

Stratham Heritage Commission

Meeting Minutes

June 14, 2017

7:00 pm

Land Use Conference Room

Present: Nathan Merrill, Rebecca Mitchell, Dave Canada, Wally Stuart, Tammy Hathaway

Absent: Florence Wiggin, Terry Barnes, Michael Houghton

Guests: Dory Wiggin, Tavis Austin arrived at 8:15

CONVENED: 7:00 pm by Chair Merrill

Secretary's Report: The May 10, 2017 minutes were amended to include commission members David Canada and Terry Barnes were absent (Mr. Merrill, Mr. Stuart, unanimous)

Treasurer's Report: Mr. Stuart reported that the commission made a \$100.00 donation to the Town of Exeter for the video recording of the February program. The current balance in the operating budget is \$4,735.02 and \$6,944.10 in the Heritage Fund. Also noted that there are two outstanding bills from Seacoast Memorial for engraving names on a monument. Ms. Mitchell reported that there is \$20.00 income from the sale of Samuel Lane books to go into the Heritage Fund.

Committee Reports:

Planning Board: Mr. Canada reported that the board approved the Verizon telecommunications tower in the back lot of the Audi garage. Ms. Mitchell and Mr. Canada attended the June 7 site walk on the John Reiss property at 16 Emery Lane. The board is concerned about drainage issues in the proposed subdivision.

Technical Review Committee: Nothing to report as they have not met since our last meeting.

Demolition Review Committee: Dana Dowling has agreed to continue serving on the committee. [Chair's note: As reported last month, Fred Emanuel has agreed to take Peter Wiggin's place, with Bruce Scamman as an alternate. Ms. Mitchell and Mr. Merrill both thanked Mr. Wiggin for his years of service on the committee.] A permit for demolition at 25 Bunker Hill Ave (a small 20th century 2 story cape in poor condition) has been issued. The committee met with the owner and her contractor, toured the house, and voted that it was not historically

significant. However the committee did encourage them to salvage the Douglas Fir floors and the glass-paned interior doors. They were very agreeable to these suggestions.

OLD BUSINESS

Bartlett-Cushman House: Ms. Mitchell reported that the barn roofing is scheduled to start the end of week June 19th and the repaired and painted shutters will be installed at the convenience of the highway department crew. Ms. Mitchell reported on her discussion with Greg Colling of Merrimack Design regarding the barn windows: he suggested the possibility of re-glazing the windows and installation of new storm windows. In a follow-up discussion regarding a recent tour of the house with Colleen Lake from the Bean Group, Mr. Canada offered to call Ms. Lake to discuss if she is willing to write a marketing plan.

National Register Nomination of 16 Emery's Lane: Ms. Mitchell reported that Lisa Mausolf has given the completed National Register application to Peter Michaud. The primary qualification for the property is the historic farm use by the Emery family (with the barn and irrigation system for the fields largely intact). The earlier use of the property as a tavern is also noted, but little physical evidence of that era remains.

Wiggin Cemetery and Access trail: Dory Wiggin reported that she and her husband Peter Wiggin would be starting a non-profit fund to help oversee the long-term stewardship of the cemetery. She noted that they hope to have a set timeline for this project in the fall of 2017. They will also be working with New Hampshire Fish & Game to formalize their rights to continue maintenance of the site. Mr. Merrill noted that Mike Houghton is also planning to communicate with NH F&G personnel about making the access trail to the cemetery permanent. Ms. Mitchell suggested that the Wiggins could reach out to the NH Preservation Alliance for ideas and resources about setting up a nonprofit entity for cemetery preservation.

Portsmouth Ave. Survey: Mr. Merrill, Ms. Mitchell, Lisa Mausolf and Tavis Austin are meeting to brainstorm and outline this project on June 27th.

Old Town Hall: The commission discussed the current vulnerabilities and future possibilities for this property as it is still on the market and is eligible for the state historic register. Mr. Merrill noted that if the vinyl siding were removed it could be eligible for the National Register. Commission members are generally in favor of acting to save this unique property that is important to the town's history as well as architecturally significant. Ms. Mitchell noted that one option could be a preservation easement. Mr. Merrill will contact the property owner to attempt arranging a meeting with him and his realtor.

NEW BUSINESS

Website update: In a discussion on the Commission's current web page, it was decided to update the group photo and members' terms, and to add both a summary of the Lane Homestead preservation easement and a description of what the Heritage Preservation Fund is used for. It was noted that links with descriptions to current forms would be useful such as the NHPA barn assessment grant application, and RSA 79:D & 79:E information and applications. Mr. Merrill noted that many of the other town boards have mission statements posted on their pages; Ms. Mitchell suggested using the text from the HC warrant article that she has included in past Town Reports. Mr. Stuart mentioned that he has photos set up on a Flickr account and could list Stratham homes on the state and national registers. Ms. Mitchell will write a summary of the Lane Homestead and rewrite the outdated historic survey text. Mr. Merrill will work on the description of the Heritage Preservation Fund and some of the links.

Commission goals for the upcoming year: Mr. Merrill highlighted a list of goals for the upcoming year, including completion of the long-planned Stratham Hill Park informational signs. He also suggested adding signage to educate the public about the Gifford Farm's history, noting that the property is heavily used and well preserved. Ms. Mitchell offered to write an article on the Gifford Farm for *Stratham* magazine that could also provide text and images for an informational sign. Completion of the Portsmouth Avenue area survey and potential revision of the corridor's zoning (to integrate historic preservation incentives) is another major goal for the year ahead. Mr. Austin agreed to assist. In a discussion of a February program the consensus was that the commission might omit having a public program this year in order to allow our time and energy to focus on completing deferred projects. However if an important or timely topic arises we still have plenty of time to put a program together. Ms. Mitchell also noted the possibility of establishing a small historic district to include the Bartlett Cushman house and adjacent Ridge School which would make the town eligible for Certified Local Government status. The status of the historic Parker Cabin owned by NH Fish & Game on the Squamscott River was also discussed. It has been 3 years since we were first made aware of this National Register-eligible property and NH F&G's plans to tear it down. Trying to save the Old Town Hall and reuse of the Bartlett-Cushman House remain ongoing concerns. Ms. Mitchell reminded the Commission that working with Stella and Doug Scamman to complete the National Register application for the Scamman Farm is another active goal for the year ahead.

Summer Meeting Schedule: The commission decided to schedule its next meeting on September 13. If urgent new business arises, the chairperson may call a meeting for July or August.

Next Meeting: September 13, 2017 at 7:00 pm in the Land Use Conference Room

Adjourned: 8:45 (Mr. Merrill, Mr. Stuart, unanimous).

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Hathaway
Secretary

Nathan Merrill
Chairman