

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Location: Strafford Town Hall Conference Room

Date & Time: August 7, 2025 6:30PM

Members Present:

Phil Auger – Chairman
Charlie Moreno – Vice Chairman
Terry Hyland
Don Clifford
Lynn Sweet – Selectman Representative

Alternate Members Present:

Donald Coker
Susan Arnold

Others Present:

Owen Corcoran, Strafford Regional Planning Commission, Regional Planner
Robert Fletcher, Minutes Recorder

The Chair, Phil Auger, called the meeting to order at 6:30PM and recognized Board members Charlie Moreno, Terry Hyland, Don Clifford, Lynn Sweet, Donald Coker, and Susan Arnold, as present. He also recognized as present Owen Corcoran and Robert Fletcher.

Continuing Business

Major Subdivision – Michael D. Whitcher Revocable Trust of 2002, 8-lot subdivision, Whig Hill Road, (Tax Map 4, Lot 1)

The Chair noted that the Altus Engineering review had not been completed. He asked for a motion for continuance after appointing Susan Arnold and Donald Coker as voting members to replace recused members Lynn Sweet and Don Clifford. Susan Arnold made a motion for continuance of the Major Subdivision Application and Conditional Use Permit to the September 4, 2025 Planning Board Meeting at 6:30PM at the Town office in Strafford, NH, which was seconded Charlie Moreno and voted upon verbally in the affirmative by all voting Board members. The motion passed. The Chair reinstated Lynn Sweet and Don Clifford as voting members and Susan Arnold and Donald Coker as alternate members.

Kate Sawal, an abutter to the Whitcher property, asked about the boundary mismatch she questioned at the July 10, 2025 Planning Board meeting. Chris Berry agreed to speak to her privately.

The Chair indicated that the order of business for the meeting would be modified to allow time for abutters and interested parties to arrive before addressing the Design Review for the Lovely Revocable Living Trusts 7-Lot Conservation Development.

Other Business

Planning Board Meeting Minutes: The Board reviewed the minutes of the July 10, 2025 Planning Board Meeting. Charlie Moreno made a motion to accept the minutes as written, which was seconded by Don Clifford and voted upon verbally in the affirmative by all voting Board members present who attended the July 10th Planning Board Meeting.

Rules of Procedure: The Board discussed minor changes to the draft Rules of Procedure as updated by Owen Corcoran. Mr. Corcoran agreed to finalize the changes and forward the document to the Board members, and the Chair will ask the Town Attorney for comments.

New Business

Design Review – Major Subdivision: David & Rebecca S. Lovely Revocable Living Trusts, proposed 7-lot Conservation Development, 20 Back Canaan Road (Tax Map 4, Lot 83-1)

Chris Berry of Berry Surveying and Engineering, on behalf of David and Rebecca Lovely, presented the proposal under design review. Another consultant previously appeared before the Board in November 2024 for design review of a proposed 5-Lot conservation subdivision by the Lovely Revocable Living Trust. The Lovely's hired Berry Surveying and Engineering to complete the project, and Mr. Berry felt it was important to present the updated proposal to the Board with a design review as required for a major subdivision. He indicated that the plans are preliminary and may be changed based on input from the Board. The Lovely's own Lot 83-1 of approximately 41 acres with frontage on both Back Canaan Road and Canaan Road with an existing duplex at the front of the lot which is accessed from Back Canaan Road. They hired Damon Burt of Fraggie Rock Environmental to delineate all the jurisdictional wetlands on the project site and Berry Surveying and Engineering to conduct a survey of the site to include a perimeter survey, existing topography and steep slopes, and to do test pits. The Lovely's are proposing a 7-Lot Conservation Subdivision that would result in one lot containing the existing duplex, five new building lots, and a seventh approximately 27-acre open space lot which, presumably, will be held by one of the two rear lot owners in the subdivision. The design includes a small private roadway that is 550-feet long with a hammerhead placed at the end. All of the newly created lots will have access via the private roadway. Stone walls were used when possible as boundary lines between lots. The open fields beyond a natural stonewall divide will be retained in the open space area by reducing the size of the two lots on the hammerhead. No wetland permits are required and there may not be a need for a conditional use permit. The project presents a fairly low environmental impact with no terrain alteration and private roadway drainage will flow to existing wetland crossings on Canaan Road. A water treatment area will be designed to capture and slow drainage flow prior to the wetland crossing area. A waiver request for roadway curvature is anticipated and a yield plan to show the number of conventional lots possible on the property will be provided.

The Chair asked the Board if there were any questions or comments. Lynn Sweet asked if the new lot with the existing duplex was sized correctly to allow a duplex. Mr. Berry indicated that as long as it can be demonstrated that a duplex fits on the yield plan the underlying lot does not need to meet ordinance lot size requirements in a conservation development. Mr. Berry stated in response to a question by Donald Coker that the grey area on the plan delineated steep slopes. The Chair asked Mr. Berry to point out the open field areas on the proposed plan. Charlie Moreno confirmed with Mr. Berry that the open space conserved area was approximately 32 acres, approximately 80% of the 41-acre lot to be subdivided. The Chair asked what the number of lots would be in the yield plan, and Mr. Berry it was either seven or eight building lots – he could not remember which. Susan Arnold noted that the July 17, 2025 Berry Surveying & Engineering letter to the Board indicated that due to the length to width ratio of the property, the yield plan approach is required and finds that seven total

constructable lots are permissible. The Chair noted that the lot with frontage on Canaan Road was larger than what the Board recommended during the November 2024 Design Review. Mr. Berry indicated that the lot size is based on the need for a 100-foot residential buffer and a water runoff containment area, and the existing stonewall location. Don Clifford questioned why an “L” shaped lot in the proposal couldn’t be squared off. Mr. Berry indicated it was the desire of the applicant to place as much area as possible into conservation. Both Don Clifford and Charlie Moreno commented that the proposed plan incorporated the spirit and purpose of the Strafford Conservation Development zoning ordinance. Mr. Moreno also noted that the plan design minimizes impervious roadway surfaces. The Chair asked what the roadway width would be, and Mr. Berry stated that a 20-foot unpaved travel surface would be desirable. The Board discussed reducing the roadway width to 18-feet and noted that the fire equipment minimum turning radius would need to be met. Donald Coker asked what the applicant’s vision for use of the open space with respect to public access. Mr. Berry indicated that the open space would most likely be owned by the owner of one of the bordering lots. The Chair stated that a deed restriction indicating open space land use is required for a conservation development and is modified to address the specific nature of the property. Mr. Coker also indicated that in exchange for giving up the ability to develop land with a conservation development the Board has the authority to alter regulatory requirements to promote the preservation of open space.

The Chair opened the meeting for public comments at 7:22PM.

Chris Reagan, 36 Back Canaan Road, provided a letter dated August 7, 2025 and offered the following concerns:

- Increased traffic on both Canaan Road and Back Canaan Road, and whether or not a traffic study has been done.
- Emergency vehicle safety on the gravel roadway to access the development.
- The impact to the aquifer with the large dump on the property from the former race track.
- How the applicant will reduce the impact on abutting properties regarding light pollution, noise, traffic, and adverse impact to abutter’s property value and quality of life.
- Safe access to Back Canaan Road with the blind hill and speeding traffic.
- Future development on the property, specifically the addition of Accessory Dwelling Units.
- Questions were raised about which survey of the property is correct.

The Chair commented on the construction of the access roadway which has to be built to the same standards for a subdivision roadway; however, a waiver to the pavement requirement may be requested. It will not be like a driveway, and it will be maintained by the homeowner’s association of this new development under a recorded agreement. He also indicated that the State recently modified ADU requirements which may allow them to be constructed on these lots. Additionally, the average household trips per day is nine which would result in 45 trips per day to and from the five proposed lots in the development. He also agreed that there should be an increase in vehicle speed enforcement on both roads in the area.

Ryan Baer, 85 Canaan Road, expressed concern about current and future waivers to a variety of regulations that help keep a rural setting in the town. He was also concerned about the contamination of well water if the dump area is disturbed during residential construction and suggested the builders or property owner be responsible for cleanup. Charlie Moreno discussed the waiver request process, consideration for natural resource protection, and the Board’s discretion on the granting of waivers.

Rob Marshall, 75 Canaan Road, asked if there was going to be a second entrance to the development. The Chair indicated that there was only one entrance; however, if the total property was developed

there would be two entrances. Mr. Marshall's property borders the proposed access roadway and he asked what structure setback distance is required from the roadway and he intends to build a garage near that border. Additionally, his gravel driveway is located near the proposed development unpaved entrance and he is concerned about vehicles entering his driveway by mistake. He also stated that 2020 census indicated an average of ten trips per day per household which would put the roadway usage at 70 trips per day for the seven-lot development. He was also concerned about damage to Canaan Road due to the water runoff from the development roadway. He asked if there was a plan to restore the foliage that had been removed along his property line.

The Board noted that it has not been determined that the roadway will be unpaved, that with ten trips per day the usage would be 50 trips based on the five buildable lots on the roadway, that foliage restoration was not indicated on the plan but could be requested, and that the required structure setback would be 40-feet from the development roadway. The Board recommended he apply for a building permit before the plan is approved.

Ryan Smith, 80 Canaan Road, asked if the water runoff from the five lots be directed to the retention pond. Mr. Berry indicated that the required stormwater analysis will indicate impervious surfaces and additional water flow. He believes with a project of this size a rain garden will be adequate to handle the estimated runoff based on a 100-year event. Mr. Smith asked who would maintain the water retention area and how often maintenance is required. Lynn Sweet indicated that it would be the responsibility of the residents in the development under a homeowner association agreement and a recommendation for periodic maintenance would be included in the plan.

The Chair read for the record two letters from abutters:

1. Letter from Jessica Merrill, 6 Back Canaan Rd, dated July 28, 2025.

Subject: Opposition to Proposed 7-Lot Conservation Subdivision at 20 Back Canaan Rd (Tax Map 4, Lot 83-1)

Dear members of the Planning and Zoning Board,

In the event I am unable to attend the public meeting on August 7, 2025, I am writing this letter to provide my thoughts and concerns regarding the proposed subdivision.

As a new homeowner and active member of the Strafford community, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed 7-lot conservation subdivision at 20 Back Canaan Rd (Tax Map 4, Lot 83-1). One of the most compelling reasons my family and I chose to make Strafford our home was the town's unique character – its peaceful, close-knit community and the natural beauty that surrounds us. We are deeply concerned that this proposed development would compromise the very qualities that make Strafford so special. Increasing the density of housing in this area risks overpopulating a space that currently offers tranquility, privacy, and a vital refuge for local wildlife. The long-term impact on the environment, infrastructure, and community cohesion must be carefully considered. As the owners of 6 Back Canaan Road, we are direct abutters to the lot proposed for subdivision. The location and design of the proposed access road are of particular concern to us, as they could significantly impact the privacy and quiet enjoyment of our property. Depending on where the road is situated, it may introduce increased traffic, noise and visibility into areas of our home and yard that are currently secluded. We ask that the board take these potential impacts into serious consideration during its review. We believe that denying this proposal is essential to preserving the natural landscape and the character of our town. Thoughtful, sustainable planning is key to maintaining the values that drew people to Strafford in the first place. Should the subdivision be approved, we would like to formally request ownership of

the strip of land that lies between our property at 6 Back Canaan Road and 83 Canaan. This parcel would provide a much-needed rear buffer from the development and help preserve the privacy and character of our home. Lastly, I would appreciate clarification on how and when residents are notified of the outcome/decisions. Understanding the process for public notification will help me follow this as closely as possible.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

2. Letter from residents of Canaan Rd and Back Canaan Rd.

Nathan Smith	56 Canaan Rd
Ron Carruth	64 Canaan Rd
Ryan Smith	80 Canaan Rd
Kim Lancey & Linda Mason	82 Canaan Rd
Ryan & Dorothy Baer	85 Canaan Rd
Edward Morse	98 Canaan Rd
Fern Fauteux	24 Back Canaan Rd
Chris & Larene Reagan	36 Back Canaan Rd
John & Lorraine Sparrow	98 Back Canaan Rd

This is a petition by the residents of Canaan Rd and Back Canaan Rd in opposition of any sub-division being built in our rural community. We would very much like to keep our rural and protect the wetlands from being destroyed. Furthermore; funneling traffic through a single entrance at a nearby crossroad would be hazardous to the surrounding homeowners (Canaan Rd and Back Canaan Rd) where vision is limited from the slope of the road. Please take these issues into consideration before moving forward.

Charlie Burnham expressed concern about the dump on the site and if it had been located. Mr. Berry indicated that he could not comment because he has not conducted any investigation of the dump.

There being no further comments, the Chair closed the meeting to public comments at 7:56PM and asked for a motion to close the Design Review. Lynn Sweet moved to close the Design Review which was seconded by Charlie Moreno and voted upon verbally in the affirmative by all voting Board members. The motion passed.

Other Business

Owen Corcoran indicated that the Commission is developing a legislative tool kit which outlines the latest land use changes by the State Legislature.

There being no further business before the Board, Don Clifford made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Charlie Moreno. The Board voted unanimously in favor, and the meeting adjourned at 8:14PM.