

Newburyport Historical Commission

Minutes of the 21 April 2011 Meeting

1. Call to Order

The regularly scheduled meeting the Newburyport Historical Commission was called to order at 7:32 in Council Chambers, City Hall. Present: Tom Kolterjahn, Ned McGrath, Bill Todd, and Margaret Welch. Absent: Linda Smiley, Chair. Tom Kolterjahn acted as Chair.

2. Demolition Applications

5 Strong Street (Michael Young and Catherine Cantwell, applicants) — Project architect John Minton represented the applicants. Mr. Minton presented his structural analysis, talking about “the very sick frame.” He and Commission members discussed the site visit; it was noted that the owners had removed the plaster from the walls. Mr. Minton doubted that it was economically feasible to renovate the residence. He mentioned that the addition was one foot from the Railroad/ Rail Trail wall. NHC member Kolterjahn said that the residence needed “quite a bit of work” and resembled unrenovated houses in the South End. The sillwork and corner posts and the second floor plate near the addition required augmentation or replacement. He said that a French drain might improve the wet basement. He noted the original beehive oven and three mantelpieces. He thought that the structure could date from 1820. NHC member Welch noted that the owner candidly said at the site visit that the purchase price for the property was low for a lot in Newburyport. When NHC member Kolterjahn asked Mr. Minton whether a compromise allowing the main structure to remain was possible, Mr. Minton said that in his professional opinion he would demolish the building. NHC McGrath asked for more details about the house’s condition. He said that tearing the house down would be like “knocking out teeth of a mouth.” Mr. Minton said that he would design a replacement structure in keeping with the neighborhood.

The NHC voted the property historically significant (4 yes, 1 absent). A public hearing will be scheduled with 19 May.

3. New Business

NHC member Welch distributed literature about the proposed Newburyport Local Historic District. Members will discuss the issue at a later meeting.

4. Review of Minutes

Minutes of 7 April accepted as amended (4 yes, 1 absent).

Meeting ended 8:15.