

Newburyport Historical Commission
City Hall Auditorium
August 11, 2015
Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Sarah White called a regular meeting of the Newburyport Historical Commission to order at 7:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were members Sarah White, Stephen Dodge, Malcolm Carnwath and Mark Bilodeau.

3. Demolition Applications

None

4. Advisory Review

None

5. General Business

Andrew Port, Office of Planning and Development

Preservation Restriction

223 High Street

The Planning Board previously approved a plan to subdivide 223 High Street. In exchange for the construction of four units at the front of the property, a preservation restriction would be placed on the Gothic Revival structure that sits back from High Street. The Historical Commission had approved of the elements of the preservation restriction at the time it was proposed.

The project was delayed but the Planning Board permit is still valid. The owner did not file the preservation restriction with the Registry of Deeds. A new developer has become involved with the property. As a part of the special permit, land behind the Nock Middle School is to be transferred to the City to be used for playing fields. The City is ready to begin the construction of these fields. In order that the project moves forward in a timely manner, the Planning Board has agreed that the restriction shall not be sent to the Massachusetts Historical Commission for review at this time. The restriction would be in effect for 30-years. Sarah White shall prepare a permanent restriction to be submitted to MHC for approval at a later date.

Mark Bilodeau recommended some changes to the language of the draft restriction. Stephen Dodge moved to authorize the Chair to sign the temporary restriction after the recommended changes have been made and the permanent restriction once it has been prepared. Malcolm Carnwath seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Geordie Vining, Office of Planning and Development

Harbormaster/Transient Boaters' Facility Utilities
Custom House Way

Because the proposed Harbormaster and Boaters Facility lies within the National Register District and Federal funding is being used for the project, the Section 106 review process has been initiated. The way in which the project might impact any surrounding historic resources must be assessed. If it were found the project would negatively impact these resources, a mitigation plan would be required.

A sewer line and a telecommunications line must be extended from the facility to Water Street. It has been determined the best route for these lines would be under Custom House Way. The sewer trench would be four feet deep and 1.5 feet wide and the telecommunications trench would be three feet deep and 2.5 feet wide. Once the utility trench has been excavated and the underground lines installed, the brick would be restored to its original condition. The new facility will be situated so as to not impact the views from the Custom House.

Some members of the public have expressed interest in the lines being installed on the east side of the Custom House, which is known Lower Custom House Way. Mr. Vining said this is not one of the historic Ways to the Water. While there may be some public rights along this corridor, it does not extend to the Fish Pier and its ownership unclear. The Waterfront Trust has agreed to allow the installation of the lines under Custom House Way and has written a letter of support for the project.

Trenches were dug along Custom House Way in the 1970s as a part of a study on the archaeology of the central waterfront. The study concluded the trenching areas would not be worthy of further exploration because they were located in an area that was thoroughly reworked and would be unlikely to yield meaningful historic artifacts. Mr. Vining concluded that the project would have no negative impact on National Register listed or eligible properties or the district as a whole because its area is one of recently filled tidelands and the project would be confined to existing paved pathways.

Rob Germinara, 2 Ashland Street, said he is in favor of the proposal. He is also supports the reclamation of Lower Custom House Way.

Mark Bilodeau moved that the project would not have an adverse impact on historic or archaeological resources. Malcolm Carnwath seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Malcolm Carnwath moved to authorize the Chair to prepare a written comment on the project. Mark Bilodeau seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

6. Minutes

Malcolm Carnwath moved to approve the minutes of the July 16, 2015 meeting as submitted. Mark Bilodeau seconded the motion. The motion was approved with Stephen Dodge abstaining.

7. Adjournment

Malcolm Carnwath moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:42 p.m. Mark Bilodeau seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.