

Stratham Heritage Commission

Meeting Minutes

December 10, 2014 at 7:00 pm

Land Use Conference Room

Present: Rebecca Mitchell, Nathan Merrill, Tammy Hathaway, Wallace Stuart, Chris Merrick, Nancy Hansen. Tammy Hathaway departed ~7:30 pm. David Canada arrived ~8:15 pm.

Convened: 7:05 pm by Chairman Mitchell

Minutes: November 12, 2014 meeting minutes were approved as presented.

OLD BUSINESS

Treasurer's Report:

Heritage Fund balance as of 11/30/2014 = \$4,220

300th Anniversary Fund balance = \$19,654

2014 budget status = no change from last month

Becky Mitchell and Nate Merrill recently met and created a draft 2015 budget. The draft was submitted to Town Administrator Paul Deschaine. Nate presented the proposed budget to the Commission for discussion. Total amount requested is \$3,750, a decrease of -\$2,700 (or -42%) from 2014's request. **Motion to approve the proposed budget for presentation to the Board of Selectmen and Budget Committee was made by Wally Stuart, with second by Becky Mitchell. Vote = affirmative, unanimous.** Complete, annotated line-by-line budget proposal is attached as addendum to these minutes. Chairman asked Treasurer to make the Budget Committee presentation in January.

Bartlett-Cushman House:

1.) Chairman Mitchell and Tom and Mary House met at the B-C house on 11/26 to complete the interior floor-plan measurements. Becky earned bonus points by sweeping all the floors!

2.) The bronze National Register plaque arrived and was well received by all those present to view it at the meeting. Becky will leave the plaque in the town administrator's office for safekeeping until the house is ready for its installation. Location (interior or exterior) of the installation will be discussed at a later date.

3.) Becky will follow up with the plaque company and with Tom House to make sure we receive invoices for payment before 12/29/2014 so that the expenses come out of our 2014 budget.

4.) The roofing project is nearly complete. The roofer reports that the majority of the structure was in good condition with minimal sheathing needing replacement under the old roof (with the exception of the ell where we knew it was leaking badly).

5.) David Canada and Becky met this week to divide up tasks that need doing for moving the RFP process forward.

Barn Program:

The February 20, 2015 program is coming together nicely. Currently John Porter is reviewing Nate's barn survey work, so that we can print it in time for the program. Wally Stuart has been doing a fantastic job handling PR work. Nate will contact John Hazekamp for making a video recording and associated DVDs. We will also investigate posting it on You Tube with a link from the HC page on the town website. Meeting rooms A & B have been reserved at the Municipal Center, and Nate notified the Exeter HC folks of the venue decision.

Planning Board and Town Center Revitalization:

1.) Last week Becky & Chris Merrick went to the Town Center Revitalization Committee meeting. The committee is also meeting again tonight: Becky and Nate attended the first hour, and David stayed for the whole session before joining HC later. Design and materials were discussed at length, particularly pertaining to the sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic islands, and lighting fixtures. HC members spoke in favor of using smooth concrete and granite accents for the sidewalks, as well as granite cobbles for the traffic islands. HC members also spoke in favor of the "Londonderry" style light fixtures, mounted on top of straight ductile-iron poles. The Board of Selectmen voted at their meeting earlier this week to support "Londonderry" lights hanging from "shepherd's-crook" style poles. These poles would be two-piece instead of one-piece, they would be taller, the lights are designed to hang over the street, and they would cost approximately \$600 more each (currently 9 poles are in the design, and phase II would add more lights at a later date).

Nathan Merrill moved, with second by Chris Merrick: "The Heritage Commission strongly advises the Town Center Revitalization Committee to select the 'Londonderry' lamp mounted on top of straight poles." Discussion ensued. Reasons for promoting this choice were identified as follows: 1.) The straight poles are shorter and simpler, which keeps them more in scale with the buildings in the

neighborhood, as well as more appropriate for pedestrian lighting (as opposed to street lighting). 2.) The straight poles will be more repeatable through the town center district as more phases are added. The lower height will ensure no conflict with overhead electric and telecommunications wires. 3.) The straight poles are less pretentious / ostentatious, and are better-suited to a small agrarian community's character. Similarly, they have a look and feel of solidity and simplicity that is better suited to the village center character of the district, as opposed to a mill town or downtown urban district. Vote = affirmative, unanimous.

Furthermore, **Becky Mitchell** moved, with second by **Wally Stuart**: "The Heritage Commission has reservations about the proposed banner program on the to-be constructed decorative light poles in the Town Center district." Discussion revolved around the following concerns: 1.) Many citizens have voiced dislike for the current banners, and banners in general. 2.) The design consultant hired to create the plan stated that the current banners are too big for the poles, both logistically and aesthetically. But TC committee member **Colleen Lake** stated that the size cannot be reduced in order to maintain adequate font size for visibility. 3.) HC members feel the banners will detract from the landscape created by the new plantings and decorative lighting. 4.) HC members are particularly troubled by the possibility of commercially sponsored banners being used on taxpayer-funded lamps on state-owned land. Vote = affirmative, unanimous.

There was discussion about the need for comprehensive review of the zoning language in the historic Portsmouth Avenue corridor, from the Town Center district to the Greenland town line. Becky and Nate will follow up with Town Planner Lincoln Daley and Planning Board Chairman Mike Houghton.

300th Anniversary Committee Report:

No report this month with Flossie Wiggin's absence.

NEW BUSINESS

RSA 79E:

Chairman Mitchell was notified that a Town Center district property owner has expressed interest in pursuing an RSA 79-E project, possibly involving a historic structure. It is unclear what role, if any, the HC needs to play, but Becky will follow up with Lincoln Daley.

Rockingham Planning Commission Regional Master Plan

Rockingham Planning Commission has released a public draft of its Regional Master Plan, which has been in the works for over a year. Both Becky and Nate reviewed the Historical Resources chapter (independently) and provided detailed feedback to RPC.

2015 Preservation Conference

The New Hampshire Preservation Alliance will host a conference on April 17, 2015 in Concord. Becky has attended previous NHPA conferences, and highly recommends that other HC members consider attending too. We have funding in the budget to pay for the registration fees and travel expenses.

Commission Rules of Procedure

There was some discussion pertaining to procedural matters, such as electing new officers and setting our meeting schedule. Currently our rules state the latter should happen in September, and the former in January. However, new members are typically seated beginning with the April meeting after town elections in March. It was suggested that both matters should be voted on at our April meeting, to better coincide with members' terms. This issue will be discussed further next month.

Next Meeting: January 14, 2015

Adjourned: 8:40 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Nathan Merrill
Treasurer/Secretary