

Newburyport Historical Commission

Minutes of the 19 May Meeting

1. Call to Order

The regularly scheduled meeting the Newburyport Historical Commission was called to order at 7:30 in Council Chambers, City Hall. Present: Tom Kolterjahn, Linda Smiley, Bill Todd, and Margaret Welch. Absent: Ned McGrath.

2. Guests

Mary Haslinger discussed with the NHC preservation options for her residence 299 High Street. She showed pictures of the interior. NHC members asked her to list the interior features she deemed worthy of preservation and that would be recorded in a preservation restriction. NHC members advised her to consult an attorney for advice on how to best protect the property from excessive subdivision. Chair Smiley and NHC member Kolterjahn will help prepare of list of features to be preserved.

Members from the Belleville Congregational Church witnessed Chair Smiley sign the preservation restriction.

3. Demolition Applications

75 Prospect Street (Larry Draginich, applicant) – Mr. Draginich discussed his plan to add dormers resembling shed dormers to the second floor. Members noted that the residence was small and were sympathetic to the need for more space. Chair Smiley noted with approval that the dormers were stepped back two feet from the front. The NHC voted the structure historically significant (4 yes, 1 absent) and voted to permit the plan as outlined in the application (4 yes, 1 absent).

244 High Street (Geno Ranaldi, applicant) – Mr. Ranaldi submitted a structural report declaring the carriage house on this property unsafe and recommending its demolition. A contractor specializing in historic properties, Aaron Sturgis, will view the property and give his opinion. The NHC voted to allow the Chair to allow the demolition of the carriage house if Mr. Sturgis's report recommended it (4 yes, 1 absent).

The Chair suspended the public meeting.

4. Public Hearing

The Chair opened the public hearing for 5 Strong Street at 8:07. The application was for full demolition.

John Minton, project architect, reviewed his request to tear down the structure. The poor state of the frame and the structural members connecting to the main chimney which, in his opinion, could lead to a fire were the two main factors driving his decision. He thought that the renovations would be so extensive that they would trigger a complete adherence to code.

Chair Smiley asked for comments from the audience in support of the proposed demolition. Bernard Casey of 6 Strong Street approved of the project, noting that the building had become an attractive nuisance. He had full confidence that the owners would put up an appropriate building.

Chair Smiley asked for comments from the audience in opposition of the proposed demolition. Linda Miller of 20 Ship Street voiced concern that Newburyport was slowly losing its historic assets. She thought that the structure could still function as a residence if repaired and noted it was a rare three-bay, three-quarters house. Reg Bayline of 21 Strong Street was concerned about losing a modest tradesman house “worth preserving.” He did not wish Newburyport to hold only artificial reproductions. Judith Grohe of 14 Strong Street, speaking in opposition, said that the house belonged there and was concerned about losing another house in the neighborhood. Jerry Mullins submitted an email from Malcolm Carnwath, the former owner, giving details of its features. It was built before 1823 and could be considered a vernacular Federal. Dr. Bernard Herman, the eminent architectural historian from the University of Delaware, had measured the elements and spoke about them in a public presentation. Mary Haslinger of 299 High Street suggested that a mason experienced in historic architecture be consulted. Lauren Newtown of 21 Strong Street admitted that the house looked “tired” but was concerned about its demolition; she said that “they were not making old houses anymore.” An email from Mary Harbaugh of 28 Strong Street stating her opposition was read aloud.

The public hearing was closed at 8:35.

5. Demolition Applications (cont.)

5 Strong Street (Michael Young and Catherine Cantwell, applicants) – NHC member Kolterjahn had seen similar chimneys in use and encouraged the applicants to rethink the project. NHC member Welch asked the applicants to patch the open holes at the corner of the structure, whatever the outcome of the process. Chair Smiley said that the NHC had made a thorough examination of the property. Chair Smiley made a motion to impose the one-year delay, encouraging the applicants to come back with other options during this period. The NHC voted to impose the delay (4 yes, 1 absent).

5. Review of Minutes

Minutes of 21 April deferred due to lack of quorum. There had been no 5 May meeting.

Meeting ended 8:50.