

Newburyport Historical Commission
City Hall Auditorium
February 6, 2014
Minutes

1. Call to Order

A regular meeting of the Newburyport Historical Commission was called to order by Acting Chair Margaret Welch at 7:35 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were members Stephen Dodge, Margaret Welch, Malcolm Carnwath, Sarah White and Mark Bilodeau.

3. Demolition Applications

Newburyport Manager, LLC

19 Water Street

Partial Building Demolition

Andy Sidford appeared for the applicant, who wishes to add a large display window to the first floor of a commercial building. The window would be installed on the Water Street façade and a large granite lintel such as the one on the side of the building would be added.

Margaret Welch moved that the building is historically significant. Sarah White seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Sarah White pointed out the applicant has not used the earliest views of the façade in his supporting documents. She said she would not support the enlargement of the opening on the side of the structure. Mark Bilodeau recommended some of the windows be changed for the sake of consistency. Stephen Dodge and Margaret Welch agreed with this recommendation. The Commission members also recommended that divided lights be used for the new display window. The applicant commented that he would be willing to change the windows as recommended but was not considering the use of divided lights for the display window.

Bill Harris commented that federal funds were used for 50% of the cost of rehabbing the building because it is a part of the Market Square Historic District. Tom Kolterjahn asked if the matter should be considered at a public hearing due to the significance of the structure. The Commission members decided the proposed alteration would not rise to the level of a public hearing, which is usually reserved for full building demolition applications.

Mark Bilodeau moved to approve the application for partial demolition with the condition the windows be changed as recommended. Margaret Welch seconded the motion. A vote was not taken. Margaret Welch suspended the discussion at 8:00 and opened the public hearing. At the conclusion of the public hearing the applicant requested to withdraw the application without prejudice.

4. Public Hearing

Lime Street Realty Trust

81 Lime Street

Total Building Demolition

Lisa Mead appeared for the applicant, who is proposing to demolish a 1787 two-family structure with numerous additions. A new two-family structure would be added in its place. Ms. Mead said the applicant had originally planned the replacement structure to be of a Federal design, but now is considering a Victorian-style structure.

The Commission members visited the structure and found that the roof is new and many old beams have been removed. Little of the original structure is visible. Stephen Dodge said many of the beams have been cut but original corner posts still exist at the rear of the main house.

Margaret Welch opened the meeting to those wishing to speak in favor of the demolition. James Lofaro, 81 Lime Street, said the roof had been replaced because the supporting members were in poor condition and an addition had been constructed to support a section that was rotting.

Margaret Welch opened the meeting to those wishing to speak in opposition to the demolition. Tom Kolterjahn said is concerned because he does not know how much of the main structure is left; there might be some remnants that are not visible. He is worried the new structure would contribute to the degradation of the neighborhood. He does not wish to lose an early structure and have it replaced with a modern one that would not fit in with the neighborhood.

Bill Harris said the house might have been one of the first on upper Lime Street. The street has a large number of historic houses and many are intact; fewer were lost here than in other neighborhoods. He said he is concerned about the dimensions of the front part of the replacement structure and the plane of the roof. The neighborhood has a certain consistency and he is concerned that it is not known what the replacement structure would look like. He would like the Commission to impose the delay and work with the applicant to retain the historic proportions of the front part of the structure.

Julie Menin read from a letter she submitted to the Commission that stated she is concerned the replacement structure would be out of proportion with the other structures on the street. She said the houses in the south end fit well together and the new structures are conspicuous.

Jerry Mullins said the character of the south end would be lost if the smaller homes were to be demolished. The structure should be saved because a new one would not have the same proportions due to the building code.

Lisa Mead asked if enough is left of the original structure to warrant it being saved. If there is, the Commission should impose the delay. In response to the comments about the size and height of the structure, she said the Commission is not a design review board. The client might be willing to work with the members of the Commission on the design of the replacement structure but she does not know when he would be able to bring drawings to them. Bill Harris responded that the size and height of the structure are important contributors to the streetscape and the house is worthy of imposing the delay.

Margaret Welch closed the public hearing. Sarah White said that while it is difficult to determine how much of the original structure remains, it does not mean that some parts do not have integrity or are not worth saving. The roofline and the way in which the house relates to the street are important. The Commission must take the streetscape into consideration.

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Margaret Welch said she is in favor of imposing the delay. She thinks it would be possible for the applicant to retain the façade and in doing so would preserve the streetscape. The applicant would be able to build behind it to make the project viable.

Stephen Dodge said he agrees the front part of the structure could, and should, be saved.

Margaret Welch moved to impose the demolition and recommend to the developer that the front portion of the structure be saved. Sarah White seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

5. Other Business

Belleville Congregational Church

The Belleville Congregational Church Preservation Group asked the Commission to provide a letter of support to accompany its application for a Community Preservation Act grant. The congregation wishes to restore three sides of the meeting house. Margaret Welch said the Commission would be happy to provide the letter.

Proposed Zoning Amendments

Margaret Welch said the Commission members should all take an active role in the discussions about the proposed changes to the zoning code. The members discussed the proposal and the way it would change the Commission's role with regards to demolition applications.

6. Minutes

Margaret Welch moved to approve the minutes of the January 16, 2014 meeting as amended. Sarah White seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

7. Adjournment

Margaret Welch moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:10p.m. Stephen Dodge seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.