



TOWN OF STRATHAM

INCORPORATED 1716

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STRATHAM HERITAGE COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes Stratham Municipal Center January 10, 2023

Present: Nathan Merrill, David Canada, Rebecca Mitchell, Jeffrey Hyland, Lucy Cushman

Absent: Michael Houghton, Tammy Hathaway, Forrest Barker

Chair Merrill called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM. He asked Ms. Cushman, in the absence of Ms. Barker, to act as a voting member.

Secretary's Report: Mr. Merrill distributed the minutes of the December 13 meeting. Mr. Canada made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hyland, that the minutes be approved as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Mr. Merrill reported that Ms. Barker informed him that at the end of the year the Heritage Fund balance was \$7,024 and the balance of the Heritage Preservation Fund was \$209,728. Of our \$5,700 operating budget for FY2022, we only spent \$494, due to a recent error processing payments in the finance office. Mr. Merrill explained that two invoices for \$1,000 each (one from consultant Lisa Mausolf for additional work on the town-wide survey and one from The Preservation Company for completion of the National Historic District nomination for 21-25 River Road) that should have been paid from the Commission's 2022 operating budget were instead paid from the Heritage Preservation Fund. Mr. Merrill will follow up in person with the finance office to see if this can be corrected. Members of the Commission expressed concern that if not corrected, this error could impact the acceptance of our 2023 operating budget request at the Budget Advisory Committee, because so much of our 2022 budget went unspent due to the bill paying error.

Board and Committee Reports:

Select Board: In the absence of Mr. Houghton there was no report.

Planning Board: Mr. Canada reported that at its December 21 meeting the Board voted to request that the Select Board require a rehearing before the Zoning Board of Appeals of

the signage variance sought for the Optima Dermatology building now under construction at 23 Portsmouth Avenue. Further, at its January 4 meeting the Board had a preliminary consultation with a representative of Copley Properties (Drew Goddard, owner) regarding plans to develop the property at 94 Portsmouth Avenue, the Hannah Wingate House that was for many years the parsonage for the Stratham Community Church. The proposal includes construction of an accessory building to include two residential units, and conversion of a portion of the existing building currently used as office space to residential. Mr. Canada explained that with new zoning under consideration for the Professional/Residential Zone the proposed increase would not be allowed. Mr. Canada further reported that at the same meeting was a public hearing for additional zoning amendments and for an application for a small-scale ground mounted solar energy system at 32 Depot Road. Mr. Canada observed that it is likely the Board will be seeing similar applications in the near future. Mr. Canada was elected to continue as the Board's representative to the Heritage Commission.

Old Business

Historic Register Nominations: 21-23-25 River Road: Mr. Merrill reported that The Preservation Company has submitted the National Historic District nomination to the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources for determination of eligibility (DOE) by the State Historical Resources Council.

Town-Wide Survey: Mr. Merrill asked if members or others have any corrections or comments on the Survey as presented last month. Ms. Cushman reported that those in her family who have seen the Survey were very pleased with the end result. There was agreement among the members that some future corrections and additions will be inevitable and that with its digital format such changes may be easily incorporated.

Town Marker Project: Mr. Merrill reported that while Town Administrator David Moore has offered to develop a formal Request for Proposals, he has of present not shared any drafts of an RFP seeking a consultant to undertake the necessary historical and photographic research as well as to draft the text of an initial series of town markers on topics selected by the Heritage Commission. In response to a query by Ms. Cushman, members of the Commission identified areas in line for markers including Stratham Hill Park, the Town Center, the mills on Winnicutt, and the Municipal Center area to include the Bartlett-Cushman House, the Ridge School, and the original Stratham Memorial School. Mr. Merrill asked if the Commission would like him to reach out informally to Lisa Mausolf, who just completed the Townwide Survey, to see if she would be interested in the historic marker research project. Ms. Mitchell suggested also contacting Preservation Company, given their past work with us and their impressive recently-completed book on the history of Newington farms. Mr. Merrill agreed to reach out to both consulting firms.

Cemeteries: Mr. Merrill reported that he shared with Boy Scout Troop Leader Dave Emanuel his idea for an Eagle Scout project to work on an accurate inventory of all cemeteries, public and private, documenting them with GPS locations and current

photographs. The end goals would be to create a digital map and record, as well as to get all of Stratham's burial sites properly identified with the NH Old Graveyards Association. He suggested that Ms. Cushman should be the Commission's liaison to help guide and mentor the Scout, given her first-hand knowledge of all the cemeteries in town. Mr. Emanuel said he would share the information with his group, and he felt that his eldest son Cole might possibly be interested in this type of project.

Public Program: Mr. Merrill reported that he has a draft of his script incorporating about 40 slides. Mr. Hyland has been assisting to improve the quality of the images from the 1899 Granite Monthly article. Ms. Mitchell volunteered to draft a press release and to work on a poster/flyer design.

New Business

Mapping Historic Properties: Mr. Merrill distributed copies of new maps created by the Planning Department staff incorporating suggestions from the Commission's December meeting. Several members pointed out some errors that they perceived but the general agreement was that the overall appearance is much improved. Mr. Merrill will compile the list of corrections and follow up with the Planning staff.

Designation of Historic/Scenic Streets: Mr. Merrill reported that he has been thinking about the criteria for such designations. One approach might be to take into account both the number of historic properties/structures and the current level of integrity.

Historic Barns Update: Mr. Merrill is pleased to report that a contractor has begun work on significant repairs to Jenn Gunn's large barn at 173 Winnicutt Road (this is the old Jewell/Peabody farm).

The meeting adjourned at 8:13 pm.

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Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Mitchell, Secretary pro tem