

**STRATHAM HERITAGE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
February 24, 2016
7:00 pm
Land Use Conference Room**

Members Present: Rebecca Mitchell, Nathan Merrill, David Canada, Wallace Stuart and Tammy Hathaway. Guests: Tavis Austin, Town Planner, joined at 7:55 and Paul Deschaine, Town Administrator, at 8:45

Convened: 7:00 PM by Rebecca Mitchell. Alternate member Tammy Hathaway took a full voting position in lieu of a Planning Board member.

Minutes: The minutes of the January 13 and February 10 meetings were approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

Membership: Canada noted that the Planning Board has not yet appointed a representative to the commission and that he will again raise that with the board. Mitchell noted that in the past it has been helpful to have the Planning Board Representative also serve on the Demolition Review Committee.

Bartlett-Cushman House: Canada and Mitchell reported on the RFP updates. Mitchell and Maggie Steir (NH Preservation Alliance) held a conference call with David Choate (Realtor and Preservation Alliance Board member) to discuss approaches to marketing the RFP. At the Old House and Barn Expo the Preservation Alliance will include the Bartlett-Cushman House in a display of properties seeking partners for rehabilitation.

Lane Homestead Easement and Warrant Article 7: Canada said he has been in contact with the Neilys and reported on a possible prospective buyer. In preparation for Town Meeting the commission agreed that Canada would introduce Article 7 (to raise and appropriate \$250,000 to be deposited in the Heritage Preservation Fund) and discuss the financial and legal aspects while Mitchell would speak to the historical significance of the property and the community benefit of preserving it. Mitchell agreed that she will draft a letter to the editor of the Exeter News-Letter and prepare handouts for the March 3 library-sponsored candidates' forum.

Demolition Review: Tavis Austen joined the discussion on how to balance property owner rights and the Town's interest in preserving historical resources within the context of the present 30-day review period. Merrill reported that he had discussed a regional meeting on the topic of demolition review to be sponsored by the Rockingham Planning Commission. Mitchell reported that she had read of a town that used incentives, such as allowing relief from set back or green space requirements, in exchange for development proposals that preserve historic structures.

Veteran's Garden: Deschaine reported that he could find no record that the Board of Selectmen had officially voted to approve the 2006 Veterans' Garden policy. A vote on the policy will be on the agenda of the Board's next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Town Center: Mitchell reminded the Commission that the 2012 report of the Plan NH community charrette listed "Re-establish the historic significance, character, and connection of the Town Center within the community" as one of three key concerns that emerged from the process. That same report noted that a sense of history in the Town Center (TC) district is still evident but that many of the buildings are in need of investment. Mitchell further said that by her count there are 11 properties that are clearly historic in the district, including two on the National Register of Historic Places. The group conceded that there are other structures within the district that are over 50 years old, but that could reasonably be seen as not contributing to its historic character.

The commission and Austin reviewed and discussed the difference between Historic Districts and Neighborhood Heritage Districts and the current zoning within the town center. There was general agreement that the Neighborhood Heritage District model is not appropriate in the TC because of its heavy reliance on resident participation and because of the lack of cohesiveness in the district. The discussion shifted to concern for the lack of protection for historic structures and landscapes along the Route 33 corridor. There was general agreement that there is an urgent need for this to be addressed by the town's Master Plan. In the nearer term the commission agreed that it could proceed with clarifying the vision and purpose of protecting the historic character of the TC and that a district-wide survey would provide a foundation for future planning. There was also agreement to pursue listing the Old Town Hall to the New Hampshire Register of Historic Places. Discussion of these topics will continue at future meetings.

The Old House and Barn Expo: Mitchell reported that the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance's Old House and Barn Expo will be in Manchester on March

12-13. Both the Lane Homestead, as a Seven to Save property, and the Bartlett-Cushman House, as a municipally owned property looking for a rehabilitation partner, will be included in the Alliance's booth at the Expo. Mitchell will volunteer at the Expo on the 12th.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10

NEXT MEETING: March 9, 2016

Submitted by:
Tammy Hathaway
Rebecca Mitchell