

# Stratham Heritage Commission

## Meeting Minutes

December 14, 2016

7:00 pm

Land Use Conference Room

Present: Rebecca Mitchell, Nathan Merrill, Wally Stuart, David Canada, (Terry Barnes @ 7:20 pm)

Guests: Anne Sloan (interested in the barn easement program)

Convened: 7:05 pm by Chairman Mitchell

Minutes: November 9, 2016 minutes were approved with the addition of Kathy Breslin as a guest (Mr. Stuart, Mr. Merrill, unanimous)

### OLD BUSINESS

Treasurer's Report: Mr. Stuart reported the following account balances as of 11/30/2016: Operating budget \$729. Heritage Fund \$4,670. **Motion: (Mr. Canada, Mr. Merrill, unanimous): To reimburse Ms. Mitchell for \$89 cost of wreath to adorn the Bartlett-Cushman House for the holiday season. Motion: (Mr. Canada, Mr. Merrill, unanimous): To reimburse Ms. Mitchell \$100 for the cost of stipends to Ben Allen and Tyler Allen for their efforts at the 300th parade pulling our float with their oxen.** Both expenditures will be drawn from the administrative line item. \$540 will remain in our 2016 budget after these expenditures.

Lane Homestead: The LCHIP plaque has arrived (at no cost to us). The National Register plaque will cost \$488.75. Ms. Mitchell will inquire if we can be invoiced prior to year-end, and the town will hold the check until the plaque is delivered.

Bartlett-Cushman House: Lucy Cushman discovered the old Stratham Historical Society sign for the house in her garage, and gave it to Ms. Mitchell for us to install as appropriate. Ms. Mitchell reported that the scheduled window renovations are complete. Mr. Canada said that the shutters will be painted and installed over the winter.

There was discussion about budgeting for any needed repairs in 2017. Ms. Mitchell noted that storm sashes are still needed for the bay windows, and that the attic dormer windows need to be repaired. The barn needs to be roofed and windows repaired. Ms. Mitchell and Mr. Canada will research cost figures for these items.

As previously mentioned, Steve Bedard (a contractor specializing in historic structure rehabilitations) reviewed the Dockham estimate for complete rehab of the building. Considering that much exterior

work has been done since the \$650,042 Dockham estimate was completed, the new figure from Bedard is \$388,783. Bedard also eliminated work that he thought unnecessary and lowered the expected cost of some items. Mr. Canada will study some possible income/expense scenarios if the town were to undertake the interior renovations and rent out the building.

Chase's Tavern: Lisa Mausolf provided an estimate of \$3,000 to complete the National Register nomination. This cost will be built into our 2017 operating budget request. The property owner is enthusiastic about pursuing the nomination.

Planning Board: Mr. Merrill reported that the Technical Review Committee has not met. Mr. Canada reported no major development projects in front of the Planning Board at this time, other than a minor subdivision off High Street. Ms. Mitchell inquired about the status of the proposed cellular communications tower at 57 Portsmouth Ave., Karl Scamman's store. Mr. Canada reported that the reception has been cool so far, and that it will be a long road for them to successfully obtain the necessary conditional use permit to proceed. Ms. Mitchell noted that the Section 106 review process has not yet begun.

Mr. Merrill met with town planner Tavis Austin and town administrator Paul Deschaine last week to begin work on the Portsmouth Avenue corridor zoning project. Mr. Austin will be creating some potential suggestions for a new committee to review and discuss when it is formed by the Planning Board. Ms. Mitchell suggested to Mr. Merrill that he could consult with NHDHR staff and/or retired staff who might be familiar with other towns in the state that have tackled similar projects. Lisa Mausolf has submitted an estimate of \$15,000 - \$17,000 for a project area survey that would be a foundation document for planning efforts along the corridor. Those present agreed that that expense should be considered for the Planning Office 2017 budget or CIP.

Demolition Review Committee: Mr. Stuart and Mr. Merrill completed documentary photographs of the rear barn at 271 Portsmouth Avenue and the three small barn/sheds at 3 Barker Lane. There was discussion of best practices for archiving electronic and hard copies of photographs and related text. Ms. Mitchell will investigate further.

Ms. Mitchell confirmed that we will postpone possible revision of the Demolition Review Ordinance until next year, in the hopes that there will be regional or statewide attention focused on this matter in 2017. Mr. Barnes noted that he is seeing large numbers of demolition requests for historic houses in New Castle, and all agreed that this problem will become increasingly alarming across the seacoast area.

Budget: 2016 budget = \$3,750. 2017 proposed budget = \$4,900. While this represents a 30.7% increase year-over-year, Mr. Canada noted that \$5,000 is considered a normal, typical budget for the smaller town committees, such as Conservation, Energy, Heritage, etc. and he does not anticipate any problem with the Budget Advisory Committee or Board of Selectmen.

300th Committee: The 300th committee has completed its work and disbanded. When closing out their books, they voted to leave their surplus \$2,066 in our Heritage Fund. Ms. Mitchell distributed a thank you letter she drafted for our review. She will print on town letterhead and mail to all 300th members.

Wiggin Cemetery: There was continued discussion about long term stewardship of the cemetery, with the town cemetery committee potentially taking responsibility for it. Ms. Mitchell will invite Peter Wiggin to attend our February meeting for further discussion before the commission makes a recommendation to the Cemetery Trustees.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

NH Preservation Alliance Initiative: Mr. Merrill reported on the NH Preservation Alliance's 52 barns in 52 weeks initiative for 2017. The need for grant funding and/or low/no cost loans for historic structure repairs was discussed.

February Program: Ms. Mitchell reported on progress developing the February program. Ron Deane has agreed to show photos and discuss his rehabilitation of the Keniston Tavern. Historian Marcia Schmidt-Blaine of Plymouth State University will be the keynote speaker, talking about women tavern owners, including some specifics about Stratham's own Love Chase. Ms. Mitchell has reserved the Morgera Room at the firehouse for 2/17/2017.

Next Meeting: January 11, 2017 at 7:00 pm in the Land Use Conference Room.

Adjourned: 9:20 PM (Mitchell, Stuart, unanimous).

Respectfully submitted,

Nathan Merrill