

**Stratham Heritage Commission
Meeting Minutes
Land Use Conference Room
March 14, 2018**

Present: Nathan Merrill, Wallace Stuart, David Canada, Rebecca Mitchell

Absent: Florence Wiggin, Tammy Hathaway, Mike Houghton

Guests: Forrest Barker, Paul Deschaine at 8:32

Convened: At 7:05 PM by Chair Merrill

Secretary's Report: The February 14, 2018 minutes were approved as presented (Mr. Canada, Ms. Mitchell, unanimous).

Treasurer's Report: Mr. Stuart reported some items in the January Financial Report raised questions. The \$40 invoice from Seacoast Memorials does not appear and the \$50 expended for the commission's membership in the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance should have been recorded as an administrative expense. There also appeared in the Report to be a \$100 discrepancy in the 2018 budget as requested and as we believed was approved by the Selectmen. Mr. Stuart will speak with Valerie Kemp to make the corrections. The Heritage Fund balance of \$7,341 on 1/31/2018 reflects the \$300 donation from Architectural Salvage. The Heritage Preservation Fund balance is \$93,891.21 as of 12/31/2017.

Committee Reports:

Planning Board: Mr. Canada reported that at a March 7 meeting Mark Perlowski and his engineering design firm presented a preliminary plan for the lots at 149 and 151 Portsmouth Avenue, requesting waivers for five elements of their proposal. The board was especially concerned about the parking in front of the second building that not only does not conform to the Town Center code but also, in the minds of board members, poses a safety problem with traffic entering the site. Full discussion was curtailed because of the late hour and gathering snowstorm. The proposal will be on the agenda at the board's March 21 meeting.

Technical Review Committee: Mr. Merrill reported that Mr. Perlowski and his design engineer presented to the committee on February 27. Because of the project's requests for waivers the proposal was sent on to the Planning Board without approval from TRC. The committee pressed Mr. Perlowski on his request for waivers from the Town Center code for not including sidewalks, street trees, and lighting in their design; for a parking lot in front of the second building; for the excessive set-back of the second building from the street; and for the use of vinyl siding on all proposed structures. The committee also said that the landscape plan needed improvement, particularly in terms of tree species; and that the two new buildings should have more differentiation between them in terms of design, or at a minimum, color. There was also discussion about tightening up the side driveway access (from the adjacent Cadieux lot) to the overhead door in the basement of the mixed-use building (to minimize its appearance from the street). Lastly, it was noted that outside display areas are not permitted in the zone.

Old Business:

Bartlett-Cushman House: Mr. Canada reported that Colleen Lake and her client, Joyce Fontaine, appeared before the Board of Selectmen with a lease proposal. Ms. Fontaine proposes to rehabilitate the second floor as an apartment for herself and to use the first floor as an antique shop. Mr. Canada has drafted a lease agreement as a starting point for the Town and Ms. Fontaine. He further reported that since no site plan review would be necessary unless Ms. Fontaine were to build a parking lot, he included a Town-built 10 space parking lot in the draft lease agreement. Ms. Mitchell noted that the Brick & Barn website listing for the property still has not been updated with the new text or photos. Mr. Canada will check with Ms. Lake on this.

Portsmouth Ave. Survey: Ms. Mitchell reported that Joyce Rowe read the draft and returned it with her comments, corrections, and questions. Next it will go to Flossie Wiggin.

Old Town Hall: Mr. Merrill thanked Ms. Mitchell for preparing the posters and flyers and thanked her and Mr. Canada for speaking and taking questions at the library-sponsored Voter Information night. Mr. Merrill will prepare a presentation for Town Meeting to follow Selectman Houghton's introduction of the article. Other commission members will stand by to respond to questions from the floor. Ms. Mitchell circulated a Letter to the Editor, approved by Chair Merrill, that she submitted in the name of the Heritage Commission. The expectation is that it will appear in the Exeter News-Letter on the morning of March 16.

Scamman Farm: Ms. Mitchell reported that Stella Scamman had notified her that the old, small barn is being cleared of its contents in preparation for upcoming repairs. The Preservation Company is ready to begin on the National Register nomination as soon as our budget is approved.

Veterans' Memorial Garden: Ms. Mitchell reported that the commission has received an application for inclusion in the Veterans' Memorial Garden from the widow of a veteran who died in January of this year. She has spoken to both the widow and daughter of the veteran, and explained to them that the veteran is not eligible for inclusion on a monument since he was not a Stratham resident during his period of service, but that he is eligible for a brick. The application includes copies of official US Army records of medals received etc. and Ms. Mitchell asked permission to waive the requirement of obtaining the official discharge papers. The commission agreed.

Membership: Mr. Merrill stated that typically the Board of Selectmen make appointments in April, following Town Meeting. Forrest Barker indicated that she would like to join the commission. Mr. Merrill said she may print an application from the Town website or obtain one from the Town Clerk. Applications should get to the Selectmen by April 1.

New Business:

Mapping: Ms. Mitchell reported that at the end of the Voter Information night videographer Michael Johnston (Spectacle Learning Media) approached her to talk about possibly collaborating on mapping Stratham roads and trails to include historical information. She

suggested that he attend the commission's April meeting with his proposal. Mr. Merrill will invite Town Planner Tavis Austin to join us for the discussion.

148 Portsmouth Ave.: Mr. Merrill reported that both he and Ms. Mitchell have been working to assist Natalie Healy transferring her antiques business from the Old Town Hall to the first floor of the house at 148 Portsmouth Avenue. To that end they met with BI/CEO Mark Morong to discuss issues raised in connection with use of the building. The commission will continue to take an interest in assisting both the property owners and Ms. Healey.

RSA 79E: Mr. Canada suggested that if Mark Perlowski intended to use RSA 79E in his rehabilitation of the Old Town Hall he should be preparing an application. Ms. Mitchell said that she would look at the application to see if there are areas with which the commission might assist.

Mr. Deschaine arrived at 8:32 and the discussion returned to the **Bartlett-Cushman House:** Mr. Canada noted that recent minutes of the Board of Selectmen indicated that selling the property was again discussed. Mr. Deschaine indicated that the Board does have the power to sell Town-owned properties with a petition of 50 or more residents having the power to oppose the sale, which would block the sale and require a Town Meeting vote. An easement, on the other hand, is a conveyance and could be executed without going to Town Meeting. Mr. Canada stated, as he has on other occasions, that the commission should be developing an easement to protect the Bartlett-Cushman House. Ms. Mitchell said that she is not sure that the New Hampshire Preservation would be willing to hold that easement but that she would raise it with the Alliance. Mr. Canada noted that as the Town would no longer be the owner of the property it could hold the easement if necessary.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Next meeting April 11, 2018 at 7:00 PM, Land Use Conference Room

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Mitchell
Secretary pro tem