



TOWN OF STRATHAM

INCORPORATED 1716

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STRATHAM HERITAGE COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

Stratham Municipal Center

February 7, 2023

Present: Nathan Merrill, David Canada, Michael Houghton, Jeffrey Hyland, Lucy Cushman, Forrest Barker, Tammy Hathaway

Absent: Rebecca Mitchell

Chair Merrill called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

Secretary's Report: Mr. Merrill distributed the minutes of the January 10 meeting. Mr. Hyland made a motion, seconded by Mr. Canada, that the minutes be approved as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Mr. Merrill reported that he met with the finance department regarding the recent error processing payments. After reviewing the matter with the town's auditor, it was determined that they cannot correct the mistake.

Correspondence: Mr. Merrill noted that he received an email from Kathy Flynn Fazekas inquiring about the status of Smyk Park, and in particular the lack of signage. Mr. Houghton stated that Seth Hickey, director of the Parks and Recreation Department, is researching possible uses for the site and that an informative sign was installed this week. Mr. Merrill suggested that it would be worthy of a future town historical marker, and Mr. Houghton agreed.

Board and Committee Reports:

Select Board: Mr. Houghton reported that the Select Board has sent a letter to the Zoning Board of Appeals, requesting a rehearing of the signage variance recently granted for the Optima Dermatology building now under construction at 23 Portsmouth Avenue. The ZBA declined to rehear the case. Mr. Houghton also explained that the overall budget for 2023 is relatively flat with a 2% increase and the Select Board is pleased. He does not anticipate any problems with the Commission's operating budget and capital reserve fund requests at Town Meeting.

Planning Board: Mr. Canada reported that the Planning Board is working on warrant articles but noted that there was nothing that pertained to the Heritage Commission.

Demolition Review Committee: Mr. Merrill reported that there was a demolition permit request for an accessory building at 37 Frying Pan Lane. The committee agreed after inspecting the building's haphazard construction and poor condition to not invoke additional historic review delay. The property owner provided historical and contemporary photographs of the structure for our archives. It had been used for various agricultural, commercial, professional, and residential uses over the years, with the oldest section at the front of the building likely dating from the latter half of the 19th century.

Heritage District Advisory Committee: Mr. Hyland reported that the committee has not met. Mr. Merrill suggested that he reach out to the other committee members to inquire about arranging a meeting. Mr. Hyland agreed that it would be important to do some property owner outreach in the district. He will contact town planner Mark Connors and committee chair Alex Dardinski.

Open Space Steering Committee: Mr. Hyland reported their first meeting will be on Monday 2/13/2023.

Old Business

Historic Register Nominations: 21-23-25 River Road: Mr. Merrill had nothing new to report and in Ms. Mitchell's absence nothing on 200 Portsmouth Ave.

Town-Wide Survey: Mr. Merrill reported that Ms. Mitchell has given him the Historic American Building Survey document and archival photographs for the Parker Cabin. He then gave these materials to the Stratham Historical Society for safekeeping in their research library. He will make a note about adding this information to the Town-Wide survey document.

Town Marker Project: Mr. Merrill had nothing new to report.

State Marker Project: Nothing to report

Neighborhood Heritage Districts: Nothing to report

Public Program: Mr. Merrill reported that he has found a few more photos from the Historical Society to add to the program and Mr. Hyland will help with the new photos if necessary. Mr. Merrill has contacted Exeter Public Access Television and they have agreed to film the program and will set up at 6:15. Mr. Hyland will set up the laptop for Mr. Merrill at 6:30 and anyone else available to help set up the 60 chairs is welcome to arrive early.

New Business

Mapping Historic Properties: Mr. Merrill distributed copies of new maps created by the Planning Department staff to review the corrections made from the notes of the previous meeting. The commission also discussed the three different interactive maps on the Amherst NH Heritage Commission website. The consensus was that the “Heritage Points of Interest” map would be the best one to model for our initial effort.

Designation of Historic/Scenic Streets: The process of designating historic/scenic streets was briefly discussed, which is a recommendation of the Master Plan.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

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Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Hathaway, Secretary