



# TOWN OF STRATHAM

INCORPORATED 1716

10 BUNKER HILL AVENUE STRATHAM NH 03885

VOICE (603) 772-7391 FAX (603) 775-0517

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## STRATHAM HERITAGE COMMISSION

### Minutes

**June 13, 2023 at 7:00 pm**

**Stratham Municipal Center**

Present: Nathan Merrill, Michael Houghton, Rebecca Mitchell, Forrest Barker, Lucy Cushman, Jeff Hyland, David Canada

Absent: Tammy Hathaway

Guests: Mark Connors

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

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

Treasurer's report: Forrest Barker reported that the HPF Capital Reserve Fund balance was \$209,230.88 as of March. This does not include this year's addition of \$50,000.

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

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

Planning Board: Dave Canada and Mike Houghton reported that there was nothing pertinent.

Select Board: Mike Houghton said that there was nothing significant to report.

Demolition Review Committee: Has not met. Mr. Merrill did report that the owner of 16 French Lane has picked up a demolition permit application, but has not submitted it yet. DRC will likely need to meet this summer.

Heritage District Advisory Committee: Jeff Hyland reported that the committee sent out letters to all property owners in the district, and are waiting to hear back from homeowners.

Open Space Plan Steering Committee: Jeff Hyland reported that the committee met May 31st and spent the whole afternoon touring sites. They wanted to see the different types of recreational, town-owned spaces. The committee discussed the next steps such as an outreach plan. They are working towards a comprehensive review of open space, conservation, and property usage in the town. They also talked about potentially acquiring other properties. Rebecca Mitchell asked if scenic byways would be included in the conversation. Mr. Hyland said that it fits with their goal of connectivity in the town. Mr. Hyland also mentioned that historic markers are also included in the conversation.

## OLD BUSINESS

Historic register nominations: Mr. Merrill reported that there were no updates with the 21-23-25 River Road nomination. Mr. Merrill said there should hopefully be news by the time we meet in September. He will keep in touch with the Division of Historical Resources and the Society for Protection of New Hampshire Forests. Mr. Merrill asked SPNHF staff about changing the name of the “Strathlorne Tract” to “Scammon Forest” or Richard Scammon Farm.” SPNHF staff will shepherd the potential name change through the appropriate channels in the organization.

Rebecca Mitchell reported that Andrew Cushing is picking up momentum on the 200 Portsmouth Ave nomination and is hoping to get it done before the house is sold.

Town marker project: Nothing new to report.

State marker project: Mr. Merrill and Ms. Mitchell will work on preparing the formal submission over the summer months. The deadline in November 1<sup>st</sup>.

Maps of historic properties: Mark Connors said that the town is working with their GIS service provider to begin the process of entering the data layers.

Veterans Memorial Garden: Ms. Mitchell reported that all the new bricks were set in place for Memorial Day. She has confirmed the eligibility of the new application for monument engraving. This will be completed prior to Veterans Day.

SHS building repairs: David Canada reported that \$7,500 has been granted from the 1772 Foundation via the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance. The rest of the cost for 2023 repairs will be covered by the Stratham Historical Society, Inc., and the Town of Stratham Buildings & Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund. The projects to be completed this year include repointing portions of the stonework, repairing rotted window frames, repairing chimney flashing, and installation of a new gutter across the rear of the roof. Mr. Merrill asked if the front steps will be fixed next year. Mr. Canada said it is not an emergency so it will be addressed in a future year. Mr. Canada reported that the SHS also talked about handicap access, but the portico granite posts limit the width available for an ADA-compliant ramp. A window could be taken out of the back, for installation of a new handicap access, but it would compromise the building’s historic architecture. Since there is currently no demand for handicap access, the SHS Board decided it

is not a priority for the time being. Mr. Canada stated that he thinks the town should be ADA compliant, but remodeling old buildings can be difficult.

Historic/Scenic Streets: Lucy Cushman looked through past town meeting minutes to find the reason why the Scenic Street designation of Stratham Heights, River Road, and Union Road did not pass. Ms. Cushman reported that the 199X Town Report of Article 15 read that it passed with the Moderator casting a tie-breaking vote in favor. Someone then requested a recount and after a second vote it did not pass. Mike Houghton suggested the Commission hold a public meeting to see if there is interest in this topic. This way residents can be part of the solution. Ms. Cushman suggested using photos for examples of what the Commission wants to protect. Ms. Mitchell added that both natural and man-made features could merit protection, giving the example of the historic, meandering course of some roads. Mr. Hyland added that River Road is popular for walking. Ms. Mitchell agreed and said she wants to maintain the road's rural character. Ms. Cushman brought up Mr. Houghton's idea of the meeting and Mr. Merrill said it would take a lot of work to organize. Ms. Mitchell asked if there is anyone in the state who is an advocate? Mr. Merrill also suggested DHR. Mr. Houghton suggested talking with Mr. Connors, and Mr. Merrill agreed that the Commission would need staff support to facilitate the meeting. Mr. Houghton suggested the Commission could get a sense of residents' support or concerns by conducting a public input meeting. Mr. Hyland also suggested that this could dovetail with the open space connectivity objectives. Mr. Merrill added that the Master Plan is now midway through its life cycle, and this public meeting could focus also on the broader context of what work has been done and what still needs to be accomplished in the overall Plan (of which the scenic streets designation is a recommended action). Mr. Hyland said an incentive for residents to maintain Historical Streets would be if the town provided residents with trees to plant along the road. Mr. Houghton said something similar was done in the past, except that it was a treebank. But neither Mr. Houghton nor Mr. Canada knew where it was. Mr. Canada said he would reach out to Paul Deschaine. Mr. Merrill concluded that we will discuss this again after our summer hiatus.

Easement stewardship update: Mr. Merrill reported that he received an email from David Moore regarding the maintenance and repair plan for 132 Portsmouth Ave. The email listed the work done in 2022 and the expectation for work to be completed in 2023, including exterior painting of the buildings. Executive director of NHPA Jennifer Goodman wrote that she is in the process of scheduling a site visit and will be in touch after that.

249 Portsmouth Ave barn demolition update: Mr. Merrill reported that the barn demolition is supposed to be completed by the end of the month. Mr. Connors said he has been in touch with one of the owners and he is also aware of the deadline and stated they may need to extend it due to the contractor's timeline. Mr. Merrill stated that with approval of the demolition permit, maintenance needed to be done on the house, especially taking down the vegetation that is touching the house.

Cemeteries – potential Eagle Scout project: Lucy Cushman stated that the project's goals are to provide GPS locations for all the cemeteries in Stratham. Ms. Cushman said that Patty Lovejoy had told her that the state attempted to document all cemeteries in the state and all the people

buried in them, but SHS has not seen the list. Ms. Cushman went on to say that Bruce Scamman has the requisite GPS equipment for the project and will be at the meeting with the eagle scout candidate, Ms. Cushman, and Mr. Merrill.

NHPA award ceremony – June 19th: Mr. Merrill informed the commission of a local award ceremony for Rebecca Mitchell in the Hutton Room on June 19th at 6:30 pm. Ms. Mitchell received an award for her leadership and work in historical preservation from the NHPA at their conference on May 19th. Forrest Barker, Lucy Cushman, and Lorraine Merrill went to the conference. Ms. Cushman said that the conference had great workshops.

Officer elections: Dave Canada nominated Nate Merrill for Chair for the ensuing year. Ms. Mitchell seconded, and all (but Mr. Merrill) voted in favor. Mr. Merrill accepted, but made the point that he thinks the Commission shouldn't have one leader for too many years in a row and that members should plan to nominate someone else next year so that one man's vision does not dominate the Commission's work indefinitely. This will be Mr. Merrill's fourth year in a row as chair, and he has led the group six out of the last eight years.

Mr. Canada nominated Tammy Hathaway as secretary. Mr. Merrill seconded, and the vote passed unanimously.

Mr. Merrill nominated Forrest Barker as treasurer, Mr. Canada seconded, and the vote passed unanimously.

Mr. Merrill made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:43 pm. Ms. Mitchell seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Forrest Barker, Secretary pro-tem