

**Demolition Review Committee
Meeting of October 17, 2018
291 Portsmouth Avenue, Stratham**

Present: Representing the Heritage Commission: David Canada, Nathan Merrill, Rebecca Mitchell; Members at Large: Fred Emanuel, Dana Dowling.

Guests: Shanti Wolph, Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer, Town of Stratham; Kevin Hatch, Property Owner.

Agenda: Demolition Permit Application #2018-797; 291 Portsmouth Ave., Map 22 Lot 21; seeking permit to demolish existing house, garage, barn, and pool.

Convened: Chair David Canada called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. In anticipation of his absence from town Mr. Canada appointed Mr. Merrill to act as chair during the period of his absence. Mr. Canada asked Ms. Mitchell to take the minutes:

Members present discussed the history of the property noting that records indicate that the one and a half story house was built by Samuel Allen (variously Allin) before 1737 and was purchased by Samuel Piper in 1772. The 1793 Phineas Merrill map of Stratham shows Piper at the location. The west side of the house is the original portion and the addition appears to date from the 19th century. In the 1930s and 40s the Pantelakos family had an extensive farm growing vegetables for market in Portsmouth and elsewhere. In more recent years it was the home of the David & Elizabeth Noyes family. David was president of the Stratham Fair 1967- 1995 and served on many town committees. He was a deacon at Stratham Church an assistant fire chief for the Stratham Volunteer Fire Department. Elizabeth served as Stratham's Postmistress for many, many years.

Ms. Mitchell noted that if the house is demolished it will be the first loss of a house shown on the Phineas Merrill map to take place in at least a decade. She noted that in 2006 there had been a move to demolish the house. She and Stratham Historical Society President Barbara Mann toured the house though there was no formal demolition review process at that time. Ms. Mitchell read excerpts from a report written by a contractor who accompanied them. He noted the "massive split and field stone foundation" and the "large granite slab footings" at the base of the brick arches supporting the center chimney. He ended his comments noting that the house clearly originated in the 18th century and that "though imposed with extensive neglect and subsequent inadequate craftsmanship, the overall integrity of this house remains intact."

The group then toured the house and barn. In the house they noted the Federal period fireplace mantel in the parlor. The two front rooms in the original part of the house appear to be the only rooms retaining significant period features. Elsewhere there have been marked alterations to the house plan, notably the probable relocation of the staircase and the 20th c. addition of a shed dormer.

Moving on to the barn the group agreed that it dates from the mid-19th century and the frame is in reasonably good condition while the roof needs work.

The group then gathered at the rear of the property for discussion. Mr. Emanuel noted the remarkable size of the house foundation stones. Mr. Merrill stated it appeared to him that the house was in poor condition, including its frame, and asked Mr. Emanuel for his assessment. Mr. Emanuel agreed that the original framing, particularly in the cellar and in the roof where the shed dormer had been added, was in poor condition and would make rehabilitation of the house cost prohibitive. Mr. Merrill asked Mr. Hatch if he could say something about his plans for the property. He also offered his opinion that the barn might be reusable and wondered if it is in some way obstructing plans for developing the property. Mr. Canada asked about the time frame for redevelopment and if there is any way the barn could be worked into the plan. Mr. Hatch said that there is no immediate plan for development but he had not considered using the barn. He also said that he had looked hard for ways to rehabilitate the house but it ultimately seemed too far gone for any such plan. He said that the new house, in whatever form it took, would most likely be located further back on the property than the current house siting. Mr. Merrill suggested that by repairing the barn, it could add value to the lot for its historic appearance, and that it would block noise and sightlines from the road, particularly if the house is moved back in the lot as Mr. Hatch suggested.

Mr. Canada asked whether there would be someone who could take the barn if it is not practical to save the barn on site. Mr. Merrill said he would investigate barn salvage options.

Noting the remarkable stones in the house foundation Ms. Mitchell suggested that the foundation be retained as a garden or landscape feature with one side opened for access. That would mark the location of the original house and, in a sense, memorialize it. Others supported this idea.

Mr. Hatch agreed to consider our discussion points and he understood the need for historic review delay in order to facilitate planning for salvage operations. He expressed willingness to allow anything to be salvaged prior to demolition taking place.

Mr. Merrill moved that the committee finds the house and barn have historical significance and that the committee invokes a 30 day period for further review with the option of extending the review period for the full allowed period of sixty calendar days. The motion was seconded by Mr. Emanuel and carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 AM

Minutes prepared by Rebecca Mitchell