

# Stratham Heritage Commission

## Meeting Minutes

November 9, 2016

7:00 pm

Land Use Conference Room

Present: Rebecca Mitchell, Nathan Merrill, Wally Stuart, David Canada

Guests: Kathy Breslin; Paul Deschaine (~8:30 pm)

Convened: 7:05 pm by Chairman Mitchell

Minutes: October 12, 2016 minutes were approved as presented (Mr. Stuart, Ms. Mitchell, unanimous)

### OLD BUSINESS

Chair's Report: Ms. Mitchell reported that she attended the NH Preservation Alliance annual meeting and Seven to Save announcement in Manchester on 10/25/2016. She was one of several speakers to offer tributes to departing NHPA staff member Maggie Stier, who was instrumental in our successful work with the Lane Homestead. Ms. Mitchell also reported that one of the just-announced 2016 Seven to Save is "vulnerable seacoast area historic sites." She plans to contact Cliff Sinnott at Rockingham Planning Commission to learn more about what this means for local preservation initiatives.

On 11/4/2016 the NHPA board of directors, staff, and committees visited the seacoast area, including three stops in Stratham. Ms. Mitchell and Mr. Merrill co-hosted the Stratham stops at the Bartlett-Cushman house, Lane homestead, and Stuart Farm. The visitors were given a three page summary of these three sites as well as a summary of more recent challenges and initiatives of the commission.

The state historic register nomination for the old Town Hall has been completed by Lisa Mausolf, and submitted to the NH Division of Historical Resources for review.

Thanks to Mr. Stuart the Heritage Commission meetings are now listed on the town website calendar.

Treasurer's Report: Mr. Stuart reported the following account balances as of 10/31/2016: Operating budget \$2,729 (however an invoice of \$2,000 from Lisa Mausolf for the old town hall state historic register nomination submitted this week will draw the account down to \$729). Heritage Fund \$4,440. Ms. Mitchell calculates a balance in the Heritage Preservation Fund of \$43,245 that does not take into account any possible interest. She is awaiting confirmation from Diane Morgera, trustee of the trust funds.

Lane Homestead: The 10/26/2016 celebration sponsored by the NH Preservation Alliance, LCHIP and the Town was a big success, and it spawned two newspaper articles for additional publicity. Ms. Mitchell also submitted an article for the December issue of the Stratham magazine announcing the successful acquisition of the preservation easement. Ms. Mitchell suggested that the Commission purchase a formal National Historic Register plaque for the Lane Homestead. She noted that we don't want to establish a policy of buying these plaques for privately held properties, but because of the town's preservation easement interest, and because of the property's unique role in the town's history, she feels it would be justified in this case. **Motion: (Mr. Canada, Mr. Merrill, unanimous): To authorize Ms. Mitchell to spend up to \$700 for a National Historic Register plaque for the Lane Homestead.**

Bartlett-Cushman House: Steve Bedard agreed to review the December 2015 Dockham estimate for rehabilitation of the building. Ms. Mitchell will follow up with him soon.

Mr. Canada will forward to Commission members the most recent proposal for widening the Bunker Hill Avenue / Portsmouth Avenue intersection for comment.

The storm windows are installed and work is progressing on the rehabilitation of the interior sash.

Chase's Tavern: The property owners want to move forward with a National Register nomination. Ms. Mitchell asked Lisa Mausolf to put together an estimate for completing this work in 2017.

Planning Board: Mr. Merrill reported that the Technical Review Committee has not met. Ms. Mitchell reported that a cellular telecommunications tower proposal at 57 Portsmouth Avenue is on the next PB agenda. Because the abutting property at 69 Portsmouth Avenue has been determined eligible for the National Register, Ms. Mitchell alerted NHDHR staff about this application because it will trigger Section 106 review. Mr. Canada reported that approval of this project would require a successful Conditional Use Permit application.

Portsmouth Avenue corridor zoning study: Mr. Merrill reported counting approximately ~130 properties in the Portsmouth Avenue corridor from the northern end of the Gateway district to the Greenland town line (also including Emery's Lane). Of these, approximately half (~65) include historic structures more than 50 years old. Ms. Mitchell added that the corridor includes 6 National Historic Register properties, 2 former town schoolhouses, the old town hall, and 20 structures are old enough to appear on the 1793 Phineas Merrill map of Stratham. This information was submitted to Lisa Mausolf and Liz Hengen for the purpose of developing cost estimates for the area survey.

Demolition Review Committee: A demolition permit for a portion of a large barn at 271 Portsmouth Avenue has been signed by the town's CEO/BI. The property owner indicated to the Demolition Review Committee during its site visit that he does not intend to demolish the structure until springtime, however we plan to document it by taking photographs soon. Mr. Stuart and Mr. Merrill will meet at the property in the near future to complete this work.

Ms. Mitchell suggested that we postpone possible revision of the Demolition Review Ordinance until next year.

Budget for 2017: Ms. Mitchell and Mr. Stuart met last week to begin preparing a draft 2017 budget.

They propose the following:

Administrative \$400 (no change from 2016);

Training/Conferences \$200 (increase of \$50 due to upcoming NHPA conference);

Veterans/Engraving \$300 (increase of \$100 due to overspending in 2016);

Survey \$TBD (major plans for 2017 include area survey of Portsmouth Avenue corridor, the National Register nomination for Chase's Tavern, and \$500 for the February public program).

Estimated costs for the area survey and NR nomination will be developed prior to our December meeting so that we can vote on a final budget figure for submission to the Selectmen.

Mr. Merrill also proposed asking voters to appropriate another \$50,000 for the Heritage Preservation Fund. He noted that the original intent of having the capital fund was to add money incrementally over time, so that a larger balance could be developed for future projects that may be critical / time sensitive and therefore do not allow waiting for Town Meeting votes. There was general affirmative consensus on this request and the logic behind it.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Wiggin Cemetery: Mr. Canada reported that he communicated with Highway Department Superintendent Colin Laverty about the town potentially adopting long-term maintenance of the historic Wiggin cemetery, located near Sandy Point Discovery Center on state-owned land. Colin will consult with the other Cemetery Trustees and examine the legalities involved with Town Administrator Paul Deschaine.

Board of Selectmen: The BOS issued a formal certificate of appreciation to Chairman Rebecca Mitchell. Mr. Canada read: "In recognition of outstanding effort in securing a preservation easement on the Lane Property; for stewardship of the Heritage Commission; and for contributions towards the preservation of the Bartlett-Cushman House."

Historic Barns: On 11/3/2016 Mr. Merrill met with two residents who requested his assistance with evaluating their historic barns and repairs that are needed. In advance of the meeting he shared with the property owners several online resources, including links to NHPA and NHDHR website pages pertaining to preserving old barns, and also information pertaining to the 79:D barn easement program on the Town of Stratham website. Both barn owners are eager to make repairs that will stabilize and enhance the beauty of their barns for future generations. At least one of the property owners is also keenly interested in pursuing a state historic register nomination for her historic house and large

connected Yankee barn. Mr. Merrill told both individuals that the Heritage Commission can assist with 79:D applications and with potential historic register nominations.

Next Meeting: December 14, 2016 at 7:00 pm in the Land Use Conference Room.

Adjourned: 8:55 PM (Merrill, Stuart, unanimous)

Respectfully submitted,  
Nathan Merrill