

Friends of the Merrill Property  
Inaugural Meeting  
October 15, 2012

1. Present: Cindy Wojcicki (acting chair), David French (chair of the Heritage Commission), Beverly Mutrie (acting secretary), Selectwoman, Mary Ann Kasprzak, Anne Lane and Frank Stifter, members of the LAS Facilities Committee, Susan Smylie, member of the School Board, Historical Society, Planning Board and other concerned citizens....about 12 in all.
2. The meeting convened at 6:50 pm. Acting Chair Wojcicki introduced attendees and asked for input to the statement of goals on the agenda which are:
  - To serve as a central repository of information regarding the property*
  - To serve as an advocate for the property.*
  - To serve as a think tank and task force to find the best use for the buildings and the money to make it happen.* No changes were made.
3. B. Mutrie requested an email list and names of attendees which was passed for signatures.
4. Tracey Healey-Beattie gave a short talk on the history of the Merrill property at 7 Kensington Road. The property was purchased for \$1.2M by the School District in 2004 after a positive March meeting vote. Originally, the property was a tavern/inn built by Caleb Tilton probably between 1750-1760, according to Warren Brown's history. Stage horses for the Wells Tavern across the street were kept here. After Caleb's son John S. Tilton died in 1875, an Albert Elkins lived here and then it was bought by the Russell P Merrill Jr. family. "Punky" was a native son, our postmaster and general store/fish, game and gun store keeper.
5. The removal of the buildings, according to James Garven, state of NH Architectural Historian would be a significant loss to the heritage of Hampton Falls.
6. Arron Sturgis of Preservation Timberframing in Berwick, Maine, sent a letter and pictures with diagrams regarding his findings on his visitation of the barn and house in 2010. His proposal will be discussed later.
7. According to the Facilities Committee member, Frank Stifter, the school has no requirement for a second egress through the property to Rt 84. They would not like to damage the resale value of the property. The egress road at one time was thought to enable commercial development along it. The State of NH DOT has a plan regarding the Rt 84 and Rt 1 intersection by adding a stop light; the repositioning of the Rte 88 access to Rte 1 and the elimination of one stoplight at the hill would happen concurrently. All this might happen by 2023 according to the RPC.
8. Moving the barn possibility was broached. It is possible to move it on skids up the hill or dismantle it and store it for future rebuilding at a different location. Arron Sturgis has given an estimate in the past to do this. If one had to choose, it is preferable to keep the house and move the barn. The School Facilities Committee does not have any plans to utilize the barn in conjunction with a new addition.
9. There were two entities interested in investigating the property for residential uses. Carol Cord and Lisa Henderson of the NH Workforce Housing Coalition. The idea of cluster housing there was too expensive as there were no town utilities. Carol Cord was only interested in rehabbing the house in a joint venture with the School District, not the barn.

10. According to Todd Santora (sp?), a real estate appraiser, there is limited commercial use of the lower property due to limited parking and wetlands.
11. The property is not on the National Historic Register, although it could perhaps be included on the State of NH Historic Register.
12. What is the cost to make the building useable again and put on the tax roles? This question could be answered by Arron Sturgis after a survey is done of current conditions (cost \$1200-2000) and preventative measures were taken to halt further deterioration (particularly the barn roof). He would also give estimates on repair cost.
13. The Property could also become the Historical Society's venue, instead of the Museum depending on finances and willingness of both boards.
14. The Property could be either residential or commercial or both.
15. The School Board would like some direction on what the town wants to do with the buildings as they are focused on the expansion/addition of the current school building.
16. The money available in grants was discussed. A. Sturgis works closely with the NH Preservation Alliance and could be a positive advocate. People with grant writing experience would be helpful. We should talk to the Preservation Alliance, Jennifer Goodman.
17. How much of the barn needs replacing? Perhaps 80%, but the exact figure is yet to be determined. Arron Sturgis has shown damaged areas in his pictures.
18. Frank S. asked if we wanted to sell the house? ...Perhaps with a preservation easement on it.
19. We discussed approaching the school board with a request for funds to do some preventative maintenance and the survey. As it is a bonded property, it may not be easy to subdivide without enough of a bond reduction.
20. We agreed to attend the Conservation Commission's meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> at 5 pm at the Fire Dept about the Cornucopia Project as Peterboro experienced it which would allow the barn to either be moved and used at the Raspberry Farm or perhaps the Barn could be moved up the hill and land set aside for community gardens on the interior portion of the property and become a useful educational tool for the students.
21. We should also be available at the next School Board meeting....November 8<sup>th</sup> and also the School Facilities Update on October 24<sup>th</sup> at the school.
22. Brainstorming was done for qualified local restoration contractors to estimate rehabilitation expenses. Atrio Realty (Aaron Brown), Rick Wickson, Chris Merrill were mentioned.
23. Cindy Wojcicki was appointed Chair/Facilitator with able help from Tracy Beattie and others.
24. We should reach out to Bobbi Burns at the Conservation Commission.
25. Our next scheduled Committee meeting will be October 22<sup>nd</sup>, Monday, at 6:45 pm.
26. All hoped to work together to find a solution to the Merrill Property's use.
27. The meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Beverly Mutrie, Acting Secretary