

Newburyport Historical Commission
City Council Chambers
November 10, 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

Ceem Properties LLC

2 Spofford Street

Full Building Demolition

Lisa Mead represented the applicant, who is proposing to demolish a single-family home and add two structures in its place. The home was constructed around 1865. Its shed addition dates from the 1980s, as does an accessory structure on the property. The accessory structure is not under the purview of the Commission.

Attorney Mead said the structure has a stone and rubble foundation and there is often standing water in basement. Rot exists in the lower part of the structure due to poor drainage. She said some of the windows are vinyl replacements. The remaining original windows are in poor condition. She said the building is not listed in the Newburyport Historic District inventory.

Sarah White opened the public hearing. No members of the public were present to speak in favor of or in opposition to the proposed demolition. The public hearing was closed.

Malcolm Carnwath circulated photographs dating from the late nineteenth century that show the structure with its mansard roof. He said the construction is post and beam, with mortise and tenon mutins. Harriet Prescott Spofford, a prominent writer from that era, once lived in the house. Stephen Dodge said in his opinion the structure is not historically significant and he approves of the design of replacement structures. Mark Bilodeau said while the structure might not be as significant as others in the city, it is unique and salvageable, with a history of its own. He would like it to be incorporated into the new construction in order that the streetscape is not changed. He said the structure is at a gateway to the city and is located in a pocket of historic structures. He added the mission of NHC is to save historic houses.

The purchaser indicated he would not be interested in incorporating the existing home into the new structure. He would be willing to build the new structure closer to the street than is currently proposed, but not to the degree that additional relief from the Zoning Board would be required.

Mark Bilodeau moved that the structure at 2 Spofford Street is preferably preserved and to invoke the one-year demolition delay. Malcolm Carnwath seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a three to one vote with Stephen Dodge voting against it. Sarah White said the Commission would work with the applicant to save a portion of the house or to incorporate it into the new structure.

4. Advisory Review

None

5. Minutes

Mark Bilodeau moved to approve the minutes of the October 28, 2015 meeting as submitted. Malcolm Carnwath seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

6. Correspondence

None

7. Other Business

Sarah White said she has changed the form the Commission uses when making its determinations to better reference areas of the law. She is also working to complete the pre-application form that would be submitted to MHC on November 16 for building surveys. The Commission will apply for matching funds from the Community Preservation Committee.

Peter Binette discussed the demolition of 8 Strong Street. He said on August 26 the Board of Health issued a directive to the Building Department that the structure be demolished under the sanitary code on the grounds it was not fit for human habitation. The building was not structurally unsound.

8. Adjournment

Malcolm Carnwath moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m. Mark Bilodeau seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. The next regular meeting will be scheduled for Wednesday, November 25, 2015.