

**Stratham Heritage Commission**  
**Stratham Municipal Center – Hutton Room**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**April 14, 2021**

Present: Nathan Merrill, David Canada, Michael Houghton, Rebecca Mitchell, Tammy Hathaway, Florence Wiggin, Jeff Hyland

Absent: Forrest Barker

Convened: 7:05 PM

Secretary's Report: Mr. Merrill distributed the minutes of the March 10, 2021 meeting. ***Mr. Canada moved to approve the minutes as presented; Ms. Mitchell seconded and the motion passed unanimously.***

Treasurer's Report: Mr. Merrill reported in the Absence of Ms. Barker that there were no significant changes.

### **Committee Reports**

Planning Board: Mr. Canada, Planning Board representative to the Commission, reported that on the April 7 meeting there was a detailed productive discussion about the Route 33 Legacy Highway project and on engaging with the residents along this corridor. The Board is interested in the possibility of creating a Neighborhood Heritage District, which would be more flexible than a Historic District, but would provide some protection for concerns about demolition and inappropriate redevelopment. Mr. Merrill thanked the Planning Board for inviting the Heritage Commission to the meeting and said he feels that new Town Planner Mark Connors will be a good facilitator for this project. Mr. Merrill and Ms. Mitchell attended the meeting, in addition to Mr. Canada and Mr. Houghton who both serve on the Planning Board. Additionally, former Route 33 Ad Hoc committee member David Rying attended the meeting, and former Ad Hoc member Alex Dardinski submitted a written statement.

Technical Review Committee: Mr. Merrill will inquire if this committee has been disbanded and if so, will remove from future agendas.

Demolition Review Committee: No meetings held.

Select Board: Mr. Houghton reported that the board had approved Jeff Hyland's application for joining the Heritage Commission. The bulk of the rest of the Board's recent discussions has been spent on post-Town Meeting implementation of the various articles that passed.

## **Old Business**

### Historic Register Nominations:

Old Town Hall: Mr. Merrill reported that Ms. Mitchell has received the plaque for the NH state register listing. Ms. Mitchell presented the plaque and brass washers and screws for mounting that she purchased. Mr. Merrill will reach out to Mark Perlowski and share a photo from the plaque mounted at the Wiggin Memorial Library for an installation reference. Mr. Merrill asked Mr. Canada if he would be willing to write a press release regarding how the Old Town Hall was saved from demolition and the process of adaptive reuse. Mr. Merrill said he will contact Mr. Perlowski to obtain a quote from him to include in the press release. Mr. Merrill inquired if Commission members would like to be present for the publicity photo that will accompany the press release. After a discussion it was agreed that it would be best for Mr. Merrill to represent the Commission as its chair. Ms. Mitchell noted that May is National Preservation Month and that would be great timing for a press release. She also volunteered to adapt the press release into an article for Stratham magazine.

River Road: Mr. Merrill reported that the property owners remain very enthusiastic about the project. Ms. Mitchell inquired with Mr. Hyland if he recalled any discussions about renaming the adjacent conservation land owned by the Society for Protection of NH Forests to “The Richard Scammon Forest.” Mr. Hyland replied that he had drafted a letter several years ago regarding this and will look into it, along with pulling up some old photographs for the Preservation Company consultants.

Town-wide Survey: Ms. Mitchell had nothing to report.

Barn Easement: Mr. Merrill mailed out 15 letters to known historic barn owners not currently enrolled in the RSA 79-D barn easement program, he was pleased to report that five new applications and one renewal have been submitted for the 2021 deadline. One additional renewal is still outstanding.

Barn assessment grant applications: Ms. Mitchell is finalizing the barn assessment grant application for the large barn at Scamman Farm, 69 Portsmouth Avenue. Mr. Merrill worked with Jennifer Gunn on an application for the barn at her property, 173 Winnicutt Road, and it has been submitted to NH Preservation Alliance.

Town Historic Marker Project: Ms. Mitchell reported that Phineas Graphics was closing and that her contact Susan will work with her on completing the template before the business is closed. Ms. Mitchell will look into other graphic design companies. Mr. Hyland commented that he has had some experience with sign layout and would be willing to work with Ms. Mitchell on the project.

State Highway Historic Marker Project: Ms. Mitchell had nothing to report.

House Bill 164: Mr. Canada reported that HB 164 had passed the House of Representatives on April 2, 2021 and would go to a Senate hearing on April 15, 2021.

## **New Business**

Veterans Memorial Garden: Ms. Mitchell reviewed items which need repair at the VMG: a fallen wall capstone, some sunken bricks, and the granite bench continues to be problematic after freeze/thaw cycles. Mr. Houghton said there has been good communication between himself, Ms. Mitchell, Mr. Merrill, and DPW Director Nate Mears. Mr. Mears suggested appropriate actions for the various repairs and consensus is to proceed as he proposed.

Lester Lane Monument: Mr. Merrill explained that the Lester Lane Monument is the tablet with compass direction and mileage to various locations at the top of Stratham Hill near the fire tower. The concrete base is deteriorating and in need of repair and there had been an inquiry of the possibility of an Eagle Scout project by Brandon Blood. Mr. Merrill raised the repair issue with Mr. Houghton and Mr. Mears as it needs to be addressed regardless of an Eagle Scout project. Ms. Mitchell thought it is important to look at the bigger picture of the whole top of Stratham Hill and maybe use some of Mr. Hyland's expertise to create a plan with the Stratham Hill Park Association's input. Mr. Merrill concurred with her suggestion. Mr. Canada questioned the Commission's role. Ms. Mitchell and Mr. Merrill feel that the park itself and the various structures and monuments are all of historic and cultural significance to the town, and worthy of our attention in our customary advisory capacity. The goal is for collaborative work with the Park Association and Select Board. Mr. Houghton remarked that there has not yet been any project presented to the Select Board by Mr. Blood, and suggested that a core group of himself, Mr. Hyland, Mr. Mears and Dan Crow as president of the Park Association come up with a vision for the monument and the top of the hill, taking in consideration the future town marker sign. Mr. Hyland also offered to meet with Mr. Blood if he chooses to proceed with this for his Eagle Scout project.

Squamscott Road Culvert: Mr. Merrill reported that he was contacted by an engineer working under contract for NHDOT. They are inquiring if we are aware of any historic or cultural resources that would be threatened or damaged by proposed culvert replacement work on either side of 55 Squamscott Road. Members present could not think of any issues or concerns. Mr. Merrill will reply appropriately.

Adjourned: With a motion from Mr. Canada, seconded by Ms. Wiggin, all present voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Hathaway

Secretary