

Stratham Heritage Commission
Meeting Minutes
January 10, 2018
7:00 pm
Land Use Conference Room

Present: Nathan Merrill, Rebecca Mitchell, David Canada, Wallace Stuart, Michael Houghton, Florence Wiggin, Tammy Hathaway

Absent: None

Guests: Forrest Barker, Paul Deschaine joined at 7:55 pm

CONVENED: At 7:00 pm by Chair Merrill

Mr. Merrill introduced Forrest Barker to the committee and explained that he had invited her to sit in on the meeting as there is an open alternate seat on the Commission, and she might be interested in serving.

Secretary's Report: The December 13, 2017 minutes were approved as presented (Ms. Mitchell, Mr. Stuart, unanimous).

Treasurer's Report: Mr. Stuart reported that he received a bill from Seacoast Memorials for \$40.00 for two engraved bricks from 2017. They will be paid out of the 2018 budget. The Commission received a \$300.00 donation from Architectural Salvage to be deposited in the Heritage Fund. Ms. Mitchell will draft a letter of thanks to be sent from the Commission. Mr. Stuart will send the 2018 budget proposal to Mr. Merrill for any changes prior to presenting it to the Budget Advisory Committee later in the month.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Planning Board: Mr. Canada said there was nothing new to report, but noted that the board is working on warrant articles including a revised cell tower ordinance and several zoning amendments. It was noted that the Planning Board is in support of expanding the Demolition Review period from 30 days to 60 days, and that the zoning amendments will eliminate the "2-for-1" incentive for removing existing houses that front on town roads when new subdivisions are proposed. This was an issue raised by the Commission several years ago, after the unfortunate demolition of the former Kathleen Foss house on Bunker Hill Avenue.

Technical Review Committee: Mr. Merrill reported that the TRC has not met recently.

Demolition Review Committee: Mr. Merrill reported that the DRC has not met recently.

OLD BUSINESS:

Bartlett-Cushman House: Mr. Houghton reported that at the 1/8/18 Selectmen's meeting a 1-year marketing agreement was executed with Colleen Lake of Brick and Barn Real Estate Group. Mr. Canada will communicate with Ms. Lake that she could reach out to the Heritage Commission for advice and information supporting the town's effort to lease the house. Mr. Merrill noted that with approximately \$8,000.00 of the 2017 budget for B-C house repairs unspent, Colin Lavery included that amount in his 2018 budget which could be used for window work. Mr. Houghton reported that the Energy Committee continues to explore options for solar panels to power the Municipal Center, with the rear of the B-C lot a possible location for siting them. ***The Commission discussed this proposal and reached a consensus that placing solar panels on the B-C lot is not desirable for several reasons, including that it would require extensive tree cutting; it would eliminate the ability to use the land for overflow Municipal Center parking or other town uses; and the ground-mounted panels would eliminate the integrity of the setting of the National Register-listed historic house.***

Portsmouth Avenue Survey: Preservation consultant Lisa Mausolf has submitted a 149-page draft survey of Portsmouth Avenue from the Exeter town line to the Greenland town line. Ms. Mitchell explained that the first part of the document summarizes the history of Stratham, broken down by the transportation eras. Names, dates, and properties both residential and nonresidential are included. The survey identifies forty properties that merit further study. Also included in the document are historical photos and current-day photos taken by Ms. Mausolf. The next step will be to proof read for errors. Ms. Mitchell will distribute the document to the Commission for review. Discussion ensued about what a valuable tool this will be for both the planning office and the Demolition Review Committee. Mr. Merrill noted that there is a RFP out for rewriting the 20-year old town Master Plan, and that this document will be a valuable resource in that process.

Scamman Farm: Ms. Mitchell has received a \$5,000.00 quote from preservation consultant Lynne Monroe to prepare the nomination document for the National Register of Historic Places. A second quote was received from preservation consultant Lisa Mausolf in the amount of \$5,500-\$6,500. **The lowest bid is \$1,000.00 over the initially-proposed 2018 budget of \$4,000.00 and a motion was made to increase the survey/consultants line item to \$5,000.00 to cover the preparation of documents for this nomination. (Houghton, Mitchell, unanimous). Furthermore, a motion was made to accept the \$5,000.00 Lynne Monroe proposal (Canada, Stuart, unanimous)**

Veterans' Memorial Garden: Mr. Stuart noted that the bill from Seacoast Memorials for the 2 bricks from November for \$40.00 was received. Ms. Mitchell will write a thank you for Tracy McGrail, and Mr. Merrill will recognize her service in his annual summary for the Town Report.

Photo Archives: Nothing new to report.

Town-Owned Resources: **The Draft Memorandum regarding the advisory Guidelines for the Heritage Commission Review of Town-Owned Historic buildings was updated by Ms. Mitchell and Mr. Merrill with a clearer description of the 1911 Wiggin Memorial Library as requested at our December meeting. Motion: To approve the updated document and send it to the Board of Selectmen (Canada, Stuart, unanimous).**

Wiggin Cemetery: Ms. Mitchell reported that she had emailed Peter Wiggin requesting an update on the cemetery at Sandy Point. He replied that his wife Dori has retired from her job and will manage the project to establish a "Friends of the Wiggin Burial Plot" organization. Mr. Merrill will reach out to them both and acknowledge the hard work on clearing the site and formalizing plans for long-term stewardship of this valuable historic resource.

Old Town Hall: Mr. Merrill, Mr. Canada, and Mr. Deschaine met with Mark Perlowski and there were concerns expressed on the proposed Option Agreement document, so it has not been signed. Ms. Mitchell spoke several times with Steven Berg of Portsmouth regarding an appraisal. After considerable thought, and including a conversation with Mr. Perlowski, Mr. Berg concluded that in his view it is impossible to do an accurate or honest appraisal for a multitude of reasons. Jennifer Goodman of the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance said she understands that the preservation easement could happen without an appraisal, and she estimated that the Alliance would need approximately \$20,000 to fund the stewardship endowment.

At 8:07 pm Mr. Merrill asked for a motion to go into a non-public meeting, citing:

- (d) Consideration of the acquisition, sale, or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community.

(Mr. Canada, Ms. Mitchell, unanimous). Returned to public meeting at 8:40 pm with a motion to adjourn non-public session and seal the minutes (Mr. Canada, Ms. Mitchell unanimous).

Ms. Mitchell will submit an article on the Old Town Hall for the February issue of the Stratham Magazine. She will also write a brief informative letter to be read at the next Stratham Historical Society meeting by Mr. Canada.

New Business:

National Register Plaque: The 16 Emery's Lane property owners are not interested in a plaque at this time. Ms. Mitchell offered a plaque to Ron Deane to recognize his rehabilitation of the Kenniston Tavern, but he reports there is already a small plaque on the structure. ***It was agreed to not order a plaque for \$400 as originally planned.*** Mr. Merrill will instruct Val Kemp to tear up the check that was written before the end of 2017.

Review of current 79:D barn easements: Mr. Merrill distributed a report from town assessor Andrea Lewey of the historic barn owners in town that have taken advantage of the RSA 79:D "barn easement" program and its property tax assessment reductions. A total of 16 barns are currently enrolled in Stratham by 9 property owners. The Commission acknowledged appreciation for these owners' participation, and will continue to work to promote the program and increase enrollment in the future. Mr. Merrill noted that he met recently with Brad and Cindy Jones to discuss the program with them, and similar efforts will continue.

Town Report: Mr. Merrill has begun writing the annual report to the town, but it is not complete yet. He will distribute to Commission members via email for review prior to submitting the document to Mr. Deschaine.

Next Meeting: February 14, 2018 at 7:00 pm in the Land Use Conference Room, unless a special meeting is called sooner for purposes of evaluating a preservation easement proposal for the Old Town Hall.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Hathaway
Secretary