

**Stratham Heritage Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
Land Use Conference Room  
March 13, 2019**

**DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED**

Present: David Canada, Nathan Merrill, Rebecca Mitchell, Forrest Barker

Absent: Mike Houghton, Tammy Hathaway, Florence Wiggin

Convened: 7:08 PM by Chairman Canada  
Mr. Canada appointed Ms. Barker a voting member.

Secretary's Report: Mr. Merrill made a motion, seconded by Ms. Barker, to approve the February 13, 2019 minutes as presented. Approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Ms. Barker reported that from the 2019 operating budget of \$5,700 the commission has spent \$50 for membership in the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance and \$200 for Lisa Mausolf's honorarium for speaking at our February program. Thus present balance is \$5,450. No money has been spent from the Heritage Fund and the present balance stands at \$6,567 that includes a \$20 donation left by an attendee at the February program. No money has been spent from the Heritage Preservation Fund so the balance remains as reported in February - \$81,637.00.

Ms. Mitchell presented invoices totaling \$58.64 for her expenditures for supplies and expenses related to the February program. Mr. Merrill made a motion, seconded by Ms. Barker, to reimburse Ms. Mitchell from the commission's administrative expenses line in the operating budget. The motion passed unanimously. Ms. Mitchell further submitted an invoice for \$60 from Michael Johnston, Spectacle Learning Media, for expenses related to video recording the February program and producing 3 DVDs. Mr. Canada will write a letter of thanks

### **Committee Reports**

Planning Board: Mr. Canada reported that the Planning Board approved Robinwood's site plan for a 40-car parking lot at 61 and 62 Stratham Heights Road. The proposal will be considered for a conditional use permit at the March 26 meeting of the Board of Adjustment. Ms. Mitchell asked if the commission wished to take any position on this proposal. Mr. Merrill replied that the proposed use is within the definition of agriculture, as adopted by both the state and the town, and that is also consistent with the historic use of farms as sites for educational and social gatherings. Mr. Merrill made a motion, seconded by Mr. Canada, that the commission recommends approval of the conditional use permit. The motion passed unanimously with Ms. Barker abstaining because she is a board member of Robinwood. Mr. Canada remarked that the proposal received, and was responsive to, considerable input from owners and residents of neighboring properties. Further Planning Board business includes the development of a cluster subdivision, to be

called Robie Farms, at 90R Winnicutt Road. Mr. Merrill reported that the contemporary home on the property, built by Hon. William and Mrs. Vivian Treat, is proposed to remain on its own subdivided lot. Access to 90R will be through 92 Winnicutt Road, which is scheduled to be demolished.

Technical Review Committee: No report.

Demolition Review Committee: Mr. Merrill reported that he and committee members Fred Emanuel and Dana Dowling met on February 15 to consider an application to demolish in entirety the house at 92 Winnicutt Road. He stated that the committee determined that the house, while qualifying for review because of its age, had no historic significance. He went on to describe the extremely dilapidated condition of the house.

Master Plan Steering Committee: Ms. Barker reported that the latest meeting, scheduled for March 11, was cancelled because the Horsley-Witten consultants were not ready for their planned presentation of work.

## **Old Business**

Bartlett-Cushman House: Mr. Canada reported that he had received a communication from Selectman Mike Houghton that the easement is nearing completion and that the Town is working on setting a closing date for both the easement and the sale of the property. Ms. Mitchell reported that she has been working on the Baseline Documentation with the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance staff, particularly to ensure that the baseline language is consistent with that of the easement.

Portsmouth Avenue Survey: Mr. Merrill reported that he and Ms. Mitchell had recently met in a working session to review the survey, making corrections and identifying areas needing checking or further research. More work of that nature remains to be done. The corrections, queries and edits will be sent to Lisa Mausolf with the goal of a final version of the area survey.

February Program: As reported at the February meeting, the program was a success with close to 70 attendees. There has been much positive feedback following the program. The recording noted above will be provided to the Historical Society, Library, and will be on the Town's website.

Old Town Hall Open House: Mr. Merrill reported that the open house held on Saturday, March 9, 9-11 AM was a success by many measures. Forty one visitors were counted but some may have been missed. Two apartments were open for viewing. Ms. Mitchell was in the foyer, Mr. Merrill in the main floor apartment, and Ms. Barker in the lower level apartment. At every point visitors expressed pleasure that the building was saved from demolition and gratitude to the commission for this and other efforts supporting historic preservation. Mr. and Mrs. Perlowski also seemed pleased with the event.

Town Meeting: The only item to be voted on at Town Meeting of direct interest to the commission is the part of the budget allocating \$50,000 to the Heritage Preservation Fund. Mr. Canada said that he will attend the meeting and be prepared to respond to any questions or objections relating to that budget item.

249 Portsmouth Avenue: The commission continues to be concerned about the state of the historic structures at this address, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983 as the Cornet Thomas Wiggin House. The barn is in a particularly threatened state. The commission discussed sending a letter to the owners expressing the commission's concern and interest in viewing and documenting the barn. The letter would also explain the tax easement available through RSA 79-D and offer to assist with an application for that benefit. The commission could also help with preparing an application for a barn assessment grant from the NH Preservation Alliance. Ms. Mitchell said that she will prepare an outline for the letter and send it to Mr. Canada and Mr. Merrill for expansion into a letter.

Thinking further about this property and other historic houses along Portsmouth Ave., Mr. Canada said that he has come to see the need for some sort of historic district along Portsmouth Ave. and for an ordinance addressing demolition by neglect that would also offer some assistance to property owners. Keeping in mind that local historic districts can take a variety of forms according to the community's needs and wishes, Ms. Mitchell suggested that the commission and Town staff meet with a consultant to discuss how to draft a historic district. She suggested Elizabeth Hengen might be a good person to work with. Mr. Merrill agreed that Ms. Hengen could be very helpful.

RSA 384: Mr. Canada reported that this bill, crafted to address the right of towns to construct and maintain trails for access to historic burial grounds on state-owned lands, has passed the house and next goes to the senate. Ms. Mitchell remarked that revisions to the bill as first drafted incorporated suggestions from several affected state agencies and now has their full support.

## **New Business**

Historic Markers: Mr. Canada and Mr. Merrill both attended the Stratham Historical Society's program with a speaker's presentation on the state highway historical marker program. Both expressed interest in taking advantage of this program to promote and commemorate historic sites in Stratham. Responsibility for and oversight of this program rests with the NH Division of Historical Resources and the NH Department of Transportation. Three possible sites for a marker were discussed: Winnicutt Mills, the Bartlett-Cushman House, and the Lane Homestead. Sites should be visible and safely approached by automobile with some space for a car to pull off the road. Mr. Canada said that the Historical Society should be considered as a partner in an effort to get one or more of these state signs. There was general agreement that the Lane Homestead was the best site for an initial effort at commemorating with a highway sign. Mr. Canada suggested that it might be possible to locate such a sign within the state right of way at the circle.

Ms. Mitchell remarked that the commission has had a longstanding interest in developing a series of illustrated informational signs at several historic sites around town and received \$9,000 for such a sign or signs at Stratham Hill Park. The commission will invite the Town Administrator and Town Planner to a future meeting to discuss how to move forward with this project.

Future Easements: Mr. Canada raised the question of a possible easement to help preserve the old Peabody Farm barn and house at 173 Winnicutt Rd. Mr. Merrill suggested consideration of a term easement. Mr. Canada responded that it is too much like giving money away with the Town retaining no interest. Ms. Mitchell said that it could be a simple easement protecting exterior only and that the question of stewardship needs to be considered. Mr. Merrill will talk to the owner and try to get a feeling of the needs present.

### **Pending**

Expansion of RSA 79E: Mr. Canada and Mr. Merrill agreed to meet with Town Planner Tavis Austin to discuss expanding 79E to cover properties with frontage on Portsmouth Avenue.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Following adjournment the members went out into the corridor to look at paint colors proposed for the three salvaged Old Town Hall exterior window frames that will become notice boards. Of the two colors proposed by Ms. Mitchell the consensus was a preference for the darker of the two, Benjamin Moore Historic Colors Townsend Harbor Brown.

Respectfully submitted  
Rebecca Mitchell, Secretary Pro Tem

**Next meeting April 10, 2019**