

**RULES OF PROCEDURE
STRAFFORD PLANNING BOARD**

Accepted June 4, 2026

A. AUTHORITY

1. These rules of procedure are adopted under the authority of New Hampshire Revised Statutes (RSA) 676:1.

B. MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES

1. The Planning Board shall consist of five (5) elected members. Pursuant to RSA 673:5, II, no more than two members shall be elected in any one year, for a term not to exceed three years. The Board of Selectmen shall designate one selectman as an ex-officio member with power to vote.
2. Selection, qualification, term, removal of members, and filling of vacancies shall conform to RSA 673.
3. Up to five alternate members shall be appointed by the Planning Board, as provided for under RSA 673:6, II, and should attend all meetings to familiarize themselves with the workings of the Board to stand ready to serve whenever a regular member of the Board is unable to fulfill his/her responsibilities. Only the Board of Selectmen may appoint an alternate for the ex-officio member.
4. Pursuant to 673:7 and RSA 673:6, IV, any two Planning Board members or alternates may be appointed or elected members of another municipal board or commission, except that no more than one Planning Board member or alternate, shall serve on the conservation commission, local governing body, or a local land use body as defined by 673:1.
5. At planning Board meetings, alternates who are not activated to fill the seat of an absent or recused member or who have not been appointed by the Chair to temporarily fill the unexpired term of a vacancy may participate with the Board in a limited capacity. During a public hearing, alternates may sit at the table with the regular members and may view documents, listen to testimony, and actively participate and interact with other Board members, the applicants, abutters and the public. However, they shall not be allowed to make or second motions. During work sessions or portions of meetings that do not include a public hearing, alternates may fully participate, exclusive of any motions or votes that may be made. At all times, the Chair shall fully inform the public of the status of any alternate present and identify the members who shall be voting on the application.
6. Members must reside in the community and are expected to attend each meeting of the Board to exercise their duties and responsibilities. Any member unable to attend a meeting shall notify the chair as soon as possible. Members, including the chair and all officers, shall participate in the decision-making process and vote to approve or disapprove all motions under consideration.
7. Vacancies in membership occurring other than through the expiration of a term of office shall be filled by appointment of the remaining board members until the next regular municipal election at which time a successor shall be elected to either fill the unexpired term or start a new term, as appropriate. This shall not apply to the ex-officio member.

8. Each newly elected or appointed (including re-elected or re-appointed) member shall be sworn in and take an oath of office as required by RSA 42:1.
9. The Vice-Chair shall forward to the town clerk for recording the appointment/election and expiration dates of the terms of each member of the Board.

C. OFFICERS

1. Chair shall be elected by a majority vote of the Board. The Chair shall preside over all meetings and hearings, appoint such committees as directed by the Board and shall affix his/her signature in the name of the Board.
2. Vice-Chair shall be elected by a majority vote of the Board. The Vice-Chair shall preside in the absence of the Chair and shall have the full powers of the Chair on matters which come before the Board during the absence of the Chair.
3. The officers of the Board shall be elected annually during the month of April or as soon thereafter as possible, by a majority of the Board. If requested by a majority of those present, voting shall be by written ballot.

D. MEETINGS

1. Regular meetings shall be held at least monthly at the Strafford Town Hall on the first Thursday of each month beginning at 6:30 PM.
2. Special meetings may be called by the Chair or, in his/her absence, by the Vice-Chair, or at the request of three members of the Board, provided that public notice and notice to each member is given at least 48 hours in advance of the time of such meeting. The notice shall specify the purpose of the meeting.
3. Nonpublic sessions shall be held only in accordance with RSA 91-A:3.
4. Quorum: A majority of the membership of the Board shall constitute a quorum, including alternates sitting in place of regular members.

If any regular Board member is absent from a meeting or hearing or disqualifies him/herself from sitting on a particular application, the Chair shall designate one of the alternate members to sit in place of the absent or disqualified member in order to make a quorum, or to make a full Board of five. Such alternate shall have all the powers and duties of a regular member in regard to any matter under consideration on which the regular member is unable to act. The alternate should continue until the matter is completed; the regular member does not vote on that matter.

5. Disqualification: If any member finds it necessary to be disqualified from sitting on a particular case, as provided in RSA 673:14, he/she shall notify the Chair as soon as possible so that an alternate may be requested to fill the place. The disqualification shall be announced by either the Chair or the member before the discussion or the public hearing on the application begins. The disqualified member shall leave the Board table during all deliberations and the public hearing on the matter.

If uncertainty arises as to whether a Board member should disqualify him/herself, on the request of that member or the request of another member of the Board, the Board shall vote on the question of whether that member should be disqualified. Such request and vote shall be made prior to or at the commencement of any required public hearing. A vote on a question of disqualification shall be advisory and non-binding and may not be requested by persons other than Board members.

6. The typical Order of Business shall be as follows:
 - a. Call to order and roll call
 - Appointment of any alternates as required
 - b. General public comment
 - c. Continuing business (continued application hearings)
 - d. New business (consideration of new applications)
 - Consideration of completeness and acceptance of applications
 - New application hearings
 - e. Preliminary conceptual consultations and informal discussions
 - f. Board discussion, includes, but is not limited to:
 - Announcements
 - Reading of communications directed to the Board
 - Discussion of any new or continuing board business
 - g. Meeting Minutes and Board Updates
 - Review and approval of minutes from prior meeting(s)
 - Report of officers and committees
7. A motion, duly seconded, shall be carried out by an affirmative vote of a majority of the members present. Voting shall be recorded in the minutes.
8. No new information or plan revision will be reviewed by the Planning Board at a meeting unless it has been received by the regular Planning Board application deadline; if more than three items are missing based on review of the checklist, the Board may opt not to continue with their review of the application before them until the missing information has been supplied in accordance with the deadline noted above. (Voted & adopted June 2000)
9. Board meetings shall normally begin at 6:30 PM and no new business shall be heard after 10:30 PM, and the meeting shall adjourn by 11:00 PM. (Voted & adopted September 2004)

E. DESIGN REVIEW

1. Applications for a Design Review Phase (676:4, II (b)) meeting with the Board shall be made on forms provided by the Board and shall be presented to the Board's agent who shall sign and record the date of receipt. A Design Review Phase meeting is a nonbinding discussion with the applicant beyond conceptual and general discussions which involve more specific design and engineering details.
2. Notice shall be given as required in RSA 676:4, I(d) 10 days before such application is submitted before the Board.
3. The Board shall determine the conclusion of the Design Review Phase process and inform the applicant in writing within 10 days of such determination.

F. APPLICATIONS FOR SUBDIVISION AND SITE PLAN REVIEW

1. Applications for hearings before the Board shall be made on forms provided by the Board and shall be presented to the Board's agent who shall sign and record the date of receipt.
2. Notice shall be given as required in RSA 676:4, I(d) 10 days before a completed application is submitted before the Board.
3. The Board shall, at the next regular meeting or within 30 days following the delivery of the application, for which notice can be given in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 2 above, determine if a submitted application is complete and shall vote upon its acceptance by majority vote. The Board shall reject all applications that are not properly completed.
4. Completed applications shall be scheduled for consideration and public hearing within 30 days of acceptance.
5. At the first public hearing, the Board shall consider whether an application is a development of regional impact requiring notice in accordance with RSA 36:57, III. If the Board determines it is a development of regional impact, the Board shall have an additional 30 days to act to approve, conditionally approve, or disapprove.
6. At the first public hearing, the Board shall consider whether an application will require legal, engineering, or other third-party review. If so, the Board shall determine a minimum amount for escrow and provide the applicant with the appropriate form.

G. FORMS

1. All forms prescribed herein and revisions thereof shall be adopted by majority vote of the Board and shall become part of these Rules of Procedure.

H. NOTICE

1. Public notice of the submission of, and public hearings on, each application shall be given by posting at both the Strafford Town Hall and the Strafford Post Office not less than ten (10) days prior to the date fixed for submission and consideration of the application.
2. Personal notice shall be made by verified mail, as defined in RSA 21:53, to the applicant, all abutters, holders of conservation, preservation, or agricultural preservation restrictions, and any professional whose seal appears on any plat, not less than ten (10) days prior to the date fixed for submission of the application to the Board. Notices will include the following information: if an application is accepted as complete, a public hearing will be opened at the same (minor subdivision) or the next meeting (major subdivision, including major subdivision by cumulative impact—i.e. four or more lots created by successive subdivision of a parent lot) and the application will be on the agenda of each Planning Board meeting until a decision is made.

I. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public Hearings will be held for any application accepted as complete. The Board will determine

if an application is complete for consideration by reviewing the plan to determine if all of the required elements are included on the plan (c.f. Planning Board checklist). The Board may agree to accept a plan as complete for consideration contingent on the completion of one or more items, and may schedule a public hearing on any plan that has been conditionally accepted as complete.

The conduct of public hearings shall be governed by the following rules:

1. The Chair shall call the hearing in session, identify the applicant or agent.
2. The applicant or agent shall be called to present the proposal to the Board and the public.
3. Members of the Board may ask questions at any point during the presentation.
4. The Chair will request any comments from Board staff, municipal staff, and/or Board consultants as appropriate.
5. Any party to the matter who desires to ask a question of another party must go through the Chair.
6. Any applicant, any abutter or any person with a direct interest in the matter may testify in person or in writing. Other persons may testify as permitted by the Board at each hearing.
7. Each person who speaks shall be required to state his/her name and address and indicate whether s/he is a party to the matter or an agent or counsel to a party to the matter.
8. The Chair may limit the length of comments at his or her discretion. The Chair may ask in advance for a show of hands of those who intend to speak during a given hearing, in order to gauge whether instituting a time limit, such as for 3 to 5 minutes for each speaker, would be advisable.
9. Those appearing in favor, opposition, or who are neither in favor nor opposition of the proposal shall be allowed to speak.
10. Other parties such as representatives of town departments and other town Boards and commissions who have an interest in the proposal shall be allowed to present their comments in person or in writing.
11. The Chair shall indicate whether the hearing is closed or continued. In the case of a continuance, additional notice is not required if the date, time and place of the continuation is made known at the current hearing.

J. DECISIONS

1. The Board shall render a written decision within 65 days of the date of acceptance of a completed application, subject to extension or waiver as provided in RSA 676:4.
2. The Board shall approve, conditionally approve, or disapprove an application.
3. Notice of decision and written findings of fact will be separate from the meeting minutes, and

will be made available for public inspection at the Planning & Zoning Office within 5 business days after the decision is made, as required in RSA 676:3. If the application is disapproved, the Board shall provide the applicant with written reason for this disapproval.

K. RECONSIDERATION

1. The Planning Board may reconsider any decision to approve, conditionally approve, or disapprove an application, for good cause, provided it is within the statutory appeal period. This may be done by the Board itself, or through a motion that specifies the reasons for reconsideration. Upon successful passage of the motion, the Board shall schedule a public hearing, with notice as provided in 676:4, I(d), where they shall rehear the application anew. Should the Board reach a new decision, a new appeal period shall be considered to have begun pursuant to RSA 677:15, et seq.

L. RECORDS

1. The records of the Board shall be kept by the designated minutes recorder and shall be made available for public inspection at the Planning & Zoning Office as required by RSA 91-A:4.
2. Minutes of the meetings, including the names of Board members, persons appearing before the Board and a brief description of the subject matter, shall be open to public inspection within 5 business days after the meeting as required in RSA 91-A:2, II.
3. If a website is maintained, a notice must be posted and maintained on the website stating where minutes may be reviewed and copies requested.

M. JOINT MEETINGS AND HEARINGS

1. The Planning Board may hold joint meetings and hearings with other "land use Boards" including the zoning Board of adjustment, the Historic District Commission, the Building Code Board of Appeals, and the Building Inspector. Each Board shall have discretion whether or not to hold such joint meeting or hearing (RSA 676:2).
2. Joint business meetings with another local land use Board may be held at any time when called jointly by the Chairs of the two Boards.
3. A joint public hearing must be a formal public hearing when the subject matter of the hearing is within the responsibilities of the Boards convened.
4. The Planning Board Chair shall chair all joint meetings and public hearings when the subject matter involves the Planning Board.
5. The rules of procedure for joint meetings and hearings, the subject matter of which involves the Planning Board, shall be the same as these rules of procedure except that the order of business shall be as follows:
 - a. Call to order by Chair;
 - b. Introduction of members of both Boards by Chair;
 - c. Explanation of reason for joint meeting/hearing by Chair;
 - d. In the case of a public hearing relative to a requested permit or an application for a plat approval, or both, the applicant shall be called to present his/her proposal;

e. Adjournment.

6. Each Board involved in a joint public hearing makes its own decision, based on its criteria for the particular matter.

N. AMENDMENTS

Rules of procedure shall be adopted or amended by a majority vote at a regular meeting of the Board.

O. WAIVERS

Any portion of these rules of procedure may be waived by majority vote of the Board.