

Fruit Street Local Historic District Commission
Meeting Minutes –January 10, 2013
Mayor’s Conference Room, City Hall

Meeting of the Fruit Street Local Historic District Commission was called to order at 7:10 PM.

Roll Call

Present: Tom Bower, Bonnie Sontag, Kevin Wallace , Maurice Southworth

Leah McGavern arrived at 7:25 PM.

Sarah White, Chair of the LHD Study Committee, was also in attendance.

Correspondence

Correspondence with Matthew Scanlon regarding proposed repair work for Julie and Jessen Wehrwein, owners of 3 Fruit St. Maurice spoke with the applicant and determined the repair work, not viewable from a public way, was covered by a Certificate of non-Applicability. Maurice sent a letter to this effect to the applicant. The application to the Building Inspector specifically stated “no exterior alterations being made.”

Maurice reminded us that he reviews requests for compliance with the ordinance and guidelines and if they do not apply, he sends a letter – Certificate of non-Applicability - to the applicant. This letter is on file with the Planning Office.

General Business

a) Approval of Minutes

Kevin made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 23, 2012 meeting.

Bonnie seconded the motion.

Tom made one change regarding the shape of the proposed swimming pool: kidney-shaped and not rectangular.

Minutes approved unanimously.

Old Business

None.

New Business

Update and discussion about the local historic district proposed ordinance submitted to the City Council, due for a second reading on January 14, 2013.

- Maurice and Bonnie, with input from Sarah, provided background and summary of proposed amendments with a focus on the proposed High Street LHD to contain 5 properties.
- It was noted that the Fruit St. LHD ordinance would be included in the proposed ordinance and that the FSLHD Commission would be replaced by a newly formed commission that would also replace the existing Historical Commission.

- One significant difference between the FSLHD ordinance and the proposal is that the latter requires visibility only from a public way within the district.
- If the proposal is not adopted, there is the possibility that other properties could be included in the FSLHD. In this case, the Commission would appoint members to fulfill the role of study committee. The Commission can create a study committee without authorization from the City Council. This study committee would decide which properties to include. It could adapt the ordinance and guidelines developed by the larger LHD study committee and propose appropriate ordinance amendments to the existing FSLHD ordinance and guidelines. The City Council would be required to adopt the amended FSLHD ordinance and guidelines with a 2/3 majority vote.
- LHDs do not have to be contiguous.
- It may not be legal under MGL 40C for the City Council to require unanimous support of all property owners in order to adopt or amend a local historic district ordinance. This is a point to be clarified, if and when appropriate.
- The general feeling of the Commission was that it is important to protect some properties, even if they are not contiguous with each other or with the FSLHD so as to “save what we can.”
- The general feeling of the Commission is to possibly move forward, if appropriate, slowly and gently with a few properties and see what happens to such a proposal for adoption of an expanded FSLHD. No decision was made to do so at this time.
- Maurice repeated the comment he had made to the City Council: one of the most positive outcomes of having an LHD is that it forces property owners to think about changes they propose to their properties and to “do it right”. When this happens, they don’t even need to come before the Commission. When they do have to come before the Commission, they can have thoughtful conversations with Commissioners and more often than not obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness.

No decision was required and none was made.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Bonnie Sontag - Note Taker.