



TOWN OF STRATHAM

INCORPORATED 1716

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STRATHAM HERITAGE COMMISSION MINUTES

**February 13, 2024, at 7:00 pm
Stratham Municipal Center**

Present: Nathan Merrill, Forrest Barker, Lucy Cushman, Jeff Hyland, and Mike Houghton

Absent: Dave Canada and Drew Bedard

Guests: Mark Connors, Director of Planning and Community Development

Chair Merrill called the meeting to order at 7:07

Secretary's Report: Jeff Hyland made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Mike Houghton seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: No report.

Correspondence: Mr. Merrill received an email from Town Administrator David Moore asking if the Heritage Commission has any input for the naming of the home team dugout at Stevens Park for longtime baseball coach John Hopping. Mr. Merrill stated that he is not personally familiar with Mr. Hopping, but that the letters written by others in support of this dedication were compellingly favorable. Other members expressed similar sentiments. The Heritage Commission agreed with the proposed naming and had no further comments.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Planning Board: Last week's meeting was canceled. Mr. Houghton said the only update was that the Gallant property application has been withdrawn for the present, and the proposed subdivision of 189 Bunker Hill Ave into six lots appears to be progressing. He expects we will receive a demolition application for the existing 1950s home at some point.

Select Board: Mr. Houghton reported that there is a citizen's petition on the Town Meeting warrant to request hand counting of ballots at the upcoming election. The Zoning Board of Adjustment recently voted to approve rezoning the large parcel of land off Stony Brook Lane from "Special Commercial" to single family residential. Mr. Houghton wrote a letter on behalf of

the Select Board, requesting a rehearing because the ZBA's decision essentially eliminates the entire Special Commercial zone, and reaches too far from the original intent of the Master Plan and zoning districts previously approved by Stratham voters. The Select Board feels that rezoning of this magnitude should be a Town Meeting decision. Commission members concurred. Mr. Houghton stated that the ZBA will need to vote on the rehearing request at its next meeting.

Demolition Review Committee: Has not met.

Heritage District Advisory Committee: Has not met.

Open Space Steering Committee: Mr. Hyland reported that the Committee held an unveiling of a draft for the Open Space Connectivity Plan the previous night and 35 people attended. All are encouraged to read the draft report on the website and provide public input.

OLD BUSINESS

Brown/Gifford Project: Mr. Merrill reported that Lisa Mausolf is making good headway on the NHDHR inventory form. Mr. Merrill is meeting with Lisa and Jim Scamman this Friday to look at photos that Mr. Scamman has in his files.

Veterans Memorial Garden: Mr. Merrill Spoke with Rebecca Mitchell about the archive of applications. Ms. Mitchell said she has the old applications since the time that she took over VMG duties from previous Commission member Nancy Hansen. She also said that Ms. Hansen had dropped off several boxes of old documents and files shortly before her move to Exeter. Ms. Mitchell has not yet sorted through these materials. In the coming weeks she will begin the process of sorting and culling the papers. She thinks that the original applications from when the VMG was first built are stored at the Historical Society. Mr. Merrill said once the files are accounted for, the Select Board will need to decide where they want them to be stored permanently. He suggested the Town Clerk's vault would be more appropriate than private homes and the non-municipal SHS (given that the VMG is town-owned).

2024 Public Program Preparation: Mr. Merrill and Jeff Hyland are working on finalizing their presentation. Peter Wiggin made some maps to help illustrate the early development of 17th century Stratham for the slideshow. Mr. Hyland said his wife Donna Jensen posted about the program on several Facebook groups, and Mr. Merrill said that Ms. Mitchell had made a couple of posts on the Commission's Facebook page. Publicity blurbs have also been distributed via the SHS, Select Board, and Wiggin Memorial Library email newsletters.

Historic Resources Mapping Project: Mark Conners said that the Open Space steering Committee's website will host the Historic Resources map for the time being. The OSSC has a mapping feature that is already being paid for by the town for one year and then the town will take over managing the map. The Heritage Commission asked if the Historic Resource section could easily be separated or accessible on its own so that it is not buried under the rest of the OSSC resources.

Historic House Placards: Mr. Merrill distributed the promotional postcards from Hand Painted Wooden Signs. Mr. Merrill asked if the town would be able to mail the promotional cards when the Heritage Commission was ready to start compiling an order. Mr. Connors said they should be able to do it. Logistics were discussed further, including setting up the mailing to appropriate property owners, and following up with SHS as potential partner in the project. Ms. Cushman noted that SHS has a business meeting coming up soon on March 11th. Mr. Merrill will follow up with Mr. Canada. Mr. Houghton stated his desire to get the details finalized soon, so that we can send out the mailing this spring, and get signs ordered and installed during the summer.

Historic/Scenic Streets: Mr. Merrill asked Mr. Connors where we stand currently with this project. Mr. Merrill summarized some of the discussions the Commission has had in recent months. He acknowledged that it is now too late to bring anything to the voters for 2024, so we really want to get the ball rolling to have a solid plan to propose in spring 2025. Mr. Connors will renew attention to this matter now that the Building Inspector's office is finally fully staffed.

NEW BUSINESS

Route 33 Neighborhood Heritage District: Mr. Connors brought up the concern with the liberal allowances for additional structures or higher residential densities on historic properties – a few of which extend quite deep into the adjoining Residential/Agricultural zone. Mr. Connors wants to make sure that it's not an invitation for people to build new buildings on property with historic structures. He is giving consideration to tightening up the current language, and/or limiting the depth of the zone to a set number of feet from the roadway. He will be discussing this topic with the Planning Board in the coming year.

Mr. Houghton made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:11 pm. Jeff Hyland seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Forrest Barker
Secretary