

**STRATHAM HERITAGE COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
MAY 13, 2015  
LAND USE CONFERENCE ROOM**

Present: Rebecca Mitchell, Nathan Merrill, Tammy Hathaway, Wallace Stuart, David Canada, Chris Merrick and Florence Wiggin.

Convened: 7:00 PM by Rebecca Mitchell, Chairman

Minutes: The minutes of the April 8, 2015 meeting were approved with amendments suggested by Nathan Merrill.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Treasurer's Report:** Nathan reported a balance of \$4300.28 in the Heritage Commission's share of the Heritage Fund. From the commission's annual budget we have spent \$234.51 from Administrative expenses and \$225 was spent on the John Porter barn program. Rebecca submitted \$20 income from sale of a Lane book and an invoice for \$24 for photocopies.

**Planning Board:** At the May 6 Planning Board meeting a proposal to demolish an office building at 81 Portsmouth Avenue and replace it with a car storage lot for the BMW dealership received an unenthusiastic reception from the board. Several members of the public including Rebecca spoke against it. If the applicant chooses to proceed the matter will go before the ZBA.

A large crowd attended the same meeting to hear the presentation of a preliminary site plan proposal to develop the Lane Homestead at the Stratham Circle. Several members of the board expressed serious reservations about the plan as presented and the chairman suggested that before the applicant goes further he should consult with the Heritage Commission. Further comments from board members, Police Chief Scippa and members of the public focused on the highway safety and environmental impact of the proposed plan. Rebecca spoke of the historic importance of the Lane Homestead and that any serious obliteration of the integrity of this site violates the intent of the Town's Master Plan as well as the goals of the Town Center revitalization.

Rebecca said that on the day following the meeting she had spoken with Chris McInnis, representative for the applicant, inviting him and his client to this meeting. She had no response. She will pursue means to discuss with the current property owners how we might help them in their efforts to sell the property while also protecting the integrity of this historic property. A number of options were discussed. Rebecca pointed out that options for development that might be acceptable from the viewpoint of historic preservation would likely still raise concerns about traffic safety and environmental impact.

**Town Center:** Nathan pointed out that while the threat to the Lane Homestead was an example of the commission often finding itself in a reactive position, we have tried to be proactive in the Town Center. He, Rebecca and Dana Dowling from the Demolition Review Committee toured

148 Portsmouth Avenue with the owners, finding it in better condition than anticipated. In the course of the tour a variety of options for future uses were discussed.

**Bartlett-Cushman House:** The RFP and the Character Defining Features Report are complete and ready for distribution. Following a suggestion from Paul Deschaine, Rebecca will work on putting together an online photo gallery as an appendix to the RFP and CDF Report. David reported that a contract for the painting had been signed. Following up on the discussion of the treatment for rotten wood encountered in the course of painting, Rebecca assembled a grouping of the recommendations from the Secretary of the Interior's guidelines.

**Wiggin Cemetery:** The Chair had heard from Peter Wiggin that as of May 5 he had completed the planned clearing but discovered two oak trees not initially thought to be in the burial area. He needs to reapply to NH Fish and Game for permission to remove these and asked the Chair for a letter of support. Rebecca read her draft letter in favor of the removal as contributing to the long-term maintenance of the site. Nathan moved that the letter be sent. Wallace seconded and the motion passed. Rebecca further reported that recently Peter was able to identify seven previously unmapped burials.

**Stratham Fair:** The commission decided that lacking the time and resources to develop a display we will not participate in the fair this year. The 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee will have its usual display in the Stratham tent and at its additional location near the 4H area.

**Veteran's Garden:** Rebecca met with volunteer Tracey McGrail, and they are in the process of reviewing procedures for engraving bricks and monuments and creating an improved application form.

**Web page:** The Chair reported that the commission's page has been corrected, but she had not yet written an updated profile of the commission's duties and activities nor created the additional links discussed at previous meetings.

**Preservation Conference:** Rebecca and Florence attended the NH Preservation Alliance's biennial preservation conference in Concord. Rebecca reported that the emphasis of many of the sessions was on planning. In both the early morning plenary session and later speakers noted the changing demographics of the state and local communities. One speaker who had been involved with the Granite State Futures Report said the top three concerns of respondents to their questionnaire were local agriculture, historic buildings, and landscapes and changing landscapes.

**NH State 5-Year Preservation Plan:** Rebecca attended the April 28 public listening session sponsored by the NH Division of Historical Resources in Portsmouth. The meeting was poorly attended but she shared with the DHR staff members present our commission's concerns discussed at our April 8 meeting.

**Agriculture meetings:** After two meetings with the Planning Board and the farming community focused on zoning and the town's administrative relationship to the local agricultural community, a framework has been set but many issues remain unresolved. Numerous issues and problems were identified by both farmers as well as town staff and Planning Board members. Rockingham

Regional Planning Commission staff members Glenn Greenwood and Theresa Walker facilitated both sessions. Work will continue on creating draft zoning and administrative language over the summer months, in preparation for a follow-up meeting with the farming community in October. In lieu of an Agricultural Commission, the Heritage Commission will continue to monitor this situation.

**Stratham Hill Park and Forestry Management Plan:** Tammy reported that the committee has met with forester Charles Moreno on a plan but it is on hold waiting for mitigation funds from Varsity Wireless to proceed.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Election of Officers:** The commission elected the following slate of officers:  
Rebecca Mitchell, Chair; Nathan Merrill, Treasurer; Tammy Hathaway, Secretary.

**Meeting Day and Time:** The commission voted to continue meeting on the second Wednesday of the month at 7PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM

**NEXT MEETING: JUNE 10, 2015; 7 PM**

Respectfully submitted,  
Tammy Hathaway  
Rebecca Mitchell