

Newburyport Historical Commission
Minutes of the July 1, 2010 Meeting

1. Call to Order

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

2. Roll Call

In attendance were members Linda Smiley, Tom Kolterjahn, Stephen Feige, Ned McGrath, Leah McGavern and Margaret Welch.

3. Demolition Applications

19 Eagle Street

Vanessa Traniello and Erik Kaminski

The drawings have been revised and the addition has been set back one foot from the original structure. It was agreed that the changes were a big improvement. Leah McGavern moved to release the property for partial demolition based on the revised plans. Tom Kolterjahn seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

23 Rear Marlboro Street

Matthew McDermott, Charmaine McDermott, Robert Miller and Dana Hooper
Leah McGavern recused herself from the discussion. The applicants have purchased a property as tenants in common. They wish to demolish a one-story house and split the property into two non-buildable lots. The date of the structure is not know. Leah McGavern, speaking as a member of the public, said she does not think it is historically significant. A decision on the significance of the structure must be made by July 13, which is prior to the next meeting. The applicants granted an extension to allow time for a site visit.

4. Advisory Review

223 High Street

Linda Smiley said the plan is detrimental to the historic structure. She would like to the development to be more sensitively designed, either with smaller or fewer units. Margaret Welch said the playing fields would be a huge benefit to the City and the project is under the purview of the Planning Board, which could approve it despite the concerns of NHC. The Commission should agree to hold the restriction, despite the misgivings about the project. Lisa Mead said the Commission has gone beyond the question that it was asked, which was very narrow. The question was if there would be a public benefit to a preservation restriction being placed on the historic structure. She asked the Commission members to refrain from making further comments to the Planning Board. Leah McGavern said if the narrow question were answered, it would imply NHC supports the project. Ned McGrath asked if the public benefit centers around the development of the playing fields or the preservation of the historic structure. He said the purpose of the letter to the Planning Board is to say NHC would like the property to be more sensitively developed. Margaret Welch said a letter should be send that expresses their opinion and states they should be willing to hold the restriction. She said she hoped NHC would be consulted earlier in the process for future projects.

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5. Public Hearing

8 Harrison Street

Bruce Taylor, AIA, for Phillip Guinta

Linda Smiley opened the public hearing at 8:05. She said she had received a letter dated June 7, 2010 from Mark Griffin, the applicant's attorney, stating that the applicant would not be represented at the hearing and would not undertake any of the methods under article 5-308(1)(2) that would allow the delay to be lifted early. The plans call for a full demolition of the structure and its replacement with a single-family house. The footprint would be increased by four feet along one side and the roof would be just a few inches higher. The meeting was open for public comment. Gus Harrington said that while he is a believer in historic preservation, he supports the demolition because the structure now looks with an apartment house and has lost most of its historic fabric. Jane Mackey, 10 Harrison, said she is happy the new structure will be single-family house. Linda Smiley read an email from Mary Harbaugh addressed to the Commission and forwarded by Tom Calderwood on July 1 stating that she is opposed to the proposed demolition because it would represent a loss to the residents of the city due to the value the historic architecture provides to residents in all neighborhoods. The public hearing was closed at 8:20. Tom Kolterjahn said he is concerned about losing the structure and thinks there is enough of the original fabric left to warrant its preservation. Linda Smiley agreed that the timber framing is good condition while Stephen Feige said there are too few timbers left to make the structure historically significant. Ned McGrath speculated that perhaps the owner is unaware of the alternatives to demolition and that he might be able to achieve his goals while retaining the structure. He said he would like the applicant to participate in the process and recommended sending him a letter saying the Commission would like to work with him. Stephen Feige said the situation demonstrates the problems with the process and the limitations of NHC's authority. Linda Smiley moved that the applicant would be sent a letter encouraging him to attend the next meeting and that the vote on the demolition would take place at that meeting. Tom Kolterjahn seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

6. Minutes

Tom Kolterjahn moved to approve the minutes of the June 17, 2010 meeting. Linda Smiley seconded the motion. The motion approved with Stephen Feige and Ned McGrath abstaining.

7. New Business

Linda Smiley said she would like to make improvements to the ordinance and have a better working relationship with other boards. She would like Gary Calderwood to direct applicants to the Commission before other boards where appropriate. He'll send letter to mayor and Linda will let mayor let her know they've met with him.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m. The regularly scheduled July 15 meeting will be cancelled due to the lack of a quorum and will be rescheduled for Monday, July 19 at 7:30.