



TOWN OF STRATHAM

INCORPORATED 1716

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STRATHAM HERITAGE COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

Stratham Municipal Center

April 11, 2023

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

Absent: Rebecca Mitchell, Tammy Hathaway, Lucy Cushman

Chair Merrill called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

Secretary's Report: Mr. Merrill distributed the minutes of the March 21st meeting. Mike Houghton made a motion to approve the minutes, Jeff Hyland seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's report: Forrest Barker reported that Rebecca Mithcell received her reimbursement from the previous meeting. The Operating budget balance was \$5,550, the Heritage Fund balance was \$7,119.77 and the Capital Reserves fund balance was not reported. Mr. Merrill asked that Ms. Barker bring the CRF balance to the next meeting.

Correspondence: Mr. Merrill reported that he received a letter from Megan Rupnik of the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources. The letter stated the Scammon Farm historical register nomination was accepted and will be voted on in their council meeting May 1st.

Mr. Merrill also relayed updates from Rebecca Mitchell. DPW staff extracted 4 bricks from the Memorial Garden. Ms. Mitchell delivered the bricks to Exeter Monument and they should be finished in time for Memorial Day. Ms. Mitchell will also submit an article about the 1860 July Fourth celebration to the Stratham "Stroll" magazine for the July issue. Ms. Mitchell is still working on her state historical register nomination with Andrew Cushing.

Committee Reports

Planning Board: Dave Canada reported that the Lindt proposed expansion passed. The proposed development off Stonybrook Lane has been reduced to 58 units. Drew

Goddard's proposal to construct a 2-unit apartment building behind the existing old parsonage at 94 Portsmouth Ave was approved. Mr. Merrill reported that Mr. Goddard has contacted him to discuss the design to ensure it is compatible with the historic home on the property.

Select Board: Mike Houghton reported that after a successful trial run, there will now be a permanent parking restriction on the Stratham Hill parking lot at the end of Jack Rabbit Lane. Only residents with a town transfer station sticker will be allowed to park. The front/main parking lot off Portsmouth Ave remains open to anyone.

Demolition Review Committee: Has not met.

Heritage District Advisory Committee: Jeff Hyland reported that the Committee just met and there were 2 applications; one for 180 Portsmouth Ave and the other for 240 Portsmouth Ave. The former is proposing a very small addition with slight modification to the roofline on the driveway side. The latter is planning internal modifications, but the exterior should remain the same.

Open Space Plan Steering Committee: Mr. Hyland stated the committee met the previous week and he joined virtually over zoom. The committee talked about collecting data, and mentioned listing existing farms of importance. The committee also discussed public outreach approaches. Nate Merrill said that there is a comprehensive list of farms in the appendix of the Master Plan. Mr. Merrill also asked Mr. Hyland to keep the Heritage Commission informed about the Open Space Plan Steering Committee's work with farms, given that Stratham does not have an Agricultural Commission, so we informally take on that role.

OLD BUSINESS

Historic register nominations: Discussed earlier with the correspondence updates.

Town marker project: Mr. Merrill reported that there have been no updates and that Rebecca Mitchell is trying to identify the right person to help with the project. Jeff Hyland said he might be able to help, saying he has worked on informational plaques and kiosks with other professionals in his municipal landscape design projects.

State marker project: Mr. Merrill reported that he and Ms. Mitchell tweaked the existing text, and they need to reach out to the new staff person at NHDHR. He asked the commission members present for their thoughts on privately funding the project or having the state pay for it (as discussed at previous meetings). Mr. Houghton said that the sooner this gets done the better. Mr. Hyland mentioned that the state does maintain the markers well. Mr. Canada said he didn't think long term maintenance on the sign would be a significant issue, unless it were damaged in a vehicular collision somehow. Mr. Merrill suggested that after consulting with NHDHR, if the wait is more than a year for a state-funded sign, then he will ask Ms. Mitchell to reach out to the Lane relatives to see if they want to contribute to the project. All agreed that this was a good compromise.

Maps of historic properties: No updates from Planning staff yet.

Historic/scenic streets: Mr. Merrill said we've been talking on and off about this for a long time and he would like to get consensus from the Commission on whether to proceed with any official designations, as recommended in the Master Plan. He provided a list of all the old streets in town, with their current and historical names referenced. Mr. Merrill noted that we could informally identify some or all these roads as "historic" but that it would not do anything to legally protect them. The only state-enabled way to legally protect historic streetscape elements such as stone walls and old trees is with a "Scenic" designation, which must be voted on at Town Meeting. Mr. Canada stated he felt that we should pursue "Scenic" protection for a few selected streets at first, and if successful, we could attempt more in future years. Mr. Hyland mentioned that corridors are as important as structures. Mr. Hyland reported that three large oak trees were recently taken down on River Road and it really changed the area. Mr. Merrill said the RSA states the specific protections afforded to a designated roadway, and street trees are included. Mr. Houghton supports picking a few roads to start with. Both Ms. Barker and Mr. Hyland agreed. Mr. Canada suggested that we all drive around the town and find roads that stand out as highest priorities. Mr. Merrill agreed. Mr. Houghton also suggested sharing this plan with the Open Space Steering Committee. Mr. Hyland said he would do so. Mr. Merrill also suggested that it be brought to the Planning Board for informational and discussion purposes.

Veterans Memorial Garden: Mr. Merrill mentioned that the lights were out on the monuments, and DPW staff replaced a broken timer.

History of Stratham farms: Mr. Merrill said he is still waiting for Lara Bricker's book on the Scamman Farm to see if she is someone who might be appropriate for this project. In the meantime, he has been continuing his own research into the history of Stuart Farm as well as the old Pearson/French farm next door.

NEW BUSINESS

Town Meeting / budget report: Mike Houghton reported that everything passed as proposed.

Steven Mallory and Drew Bedard site visits: Nate Merrill said he has written a detailed summary of their recent visit to the c. 1722 Simon Wiggin house at Stuart Farm, but forgot to bring it. He will email it later. Ms. Mitchell is working on a similar summary of their visit on the same day to her home at 200 Portsmouth Ave.

SHS building repairs: Mr. Canada said there was a grant request out for money to work on the Stratham Historical Society building. No work is being done until June when the decision is made about the grant. Mr. Canada said there is a three-year plan for repairs, compiled by Drew Bedard of Hall & Parlor Historic Preservation. Mr. Merrill noted that the window frames were rotten and there is some masonry that needs repointing. Mr.

Houghton asked if the repairs were urgent and if they could wait until June. Both Mr. Canada and Mr. Merrill said nothing was too urgent yet.

173 Winnicutt Road barn repairs: Mr. Merrill reported that the first phase of Jenn Gunn's barn repairs has been completed. Rotten sills, first floor beams, and exterior sheathing were replaced with like-kind materials. The second phase, to be completed this year, includes repairing broken windows, replacing some missing slates on the roof, and painting the whole barn. This barn was recently enrolled in the 79-D easement program.

Officer elections will be postponed until the next meeting due to tonight's absences.

Mr. Canada made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 PM. Mike Houghton seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Forrest Barker, Secretary pro-tem