

**STRATHAM HERITAGE COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
September 9, 2015  
LAND USE CONFERENCE ROOM**

Members Present: Rebecca Mitchell, Nathan Merrill (7:30 arrival), Wallace Stuart, David Canada, and Florence Wiggin. Also Present: Paul Deschaine; Brian Ward, Seacoast Newspapers; two Stratham residents.

Convened: 7:04 PM by Rebecca Mitchell, Chair

Wally agreed to serve as Secretary Pro Tem. Floss moved into Chris Merrick's voting position.

Minutes: The minutes of the June 10, 2015 meeting were approved as distributed

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Lane Homestead:** The LCHIP grant application for funds to support a preservation easement on the Lane Homestead was submitted on the June 26 deadline. Becky reported that a site visit to the Lane Homestead by LCHIP officials has been set for Wed., September 30 at 10:30 AM. Dave reported that the appraisal has been received but is considered a draft at this stage in part because the NH Preservation Alliance (the potential easement holder) was not interviewed during the appraisal process. Dave and Becky met with NHPA staff on Sept. 3 to discuss the appraisal and terms of the easement. The Seven to Save nomination for the Lane Homestead will be submitted on Sept. 14. Locally, the Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee, and Stratham Historical Society support the nomination. Further significant support has come from members of the NH preservation community.

**Bartlett –Cushman House:** A local builder has agreed to prepare an estimate of the cost to rehabilitate the building for use and, further, is considering the building for his own business headquarters. With the addition of the rehabilitation estimate to the RFP the Town will again approach a commercial property realtor to market the property for rehabilitation and rental.

**Town Center:** A restaurateur from Dover has expressed interest in expanding his business to 148 Portsmouth Ave. Becky brought up the idea of considering a Neighborhood Heritage District for the Town Center. It offers more flexibility than a local Historic District. She will distribute information on neighborhood heritage districts to commission members.

**Planning Board:** Dave reported that Tim Mason has submitted a proposal for an 8 unit housing development on the lot at 109 High St. at the corner with Willowbrook Ave. The circa 1790 house will remain in place. Existing stonewalls will be undisturbed with the exception of the creation of an access opening.

**Technical Review Committee:** Nate indicated that the Committee is considering a proposal by Porsche of Stratham at 60 Portsmouth Ave to expand their facility to double the size. The dealership wants to change the architecture and add a service area. The proposed design includes "franchise architecture" that does not conform to the Gateway Commercial Business District

regulating plan. The committee is negotiating for some architectural modifications and mitigations for the design's non-conforming aspects.

**Agriculture:** The Economic Development Committee will be running a campaign to highlight Stratham farms. To help initiate this effort Becky wrote a brief article on the history of agriculture in Stratham for the September issue of Stratham magazine. Over the summer, Nate attended several meetings of the working group led by staff from the Rockingham Planning Commission with the goal of drafting "farm friendly" zoning regulations. Their goal is to complete a draft document in September for presentation to the full task force by October. The next step would be presentation of the regulations to the Planning Board.

**Varsity Wireless mitigation project:** Becky reported that the Town has received \$9000 from Varsity Wireless as mitigation funds earmarked to a sign panel for Stratham Hill Park. Wally indicated that he had exchanged email with Jill Edelmann, NHDOT's Cultural Resources Manager, concerning the historic interpretive panels installed at Chapman's Landing on the Stratham side of the bridge over the Squamscott River. These panels have been identified as a model for the ones to be installed at Stratham Hill Park. Ms. Edelmann related that the design and fabrication of the panels by Advantage Signs, Inc (ASI) of Concord, NH, with a consultant's help came to just under \$8,000. Significant uncompensated time was also put into the project by volunteers as well as undetermined time by NHDHR and DOT staff to bring the project to completion. Wally followed this up with an email to Ms. Edelmann with an inquiry about information that DOT might be able to provide about the history of the 2-mile stretch of Portsmouth Ave by the park. This information would be useful developing content for the interpretive panel. Wally has not yet received a reply to this inquiry. Wally also made contact with Graphic/Web Designer Abbey Dow at ASI who expressed an interest in taking on our project, learning its specs, and providing a quote. Becky cautioned that the Commission would need to hire a consultant to oversee design and production of such a time consuming project. Becky will investigate who could be engaged to do this work and at what cost.

**Barn Easements:** Two new applications are pending. Public hearings on the applications have been postponed. The applications are for barns at 148 Stratham Heights Rd. and 2 Emery's Lane. After discussion, Becky asked Nate to review the application materials.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

**Verizon Wireless proposed telecommunications monopole:** Becky brought before the Commission a letter from Environmental Resources Management (ERM, under contract with Verizon Wireless) inviting our comments on historic properties that may be effected by the proposed Verizon Wireless cell tower off of Bunker Hill Ave. The attached response form included a number of boxes to tick. In the discussion Becky said that having read the definition of "effect" in the Nationwide Programmatic Agreement for Review of Effects on Historic Properties she had somewhat reluctantly concluded that there would not be an effect upon historic properties within the area of potential effect. After further the discussion the commission voted (4 aye, 1 nay) to check the box: "We find the proposed project will not affect (sic) historic properties." The commission agreed to leave unchecked the remaining boxes: "We support the proposed project" and "We have no comment regarding the proposed project."

**NHPTV Our Home Town:** Paul explained the concept of an NHPTV production of a half hour program featuring Stratham in 2016. He was approached to secure sponsorships from local business to provide underwriting support. Becky expressed her desire that the program producers seek out younger people and people newer to Stratham to feature in order that there be a balanced representation of the population. Information on the Our Home Town project (and the Peterborough program) may be found at <http://www.nhptv.org/hometown>.

**Coastal Workshop: Keeping New Hampshire's History Above Water:** On behalf of the commission, Wally attended this program at the Discovery Center on July 30. Peter Wiggin was also in attendance. The program covered planning for sustaining historical assets in face all forms of disaster, but with particular emphasis on rising and raging seawater. Wally reported that the main messages from the workshop were: 1) Intentionally plan to protect historical assets from all forms of injury in such a way that they can survive disasters and quickly be put back in service, and 2) Seek out working relationships with emergency management officials in order that they include you in their planning, they think of you and your assets as disaster threatens, and come to your aid during disasters, and 3) Proactively take responsibility for saving your assets, not waiting for officials and emergency personnel to come to the rescue. Nate noted that perhaps the greatest threat to town-owned historic structures might come from adjacent trees and volunteered to meet with Colin Laverty to review any needed work.

**Jewell Hill Brook:** Becky reported on a recent discovery of rare sea-run brook trout in Jewell Hill Brook just below its passage under Portsmouth Ave. She further noted that there is some interesting old stone culvert work at that location that might be a good candidate for restoration as part of an effort to improve the trout habitat. Paul confirmed that NH DOT is responsible for culvert maintenance at that location.

**My New Hampshire photo project:** Wally distributed copies of the 9 captioned photos of historic sites in Stratham that he had submitted on Sept. 8 to the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources's My New Hampshire project. NHDHR solicited photos from around the state to illustrate the forthcoming statewide preservation plan. The photos will also be used to create an interactive state map.

**February program:** In a brief discussion of a possible program for February 2016, Becky suggested that it would be appropriate to have a program to support the goals of the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations. She will speak with John Dold, chairman of that committee.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm.

**NEXT MEETING: October 14, 2015; 7 PM**

Submitted by,  
Wallace Stuart  
Rebecca Mitchell