

Newburyport Historical Commission

Minutes of the 3 November 2011 Meeting

1. Call to Order

The regularly scheduled meeting the Newburyport Historical Commission was called to order at 7:34 in the City Council Chambers, City Hall. Present: Steve Dodge, Tom Kolterjahn, Ned McGrath, Linda Smiley, Bill Todd, and Margaret Welch.

2. Advisory Review

3-5 Pine Street – Tim Carey, representing the developer Geno Ranaldi, discussed the condition of this structure now under renovation. They had pulled a permit to rebuild the foundations. Exploratory demolition had revealed that a fire had occurred. Mr. Carey thought that the trusses were compromised and “every stud spliced.” He was willing to take apart the building for salvage. Chair Smiley said that the NHC members would look at the building before a demolition permit was submitted. A site visit was planned.

3. Demolition Applications

255 Low Street (Low Street Redevelopment LLC) – Mr. Lou Repucci presented the project in which an office building will be constructed. The structure is exactly seventy-five years old. NHC members agreed that the structure with cinderblock foundations and indeterminate style held no historical value. The structure was released for demolition (6 yes).

257-259 Water Street (Ian Lucy) – Mr. Lucy’s representative had withdrawn the application.

Review of Minutes

Minutes of 20 October approved (4 yes, 2 abstentions).

Correspondence Received

EBI Consulting informed the NHC that an installation of a GPS antenna was planned for the Unitarian Church (31 Pleasant Street) and asked for comment. Chair Smiley will ask the pastor whether the installation will show outside the steeple. If she finds that the installation will be unobtrusive, the NHC empowered her to write a letter of approval (6 yes). Chair Smiley suspended the meeting at 8:00.

Public Hearing for 95 Water Street

Chair Smiley called the public hearing at 8:00. The new project director Scott Gayden presented the project to demolish three buildings including the storage shed, garage, and main office. In response to Chair Smiley’s question about the motivation for the demolition, Mr. Gayden said

that cost savings would result from not caring for the buildings. National Grid would continue to have buildings at the site.

Chair Smiley asked for comments for and against the project from the audience. William R. Harris, 56 Lime Street, spoke about the ACHP 1980 ruling re: the “ways to the waterfront” with the admonition that any future development of the site would require licensing under Chapter 91 and that future buildings must be placed in a perpendicular pattern to the waterfront. He described two of the ways as located at Lower Long Wharf and at the foot of Ship Street. Where the National Grid property ended and the City of Newburyport property began was unclear; Mr. Harris later said that he would research the issue.

Geordie Vining of the Planning Office clarified the role of the proposed Rail Trail corridor in relation to the National Grid property. He said that the buildings held no significance and that their removal would serve many purposes.

Linda Miller, 20 Ship Street, had no objection to the removal of the buildings and wanted more access to the waterfront for the neighborhood.

No one in the audience was opposed to the demolition.

Hearing closed at 8:25.

Demolition Applications (cont.)

Chair Smiley reopened the public meeting. She noted that speakers had noted different kinds of historic preservation including public ways. She said that the future of the buildings was limited given their position between the sewage plant and electric substation. NHC member Kolterjahn said that the buildings were in difficult shape and went against the historic perpendicular pattern. He said that it would be a shame to dispose of the massive timbers in the office building. Chair Smiley moved to release the buildings for demolition (6 yes). Mr. Kolterjahn wished that National Grid would work with the City for better public access.

New Business

William Harris has been informed that wooden structures of interest had been found during the replacement of the Derek Hines Bridge. Mr. Kolterjahn would tell Jay Williamson, a member of the Amesbury Historical Commission.

Members congratulated NHC member Todd on his recent award from the Newburyport Preservation Trust.

Meeting ended 8:35.