

STRATHAM HERITAGE COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
November 12, 2014
Land Use Conference Room

Present: Rebecca Mitchell, Chairman; Nathan Merrill; David Canada, Selectman; Chris Merrick, Planning Board; Florence Wiggin; Nancy Hansen; Tammy Hathaway; Wally Stuart.

Guest: Audrey Cline, BI/CEO

Tammy Hathaway volunteered to take minutes.

The minutes of the October 8 meeting were read and approved with these additions: Nancy Hansen was present, and the title of John Porter's February Barn talk is "The History of Agriculture as Told by Barns."

OLD BUSINESS

Membership: The Chair welcomed new member Wallace Stuart, and remarked that he brings some very useful skills and experience from his years living in Plymouth.

At this point the meeting deviated from the agenda to welcome and accommodate the schedule of **Audrey Cline**, attending a Heritage Commission meeting for the first time. Cline and the Commission discussed the Demolition Review process and also the Commission's advisory role in relation to the ZBA and the Planning Board. The Chair remarked that she would like to receive the agendas for ZBA meetings. Canada said that he has long felt that it would be helpful for builders or project managers to get earlier notice that if demolition is anticipated in a project there may be a delay before the demolition permit may be issued. The Commission agreed that it would be useful for the Demolition Review Committee to meet with Cline to review procedures and the wording of the ordinance. Cline departed the meeting at this point.

Treasurer's Report: Nathan Merrill, Treasurer, reported that the Commission has spent \$1231 of the \$6450 in our 2014 budget. From the \$2500 budgeted for the completion of the Bartlett-Cushman House National Register nomination, the Commission spent \$1000. The 2014 budget also included funds for professional services to support the preparation of a Request for Proposals for the rehabilitation of the Bartlett-Cushman House. No funds from that category have been disbursed, largely because of donated services. The Chair said that under the next agenda item she would be proposing an item that could use a small portion of the NR nomination funds and a use of professional services to support the RFP.

The Commission's share of the revolving fund called the Heritage Fund totals \$4200. Nancy Hansen reminded the Commission that this includes a \$1000 gift from Amy Ross in memory of her husband to be used for the Veterans' Garden. Ross has not proposed a use that she would prefer. The Commission agreed that Hansen is to contact Ross to reopen the discussion of possible uses.

The draft 2015 budget request is due to Paul Deschaine on Dec. 1st. That draft budget will be discussed and a final budget voted on at the Commission's December meeting.

Bartlett-Cushman House: The National Park Service sent a notice on Oct. 17 announcing that it had placed the Bartlett-Cushman House on the National Register of Historic Places. Mitchell proposed that the Commission purchase a bronze plaque commemorating the National Register listing. A 14x12 plaque will cost \$590. Merrill moved and Stuart seconded that Mitchell proceed with procuring a plaque of that size and cost. The motion passed. The wording of the plaque was discussed with the preferred wording being: Bartlett-Cushman House/ Built 1827/ placed on the/ National Register of Historic Places/ by the/ United States Department of the Interior. Canada noted that the Board of Selectmen has to approve both the expenditure and installation of the plaque. Mitchell will prepare and circulate a press release announcing the NR listing.

Canada reported that roofing is scheduled to commence in the week of Nov. 17 Mitchell reported that she is continuing to work on the Defining Characteristics report with Peter Michaud, and that she recently showed the house at the request of a staff member of Historic New England who offered advice on preserving samples of wallpaper from the house with the goal of archiving them at the Stratham Historical Society.

Mitchell proposed that money in the Commission's budget for professional services in preparing a RFP be applied to obtaining a basic existing floor plan for the house and ell. She has received a very favorable offer to produce a plan for \$800, work to be completed before the end of the fiscal year. Canada stated that in his opinion a walk through with prospective bidders would be sufficient and that a floor plan at this stage is unnecessary. Mitchell stated that a floor plan would serve to clarify specifications the Town includes in the RFP and would assist those reviewing the RFP to get a preliminary understanding of the spaces in the building. Merrill moved that the Commission recommend to the Board of Selectmen that a measured interior floor plan be procured at a cost not to exceed \$800 in order to contribute clarity to the RFP process. Hansen seconded the motion. The vote was 7 yea; 1 nay.

Parker Cabin: On Oct. 20 Canada and Mitchell attended a meeting at the Great Bay Discovery Center that also included a site walk to the cabin. Nadine Peterson from the NH Division of Historical Resources explained the reasons why the NHDHR determined the cabin eligible for the National Register. Options for preserving the cabin on site or at a new location were reviewed. NH Fish & Game, owner of the property, is concerned about the safety of the cabin in its present location and the potential financial burden for them. At the conclusion of the meeting NHF&G agreed to work with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to explore the options and to consider the costs and feasibility of each. No deadline was set for this process.

UNH Interns: Mitchell reported that she met with Kimberley Alexander, faculty member in the Museum Studies program. Alexander was enthusiastic about our proposed intern projects but offered no date when interns would be available. Alexander is currently working on a 2015 exhibit at the Portsmouth Athenaeum on shoemaking in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Samuel Lane of Stratham will be featured in the exhibit.

Veterans' Garden: Nancy Hansen reported that there are no monument engravings pending and that 2-3 brick names are pending verification. The Commission decided that once the names are verified the bricks should be engraved and may be set later when the ground has thawed.

Mitchell reported that a Stratham citizen had raised the issue of the lack of designation on the obelisk monument commemorating the service of Stratham residents in post-Vietnam conflicts. There are currently 14 names on that monument. Mitchell said that she had done some

preliminary investigation but had come up with no conclusive and inclusive name for the several areas of conflict that have involved our service members. Stuart agreed to investigate further to see if the Department of Defense or any other authoritative body could provides answers or examples of how other municipalities have dealt with this problem.

February Barn Program: Merrill reported on progress made organizing the program scheduled for Friday, February 20 at 7 PM. He spent the better part of a day with John Porter, our speaker, touring and photographing 11 barns in Stratham and 3 in Exeter. Members expressed a preference for holding the event at the Stratham Municipal Center because of ease of parking and access. Mitchell said she would like to make sure that all barn owners are invited and encouraged to attend the program, and that the availability of barn easements be highlighted. Stuart agreed to work with Merrill to publicize the program and organize the room arrangements. Merrill said that Porter charges a \$100 honorarium plus travel expenses. The members discussed making a further donation in honor of Porter to a suitable barn preservation program or project.

Planning Board: Chris Merrick reported that the Forma Realty plan for increased parking at their properties in the Town Center had been approved and that there is currently no pressing business before the Board. This report was followed by a discussion of the Residential/Agricultural zone along Portsmouth Avenue that has recently seen changes that amount to spot zoning. It was agreed that this is likely to continue. Merrill pointed out that while both the Commercial and Town Center zones have been rezoned no recent effort has been made to revisit the regulations in the R/A zone along Portsmouth Ave. The meeting asked Merrick to report to the Planning Board that the Commission would like to engage with the Board to explore the situation existing in this crucial part of town.

Demolition: Mitchell and Merrill reported that the in the year to date three cases have come before the Demolition Review Committee, the most recent being at 26 River Road. In all cases the Committee voted to allow issuing a permit.

NEW BUSINESS

Stratham Hill Park: Mitchell reported that while Varsity Wireless will be required to pay the Town \$3000 to support a forest management plan for the Park, they have not yet applied for the building permit that would trigger that payment. In the meantime, Canada reported, there is a need to do some clearing on the top of the hill to facilitate emergency telecommunications, and that a committee has been formed to devise the goals and requirements of the forestry plan. The Commission has been asked to participate and the Chair appointed Tammy Hathaway to represent the Commission with the goal of balancing recreation and conservation.

Town Meeting: The Chair asked if any members wanted to propose items for the Town ballot or Meeting. There was consensus that the Commission might best work with the funds currently available in the Heritage Preservation Fund and demonstrate prudent management before asking for further funding.

Commission email account: Canada offered to look into the possibility of the Commission having an email address tied into the Town's strathamnh.gov system.

NEXT MEETING: DECEMBER 10, 7 PM

A motion to adjourn was made by Merrick and seconded by Stuart. The motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Minutes prepared by Tammy Hathaway and Rebecca Mitchell