

Newburyport Historical Commission
City Hall Auditorium
July 19, 2012
Minutes

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, Ned McGrath, Bill Todd, Stephen Dodge and Margaret Welch.

3. Applications

Concordia Homes, Inc.

55 ½ - 57 Bromfield Street

Full Building Demolition

The applicant said he has entered into an agreement with the owner of the structure and would like to “start the clock” on the demolition delay. He said he believes the house is beyond repair: the ridge is cracked, the walls have pushed out and there is wet and dry rot. Tom Kolterjahn said the house is much older than the 1894 date that is listed on the application. Linda Smiley moved that the structure is historically significant. Tom Kolterjahn seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. A site visit will take place on Tuesday, July 24 at 6:00 p.m.

George Haseltine

23 Oak Street

Full Building Demolition

The applicant said the house has been drastically changed over the years and the original characteristics have been lost. Vinyl siding and replacement windows have been added to the structure. The applicant said he does not believe the style of the house is characteristic of the neighborhood and he would like to construct a larger structure that is more in keeping with its context. Linda Smiley moved that the structure is historically significant. Tom Kolterjahn seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. A site visit will take place on Tuesday, July 24 at 6:30 p.m.

4. Public Hearing

Jeanne Petrillo

182 High Street

Demolition of Carriage Barn

Lisa Mead appeared for the applicant, who is requesting the carriage barn, which dates from the late 1800s or early 1900s, be released for demolition. She said the applicant is not sure at this time if she would rebuild the barn or not.

Linda Smiley opened the hearing to public comment and asked for comments from those in favor of the demolition. Lyndi Lanphear, 347 High Street, said the applicant had attempted remodel the barn, but had incurred expenses during the long

process. She said she does not think it is fair the applicant must park her cars in the driveway and added that the applicant did a good job with the work on her home.

Linda Smiley asked for comments from those opposed to the demolition. Bill Harris, 54-56 Lime Street, said the barn compliments the house and adds value to the property and the neighborhood. He said carriage barns were an integral part of life in Newburyport and too many from this era have been lost. He also said carriage barns are flexible for adaptive reuse. Michael Sales, 6 Fruit Street, said there is not a compelling case for the demolition, especially as there are no plans for an alternative. Jerry Mullins, 7 Parsons Street, said he is opposed to the demolition and asked if the Commission members have visited the site. Linda Smiley said the applicant appeared before the Planning Board with a 6-C application in 2009. The plans submitted at that time were for renovation of the carriage barn, with a garage on the first floor and a residence on the second. She explained that public benefit is a required component of a 6-C application, and in this case the benefit was to have been the placement of a preservation restriction on the main house. She said the Historical Commission had been pleased with the quality of the work done on the house and the 6-C plans for the carriage barn were nicely done. The Commission submitted to the Planning Board a small list of items to be included in the restriction. The 6-C process was lengthy and the property owner eventually withdrew the application, apparently out of frustration. Tom Kolterjahn said the Historical Commission was supportive of the conversion and reuse of barn. He said the Commission was not involved with the application and had only been asked by the Planning Board about which elements should be included in the restriction. The restriction would have applied to the exterior of the structure only. In the letter of recommendation from the Historic Commission some interior elements were called out as being of interest, but acknowledgement was made that the Commission has no jurisdiction over the interior. Lisa Mead said she did not represent the applicant at that time but believes she thought the restriction was over burdensome. Stephanie Niketic, 93 High Street, said she is opposed to the demolition. Leslie Eckholdt, 36 Warren Street, said the barn is a part of the city's historic context and there is no compelling reason to demolish it. Tom Kolterjahn said it might be possible for the barn to be moved to another location. Lisa Mead said she would make the applicant aware of this option. Linda Smiley said the Commission would assist the applicant in finding a party that would be interested in taking the barn. Bill Harris added that there is a national interest in historic barns because so many have been lost and they add to the value of a property. Margaret Welch said that given there have been some dramatic changes on High Street, the preservation of the barn might in itself be considered a public benefit if the applicant were to resubmit a 6-C application.

Linda Smiley closed the public hearing. Tom Kolterjahn said he would hate to lose the wonderful early structure that compliments the main structure. He encouraged the other members of the Commission to use any means to save it, such as writing letters to the Planning Board or the Zoning Board. Linda Smiley said the barn is an important part of the disappearing past, and a well-preserved house with a barn is a valuable property. She said the Commission would support the owner in any way possible in order to save the barn.

Linda Smiley moved to impose the demolition delay on the carriage barn. Tom Kolterjahn seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

5. Approval of Minutes

Tom Kolterjahn moved to approve the minutes of the July 5 meeting as amended. Linda Smiley seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

6. Correspondence

Michael Mroz forwarded a copy of an acceptance letter from the Custom House Maritime Museum for a grant from the Preservation Project Fund in the amount of \$45,000.

7. Other Business

Linda Smiley said the Planning Office has informed her that the applicants for the demolition of an early house and barn on the waterfront at 284 Water Street do not plan to attend any meetings of the Commission.

Ned McGrath said his family visited the William Penn birthplace while traveling in Pennsylvania. He said the home, a small piece of preserved history, was situated in the midst of what is now a landfill. He asked how long might it be before nothing is left of the past? He said there exists an obligation to the community of today and the future to retain what makes this place special.

8. Adjournment

Tom Kolterjahn moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m. Ned McGrath seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.