

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Location: Strafford Town Hall Conference Room

Date & Time: July 2, 2026 6:30PM

Members Present:

Phil Auger – Chair

Lynn Sweet – Selectman Representative

Alternate Members Present:

Donald Coker

Sue Higgins

Others Present:

Lisa Wise, Strafford Regional Planning Commission, Senior Regional Planner

Robert Fletcher, Minutes Recorder

The Chair, Phil Auger, called the meeting to order at 6:34PM and recognized Board members Lynn Sweet, Donald Coker, and Sue Higgins as present. He also recognized as present Lisa Wise and Robert Fletcher.

General Public Comment

No public attendees had any comments.

Other Business

The Chair stated that no old or new business was on the agenda and the meeting would be more like a work session.

Master Plan Subcommittee Updates.

Bow Lake & Watershed Management. Sue Higgins provided the following information:

- 26.6 percent of the Strafford septic system surveys were returned. The survey was broken into zones.
- Some residents questioned how to fill out the survey because they had town water and sewer.
- Some residents are not doing any septic inspections or pumping out their systems.
- Survey questionnaires have gone out for the Northwood end of the lake.
- 604B grant has been approved. It will need to go through the Governor's Council for final approval. .
- In the future the watershed management plan will qualify Strafford for 319 and other grants to help with watershed issues and cost-sharing for septic system repairs and upgrades.
- F T Environmental conducted a shoreline survey from boats provided by volunteers.
- Sue Higgins, Phil Auger, and Jeff Schloss are determining the adequacy of roadway culverts and drainage issues that are obvious from public roadways.

Jeff Schloss, 30 Bunnell Drive, member of the Bow Lake subcommittee, offered the following:

- The management plan needs to be completed for justification for additional grant some of which only require a one percent match payment from the town.
- Runoff is difficult to calculate for determining its effects on lake water quality. It is important to understand its effect for justification to require infrastructure and property owner

improvements. Lynn Sweet noted that the state is responsible for a large portion of Province Road near the lake and it is very difficult to get the state to make any improvements. The Chair noted that Fire Roads and driveways are more significant sources of runoff and drainage issues to the lake. Sue Higgins noted that a number of residents along Water Street have been piping some type of runoff from their homes into the storm drains.

The Chair noted that it appears the expected grant funding for approximately \$84,000 combined with \$25,000 town appropriation will cover the watershed management plan costs. The Planning Board will work with the town road agent when the watershed management plan is complete and apply for grant that can be used as incentives for property owners to fix septic systems and drainage problems. He mentioned the problem with additional recreation vehicles (RVs) near the lake that place added stress on existing septic systems. Sue Higgins believed there was a state RSA for travel trailers to get permits for use exceeding seven days with requirements for waste disposal. The Chair indicated that the RSA requires RVs to be connected to a septic system after some period of time.

Bow Lake Lollapalooza is July 25, 2026.

Sue Higgins indicated that the town library is considering raising the current library structure to provide additional area. The Chair stated that modifying the current library property would be a temporary solution for a library expansion. They are no longer pursuing the acquisition of a parcel close to the town offices but ideally would like to relocate the library in the future.

Green Committee. Sue Higgins stated that the committee plans to meet with the Strafford school superintendent to discuss solar panel installation to reduce utility bills which are exceeding \$78,000 per year.

New Hampshire Zoning Law Changes.

The Chair questioned which bills had been signed by Governor Ayotte and Lynn Sweet requested the author of each bill be identified. Lisa Wise noted the following bills:

- SB564 – Creates 674:21-b which would prohibit municipalities from limiting dead end street length and cap the number of housing units on dead end streets. The Chair was concerned about the effect this would have in Strafford. It was unknown if the bill had been signed.
- HB1103 – Amends RSA 79-E to give municipalities the option of using RSA 79-E Community Revitalization Tax Relief for conversion of industrial and commercial structures to residential use, and to allow 79-E tax relief in Housing Opportunity Zones, without any prescribed affordability requirements. This bill was signed but doesn't affect Strafford.
- HB1195 – Amends RSA 674:16, VI to require that home-based childcare for up to 12 children be allowed in primary residential or existing accessory structures on lots where residential uses are permitted and not be subject to site plan review, if the family or group family childcare meets DHHS childcare licensing requirements. This bill was signed.
- The Chair noted that legislation regarding Class VI roadways passed last year went into effect on July 1, 2026. This could be significant for Strafford which has over 26-miles of Class VI roadways.

Data Centers.

The Chair questioned whether or not the town should have a public meeting to educate residents on the pros and cons of data centers. Donald Coker indicated that he is neither for or against data centers but expressed his concern that getting factual information about data centers is paramount to making an informed decision. The Board agreed that it would be a good idea and Lynn Sweet suggested an informational public meeting that includes presentations from experts for both the pros and cons of data centers. Lisa Wise indicated that the SRPC is focusing on developing information regarding data center water and energy usage. Donald Coker stated that he knew of someone who could provide information in this regard.

Planning Board Meeting Calendar.

The Board discussed the Planning Board meeting dates for 2027 to resolve any conflict with holidays. They determined that meeting the first Thursday of each month needed to be modified as follows:

- July 1, 2027 to July 8, 2027.
- September 2, 2027 to September 9, 2027.

They also determined that September 3, 2026 needed to be changed to September 10, 2026.

Regulation Revisions.

The Chair reiterated the need to update town regulations with a functional index and a slight reorganization to make them more “user friendly” to include RSA links. Lynn Sweet suggested incorporating photos or drawings to provide a visual reference. Some updates or changes may require a town vote. Lisa Wise reminded the Board of time-line requirements for a town vote.

The Board reviewed the minutes of the June 4, 2026 Planning Board Meeting. The Chair appointed Donald Coker and Sue Higgins as voting members in the absence of Charlie Moreno and Terry Hyland. Lynn Sweet made a motion to accept the minutes as written, which was seconded by Sue Higgins and voted upon verbally in the affirmative by all voting Board members.

There being no further business before the Board, Donald Coker made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Sue Higgins. The Board voted unanimously in favor, and the meeting adjourned at 7:22PM.

Minutes Prepared by Robert Fletcher