

Stratham Heritage Commission
Meeting Minutes
December 13, 2017
7:00 pm
Land Use Conference Room

Present: Rebecca Mitchell, David Canada, Wallace Stuart, Michael Houghton, Tammy Hathaway

Absent: Nathan Merrill, Florence Wiggin

Guests: Paul Deschaine, Tavis Austin arrived at 7:45

CONVENED: At 7:00 pm by Rebecca Mitchell, Chair *pro-tem*.

Ms. Mitchell appointed Ms. Hathaway to serve as a voting member in Mr. Merrill's absence.

Secretary's Report: The November 8, 2017 minutes were approved (motion Mr. Canada, Mr. Stuart, unanimous).

Treasurer's Report: Mr. Stuart reported that the commission has \$1519.39 remaining in the operating budget. The balance for the Heritage Fund is \$7031.31. The Heritage Preservation Fund balance of \$93,489.00 does not reflect any interest accrued. Seacoast Memorials will send an invoice for \$40 for engraving 2 bricks in November. Ms. Mitchell submitted invoices for reimbursement \$44.10 for a wreath at the Bartlett-Cushman house; \$4.90 for printing at Staples; and \$52.00 for Samuel Lane books to sell.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Planning Board: Mr. Canada reported that the board approved a "pork chop" lot for the rear of 104 Union Road, and reported that the owners stated they would not be demolishing the historic house fronting the road. Hearings on proposed zoning changes will be on January 3, 2018, including a change that will reduce but not eliminate the incentive to demolish existing structures to gain density. The present 2 for 1 exchange would be reduced to 1 for 1.

Technical Review Committee: Ms. Mitchell communicated Mr. Merrill's report that Jeff Hyland and Tom House will work on graphic documents to illustrate the proposed design regulations for the Rt. 108 corridor. The committee also anticipates receiving Mark Perlow's site plan proposal for 149 Portsmouth Ave.

Demolition Review Committee: Ms. Mitchell reported that Mr. Merrill submitted the committee's reports to Mark Morong, Code Enforcement Officer/Building Inspector, regarding the demolition permit applications for 149 Portsmouth Avenue (Parker House), and 151 Portsmouth Avenue (Old Town Hall). The DRC voted to invoke the 30-day historic review for both properties and the reports serve as the "final written recommendation" in each case. Ms. Mitchell noted that Architectural Salvage of Exeter salvaged for sale some items from the house before its demolition on December 8.

OLD BUSINESS:

Bartlett-Cushman House: Mr. Houghton reported that the selectmen had received 4 contract proposals for marketing the Bartlett-Cushman House for lease. A firm that the board preferred was asked to respond to a request for some changes. No changes were received by the board's Dec. 11 meeting. The board is now asking a different firm for a proposal that will more closely reflect the terms acceptable to the board. Mr. Canada asked whether the lease proposals are for the 1+ acre front portion of the lot and Mr. Deschaine said that that is the case. Mr. Houghton remarked that sale of the property remains an option. Ms. Mitchell said that a preservation easement should be considered.

16 Emery's Lane: Ms. Mitchell is exploring prices for a bronze National Register plaque. The first estimate was \$500.00 for a plaque to read "This Property is Listed on the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior." Ms. Mitchell will seek a lower price. The commission voted to purchase a generic sign with the cost not to exceed \$500.00 (Stuart, Canada, unanimous)

Portsmouth Avenue Survey: Ms. Mitchell reported that the project is moving along and she is giving Lisa Mausolf input on deeds and other information from her files. Ms. Mausolf has been notified that work and an invoice must be submitted by December 27.

Old Town Hall: Mr. Canada met with new owner, Mark Perlowski, and the town assessor. After review the property, taking into account the lack of water and septic, the assessment was lowered from \$523,00 to \$329,000.00. Mr. Merrill and Ms. Mitchell also met with Mr. Perlowski to discuss his plans and the commission's interest in avoiding demolition of the building. At that meeting Mr. Perlowski stated that he would not be doing anything with the building before the first of April. Mr. Merrill and Ms. Mitchell stated that their primary goal is to avoid demolition and to preserve the character defining features of the exterior. Mr. Merrill proposed a written understanding between the Town and Mr. Perlowski with both parties agreeing to explore the preservation easement option or failing that, the sale of the building for the purchase price plus expenses. Mr. Merrill sent a memo outlining such an agreement to Paul Deschaine. Mr. Deschaine distributed a draft option agreement. After a discussion among the commission a motion was made to approve the draft agreement for Mr. Deschaine to review and confirm with Mr. Merrill, with review with Mr. Perlowski to follow. (Mr. Canada, Mr. Stuart, unanimous). Ms. Mitchell asked if the commission would like her to write an article for the February issue of *Stratham* magazine to reflect the current situation regarding the Old Town Hall. The goal of the article would be to restate the historical significance of the Old Town Hall and to educate the public concerning the known facts of the current situation. The consensus of the meeting was that this would be a good idea.

Scamman Farm: Ms. Mitchell reported that on December 11 she, Mr. Merrill and Stella and Doug Scamman met at the farm with Peter Michaud of the N.H. Division of Historical Resources as a first step to nominating the farm to the National Register of Historic Places. Mr. Michaud was impressed with the

quality and integrity of the site and felt the architectural distinction of the house along with the agricultural history of the farm meet the criteria for a National Register nomination.

Veterans' Memorial Garden: Ms. Mitchell thanked Mr. Stuart for his willingness work on the bricks and monuments until a replacement is found. Tracey McGrail, who had been doing the work for several years as a volunteer, has moved from town and felt she could no longer do the work. The commission discussed the desirability of finding a similar volunteer, perhaps among Stratham veterans, and it was suggested that a short article on the Memorial Garden and the need for volunteer help be written for the *Stratham* magazine.

Website Update: Ms. Mitchell reported that a link to the inventory prepared for the Old Town Hall nomination for the New Hampshire Register of Historic Places is now available on the commission's page on the Town website. Anyone with questions about the history or significance of the Old Town Hall may be referred to that document.

Demolition Review ordinance and procedures: Ms. Mitchell reported that she and Mr. Merrill ask that the commission request a change in the present demolition review ordinance to raise the 30 day review period to 60 days. The purpose is to allow more time for investigation, for seeking public comment and involvement, and for seeking alternatives to demolition. Mr. Deschaine added that he suggests an overall review of the committee procedures to achieve greater clarity. There was general consensus that this should be achieved through discussions with the Demolition Review Committee, the Commission, and the Planning Office staff. A motion was made and passed unanimously requesting that the Planning Board replace in Sections 16.5.3 b. and c. the words "30 calendar days" and "30 calendar-day-period" with "60 calendar days" and "60 calendar-day-period" and include that among in the zoning changes to be included in the warrant articles to voted on in March 2018. (Canada, Stuart, unanimous).

Bunker Hill Avenue Intersection: The commission reviewed and discussed a draft letter, dated December 14, that Mr. Merrill wrote to address the proposed traffic light at the intersection of NH Route 108 and Bunker Hill Ave. Mr. Austin noted that the Technical Review Committee had reviewed the draft and had suggested to changes in paragraph 1 and 3 where stated "the traffic safety needs along Route 108 from the junction with Route 101 to the intersection with Bunker Hill Avenue" be extended to the traffic circle. Also, a change in the closing paragraph which reads "We would be happy to meet with you or members of the Department of Transportation to explore further the concerns and ideas expressed in this letter" adding the following "as the design process progresses". There was a motion to send the letter as amended (Canada, Hathaway; 4 aye, 1 nay).

Gifford House repairs: Mr. Houghton reported that the repairs were underway with new storm doors purchased and with weather-stripping added as needed. Ms. Mitchell inquired about the energy audit and Mr. Deschaine explained that the Energy Commission was asking for \$2400.00 for matching funds for an energy audit grant from Unitil.

Town-Owned Resources: Ms. Mitchell distributed a draft memorandum written by Mr. Merrill, at the

request of the Board of Selectmen and Paul Deschaine, offering guidelines to clarify those circumstances when the Heritage Commission should be consulted for repairs and maintenance of town-owned historic buildings. Mr. Deschaine thought the memo is a good place to start and there was general agreement that the section referring to the old Wiggin Memorial Library building be made clearer. Mr. Canada queried whether routine maintenance and certain updates to that building might be exempted from commission review.

New Business:

2018 budget & CIP Proposals: Ms. Mitchell distributed copies of Heritage Commission 2018 Operating Budget Request proposed by Mr. Merrill and Mr. Stuart, Treasurer. It was noted that 2017 expenditures as shown on the budget sheet do not include invoices not yet received and paid. The overall proposed budget request, \$4.800, is down \$100.00 from 2017. A motion was passed to approve the 2018 budget to send to Budget Review Committee (Canada, Stuart, unanimous). That vote was followed by a discussion on what to ask in the CIP fund to add to the Heritage Preservation Fund especially in light of a possible purchase of a preservation easement for the Old Town Hall. A motion was passed to propose a request for \$150,000.00 (Mitchell, Hathaway; 4 aye, 1 abstention).

Next Meeting: January 10, 2018 at 7:00 pm in the Land Use Conference Room.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Hathaway
Secretary