

Stratham Heritage Commission
Stratham Municipal Center – Hutton Room
Meeting Minutes
September 9, 2020

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

Absent: Florence Wiggin

Convened: 7:00 PM

Chairman Merrill opened the meeting by welcoming commission members and thanking them for attending.

Secretary's Report: Mr. Merrill asked if there were any additions or corrections. Mr. Canada noted that under old business "Photo Project" the minutes should read "former member Wally Stuart." Mr. Merrill will correct before submitting the minutes to Karen Richard for posting. **Ms. Mitchell moved and Mr. Canada seconded that the minutes be approved as amended. All present voted Aye.**

Treasurer's Report: Ms. Barker is waiting to hear back from the town office whether the Phineas Graphics bill of \$300.00 has been paid. Mr. Canada submitted a \$64.73 bill to reimburse himself for the new plaques he purchased (with the commission's prior approval) to place in the Old Town Hall window frame displays at the municipal center.

Committee Reports

Planning Board: Mr. Canada reported that they have been reviewing the Gateway regulations and on September 16 there will be a Gateway zoning district workshop. Mr. Merrill noted that the final report of the Rt 33 Legacy Highway Ad Hoc Committee will be also on the 9/16 Planning Board agenda, and he encouraged commission members to attend and participate in the discussion.

Technical Review Committee: Ms. Mitchell reported that nothing new has come before the committee.

Demolition Review Committee: Mr. Merrill reported that an application was submitted for a demolition of a two-car garage on Winnicott Road that did not meet the requirements for a meeting, so as chair he authorized the building inspector to proceed with issuing the permit.

Select Board: Mr. Houghton reported that the budget process will begin early this year due to Covid 19 and the anticipation of future challenges. The current town budget is trending in good shape and should remain that way through the balance of the year. The municipal center is now staffed and open. The Bartlett-Cushman house RSA 79E application has been completed, approved, and signed by all parties. Mr. Merrill thanked the Select Board for supporting RSA

79 E on the Bartlett Cushman home as it sets a good precedent for future endeavors. Mr. Merrill also thanked Mr. Canada for representing the commission at the Select Board public hearing in the chairman's absence.

Route 33 Legacy Highway Ad Hoc Committee: Mr. Merrill reported that Town Planner Tavis Austin has the final report from the committee, and that it should be posted on the town website. He encouraged the commission to attend the September 16, 2020 Planning Board meeting, at which the final report and next steps will be discussed.

Old Business

Old Town Hall: Window Frame Bulletin Boards: Mr. Merrill thanked Mr. Canada for finishing the project by installing the signs on the window frames. A discussion ensued on creating and rotating educational/informative material for the bookshelves. Ms. Mitchell will reach out to Mr. Skip Stearns of the Stratham Historical Society to collaborate on content for the display shelves. **State Historic Register:** Ms. Mitchell will work on compiling information for nominating the Old Town Hall to the NH Register of Historic Places.

Conservation Commission Easement: Mr. Merrill noted that in July the property owners (discussed at a prior non-public meeting) met and walked the property with himself, Mr. Canada, Mr. Bill McCarthy representing the Conservation Commission, as well as Jennifer Goodman and Beverly Thomas of the NH Preservation Alliance. At this time, the owners are pursuing a conservation easement, but have declined to pursue a preservation easement. Mr. Merrill will inquire if they would be willing to pursue a potential historic register nomination for the property.

Town Meeting: Mr. Merrill announced that our 2020 operating budget was approved, as well as \$25,000 for the Heritage Preservation Fund (the latter figure being half of the originally requested amount, due to budget cuts made by the Select Board as a result of the pandemic). Discussion of next year's budget followed. All agreed that our 2021 capital reserve fund request should return to the normal \$50,000 amount for the Heritage Preservation Fund. The 2021 operating budget request will be further discussed at next month's meeting. Returning to the Town Meeting results, Ms. Mitchell also noted that the expansion of 79-E was also approved as requested by the commission and recommended by the Select Board. She thanked Mr. Houghton again for his ongoing support of 79-E and 79-D in Stratham, both being valuable historic preservation tools.

Photo Project: Mr. Merrill will complete work on this ongoing project this winter.

Town-Wide Area Form Survey: Ms. Mitchell reported that preservation consultant Lisa Mausolf is working on the project and that all parties have signed off on the Town's professional services agreement in June. Ms. Mitchell may set up a personal meeting with Ms. Mausolf and the Historical Society to gain access to any information needed for the project from the SHS building, which is currently closed to the public due to the pandemic.

RSA 79D Applications: Ms. Mitchell will contact Mr. David Ryng, 271 Portsmouth Ave regarding his barn tax assessment and recommend that he meet with Town Assessor Andrea Lewy before applying for RSA 79D.

Town Marker Project: We approved the conceptual design last spring, and Ms. Mitchell plans to begin working on textual and photographic content. Mr. Merrill inquired about potentially hiring someone to help with this work. Ms. Mitchell suggested to wait another month to see if there is money available in the budget.

State Marker Project: Ms. Mitchell will respond to the Department of Historical Resources regarding the Lane Homestead marker project.

HB 1104: Mr. Canada reported that the bill sponsored by Representative Abrami will be reintroduced in the next legislative session if he is successfully re-elected.

Parker Cabin: Ms. Mitchell reported that in August the Heritage Commission email received a letter from Corey Riley of the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve and Discovery Center. Ms. Riley attached a copy of a Memorandum of Agreement signed by officials of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the NH Division of Historical Resources, and NH Fish and Game in August 2019. The stipulations of the agreement require that a “qualified architectural historian” document the Parker Cabin following “Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) standards, utilizing the short format report.” The second stipulation of the agreement requires that the Great Bay Discovery Center prepare an exhibit to “consist of an interpretive area with informational panel and re-creation of a corner of the Parker Cabin for educational purposes.” The agreement stipulates that the exhibit “will be maintained for a period of up to three years,” with the Stratham Heritage Commission contacted prior to the removal of the exhibit.

After considerable discussion, it was decided Chairman Merrill should respond to Ms. Riley with the following points included: 1.) The Commission requests two archival quality copies of the HABS documentation, one copy for the Town Administrator’s files at the Municipal Center, and a second copy for the Stratham Historical Society’s files; 2.) Express our surprise and disappointment that the exhibit will only be temporary rather than permanent; 3.) Request that a minimum of 60 days’ notice be given to the Town when the educational display will be removed, so that we may potentially seek a new home for it within the community or else within the greater seacoast area.

New Business

Membership: Mr. Merrill noted that there is one open alternate seat on the commission, and he has reached out to Alex Dardinski who has yet to respond. Mr. Merrill commented to Mr. Houghton regarding the Heritage Commission’s page on the town website that it needed to be updated and Mr. Houghton responded that he will look into the matter. Mr. Merrill is willing to work with Karen Richard to assist with the necessary updates.

State National Register Nominations: Mr. Merrill opened a discussion on potential nominations for the NH State and National Registers as it could affect the 2021 budget. It was decided that it

would be worth approaching the property owners on River Road to see if they are interested. Mr. Merrill has visited the Scamman farm barn and noted that the rehabilitation is complete and all the historical pieces are intact the building is just a bit higher and it looks great. He noted that while the increase in height is not historically accurate, it does increase the economic and functional value of the structure to the family's farming operation, which will help to ensure its future maintenance.

NH Preservation Alliance membership: Mr. Merrill has received the annual renewal notice for our organization-level membership at the NH Preservation Alliance, which costs \$50. **Mr. Canada made a motion expend \$50.00 from our operating budget to renew the membership and Mr. Houghton seconded. Ms. Mitchell abstained from the vote as she serves on the NHPA board of trustees. All others present voted Aye.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:23 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Hathaway