

Newburyport Historical Commission
Newburyport Public Library
June 5, 2014
Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Linda Smiley called a regular meeting of the Newburyport Historical Commission to order by at 7:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were members Linda Smiley, Stephen Dodge, Malcolm Carnwath, Margaret Welch, Sarah White, Mark Bilodeau and Ned McGrath. Peter Binette was also in attendance.

3. Applications

Dan and Mary Herlihy

18 Atwood Street

Roofline Change

The applicants described the ways in which they wish to modify the changes to the roofline that have taken place over time. Linda Smiley moved that the building is historically significant. Sarah White seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Tom Kolterjahn said he strongly supports the project. He said he is pleased the owners have acquired the property, as he believes most others would intend to demolish the structure. Linda Smiley said she has watched the building deteriorate over the years. She supports the plans of the new owners and is confident they will make every effort to save as much of the structure as possible. Bill Harris said after it has been completed, the house should be one of the landmark structures on Atwood Street.

Mark Bilodeau moved to approve the application as submitted. Linda Smiley seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Deborah Dimes and Frank Traniello

5 Ocean Street

Roofline Change

Matthew Cummings appeared for the applicants, who wish to add dormers on two sides of the structure in order to increase the size of the rooms on the second floor. The dormers would not be visible from the street. A second floor would be added to an existing single-story el at the rear of the structure. The footprint would not be changed and the height would not exceed that of the existing ridgeline.

Linda Smiley moved the structure is historically significant. Sarah White seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Linda Smiley moved to accept the plans as submitted. Ned McGrath seconded the motion. Margaret Welch said the approach proposed by the applicants is a reasonable one, given that the house is small and on a small lot. Linda Smiley said the plans are sensitive to the structure. The motion was unanimously approved.

4. Advisory Review

24 Collins Street

The Zoning Board has purview over the application and is seeking a recommendation from the Commission. The applicant is proposing to demolish a single-family house and replace it with two joined residential structures. The applicant's representative said the structure has been altered and little is remaining of historic value. He added the house is not structurally sound and would be need of a new roof and foundation, along with new beams and flooring members, if it were to be saved. The property is listed as a contributing structure in the National Register District. A site visit will take place on Monday, June 9 at 7:00 p.m.

114 Merrimac Street

Lisa Mead appeared for the applicants, who are proposing to demolish the structure and replace it with a two-family house. The property is listed as a contributing structure in the National Register District. Architect Bob Cook said he was asked to evaluate the structure and found it to be impacted by the water that collects in the basement. He said the building has significantly settled and it would be prohibitive to bring it up to code. He said he found little of historic significance remaining in the existing structure.

Tom Kolterjahn, co-president of the Newburyport Preservation Trust, said the Trust is opposed to the demolition. The city has a long tradition of adaptive reuse, which is the course that should be taken for this building. He said the structure was one of the earliest firehouses in the city and its demolition would be detrimental to the city's history. Bill Harris said the building is a landmark in the history of firefighting. He added the structure is a solid one and the presence of moisture is not a valid reason for the demolition of a historic building.

Ms. Mead said the Zoning Board might approve a request for demolition based on evidence that a historic building retains no substantial remaining market value for reasonable use while considering the cost of rehabilitation to meeting the building code. Linda Smiley said the roll of the Commission is to make a recommendation based on the historic significance of the structure, without taking cost into consideration. Margaret Welch pointed out the Zoning Board would commission a structure report and Mr. Cook does not represent an independent view.

A site visit will take place on Wednesday, June 11 at 7:00 p.m.

5. Minutes

The approval of the minutes of the March 6, March 20, April 3 and April 17 meetings was tabled.

6. Other Business

Bill Harris reported that National Grid plans to move its meters to the exterior of structures. He wishes his meter to remain on the interior of his house, as mounting it on the exterior would require drilling through the brick. He requested that the Commission send a letter of support to the company. The Commission members agreed to the request.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m. The next meeting will take place on June 19.