

**Stratham Heritage Commission
Stratham Municipal Center – Hutton Room
Meeting Minutes
February 10, 2021**

Present: Nathan Merrill, David Canada, Forrest Barker, Rebecca Mitchell, Tammy Hathaway, Florence Wiggin

Absent: Michael Houghton

Convened: 7:05 PM

Secretary's Report: Mr. Merrill distributed the minutes of the January 13, 2021 meeting. Ms. Mitchell moved to accept the minutes; Mr. Canada seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Ms. Barker reported she is waiting to receive the current statement from the town office but does not anticipate any changes.

Committee Reports

Planning Board: Mr. Canada, Planning Board representative to the commission, reported that the board at its January 20 public hearing meeting, made no changes to the Warrant Articles on the Gateway or Town Center District. It was decided to hold off a year on the Route 33 Legacy Highway District proposal. Mr. Canada also noted that discussion of workforce housing incentives will be a focus area for the Board in 2021.

Technical Review Committee: No report

Demolition Review Committee: No report

Select Board: No report

Old Business

Historic Register Nominations:

Old Town Hall: Mr. Merrill reported that the nomination has been approved for the listing on the NH Register of Historic places. Mark Perlowski, owner of the Old Town Hall has agreed to pay for a plaque and have his crew install it. Mr. Merrill noted that the plaque costs \$50.00 and \$10.00 for shipping, it is 10" diameter and made of aluminum. Ms. Mitchell will look at the building to recommend an appropriate spot for placement of the plaque. After a discussion on a press release it was decided to wait until after the plaque was installed with a photograph of Mr. Merrill and Mr. Perlowski.

River Road: Mr. Merrill reported that the Town's Professional Services Agreement has been formalized and signed by Lynne Monroe of Preservation Company and David Moore, town administrator. The possibility of adding 21 River Road to the project was discussed. Ms. Mitchell spoke with the property owners and they are enthusiastically supportive of the idea. This property was originally part of the Scammon Farm, along with the open land to the rear currently owned by the Society for Protection of New Hampshire Forests. Consensus was for Mr. Merrill to contact Preservation Company for a modified scope of work and price quote to add 21 River Road to the project. He will report back next month.

Town-wide Survey: Ms. Mitchell reported that Lisa Mausolf emailed her that she had a broken ankle and would be out of commission for a bit. Ms. Mitchell will reconnect with Ms. Mausolf to determine if the June 30, 2021 due date needs to be extended, and will follow up with Mr. Moore as appropriate.

Barn Easement renewal: Ms. Wiggin will submit a new application for the Wiggin barn at 65 Squamscott Rd. Mr. Merrill will write a letter regarding the barn easement program to distribute to property owners of eligible barns, highlighting the April 15th deadline for 2021 applications.

Town Historic Marker Project: Ms. Mitchell noted that she had a conversation with Skip Stearns of the Historical Society regarding Stratham Hill Park, and he mentioned the possibility of a future Eagle Scout project on the history of the last fire warden to work at the fire tower. Ms. Mitchell voiced concern about duplicative efforts, noting that there is already a marker on top of the hill for Clayton Eastman (the last fire watchman) and that we are trying to create a common format for historical display signs. Mr. Merrill questioned how to move forward on research content for the sign project -- if it should be outsourced. Ms. Mitchell would like to research the history of the gifting of the park to the town including previous owners of the land, property lines etc. After a discussion it was decided to contact Lucy Cushman to possibly help with the deed research and Joyce Rowe for historical information.

State Highway Historic Marker Project: Ms. Mitchell reported that she is working on the paper copies of the source materials that support the statement in the marker text.

Membership: Mr. Merrill reported that Ms. Hathaway's membership is up for renewal this year, and she has agreed to another term and he will let the Select board know. Jeff Hyland has agreed to apply to the Select Board to join the commission.

Website updates: Mr. Merrill thanked Ms. Barker for her work with Wiggin Memorial Library Director Lesley Kimball on getting the previous February programs streamed on the website.

Budget update: Mr. Merrill reported that he had received an email from Mr. Moore that there had been a proposed reduction of \$3,500.00 in the Heritage Commission's 2021 operating budget made by the Budget Advisory Committee. Mr. Merrill responded to

Mr. Moore with a detailed email outlining the importance of maintaining our modest operating budget. Mr. Merrill and Ms. Mitchell attended a Select Board Public Hearing regarding the budget. The Select Board voted to restore our budget to the originally requested amount (\$5,900.00). Mr. Merrill will work with the Town Administrator and the new Town Planner to review the history of the Heritage Preservation Fund to make sure they understand its purpose and intent, as well as the goal to build the fund to \$250,000.00 to use for unanticipated preservation threats.

House Bill #164: Mr. Canada reported that it had passed the House Municipal and County Government Committee public hearing and will go on the House consent calendar and then on to the Senate.

New Business

Historic house fire at 15 Jack Rabbit Lane: Mr. Merrill and Ms. Mitchell visited the site of the fire and reported that there was not much to be salvaged. They took photos of the property for documentation purposes. A discussion on the history of the property ensued, noting that it was originally part of the Brown/Gifford farm that is now town-owned. The tax card claims the house dates from 1820, but neither Ms. Mitchell nor Mr. Merrill believe it to be that old – more likely it dates from 1830-1850.

Town Planner Mark Conners: Mr. Merrill, Ms. Mitchell and Mr. Moore met with the new Town Planner Mark Conners and reported that their discussion focused on the Route 33 Legacy Highway zoning initiative, and on other Heritage Commission-related items from the Master Plan. We look forward to working with Mark in the future, and when requested he would be happy to attend our meetings. We anticipate working closely together on the Route 33 zoning effort in the coming year.

Master Plan: Mr. Merrill inquired of Ms. Barker if she would be willing to review the Master Plan's action items that are relevant to the Commission, and provide us with a summary/report at our next meeting.

Scenic roads: The Master Plan's recommendation to identify scenic and historic roads was discussed. Mr. Merrill shared information from state statutes about designating local scenic roads, as well as the state-administered scenic and cultural byways program.

Adjourned: With a motion from Mr. Canada, seconded by Ms. Mitchell, all present voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Hathaway

Secretary