

Stratham Heritage Commission
Meeting Minutes
Land Use Conference Room
December 12, 2018

Present: David Canada, Nathan Merrill, Rebecca Mitchell, Mike Houghton, Forrest Barker, Tammy Hathaway, Florence Wiggin

Convened: 7:02 PM by Chairman Canada.

Secretary's Report: Mr. Merrill made a motion to approve the November 14, 2018 minutes as presented. (Mr. Merrill, Ms. Mitchell, unanimous in favor)

Treasurer's Report: Ms. Barker reported the Heritage fund balance is \$6517.78 and the operating budget \$5,342.00 after a Seacoast Memorial engraving expense of \$268.

Committee Reports:

Planning Board: Mr. Houghton reported that Sophie Robinson of Berry Hill Farm, 61 Stratham Heights Road, was opening an event and educational center in the barn to be called "Robinwood Center"; the farm will remain Berry Hill Farm.

Technical Review Committee: The Committee will meet on the 18th to review the work of Jeff Hyland and Tom House to present a graphic display of the Gateway design possibilities.

Demolition Review Committee: Ms. Mitchell has contacted the owner of 291 Portsmouth Avenue regarding salvaging historic items from the home and barn before demolition, but has not heard back from him. She has given his contact information to Mr. David Ryng, current owner of 271 Portsmouth Avenue, who is in the process of rehabilitating his historic property, and is interested in salvaging some historical items. She will continue efforts to contact the current owner to determine if he may consider leaving some of the cellar stone as a historic marker of the house and to determine his willingness to refrain from demolishing the barn.

After a discussion of the upcoming demolition of the Smyk property Mr. Merrill expressed his concern that there is a lack of communication between the Board of Selectmen and the Heritage Commission, most recently regarding the demolition of the Smyk home. The Commission, he noted, met on November 14, 2018 and at that meeting nothing regarding the Smyk house was mentioned by the Board's representative. However, the next day the application for the demolition of the house was submitted by the Director of Public Works to the Code Enforcement Officer. Mr. Merrill further expressed his frustration that despite sharing significant new details about the house with the Selectmen they refused to reconsider the decision to immediately demolish.

Mr. Houghton stated his opinion that there had been much discussion about the Smyk property over the past year, and that no clear use or vision for the house had been articulated.

Mr. Merrill argued that the stated goal of prior public discussion was to determine whether or not to accept the property as a whole, not to determine the fate of the house. He also noted that 100% of the 20 written comments left by visitors at the Smyk open house sponsored by the Commission on December 1 were in favor of keeping and repurposing the house. Mr. Canada (a former member of the Smyk Property Study Committee) pointed out that the Committee's final report made a summary statement about the house that offered several alternative paths to follow, with demolition being one of the potential choices. In his view the Committee's conclusion implied further community dialogue about the house before making an irreversible decision, and that viewpoint was reinforced by the excellent turnout for the open house and the many expressions of interest in saving the house that he heard that morning.

Mr. Canada said that he will give the Stratham Historical Society the blue prints of the home along with the 1973 New Hampshire Profiles magazine article and aerial photos of the property. He will also scan and save to a Dropbox file the collections of photographs documenting the construction and interior of the house shared by Kathy Flynn Fazekas.

At the conclusion of the discussion Mr. Merrill reported that he had had a conversation with Mr. Fred Emanuel who expressed interest in moving the house, possibly to his adjacent office park. Mr. Houghton replied that any interest in moving the house should be brought to the next selectmen's meeting on December 17.

Master Plan Steering Committee: The next meeting is in January 2019. Mr. Merrill and Ms. Barker reported that they and Ms. Mitchell had recently attended a focus group on agriculture in Stratham, led by Nate Kelly of Horsley Witten, the consulting firm hired by the town. Discussions included the importance of respect for the culture of agriculture, the diversity of products, and the importance of zoning regulations that allow farmers flexibility as their businesses change over time. The shift to direct-to-consumer marketing and agritourism poses some unique challenges for farmers and municipalities alike. Building codes and code enforcement challenges were also discussed. At the meeting Ms. Barker raised the problem faced by young farmers trying to find both find land and affordable housing.

Old Business

Bartlett-Cushman House: Mr. Houghton explained that there has been some negotiating with interested parties around the proposed content of the preservation easement. Mr. Canada noted that the new barn windows have been installed.

Portsmouth Avenue Survey: It is still being reviewed.

Scamman Farm: Ms. Mitchell reported that the application for the National Historic Register is completed and will be wrapped up by the end of the month.

Veterans' Memorial Garden: Ms. Mitchell reported that she is working with Deb Bakie on a draft of the new application form.

Old Town Hall: Ms. Mitchell will write a report to summarize the Old Town Hall redevelopment and noted that the preservation easement had been filed. Building owner Mark

Perlowski will host an open house in January 2019. When the question of a plaque for the building was raised Ms. Mitchell said that with the extensive changes to the interior the building may no longer be eligible for the State Register of Historical Places. She will query the NH Division of Historical Resources

Photo Archives: Mr. Merrill is in communication with former Commission member Wallace Stuart regarding the status of the photo website.

February Program: A change of topics from recreational hunting and fishing along the Squamscott River and Great Bay to the Kings Highway (Portsmouth Avenue) was decided due to the relevancy of the Portsmouth Avenue survey report done by Lisa Mausolf, who has lots of photographs and will speak on the topic. Ms. Mitchell will write an article for the Stratham Magazine. The dates will be 2/8/19 with a snow date of 2/15/19.

Parker Cabin: Nothing new to report.

New Business

Town Report: Mr. Merrill made a motion to recommend to the Board of Selectmen that there be a dedication to the Smyks in the town report (Mr. Merrill, Ms. Wiggin, unanimous in favor)

Expansion of RSA 79E area: A discussion on the importance of keeping this topic on the agenda for future dialog to help ensure the economic viability and sustainability of historic resources both east and south of the town center.

The Wiggin Cemetery: Mr. Canada distributed for review a proposed change to legislation by State Representative Pat Abrami regarding access to historic burial sites on state-owned

Next Meeting: January 9, 2019 at 7:00 pm in the Land Use Conference Room

Adjourned at 8:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted
Tammy Hathaway
Secretary