

Newburyport Historical Commission

December 12, 2018

City Council Chambers

Minutes

1. Call to Order

Acting Chair Stephen Dodge called a regular meeting of the Newburyport Historical Commission to order at 7:32 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were members Stephen Dodge, Glenn Richards, Christopher Fay and Malcolm Carnwath. Ned McGrath, Sarah White and Ron Ziemba were absent.

3. Public Hearings

Bradley Kutcher

390 Merrimac Street

Roofline Change

The applicant is proposing to raise the roof of the structure to make the second floor more functional. True divided lights would be installed. The footprint would not be changed.

The hearing was opened to comments from the public. Tom Kolterjahn, 64 Federal Street, said based on past experience, the raising of the roof should not be permitted because it would change the historic proportions of house. In the past, the results have not been satisfactory when the Commission has allowed roofs on historic structures to be raised. The public comment portion of the hearing was closed.

Christopher Fay said the house is surrounded by a parking lot, marina and factory and is not a part of a neighborhood. He said no one could live in the house due to its poor condition and it would probably be demolished eventually. Malcolm Carnwath said the structure is not viable in its current condition and it would be preferable for work to be done to the structure that would allow it to be retained. Glenn Richards agreed that it would be better to save some portion of the historic structure rather than it being totally demolished.

Glenn Richards moved to allow the roofline change as proposed. Christopher Fay seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

4. General Business

Jan and Janina Schwarte

263 Water Street

DCOD Advisory Review

Lisa Mead represented the applicants, who are proposing to renovate the historic portion of a home located on the river and reconstruct later additions at its rear. According to FEMA requirements, when the cost of improvements would exceed 50% of the value of the structure, the house must be raised on pilings. The Board of Building Regulations and Standards could grant a variance for a historic structure.

Attorney Mead said the front wall of the structure is bowing and the main beam in the attic is split. She submitted a letter from an engineer stating no portion of the structure is worth

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saving or incorporating into new construction. One of the end walls is of brick, which is unique in the Joppa district. This wall is in good condition and would be preserved. The front door would be restored to its original form. The clapboards on the front of the structure would be repaired or replaced and the shingles on the side of the structure would be replaced with clapboards with the same reveal as those on the front. All non-original windows visible from the street would be replaced with historically appropriate ones.

David Keery reviewed the plans for the construction at the rear of the structure. The shed dormers would be removed and replaced with a flat roof. The addition would be constructed in such a way that there would be a distinct difference between the old and new portions of the structure and the view of the brick wall would not be blocked.

The meeting was opened to comments from the public. Tom Kolterjahn, 64 Federal Street, said a second opinion from an engineer should be sought, as most are not knowledgeable about historic structures. He said the frame is a defining feature of a first-period house. He is concerned about the removal of the summer beam because it is the element that ties the whole house together. Attorney Mead responded some materials to be removed could be reused elsewhere in the house.

Attorney Mead requested the Commission issue a written finding in support of the DCOD special permit stating the structure is historically significant and is important in the context of the district; the structure should be restored rather than demolished; the later addition is not historically significant and may be demolished; and the design of the proposed addition meets the standards of the Secretary of the Interior and is acceptable to the Commission.

Stephen Dodge moved the structure is historically significant. Glenn Richards seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. Stephen Dodge moved to provide written support for the DCOD special permit application. Glenn Richards seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

5. Minutes

Glenn Richards moved to approve the minutes of the November 28 meeting. Christopher Fay seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

6. Adjournment

Stephen Dodge moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:36 p.m. Glenn Richards seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.