive signs were the next topic to be discussed. Mr. Daley commented on  
24 inflatable signs and asked if the Board would be in favor of adding those to the list of  
25 prohibited signs. The Board said it should be included due to the visual clutter it  
26 creates. Mr. Federico said he would expect to see that type of signage to be under the  
27 section "Special Events Request". Mr. Houghton said it should still be under  
28 prohibitive signs, but with a proviso allowing it as a temporary sign under the Special  
29 Events regulation.  
30

31 The Board then discussed the placement of signs. Mr. Daley referred to the placement  
32 of signs within the Gateway District. He said they apply to internal streets, but feels the  
33 same regulations could be used for the entire corridor itself as well. The language of  
34 the Ordinance details the types of lettering, fonts, materials used, and color pallet for  
35 signs. This is in order to maintain consistency within the area and to avoid noxious  
36 signs. Mr. Daley said it may need to be modified to address signs on the Route 108.  
37

38 Mr. Daley asked the Board their opinion if the current sign regulations may be too  
39 restrictive. Mr. Paine felt it was a good idea. Ms. Werner referred to the hand out  
40 from Mr. Daley showing various signs and stated that she didn't feel many of the signs  
41 were applicable to Stratham anyway. Mr. Hyland said the only thing he felt might be  
42 restrictive is limiting signs to certain fonts. Ms. Werner felt the wording of "should",  
43 "could", "preferred" does give a lot of leeway.  
44

45 Mr. Daley stated that the Economic Development Committee also discussed the use  
46 modern technology in signs He mentioned that a number of local businesses would like

1 to incorporate electronic signage. However, the Zoning Ordinance currently prohibits  
2 those kinds of signs. Several of the Board members commented that they find them too  
3 distracting and not within the vision or character of the community.  
4

5 Mr. Daley referred to the Gove sign in Stratham which was allowed, but the text is only  
6 allowed to move once in a 24 hour period. He asked the Board if they would support a  
7 business displaying a temperature and time sign. The Board was not in favor. The  
8 Board continued their discussions and cited various examples of electronic signs in  
9 Stratham and in neighboring communities. Members stated that business owners  
10 expressed an interest in allowing electronic signs. Their main concerns being how  
11 often technology changes and what kind of electronic signs should be allowed.  
12

13 Mr. Daley then asked about setbacks for freestanding signs on the Route 108. He asked  
14 if the Board felt it should be outside of the right of way and went on to explain that the  
15 the NHDOT will only allow breakaway sign within the right of way. Mr. Daley  
16 suggested the revised ordinance state that all freestanding signs should be placed  
17 outside of the right of way. Mr. Daley reminded the Board that the right of way varied  
18 along the Routes 108 and 33. A brief discussion then ensued regarding the appropriate  
19 reference point to establish setbacks.  
20

21  
22 Mr. Houghton continued the discussion to next Planning Board meeting.  
23

## 24 **5. Miscellaneous.**

### 25 a. Report of Officers/Committees.

26  
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28 Mr. Daley briefed the Board of the Plan NH presentation given the previous week. He  
29 said it was a very well attended event and the group was very diverse and vocal. He  
30 explained that there was a contingency that appears to want to keep things as they are  
31 from a traffic standpoint, but increase the flow of traffic. The other contingency is  
32 seeking to making improvements at the Stratham Circle to create a viable town center.  
33

### 34 b. Member Comments.

35  
36 Mr. Baskerville asked about an email from Mr. Deschaine concerning Stratham's  
37 designation as a community that falls under the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer  
38 Systems (MS4s). Mr. Daley briefly explained that the designation is partially based on  
39 the 2010 Census Data, which uses population as a determining factor and that  
40 additional regulatory monitoring and oversight of storm water management in town  
41 would be required. Mr. Daley continued that this will require Planning Board to  
42 consider storm water regulations and additional compliance measures including  
43 possibly outsourcing to a third party to make sure the Town meets all the requirements  
44 of the program.  
45

1 Ms. Werner asked if there were available resources that the Town could utilize for  
2 assistance to help manage the program. Mr. Paine responded that the seacoast  
3 community has already joined together to develop a lot of the materials that Stratham  
4 will need to use. He suggested that Stratham become part of seacoast community.  
5

6 Mr. Daley apprised the Board of the costs to implement and manage the program and  
7 stated that the Town may need to create a budget in 2013. He further stated that an  
8 inventory of the Town's stormwater/drainage infrastructure and outfalls would need to  
9 be completed. .  
10

11 Mr. Paine said that there isn't a state run program in New Hampshire so the Board will  
12 be dealing with the EPA. Mr. Daley said that the Town may qualify for a waiver due in  
13 larger part of the lack of waste water infrastructure. there is a possibility for a waiver as  
14 Stratham doesn't have a sewer in Town. Mr. Daley and Mr. Deschaine are currently in  
15 the process of weighing up the pros and cons.  
16

17 Lastly, Mr. Daley requested that the Board look at the list of seminars he had emailed  
18 previously and to let him know if they would like to attend any of them.  
19

20 c. Other.

21  
22 There were no other items to report  
23

24 **6. Adjournment**

25 Mr. Baskerville made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. Motion was  
26 seconded by Mr. Hyland and carried unanimously.  
27  
28