

Stratham Heritage Commission

Meeting Minutes

August 8, 2017

1:00 pm

Land Use Conference Room

Present: Rebecca Mitchell, Dave Canada, Wallace Stuart, Michael Houghton, Florence Wiggin

Absent: Tammy Hathaway, Nathan Merrill

Guests: Paul Deschaine

CONVENED: 1:00 pm by Rebecca Mitchell, chair pro tem in the absence of Chair Merrill.

Old Business:

Bartlett-Cushman House: Discussion of marketing proposal from Bean Group

At the request of the chair Dave Canada reviewed the origin and content of the Bean Group's marketing proposal for sale or lease of the Bartlett-Cushman House property at 82 Portsmouth Avenue.

As discussion ensued Mitchell said she has strong qualms about selling the property without any restrictions in place to protect key historical features and that the Town might regret losing control of that corner.

Paul Deschaine responded with a number of comments beginning with enumerating some of the costs entailed in subdividing the property including surveying, and verifying the state of the septic system and well. He observed that the Town could sell the property while retaining a use easement, and also protecting the historical features with covenants or an easement. He reminded the meeting that the Town had purchased the property with tax-exempt notes and the last payment will be due in June 2018. He ended his comments with the observation that he found the market analysis to determine the Fair Market Value to be problematic and that the listing agreement appears to name Bean Group as the agent in one place and Colleen Lake, Inc. as agent in another place.

Dave Canada said that in his view the property remains a good strategic purchase and that it would not be worthwhile to sell it.

Mike Houghton expressed the Selectmen's concern that Town properties be "productive assets." He added that the Town needs to commit to a set of objectives for the property that would help to assess steps that could be taken to achieve those objectives. He also

added that with those objectives in hand the Town could ask several agencies to submit marketing plans, ending with his view that leasing is probably the way to go.

In the ensuing discussion there was consensus that, at least at this stage, leasing rather than sale is the better route and that defining goals is a good idea. Some of the goals mentioned were: how leasee would pay taxes; what uses the Town would retain; what changes to the structures and the property at large would be allowed or prohibited.

Rebecca Mitchell said that based on the existing Character Defining Features Report she could prepare a bulleted list of features the Town wishes to see preserved.

Paul Deschaine said that one possibility to consider would be a lease/purchase option. Wally Stuart suggested that the objectives should clarify what amount of the property is being leased – the entire parcel, or just the house and barn?

After some further discussion Dave Canada moved, with Wally Stuart seconding, that:

The Heritage Commission recommends to the Board of Selectmen that the Town pursue a marketing agreement for the lease of the Bartlett-Cushman House and that the agreement be accompanied by a set of Town objectives for the lease.

In the following brief discussion Paul Deschaine said that he would query other Town boards, commissions, committees, and offices to see if they have comments or anything to add to the list of objectives, particularly with an eye toward both near and long-range future Town uses of the property.

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 2:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Mitchell