



# TOWN OF STRATHAM

INCORPORATED 1716

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## STRATHAM HERITAGE COMMISSION

### Meeting Minutes

### Stratham Municipal Center

May 9, 2023

Present: Nathan Merrill, Michael Houghton, Rebecca Mitchell, Forrest Barker, Lucy Cushman

Absent: David Canada, Jeff Hyland, Tammy Hathaway

Guests: Mark Connors

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

Secretary's Report: Rebecca Mitchell made a motion to approve the April 11th minutes and Mike Houghton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's report: Nothing new to report at this time. Forrest Barker will bring the HPF Capital Reserve Fund balance to the next meeting.

Correspondence: Mr. Merrill said he will work the correspondence into the scheduled agenda items.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

Planning Board: Mr. Houghton reported that the last meeting was a training session. He noted that there are several new members now serving on the Zoning Board. Ms. Mitchell asked Mr. Merrill if Drew Goddard reached out to him about exterior siding materials and colors for his property at 94 Portsmouth Ave. Mr. Merrill reported that Mr. Goddard plans to use the existing colors for his changes to the existing structure. For the planned new barn-style apartment building he proposes using Hardie-style fiber cement siding in dark red. Mr. Merrill said that he shared with Goddard Ms. Mitchell's suggestion that he avoid using white trim on that structure, instead using black or a color the same as or similar to the siding.

Select Board: No news of significance to the Commission to report.

Demolition Review Committee: Has not met.

Heritage District Advisory Committee: Mr. Hyland reported via email that letters have been sent out to homeowners in the district.

Open Space Plan Steering Committee: Mr. Hyland reported via email that the next Open Space Steering Committee meeting will be held on May 31st.

## OLD BUSINESS

Historic register nominations: Mr. Merrill received an email from Megan Rupnik at the NH Division of Historical Resources stating that they postponed consideration of our application for 21-23-25 River Road due to a letter they received from the Society for Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF) requesting more time. SPNHF owns the “Strathlorne Forest,” a large parcel of open field and wooded conservation land that makes up much of the old Scammon Farm property. Mr. Merrill, who had engaged with the Society early in the process, questioned the reason for the delay, speaking to both Ms. Rupnik and his contact at SPNHF. He learned that there had been some recent staffing changes and that higher-level NPNHF staff had some questions about the potential impact of National Register listing. Ms. Rupnik and Mr. Merrill both assured SPNHF staff that the listing would in no way impact the SPNHF-held land, which contains no structures. SPNHF staff indicated that the organization would ultimately most likely support moving forward, but that it needed to be reviewed and voted on by a committee. NHDHR chose to postpone our application until August, to allow SPNHF more time to complete its internal due diligence. The delay is frustrating but does not adversely impact our application.

Town marker project: Ms. Mitchell stated that she is working on an article for Stroll magazine that will highlight Stratham’s Fourth of July festivities in 1860, and Stratham Hill’s role in the events of that day. She anticipates using much of the information and images that she has collected in developing content for the Stratham Hill/Lincoln Trail marker. Ms. Mitchell noted that recent research seems to indicate that Samuel Lane purchased Stratham Hill land, and it passed through his heirs until it was sold to representatives of Edward Tuck who gave it to the Town. Further it appears that the Lane family allowed, and possibly even encouraged, extensive public use of the property long before it became a designated public park.

State marker project: Mr. Merrill reported that he spoke with Amy Dixon at the NH Division of Historic Resources to check on the application process. She stated that extensive flooding at their office building had slowed the process, and newly revised application standards and guidelines are now in force. Ms. Mitchell noted that it is very helpful that the NHDHR staff now assists with the formatting and final editing of text. She also said that she has a solid start on the required bibliography that should help us toward the November 1, 2023 deadline. Ms. Cushman suggested enlisting help or financial support from the Stratham Historical Society.

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

Historic/scenic streets: Mr. Merrill recapped last month's discussion on this topic and opened the floor for discussion of which streets would be best suited for pursuing a scenic designation. Ms. Mitchell suggested Depot Road and Sandy Point Road. Mr. Merrill reported that Mr. Canada wrote via email to advocate for Stratham Heights Road and River Road. Ms. Cushman said she will look for the old Town Meeting minutes on the previous attempt at designating River Road. Ms. Cushman said that Jim Scamman has expressed desire for restoring some of the original road names. Ms. Cushman and Ms. Mitchell both agreed that changing road names is significantly disruptive and therefore not worthy of pursuit, but that reverting to historic names of several streams/brooks in town could be worthy of further discussion. Mr. Houghton agreed with the Depot Road suggestion because it is so beautiful in the winter. Ms. Mitchell also suggested Winnicutt Road, particularly the area from the corner of Union Road to the North Hampton town line. Forrest Barker suggested Emery Lane. Ms. Mitchell said we should eventually have a historic marker for Emery Lane. Mr. Merrill agreed with the significance of Emery Lane, and also suggested Jackrabbit Lane, noting that it would be easy to designate because most of the property along it is town-owned.

Mr. Merrill brought up concern for the stone wall at the front of Smyk Park, with the looming potential widening of Bunker Hill Ave. adversely impacting the wall and/or the National Register-listed Bartlett-Cushman house. Ms. Cushman and Ms. Mitchell thought it would be a good idea for the wall to be moved back from the road and repaired, rather than having the road widening encroach further onto the B-C property.

Veterans Memorial Garden: Ms. Mitchell reported that three new bricks will be engraved and installed in time for Memorial Day. More recently she received an application eligible for inclusion on the Persian Gulf War monument. It will be processed in time for the Veterans' Day observances.

SHS building repairs: Mr. Merrill reported that the work to be done this year will be supported by a matching grant funded by the 1772 Foundation that is administered by the NH Preservation Alliance. The work will be completed by Drew Bedard, Hall & Parlor Preservation, of Stratham.

Easement stewardship update: Mr. Merrill stated that per last year's agreement between the property owner, Town, and NHPA, there are supposed to be repairs and maintenance occurring this year at 132 Portsmouth Ave. But he hasn't noticed any activity yet this season, so he asked David Moore to check in with NHPA for an update.

249 Portsmouth Ave: Mr. Merrill reported that there is no progress on demolition of the barn, but it should be done by June according to the property owner's agreement with the Town. Mr. Merrill expressed his hope that work may be done to protect the house because of its many, presently intact, exterior and interior features and because of its location on Portsmouth Avenue. Ms. Mitchell stated that many of these features, including a shoe making shop, are included in the National Register documentation.

## NEW BUSINESS

Mark Connors was able to join the meeting at this time. He announced that he is applying for Stratham to be a Certified Local Government. One of the benefits is that there is extra grant money available to Certified towns. He believes the Route 33 Neighborhood Heritage District makes us eligible; however, with it being the first established in the state, approval is still pending.

Renewable energy subcommittee appointee: Mr. Connors said that solar panel applications are increasing rapidly. The town is putting together a committee with a short charge to look at our solar ordinance. The Heritage Commission needs representation. Ms. Cushman volunteered to serve. Mr. Merrill thanked her, and added that her past experience on the Planning Board will make her a particularly valuable member.

Mr. Merrill brought up that Mark Connors was recently promoted to Director of Planning and Community Development. Commission members extended their congratulations to Mr. Connors.

Mr. Merrill said that the livestock barns at Stratham Hill Park are being dedicated to his late grandparents, James & Lorraine Stuart. There will be a dedication ceremony at SummerFest on July 15th at breakfast time.

Mark Connors brought up the Bunker Hill Avenue intersection and reported that he and David Moore have been in regular contact with NHDOT. Mr. Connors stated that the Town wants to be a part of the design process, and not just reacting to DOT. Commission members shared their strong opinion that no more land should be taken from the Bartlett-Cushman house, as it was already adversely affected by the widening of Portsmouth Avenue in the 1950s. Mr. Merrill said it would be a good idea to have Butterfield Lane and Raedar Drive connect into the future traffic signal at the intersection.

Maps of historic properties: Mr. Connors said the first phase of this project will be to get the data from the townwide survey entered into the Town's GIS mapping system, at a cost of approximately \$5,000. Mr. Merrill suggested making the map interactive because the library gets inquiries from residents about the history of their homes, so there is clearly interest in this information and we need to make it accessible to the public. Mr. Connors said that would be down the road and getting the inventory of data digitized is a good place to start.

Mr. Connors also said he wanted to update the town's Wikipedia page, and that he wanted residents to send in their photos so that everybody can vote for their favorites. Ms. Mitchell suggested a composite photo of historic doorways. Mr. Merrill agreed that this was a good idea because Stratham doesn't have a downtown, so the historic architecture we have doesn't stand out as much.

NHPA statewide conference & awards ceremony: Mr. Merrill announced that the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance is having a conference and awards ceremony in Claremont, NH on May 19th and that Ms. Mitchell is receiving a Preservation Achievement Award.

Officer elections will be tabled until the next meeting when there will hopefully be more members present.

Ms. Cushman brought up the potential Eagle Scout project of mapping the cemeteries in Stratham. Ms. Cushman will schedule a meeting with him to discuss.

Rebecca Mitchell made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 pm. Mr. Merrill seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Forrest Barker, Secretary pro-tem