

**Stratham Heritage Commission
Meeting Minutes
Land Use Conference Room
April 10, 2019**

DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED

Present: David Canada, Nathan Merrill, Michael Houghton, Tammy Hathaway, Florence Wiggin, Forrest Barker

Absent: Rebecca Mitchell

Convened: 7:03 PM by Chairman Canada

Secretary's Report: Mr. Merrill made a motion, seconded by Mr. Canada, to approve the March 14, 2019 minutes as presented. Approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Ms. Barker reported that there are no changes in account balances except for \$11.02 interest in the Heritage Fund for a balance of \$6,578.02

Committee Reports

Planning Board: Mr. Canada had nothing to report that is pertinent to the Heritage Commission.

Technical Review Committee: No report.

Demolition Review Committee: Keven Hatch left a message with Mr. Canada regarding the demolition of 291 Portsmouth Avenue. He reports that he anticipates selling the home soon and that the new owner has no interest in retaining the house or barn. Anything of value may be salvaged. Mr. Merrill recalled that there are salvageable beams in the barn and mantles in the house. Mr. Canada noted that the large foundation stones are going to be used in the entrance. Mr. Merrill has contacts that may be interested in salvaging some of the items. A discussion ensued on whether or not a new owner needs to obtain a new demolition permit. Mr. Canada will discuss with CEO/BI Shanti Wolph.

Master Plan Steering Committee: Ms. Barker and Mr. Merrill attended a meeting on April 8, 2019 which was focused on preparing for the public forum in May. Dan Crow and Greg Blood attended the meeting representing the Stratham Hill Park Association. It was noted that to date there haven't been any images or drafts of a plan to review. Public participation at the upcoming May 13th meeting is encouraged. A roundtable lunch with business owners is also scheduled for next week.

Old Business

Rezoning of Route 33: Mr. Canada and Mr. Merrill met with Town Planner Tavis Austin on March 27, 2019 to discuss the potential rezoning of Route 33. Mr. Canada outlined the three main goals of their discussion, namely to create a historic district or historic overlay, define the Route 33 corridor for purposes of rezoning, and the expansion of RSA 79-E opportunities outside of the Town Center. Mr. Austin is working on researching the feasibility of these goals, examining how other towns have handled these issues, and preparing a draft of necessary ordinances. Mr. Merrill noted that code compliance can be expensive for property owners when rehabilitating older structures. Ms. Mitchell will be contacting Elizabeth Hengen, an independent consultant, regarding the historic overlay option.

Bartlett-Cushman House: Mr. Houghton reported that everything on the sale of the house was progressing and a closing date of April 17, 2019 was set. It will be held at the office of Florence Ruffner, 185 Water Street Exeter NH at 1 pm. The new owners are very excited to start working on the home and are currently looking into contractors. A discussion ensued on how best to introduce the new owners to the Heritage Commission. Mr. Merrill suggested that a personal meeting with Mr. Canada and Ms. Mitchell would be an appropriate start, and all agreed.

249 Portsmouth Avenue: Nothing to report

Historic Markers: Mr. Merrill has been in contact with Jenn Gunn, property owner of the site of the historic Winnicutt Mills, and she was receptive of recognizing the site as part of the state historical roadside marker program. Mr. Canada will contact Bruce Kerr, the president of the Stratham Historical Society, to follow up on the Society partnering with the Heritage Commission on this project. Other potential sites to consider include the Lane Homestead and the Bartlett-Cushman House.

HB 384: Mr. Canada reported on a discussion he had with State Representative Pat Abrami regarding concerns from Peter and Dory Wiggin that the town was trying to take over the Wiggin cemetery, which is not the purpose of House Bill 384 introduced by Representative Abrami. Mr. Abrami also heard concerns from indigenous people that treasure hunters may take advantage of accessible sites. He will work on language to address this issue.

Barns: RSA 79D Barn Assessment Grant Applications: Jenn Gunn, owner of the Peabody Farm at 173 Winnicutt Road, is interested in a 79D easement for her barn. The barn needs sill work and Ms. Gunn is planning to finance the work. This project will most likely happen in 2020. A discussion on the historical importance of this property ensued. It is the site of the former largest working mill in town and is documented at the Library of Congress. The possibility of a preservation easement on the outside of the house and barn was discussed. It is felt that the Commission needs to set guidelines on what is worthy of consideration for a preservation easement. Mr. Merrill also suggested the possibility of some sort of revolving loan fund program to help property owners maintain their historic homes and barns.

Photo Archives: Mr. Merrill reported that Wally Stuart has a new computer and is working on organizing photos for the website.

Scamman Farm: Mr. Canada reported that the Scammans are willing to pay for a plaque identifying the National Register designation their property is expected to achieve soon. It will cost approximately \$500-\$800. Mr. Merrill also reviewed the proposal for the Scammans' old carriage barn at Stella's request. The Scammans have now signed the contract with Arron Sturgis, timber framer, for a complete rehabilitation of the c. 1750s English barn.

New Business

Eagle Scout Project: Mr. Canada reported that Nicky Denton, a current Life Scout in Troop 185, is proposing to clean up the Colonel John Folsom family cemetery located on the Gifford property as his Eagle Scout project. This project would consist of removing brush and debris, building a walkway and installing a plaque at the neglected site. A motion was made by Mr. Merrill that the Commission support this project. (Mr. Merrill, Ms. Barker, unanimous). Mr. Merrill will follow up with Nicky, and encourage him to reach out to us again after his project is approved by the Eagle Scout Board and Select Board.

Kenniston Tavern: Ron Dean plans to move his antique business to the Kenniston Tavern barn at 245 Portsmouth Avenue. He needs some zoning relief on the maximum amount of space allowed for a home occupation business. He will be going to the ZBA to request an expansion. Mr. Canada would like to go to the meeting and support Mr. Dean. Mr. Merrill made a motion that the Commission support the relief sought by Mr. Dean and authorize the Chair to communicate this to the ZBA. (Mr. Merrill, Ms. Barker, unanimous)

The meeting adjourned at 8:08 PM.

Respectfully submitted
Tammy Hathaway

Next meeting May 8, 2019