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5 **Stratham Planning Board**
6 **Meeting Minutes**
7 **April 17, 2013**
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 Bruno Federico, Selectmen's Representative
16 Jameson Paine, Member, Planning Board
17 Mary Jane Werner, Alternate
18 Tom House, Alternate
19 Christopher Merrick, Alternate
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21 **Members Absent:** Jeff Hyland, Secretary
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23 **Staff Present:** Lincoln Daley, Town Planner
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25 **1. Call to Order/Roll Call.**

26 The Chairman took roll call and asked Ms. Werner if she could be a full voting member for
27 tonight's meeting. Ms. Werner agreed.

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

- 29 a. March 6, 2013
30 b. March 20, 2013
31

32 The Board agreed to review the minutes in time for the next meeting. Mr. House
33 commented that on page 2 of the March 20th, 2013 minutes, it was Mr. Merrick who
34 made the motion and himself that seconded the motion.

35 **3. Public Meeting(s).**

- 36 a. **Planning Board Workshop** – Zoning Ordinance and Site Plan Analysis of Auto
37 Dealerships.

38 Mr. Daley posed several questions to the Board seeking to improve the site plan review
39 process for auto dealerships. Mr. Daley sought guidance from the Board with regards
40 to density/number of vehicles allowed on site and a prescribed methodology to employ
41 to assist the Board.

42 Mr. Daley presented an analysis on the current auto dealerships comparing such
43 elements as acreage, number of cars on site, size of building (s), calculating number of

1 cars per acre, and number of cars per impervious surface. Mr. Daley shared that when
2 he was looking at parking spaces per acre, it didn't give a true picture of parking spaces
3 that would be permitted on a site. When he looked at the impervious surface however,
4 that gave a more accurate picture of what the true impacts of parking demands.

5 Mr. Daley explained that there are certain times of the year when a "surge" can occur.
6 This is when the dealerships force cars onto dealers to put on their sites due to a variety
7 of reasons. He said that this should be built into the methodology to allow for this to
8 occur as dealers don't have much choice, but to accept this extra inventory.

9 Ms. Werner commented that she felt the problem wasn't so much to do with what the
10 Planning Board approved, but more to do with how the plan was applied afterwards by
11 the dealerships.

12 Mr. Baskerville suggested contacting other towns.

13 Ms. Werner made the point that although they are all on the planning board, they are
14 also residents of Stratham and they should take into account the opinions of other
15 residents in Town when it comes to auto dealerships. Mr. House referred to the
16 Gateway standards and would be happy as long as they can be applied.

17 The Board discussed requesting more landscaping from auto dealerships, in particular
18 to provide screening for neighboring properties. Mr. Daley asked about the visual
19 impacts of auto dealerships saying if more cars were at the back of a dealership would
20 that have less of a visual impact than if the majority of inventory were out in the front
21 of the dealership. Mr. Baskerville said it depends on the lot itself. He explained that
22 Honda Barn lot is much different to the Nissan lot. He said he felt that landscaping was
23 key and shared that the town of Bedford's make architects supply samples of building
24 materials to be used for such a project.

25 Ms. Werner asked why one of each model of car a dealership has to offer, isn't
26 displayed in the front and the rest of the cars kept in the back. Mr. House thought that
27 was a good idea and suggested the building itself could be closer to the road and be
28 more architecturally more pleasing.

29 Dave Canada, commented on car dealerships he has seen in the Washington D.C. area.
30 He stated that all the models tend to be behind big glass windows so they can be seen
31 from the street and all other inventory is kept at the back of the property. He
32 appreciates that Stratham doesn't have the same urban environment, but he felt it was a
33 great example. He felt that the auto dealerships in Stratham had turned their outdoors
34 inventory storage into giant displays. He commented that small business owners have
35 problems with signage and displaying their inventory so he felt it was unfair to let the
36 large auto dealerships display theirs. Mr. Canada said that every time the hood of a car
37 is open, this should count towards the dealership's promotional allowance.

38 Mr. Daley explained that the sign ordinance had been amended to allow businesses up
39 to 42 days of promotional signage which was a change made in direct response to a
40 demand expressed by the business community.

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1 Mr. Paine wondered if a uniform coordinated letter should be sent to the dealerships to
2 reiterate the concerns expressed tonight. The Chairman thought this was a good idea.
3 Mr. Federico felt it would be a good idea to hold a workshop with the owners/managers
4 of the auto dealerships. Other members of the Board felt that it may be too challenging
5 due to the different natures of the various sites.

6 Mr. Deschaine said that another challenge is the regular turn over in the management
7 staff of the dealerships. He commented that every time a new manager is hired, they
8 need to be made familiar with Stratham's Zoning Ordinance.

9 The Board discussed how to enforce the regulations generally on all businesses not in
10 compliance. It was felt that having proper documentation of violations was key. Mr.
11 Deschaine explained that the Town favors voluntary compliance hugely and only
12 resorts to more legal methods if absolutely necessary and he explained the process.

13 Mr. Canada said that with effective communication 80% of the offenders will stop and
14 stressed again the importance of documenting everything. He said also that the Town
15 could take away promotional days from businesses who violate the Town's regulations.

16 Mr. Baskerville suggested a multi step process starting with a letter from the Planning
17 Board including a copy of their site plan, if they don't come into compliance, a letter
18 from the Board of Selectmen would then be sent out, and if necessary a third letter
19 could be sent by Town Counsel.

20 **b. Planning Board Discussion – Board/Commission/Committee Chair Meeting.**

21 Mr. Houghton began by saying he felt that the Planning Board could become better
22 aligned with other Town boards and committees and suggested inviting them to
23 Planning Board meetings to better understand their goals and roles.

24 Ms. Werner took the opportunity to commend Mr. Houghton and Mr. Daley for
25 attending a Heritage Commission meeting recently to familiarize themselves more
26 about their role. She added it would help the Planning Board also to recognize when a
27 certain Board or Committee should be contacted for their input when reviewing a
28 project.

29 Mr. Paine asked if it was possible to receive copies of minutes from other
30 Boards/Committees to help stay informed. Mr. Daley said he was happy to do that.
31 Ms. Werner felt they should work more with the ZBA too as often there are cases that
32 involve the input of both Boards.

33 Mr. Baskerville referred to the Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD) and
34 wondered if a representative could attend a Planning Board meeting.

35 Mr. Daley asked Mr. Houghton whether they should meet with just the chairs or the
36 whole commission. Mr. Houghton responded that he felt starting with the Chairs first
37 would be best and then as time goes on and issues present themselves, they should
38 reach out to the appropriate full committee

39 Mr. Daley reminded the Board that there is always an opportunity at the end of the
40 agenda for those members of the Planning Board who are representatives on other
41 Boards to give updates.

1 **4. Miscellaneous.**

2 a. Report of Officers/Committees.

3 i. Economic Development Committee.

4 Mr. Daley shared that the next 2 EDC meetings will be to discuss how to have a
5 restaurant with the current water and sewer issues.

6
7 ii. Exeter-Swampscott River Local Advisory Committee.

8 Mr. Paine said he had stepped back from this committee as well as the stormwater
9 management committee.

10
11 iii. Heritage Commission.

12 Mr. Houghton said he learnt a lot about buildings of interest in the Town. There
13 was lots of interaction and he looks forward to working more closely with the
14 Heritage Commission. Mr. Daley added that himself, Becky Mitchell, and Dave
15 Canada were meeting with the Director of Strawberry Banke in Portsmouth, the
16 goal being to look at ways in which preservation of older homes has been managed
17 and how that could be related to the Cushman property.

18
19 iv. Public Works Commission.

20 Mr. Daley said progress has been made on the discussion of water and sewer with
21 Exeter. 2 sub committees had been formed, one technical to answer some of the
22 questions raised in relation to the Exeter/Stratham study done by a consultant and
23 the second one is looking at the financial and economic impacts of working
24 together.

25
26 v. Stormwater Management Committee.

27 Mr. Daley said there is an opportunity for grant money to have RPC draft some
28 recommendations, so he has applied for that. He is working with Paul Deschaine
29 and John Boisvert and they are hoping to find a fourth person to design and write
30 the regulations for the committee. Mr. Baskerville commented that the regulations
31 are complex and it also depends whether you are looking at them from a Planning
32 Board perspective or a Public Works perspective.

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34 vi. Town Center Revitalization Committee.

35 There was no update

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37 b. Member Comments.

38 There were no member comments.
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40 **5. Adjournment.**

41 Mr. Paine made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:34 PM. Motion seconded by Mr.
42 House. Motion carried unanimously.