

**Stratham Heritage Commission  
Stratham Municipal Center – Hutton Room  
Meeting Minutes  
January 12, 2022**

Present: Nathan Merrill, Rebecca Mitchell, Jeffrey Hyland, Michael Houghton, David Canada, Forrest Barker

Absent: Florence Wiggin, Tammy Hathaway

Convened: Chair Nathan Merrill convened the meeting at 7:05 pm

Secretary's Report: Mr. Merrill distributed the minutes from the December 8, 2021, meeting. Ms. Mitchell made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Hyland seconded. Ms. Barker abstained because she was absent from the last meeting, and the rest were in favor.

Treasurer's Report: Ms. Barker noted that the only change to the balances was the processing of the invoice from Preservation Company for the survey work at River Road. \$5,000 was taken out of the operating budget and the remaining \$4,950 out of the Preservation fund. That left the year-end balances for the Operating Budget at \$700 (unspent), Preservation Fund: \$171,399, and Heritage Fund unchanged at \$6,957.

### **Committee Reports**

Planning Board: Mr. Canada gave a report from the recent planning board meetings. Optima dermatology attended to present their plans for the property next to Market Basket at 23 Portsmouth Ave. They plan to tear down the old barn and put up a new building. Mr. Merrill noted that the barn was previously determined to not be of historic significance by the Demolition Review Committee.

There was a public hearing to discuss proposed changes to the Flexible Mixed Use zone at the former Vo-tech college. The current owner, Juliet Marine, has proposed a large multi-unit/multi-structure residential development that does not meet the current or proposed zoning language.

Mr. Canada was reappointed as the Planning Board's representative to the Heritage Commission for the coming year.

Demolition Review Committee: Has not met.

Select Board: Mr. Houghton announced the hiring of Jim Marchese as the town's new Code Enforcement Officer / Building Inspector. He is experienced in the field and comes to us from the town of Hampton. Budget Advisory Committee meetings are coming up. The proposed municipal budget represents a 2-3% increase overall. The CIP burden to taxpayers will be reduced with federal ARPA funds being applied to larger onetime



capital expenditures. Mr. Houghton reported that Joe Lovejoy is not seeking reelection to the Board.

## **Correspondence**

Correspondence: Mr. Merrill noted that he received a letter from NHDOT stating they are planning to add a middle left-hand turn lane, without expanding the road width, from the former Vo-Tech college to the traffic light in Greenland. The reason for adding the lane is to increase safety for left-turning cars. DOT is inquiring if the commission had any mitigation concerns that would be affected by this. No concerns were raised. Mr. Merrill requested that if any member wishes to convey anything back to DOT to let him know. Mr. Houghton brought up the point that if DOT reached out to multiple committees, it might be more helpful to DOT and the other boards if all input is funneled through one person who would be in a position to make a cohesive and inclusive official response from the town as a whole. Mr. Houghton recommended that Mr. Merrill follow up with Town Planner Mark Connors.

Mr. Merrill also reviewed email correspondence he has had with Town Administrator David Moore:

- 1) Mr. Merrill inquired about the status of previously discussed preservation easement stewardship matters. Mr. Moore said there is an active conversation between the NH Preservation Alliance and the property owners. A prioritized list of items to address in the coming construction season is being developed. Ms. Mitchell and Mr. Houghton mentioned that they noticed landscape work and building maintenance being done recently.
- 2) Mr. Merrill asked for updates on the budget and if he should plan to speak at a future Budget Advisory Committee meeting. Mr. Moore replied that with our modest request with no increases that he did not think any further action is necessary.
- 3) Mr. Merrill asked for updates on the 79-D barn easement document wording. Mr. Moore replied that it has been worked on by Town Counsel and the contract assessor so it will comply with current state law. Mr. Moore sent Mr. Merrill the current draft language today for him to review.
- 4) Mr. Moore was intrigued by the interactive map of Rochester that Mr. Merrill distributed via email, which shows locations, photos, and information about historic sites in the city. Mr. Moore plans to reach out to see what went into that project and how much it cost.

## **Old Business**

Historic register nomination:

- 1) Mr. Merrill noted that the Preservation Company sent a completed draft of the Richard Scammon Farm historic district survey to Mr. Merrill and Ms. Mitchell as well as the property owners to review. After edits are complete, the final copy will



be sent to the NH Division of Historical Resources for the State Historical Resources Council to make a determination of eligibility. If approved the nomination goes to the National Park Service where the Keeper of the Register has 45 days to make a final decision. If the property owner formally objects to the nomination, the property will not be listed. In cases of multiple owners, the property will not be listed if a majority of the property owners object to the nomination.

- 2) Ms. Mitchell reported that she is working with Andrew Cushing to complete a NH State Register of Historic Places nomination for her house at 200 Portsmouth Ave.

Town-Wide Survey update: Ms. Mitchell noted no updates and will follow up with Lisa Mausolf. Mr. Merrill confirmed the deadline for completion presently stands at March 31, 2022.

Town Marker Project: Ms. Mitchell reported that she developed a job description for a research assistant position that she shared with Dr. Kimberly Alexander of the UNH History faculty. After reading the job description Dr. Alexander recommended Sydney Barrington, who recently completed her course work and thesis for a MA degree. She has also successfully completed an internship at Canterbury Shaker Village. Ms. Mitchell said she has spoken with Ms. Barrington who is willing to work for \$15 per hour and is available to begin work immediately. They plan to meet in person within the coming week to discuss the scope of work more fully. The commission expressed support for going ahead with this hire and discussed how invoices and payment would work. **Mr. Canada moved that Sydney Barrington be paid out of the Varsity Wireless mitigation fund, and that the chair would be authorized to approve invoices and forward them to the Town Office for payment. Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously.**

State Marker Project: No new reports.

Preservation Easement Stewardship: Mr. Merrill distributed a draft of the *Stratham Heritage Commission Preservation Easement Annual Monitoring* document that he and Ms. Mitchell prepared. The document outlines the procedure a Heritage Commission representative and the Town's Code Enforcement Officer / Building Inspector should follow for inspecting properties with a preservation easement held by the Town. At the present time, the Old Town Hall is the only such property with a town-held easement. Mr. Merrill said that if this document looked good to everyone, he will make an appointment to meet with property owner Mark Perlowski in the coming weeks. Mr. Merrill asked Mr. Houghton if it is acceptable to request the CEO/BI's involvement, given that we are an advisory board. Mr. Houghton said yes, he felt that having the CEO/BI present would be valuable and a worthy use of his time on the Town's behalf.



Demolition review ordinance: Mr. Houghton said that he would follow up with the Select Board and Jim Marchese CEO/BI about adding potential penalties for violations of the ordinance.

February Program: Mr. Merrill noted that the Stratham Historical Society has canceled its in-person January program and it seems like holding an event in the current climate is unfavorable. Everyone agreed to table the program until next year due to concerns with the pandemic. Mr. Canada expressed his concerns and regret about losing this valuable opportunity to connect with residents two years in a row. All agreed that hosting a program in February 2023 about Richard Scammon and his River Road farm is a goal that we want to achieve.

Route 33 heritage district rezoning proposal: Mr. Merrill reported that he and Ms. Mitchell both reviewed a recent draft of the zoning language and provided detailed feedback to Town Planner Mark Connors. Mr. Canada reported that the Planning Board discussed in detail the feedback provided and made several changes and corrections at its most recent meeting. The final public hearing on the latest draft will be next Wednesday, January 19<sup>th</sup>.

## **New Business**

Volunteer Work: Mr. Merrill reported that he recruited Joyce Charbonneau to help with research work in the town vault. Ms. Mitchell noted that North Hampton recently catalogued their vault information by year and subject matter. Mr. Merrill agreed that would be a good first project for Joyce, given her familiarity with the contents, and so the Commission would know what information is available when conducting future research. Ms. Mitchell noted how grateful the commission is for Ms. Charbonneau's expert assistance.

Stratham magazine article: Ms. Mitchell wrote an article about the Richard Scammon farm for "Stratham" magazine. Mr. Merrill thanked her for doing that and the rest of the commission agreed.

Photo Archives: Mr. Merrill reported that he has finished putting photos from former commission member Wally Stuart's Flickr account onto a storage drive. Mr. Moore will then upload them to the town's server. Ms. Mitchell said she has a few additional photos to include in the archives as well, and will work on getting them to Mr. Merrill.

Membership: Mr. Merrill noted that Tammy Hathaway's term actually expired last spring, and she has agreed to renew. David Moore put her renewal on the next Select Board agenda. Ms. Mitchell's and Ms. Wiggin's terms are expiring this spring. Ms. Mitchell has agreed to re-enlist, but Ms. Wiggin wishes to retire.

Wiggin burial ground annual report: Mr. Merrill recapped the written report and photos sent by Dori Wiggin that he forwarded to all members. Mr. Canada reported that he walked the path and confirmed everything in the report is as described. The Commission



expressed appreciation for the good work being done by the various family members, and for the detailed annual report from Dori Wiggin.

Any other item to come before the Commission: Mr. Merrill brought in a book completed by Preservation Company for the town of Newington funded by Section 106 mitigation funds from the Seacoast Reliability Project (PSNH/Eversource). The book covers the history of farms in Newington with photos, maps, and text. All agreed that having a similar book about Stratham would be a valuable resource. Mr. Houghton endorsed the concept, noting that farming history defines Stratham given its agrarian past, and the living sources of oral history are dwindling. He feels that this could be funded by the Heritage Preservation Fund and will speak with his fellow Select Board members about it at their next meeting. Mr. Merrill said he would ask Lynn Monroe of Preservation Company for more details on the project, its budget, and how the finished product is being used in Newington. Mr. Houghton added that he felt every Stratham household should have a copy of a future Stratham version.

At 8:30 PM, Mr. Canada made a motion to adjourn, Mr. Hyland seconded, all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Forrest Barker

Secretary pro-tem