

What is the Heritage Preservation Fund?

It is a capital reserve fund created in 2011 for the purpose of supporting the protection and preservation of historic properties and cultural resources in Stratham. The Heritage Preservation Fund provides a means through which capital can be recycled to support multiple projects over time. Any proposed disbursements from the Fund will be subject to approval of both the Heritage Commission and the Select Board.

Why does Stratham need the Heritage Preservation Fund?

Our Master Plan states that the Town “desires to maintain a well planned community with protected natural and historic resources.” Stratham has taken significant measures to protect its natural environment, but little had been done for its historical resources prior to establishment of this Fund. Since 2011, we have successfully saved the Lane Homestead, Bartlett-Cushman House, and our Old Town Hall from uncertain futures, largely with money from the HPF combined with outside grant funding from New Hampshire’s Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP). Local matching funds are required for most outside grant programs, and having our matching funds “in the bank” makes our grant applications more competitive. Preserved and protected historic properties benefit the entire Town, helping to maintain property values and attracting investment. Communities that demonstrably care about their historic resources are vibrant communities with a commitment to a thriving future.

How does the Heritage Preservation Fund work for Stratham?

The Fund enables the Town to take proactive measures to protect significant historic Stratham properties rather than having to react to preservation needs on an unplanned or ad hoc basis. The Fund will be a ready source for matching funds to be combined with grants or private donations. Other effective preservation actions include negotiating preservation easements with private property owners, buying historic properties for resale with preservation restrictions in place, contributing to capital project needs for significant Stratham structures, and relocating within town historic structures threatened with demolition. The Fund could also enable the Heritage Commission to collaborate with the Conservation Commission on combined preservation-conservation easements. And lastly, it can also be used for projects that build our knowledge and the public’s awareness of local historic resources (such as historic research, signage and plaques, etc.)

What is the Heritage Commission’s goal for funding the HPF?

The goal is to build it up with \$50,000 annual appropriations through the Town’s Capital Investment Program (CIP) whenever the Fund balance is less than \$250,000. Each appropriation to the Fund via CIP is subject to annual review of the Planning Board, Select Board, Budget Advisory Committee, and approval by Town Meeting voters every March.

Can you summarize again what the money is to be used for?

- Purchase of preservation easements
- Purchase historically significant property, to be resold with preservation restrictions
- Provide matching funds for outside grants that help to preserve historic resources
- Moving historically important structures to save them from demolition
- Provide funding for research, historical surveys, and signage/plaques
- Provide funding for capital improvements to historic resources in need of repair
- Collaborate with the Conservation Commission on combined conservation/historic preservation projects