

**Stratham Heritage Commission
Stratham Municipal Center – Hutton Room
Meeting Minutes
June 8, 2022**

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

Absent: Tammy Hathaway

Convened: Chair Nathan Merrill convened the meeting at 7:05 pm

Secretary's Report: Mr. Merrill distributed the minutes of the May 11, 2022 meeting. Ms. Mitchell made a motion to approve the minutes and Ms. Barker seconded, the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Next quarterly report will be available for our September meeting. Ms. Mitchell reported that she received a gift of \$41 from Lane Tapley for a copy of a scholarly publication with an article on Samuel Lane that Ms. Mitchell sent to her. Ms. Mitchell said that she would like to donate the money to the Heritage Fund, and turned the check over to Ms. Barker for passing along to the finance office.

Committee Reports

Planning Board: Mr. Canada stated there are not currently any significant updates relevant to the Commission.

Select Board: Mr. Houghton reported that the proposed names for Room A at the Municipal Center (Joan M. Sewall Room) and the barns at Stratham Hill Park (for James & Lorraine Stuart) were approved by the Select Board. He also noted that Tom House was appointed to the Route 33 Heritage District Advisory Committee as the Planning Board representative. He will join Jeff Hyland representing the Heritage Commission and Alex Dardinski as the Select Board appointee. Mr. Houghton also reported that the Stonybrook Lane development is progressing and there are discussions with the town of Exeter about the possibility of bringing water and sewer services to the area, which would allow for higher density housing so that some of the units could be specified workforce housing.

Demolition Review Committee: Mr. Merrill distributed minutes from the May 11, 2022 DRC meeting for everyone's information, pertaining to 18 Stratham Heights Road. He also noted that the old barn at 23 Portsmouth Avenue was demolished recently. The barn was previously reviewed by the DRC and found to have no remaining significant historical value given its extensive modifications and seriously deteriorated condition.

Correspondence: Mr. Merrill shared an email from Town Planner Mark Connors. Mr. Connors reviewed the Master Plan and noticed that an interactive map of historical resources was one of the stated priorities. He suggests that this is eminently doable and offered to reach out to the Rockingham Planning Commission for possible technical and financial assistance. Members concurred that this is a priority and authorized Mr. Merrill to engage in follow up discussions with Mr. Connors over the summer.

Heritage District Committee: Has not met yet, but they are working on setting a date for an organizational meeting.

Old Business

Historic register nominations:

River Road: Mr. Merrill reported that he is communicating with Lynne Monroe to determine the cost of completing the National Register of Historic Places nomination forms, and whether it makes the most sense to pursue that route, or alternatively submit the existing National Historic District nomination form. Some additional funds might be required to complete National Register applications for the individual properties if we choose to go that route. Ms. Mitchell made a motion to authorize Mr. Merrill to spend up to \$1,000 to complete the National Register application forms, if required. Mr. Houghton seconded. The vote passed unanimously.

200 Portsmouth Ave: Ms. Mitchell noted no substantial updates but that Andrew Cushing was planning on working on it in the fall after he transitions to his new job.

66 Squamscott Road: Mr. Merrill shared the report from architectural historian Steven Mallory. His professional evaluation of the house's framing and architectural features indicates that it was built c. 1740-1750, with a major renovation c. 1840 that completely remodeled the interior – including replacing the original front staircase with the curved one now present. Contrary to previous assumptions, Mr. Mallory states clearly that the back part of the house is not older than the front. Citing the framing techniques, he dates the rear structure to the late 18th or early 19th century – and that it was a once larger structure, likely with a non-residential use, that was disassembled from another location and added to the rear of the main house, perhaps around 1810 based on how the two structures are attached to each other. Mr. Mallory does not feel that further investigation with dendrochronology is warranted. He also thinks the house has been too heavily modified to qualify for the National Register, but the farm taken as a whole with the house, barn, and land might make a viable NH State Register nomination.

Town-Wide Area Form: Mr. Merrill reported that he and Ms. Mitchell met earlier today to go over the survey form. They spent four hours on it and still have a lot left to cover. They will keep working on it, with a goal to finish by the end of the month so that Ms. Mausolf can have a finished product for us by the time we reconvene in September.

Town Marker Project: Ms. Mitchell reported that she has been learning about the big 1860 fourth of July celebration held at Stratham Hill and other venues in town. She feels confident that by September she will have a first draft mock-up of the SHP marker for the base of Lincoln Trail ready for review.

State Marker Project: No updates.

Veterans' Memorial Garden: Ms. Mitchell reported that she has spoken with Exeter Monument Works about how much lead time they would need to inscribe the bricks for the Memorial Garden in time for Memorial Day and Veterans Day each year. This will help systemize the process because David Moore requested that we create a procedure document regarding the engravings. Ms. Mitchell also gave Ms. Barker the invoice from Exeter Monument Works for two brick engravings to turn into the finance office..

New Business

Digitization of 20th Century aerial photography: Mr. Merrill reported that the town planning and building office possesses aerial photographs of Stratham from the mid through late 20th century. Jim Marchese, CEO/BI, will work on scanning the large sheet-sized images so that they can be digitally accessible to the public on the town website.

Goals for the 22-23 Season: Mr. Merrill asked the Commission to think over the summer about members' goals for the upcoming season, and email suggestions to him or bring them to the September meeting. He noted that a primary goal will be completion of the town-wide survey and tackling other Master Plan related priorities that stem from it, as well as successful completion of the first Stratham Hill Park historic marker.

Smyk Park: Mr. Merrill reported that a new resident recently asked on Facebook about the history of the Smyk Park and what used to be there. Ms. Mitchell noted that it would be beneficial to have a condensed history including the conditions of the gift that the Heritage Commission could direct people to. Mr. Merrill noted it would fall under the Commission's efforts of outreach and education. Ms. Mitchell added that it would be beneficial to have similar background historical information available online for all town owned properties. Ms. Mitchell said that for now, several members of the public responded to this particular inquiry. But she and Mr. Merrill will work on drafting a brief history of the property that would be suitable for posting online in the future.

Procedural Rules-proposed updates: Mr. Merrill reported that he will email the Commission his recommended updates as a redlined Word document, and members will have the opportunity to discuss and vote on them in September.

Officer Elections: Ms. Mitchell nominated Tammy Hathaway as Secretary, Ms. Barker seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously.

Mr. Merrill nominated Forrest Barker as Treasurer. Ms. Mitchell seconded, the vote passed unanimously.

Mr. Canada nominated Nathan Merrill as Chair. Ms. Mitchell seconded, the vote passed unanimously. Mr. Merrill noted that he is willing to be chair for another term but after leading the group for four out of the past six years, he feels strongly it is healthy for boards to rotate their leadership so that no single person sets the tenor and agenda indefinitely.

Group photo for web page: Tabled to the next meeting when all members will be present.

Next Meeting Date: After discussion, it was agreed to post the next meeting for September 14th, 2022 unless the chair deems it necessary to call a July or August meeting of the Commission.

Any other business to come before the Commission: Mr. Merrill said he would like to discuss two specific properties and requested a vote to go into non-public session. At 8:07 pm Ms. Barker made a motion to go into non-public meeting to discuss two specific properties. Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously. At 8:24 pm Ms. Mitchell made a motion to close the non-public and seal the minutes to protect the reputation of others. Mr. Hyland seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously.

At 8:25 pm Mr. Canada made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Mitchell seconded and the vote passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Forrest Barker

Secretary pro tem