



TOWN OF STRATHAM

INCORPORATED 1716

10 BUNKER HILL AVENUE STRATHAM NH 03885

VOICE (603) 772-7391 FAX (603) 775-0517

STRATHAM HERITAGE COMMISSION

Minutes

October 10, 2023 at 7:00 pm

Stratham Municipal Center

Present: Nathan Merrill, Drew Bedard, Rebecca Mitchell, Forrest Barker, Lucy Cushman, Jeff Hyland, David Canada

Absent: Mike Houghton

Guests: Stratham Energy Commission members Paul Deschaine and Matthew O'Keefe until approximately 8:00 pm

Chair Merrill called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

Paul Deschaine and Matt O'Keefe gave the Heritage Commission a summary of their proposal for Stratham Community Power, which will be voted on at a special Town Meeting on 10/26/2023. Adopting Community Power will save Stratham residents money by using a third-party company to buy power instead of sourcing energy through Unitil. Unitil will still deliver the power over its transmission lines and handle all billing.

Secretary's Report: Rebecca Mitchell made a motion to approve the September 12, 2023 minutes. Dave Canada seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's report: Forrest Barker reported no changes to the balances except for interest. Ms. Barker received an invoice for Exeter Monument Works and that will be reflected in the next balance.

Correspondence: Mr. Merrill received a form from the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance to renew the Commission's membership. Mr. Canada made a motion to renew the membership at last year's rate of 'Membership Plus' at \$60, which includes quarterly newsletters for Commission members. Jeff Hyland seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Ms. Barker will submit the form for payment to Christiane McAllister, town finance administrator.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Planning Board: Mr. Canada reported the Planning Board has met twice since the Heritage Commission's last meeting. Drew Goddard (D.B.A. Copley Properties LLC) wants to demolish the existing office buildings at 89 and 91 Portsmouth Ave., and replace them with one office building on the frontage, with several multi-unit residential buildings to the rear. Mr. Merrill advocated for attempting to connect Butterfield Lane and Raeder Drive to the future Bunker Hill Ave. traffic signal – and this redevelopment project could provide such an opportunity for Butterfield Lane. Mr. Canada added that the Planning Board encouraged Mr. Goddard to include sidewalks in his site plan, because with each addition of sidewalk segments, we will eventually achieve townwide pedestrian connectivity. He reported that Mr. Goddard appeared agreeable.

Select Board: No report.

Demolition Review Committee: Mr. Merrill reported that the new owners of 46 High Street applied for a demolition permit to raze the existing house and replace it with a new one of a slightly larger size. The 1952 ranch style home is in poor condition, and the DRC did not invoke the Historic Review Delay.

Heritage District Advisory Committee: Mr. Hyland said there was nothing to report.

Open Space Plan Steering Committee: Mr. Hyland reported that the committee met a few weeks ago. He passed around their vision statement. They discussed the potential for an Ag Commission because so much of Stratham's open space is farmland. Mr. Merrill stated that it has been considered before, but farmers in town have generally felt supported by the community, and fear that another volunteer board would be difficult to fill with suitable volunteers. Ms. Mitchell emphasized that the Heritage Commission has tried to support Stratham's farmers and highlight issues that affect agriculture in Stratham, in lieu of a separate Ag Commission. The Heritage Commission was vocal about protecting farmland and supporting farmers in the Master Plan, and has also worked cooperatively with the Conservation Commission in the past. Mr. Merrill added that this is something that could be reinvigorated.

OLD BUSINESS

Historic register nominations: River Road: Mr. Merrill reported that he was supposed to hear from the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources by this time but has not. He will reach out to DHR staff.

Next Project: Mr. Merrill asked if other members of the Commission had further contemplated last month's discussion about which property to pursue next for a potential national or state historic register nomination. Ms. Mitchell voiced support for the Brown/Gifford property at 16 Jack Rabbit Lane. Mr. Merrill shared some history, when four or five years ago the Town's tenants at the Brown/Gifford house wanted some improvements made, including replacing the front door with a modern unit. Mr. Merrill said that without the Commission's intervention, the beautiful original Federal period front door and ironwork could have been lost. The house contains other original features, including its front hall and staircase woodwork, as well as fireplace mantles and wide pine floorboards. Ms. Mitchell added that the Josiah Brown diaries,

combined with the historic integrity of the house and accompanying barn, would make this a strong candidate for a National Register nomination – and potentially desirable for a preservation easement. Mr. Canada asked if the Town would hold the easement even though they own the buildings. Ms. Mitchell feels that it could.

Mr. Merrill suggested asking Lisa Mausolf or Preservation Company to do the nomination form, noting that we have adequate funds available in our operating budget. Mr. Merrill will need to meet with the Select Board as the property owners to get their support for this project. The Commission agreed, and authorized Mr. Merrill to reach out to Lisa Mausolf if the Select Board reacts favorably.

Town marker project: Nothing to report.

State marker project: Ms. Mitchell has finished the bibliography and is working on compiling source materials for scanning. She has read through the updated submission requirements. The application needs a petition form with twenty signatures from New Hampshire residents. The petition also must include the proposed location of the marker. The Commission discussed the pros and cons of different spots around the traffic circle. Mr. Hyland, Ms. Cushman, and Mr. Bedard agreed that near the Collector's Eye parking lot would be advantageous because people could safely pull over and see the building while reading the sign. Mr. Canada said he would approach the Stratham Historical Society to ask if they would contribute \$1,000 dollars toward the cost of the marker from the donations they have received in recent years from the late Priscilla Lane Tapley. The Heritage Commission would cover the rest of the cost and complete the application. Mr. Canada made a motion to submit the proposal to NHDHR for a self-funded state marker and ask the Stratham Historical Society to donate \$1,000 toward the project. Mr. Hyland seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Veterans Memorial Garden: Rebecca Mitchell said there is one new brick and one monument application and that she will go over the process with Ms. Cushman.

SHS building repairs: Drew Bedard reported that phase one will be complete after the last window is painted, and phase two will start next year.

Easement stewardship update: Mr. Merrill noted that clapboard replacement on the Lane Homestead barn is currently underway.

Cemeteries: Lucy Cushman said that she will reach out one last time to get a yes or no from Cole Emanuel. If he does not wish to do the cemetery marking project, she will bring it to the Scoutmaster as an idea for another Eagle Scout candidate to consider.

Historic house placards: No updates.

Membership and officer changes: Mr. Merrill informed the Commission that the website is updated with current members and their term expiration years. Drew Bedard is officially a new member, serving as an alternate. Mr. Hyland is moving up from an alternate seat to fill the voting position being vacated by Ms. Mitchell. Ms. Mitchell spoke with David Rying, and he

appears interested in joining the Demolition Review Committee, to take Mr. Bedard's at-large seat.

Historic/Scenic streets: Mr. Hyland presented a slide show with photos he took of River Road, featuring the open landscapes, stone walls, historic buildings, and the Scammon cemetery. Mr. Hyland will take more photos to better capture pedestrians, cars, and signs on the road to help give a better sense of how the street is used, and to give an improved sense of scale, noting how narrow the roadway is.

Rebecca Mitchell made her final motion as a member of the Stratham Heritage Commission, to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 pm. Mr. Merrill seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Forrest Barker, Secretary