

STRATHAM HERITAGE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
May 18, 2016
7:00 pm
Land Use Conference Room

Members Present: Rebecca Mitchell, Nathan Merrill, Wallace Stuart, Tammy Hathaway, Florence Wiggin and Terry Barnes.

Convened: 7:00 PM by Rebecca Mitchell

Mitchell asked both Hathaway and Wiggin to take voting positions in the absence of David Canada and a Planning Board member.

Minutes: The minutes of the April 13, 2016 meeting were approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

Treasurer's Report/Budget: Merrill reported that at the end of March there was a balance of \$4,400.00 in the Heritage Fund, and \$3700.00 remaining in the operating budget after \$45.00 expenditure.

Lane Homestead Easement: Mitchell reported that the preservation easement is in the process being reviewed by all parties. The current goal is for a closing on or before July 29, 2016. In a discussion of the draft easement Merrill noted some grammatical lapses and raised the concern that dredging of the pond be allowed. Following that Barnes questioned what entity is responsible for maintaining the dam. Mitchell agreed to share comments and questions with the Preservation Alliance. She also will ask Bill Ducet for a proposal for the survey work needed.

Town Center: Mitchell reported that the curbing and sidewalks are going in but that unanticipated expenses related to resolving drainage problems mean that the trees and lighting will not be installed at this time. Merrill spoke with the owner of Stratham's old Town Hall and reported that the owner supports the Heritage Commission nominating the building to be placed on the state register of historic places. Mitchell will proceed with recruiting a consultant to write and submit the nomination, using research already completed, notably Stuart's research in old town reports. A discussion followed on the need of a survey of historic buildings within the Town Center with the possibility of forming a local historic district.

Wiggin Family cemetery site: Peter Wiggin is seeking help in the final stages of cleaning up the site and Stuart has posted his appeal on the commission's Facebook page. Mitchell reported that she suggested to Peter that he contact the Parks & Recreation Department.

300th Anniversary Committee: Wiggin reported that the Stratham historical play was a success with audiences of 375 persons at both performances. Sales of merchandise totaled close to \$1,000. There will be another performance of the play on the Thursday night of the Stratham Fair.

On June 12, 2016 the Stratham Community Church will celebrate the 300th anniversary of its founding.

NEW BUSINESS:

Former Baptist Church site: Mitchell reported that the Board of Selectmen has requested that the Commission work with the Stratham Community Church's church history committee regarding the lot by the Greenwood Cemetery, which was the original site of the Baptist church. That church was moved in 1982 and is now the Parker Parish Hall, attached to the Community Church. The church committee is apparently seeking a means to more publicly recognize the history of the structure and its relocation. The board after discussion thought the story of the Parker Parish Hall would be most visible to the greatest number of people through an interpretive sign attached to the building itself. Mitchell suggested that the present bronze marker commemorating the Baptist church's original site and its removal could be made more prominent and the site generally improved. Members agreed to visit the marker site and discuss possible improvements including vehicular access to Greenwood Cemetery.

Election of Officers: A motion was made by Wiggin and seconded by Merrill nominating a slate of officers: Mitchell, Chair; Stuart, Treasurer; Hathaway, Secretary. The slate was elected unanimously.

Demolition Review Committee Appointments: Currently Peter Wiggin and Dana Dowling serve as members-at-large along with Mitchell and Merrill from the Heritage Commission. Mitchell noted that the Commission is allowed a third member who has in the past been the Planning Board representative to the Commission. After discussion it was agreed that Mitchell will ask Peter Wiggin and Dana Dowling to continue to serve on the committee.

Regional HC/HDC meeting: Mitchell reported that the North Hampton Heritage Commission has contacted her with a plan to organize a regional meeting in the fall.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15

All agreed to reopen meeting at 8:16 to discuss the May 11 meeting of all boards, commissions and committees.

May 11 Meeting for Gateway Presentation and Discussion

All commission members were present at the meeting, and agreed they generally support the Gateway vision and understand the need for municipal water and sewer to be installed for enhanced development of the zone. General consensus appears that having a sewer proposal to go along with water is essential for any future warrant article.

From the commission's perspective, it is important to keep intensive commercial development contained to its current corridor, rather than allowing it to sprawl further north/east along Portsmouth Avenue. Stuart mentioned that he felt the PowerPoint presentations were well done, but that they should perhaps be shortened up a bit, and that Canada's water/sewer presentation needs fleshing out as more detailed information becomes available. There was consensus that more community outreach and education needs to be completed in the months ahead. Merrill, a former Gateway Committee member and current Technical Review Committee member, helped begin this process by publishing a 3-part op-ed series in The Exeter News-Letter that was co-signed by all of the other former Gateway members, including Mitchell. The series will also be published with color visuals in upcoming editions of Stratham magazine. Merrill pointed out that as civic leaders in the community we all need to be willing to speak up when opportunities arise with friends and neighbors.
Meeting adjourned at 8:40

NEXT MEETING: June 8, 2016

Submitted by:
Tammy Hathaway
Rebecca Mitchell