

Stratham Heritage Commission
Meeting Minutes
Land Use Conference Room
January 8, 2020

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

Absent: Tammy Hathaway, Florence Wiggin

Guests: Tavis Austin, Town Planner, joined the meeting at approximately 8:20.

Convened : 7:03 PM

Chairman Canada asked alternate member Ms. Barker to participate and vote in place of absent member Ms. Hathaway.

Secretary's Report: Mr. Canada distributed the minutes. Mr. Merrill made a motion, seconded by Ms. Mitchell, to approve the minutes of December 11, 2019 as presented. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Merrill made a motion, seconded by Ms. Mitchell, to approve the sealed minutes of the December 11, 2019 non-public session. That motion passed unanimously.

There being a quorum of Demolition Review Committee members present the minutes of that committee's December 19, 2019 meeting at 169 Portsmouth Avenue (Demolition Permit Application #2019-1117) were reviewed. Ms. Mitchell's motion to accept the minutes, seconded by Mr. Canada, was approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Ms. Barker reported that there were no changes since the December meeting. At the year's end the balance remaining in the operating budget was \$5,331. The Heritage Fund received a donation of \$30 making a balance of \$6,711. Ms. Mitchell submitted an invoice for \$13.49 spent on purchase of paper for printing the new Veterans Memorial Garden application forms.

Committee Reports

Planning Board: Mr. Canada reported that the Planning Board had met only once since the commission's December meeting. That meeting took up a lot line adjustment for 82 Bunker Hill Avenue. The board also addressed the composition of the Ad Hoc Route 33 Committee. Appointments to date: Planning Board members Tom House and Rob Roseen; Heritage Commission members Nathan Merrill and Forrest Barker; and member-at-large April Mason. It is expected that further at-large-members will be appointed at the January 15 meeting of the board.

Technical Review Committee: No report

Demolition Review Committee: Mr. Canada reported that the committee met on December 19 at 169 Portsmouth Ave. to deliberate on Demolition Permit Application #2019-1117 to demolish house and small shed. The committee found no historic significance and voted to waive the 60-day review period.

Old Business

February Program: Mr. Merrill reported that he has been in communication with the speaker, Stephen Taylor. He and Ms. Mitchell will provide Mr. Taylor with some Stratham-specific information and images to insert into the program. Ms. Mitchell reported that she had submitted an article on the program to the *Stratham* magazine but has no assurance that the magazine will be distributed prior to the February 7 program date. Ms. Mitchell will ask Michael Johnston of Spectacle Learning Media if they will be willing to video record the program. She also agreed to prepare a press release and publicize the event with area Heritage Commissions and Historical Societies and on social media. Mr. Merrill and Mr. Canada will work on the projector and sound system needs. The commission agreed to meet at the fire station at 6 PM for seating and equipment set up.

NH Historical Highway Marker: No progress to report

Old Town Hall Baseline Documentation and NH Register Listing: No progress to report

Stratham Hill Park Historical Markers (Varsity Wireless funded): Mr. Canada reported on information that he had received on designs and pricing of informational signage. Ms. Mitchell shared copies of the description of Portsmouth's historical marker program using designs developed with Phineas Graphics but fabricated by various non-local companies. Following a general discussion Mr. Merrill stated that he supports working with Phineas Graphics in Portsmouth to develop a prototype design that could be used for this project and for future historical markers. Ms. Mitchell said that the best way to get a good idea of how a prototype could look would be to develop an example. She proposed developing a marker for the fire tower and trail up to the top of the hill as a good example with available historical textual and graphic image content. Mr. Merrill moved that the commission approve spending up to \$600 from the Varsity Wireless mitigation fund to develop a prototype historical marker with Phineas Graphics. Ms. Barker seconded and the motion passed.

In further discussion centered around the fabrication of markers there was general agreement that it would be advisable to avoid custom sizes and, based on available information, there was support for framed versus unframed fabrication because of concern for longevity of the marker edges.

Ms. Mitchell said that she would speak with Seth Hickey to let him know the direction the commission is taking.

Veterans' Memorial Garden: Mr. Canada reported that he had investigated whether it would be possible to correct the engraving on one obelisk to "Vietnam Conflict" from the incorrect "Vietnam War." His conclusion was that to try to change it would be costly

with a rather poor result. The commission concurred and the consensus was to leave the obelisk as is. Ms. Mitchell reported that the estimate for engraving “Persian Gulf War” on the fifth obelisk came in at \$246. This figure exceeds the amount requested in our engraving budget for 2020. Mr. Merrill moved, and Ms. Barker seconded, that the commission expend \$200 from our engraving budget and cover the remainder from the Administrative line of our operating budget. The motion passed. Ms. Mitchell presented the new Veterans’ Memorial Garden application form that she developed with Deb Bakie, Deputy Town Clerk. Seeing that the commission had no changes to add she will ask to get the new form posted on the Heritage Commission’s web page.

Pending Projects and Assignments: Mr. Merrill and Ms. Barker will be working on organizing Wally Stuart’s photographs and will investigate whether they may be stored using the town server. There was general agreement to table the review and listing of historically significant places pending a town-wide survey. Ms. Mitchell continues to have editing the Portsmouth Avenue Survey and the Old Town Hall baseline documentation on her list of projects.

Mr. Canada reported that HB 1104 to revise existing NH RSA 41:14-a will be in hearings before the NH House this month. Prior to hearings he and Rep. Abrami will meet with the lobbyist for the NH Municipal Association to explain the background of the bill and reasons to support it.

New Business

Review and Amend Heritage Commission Procedural Rules: At the suggestion of Ms. Mitchell, Mr. Canada proposed that reference to funds of the 300th Anniversary Committee be removed from section III B. 2. Heritage Fund. Mr. Merrill moved, and Ms. Barker seconded, approval of that revision. The motion passed and Mr. Canada agreed to make sure the revised rules are on the commission’s web page.

Heritage Commission Annual Report: Mr. Canada circulated his draft annual report to be included in the 2019 Town Report. He noted the desirability of keeping reports to one page but explained that to fully report on the commission’s accomplishments and activities required more than one page. Once the report had gone over one page it made sense to take full advantage of the space as the once-a-year platform to address and inform the voters, the town’s ultimate governing body. Mr. Houghton expressed his concern about length, and stated his regret that the commission had not consulted with the Select Board prior to working with Rep. Abrami to develop HB 1104, revising NH RSA 41:14-a. Mr. Merrill pointed out that the commission’s work on the bill had been reported in our minutes and the Select Board had the opportunity to comment. In the ensuing discussion there was general agreement that both sides commit to collaboration and improved communication. Mr. Merrill moved, with Ms. Barker seconding, that the commission approve the annual report as submitted. The motion passed with Mr. Houghton abstaining.

Other Business: Ms. Mitchell inquired if there had been any further communication or updates from the Conservation Commission regarding the matter discussed in non-public session at our December meeting. Mr. Canada responded that he had reported the results of our discussion to Bill McCarthy, CC chairman, but that he has not heard anything further yet. He will follow up with Mr. McCarthy.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Mitchell, Secretary pro-tem