

Newburyport Historical Commission
City Hall Conference Room
January 13, 2016
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, Malcolm Carnwath and Mark Bilodeau. Ned McGrath and Stephen Dodge were absent.

3. Demolition Applications

None

4. Advisory Review

Mark W. Griffin ☐

15 Howard Street

DCOD Special Permit

The applicant did not attend the meeting. Malcolm Carnwath will contact him to schedule a site visit.

Tom Kolterjahn, 64 Federal Street, commented that small houses such as this one are often demolished. This prevents young people or those from lower economic brackets from being able to live in the city. Discussions on the need for affordable housing focus on the creation of new units, but the retention of existing housing stock should also be considered.

Sarah White moved the structure at 15 Howard Street is historically significant. Mark Bilodeau seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Section 106 Review for Small Cell Build on Summit Place

Section 106 Review for Small Cell Build on California Street

A Section 106 Review is triggered when Federal permitting, funding or licensing is a part of a project that potentially impacts historic resources. The role of the Commission is advisory only and no public hearing is held.

Andy Port described the two projects. Existing telephone poles would be used to stack equipment. Because the equipment would not be placed on any historic structures or would not be freestanding, its installation would not result in an adverse impact to the National Register District.

Sarah White moved to authorize the Chair to send a letter to the FCC stating the small cell builds on Summit Place and California Street would not adversely impact the National Register District. Mark Bilodeau seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Section 106 Review for the Newburyport Intermodal Parking Facility

The City intends to demolish the brick building on the corner of Titcomb and Pleasant Streets, which housed the Port Cinema Theatre and the Fitness Factory, for the construction of a parking

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garage. Federal Transit Administration funds would be used for the project, which would make it subject to a Section 106 Review to determine if it would negatively impact historic properties.

The Commission members had determined at a previous meeting the structure would not be eligible for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places and its demolition would not have a negative impact on the National Register District. It was not within purview of the Commission to comment on the impact of the proposed parking garage. Andy Port requested that the Commission members reaffirm their decision.

The City had considered orienting the garage along Titcomb Street. This would require the demolition of two structures on Pleasant Street and would have triggered a Section 106 Review. Instead the City now intends to orient the garage along Merrimac Street. In order to accomplish this, portions of the rear of four properties along Pleasant and Market Streets would be taken. The FTA has not requested a Section 106 Review for these properties. The Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority has requested the Commission provide a letter on the impact the taking would have on historic assets in the National Register District. The Commission has not been asked to comment on the impact of the parking garage itself.

Kathy Tate Howard, 94 Pleasant Street; Melvin Nagler, 37 Federal Street; Gail Cray, 96 Pleasant Street; Carol McDermott, 98-100 Pleasant and Leah Lynch, 92 Pleasant Street discussed their concerns about the proposed parking garage and expressed their frustration with the process and lack of communication. They said the height of the garage is incompatible with neighborhood. They are concerned the project would have a negative impact on property value and businesses during construction and would result in health impacts by reducing the quality of the air. In addition the structure would block sunlight and would lead to additional noise and traffic. Taking land from four properties would result in a gain of only 34 parking spaces. While the residents were allowed to voice their concerns, the issues were largely outside of the purview of the Commission.

Bill Harris, 56 Lime Street, said this is a case of segmented assessment. A process exists for an integrated review. He suggested the residents contact the Council on Environmental Quality. He said the historic district would be adversely impacted if the parking garage were located parallel to the river.

Tom Kolterjahn, 64 Federal Street, said the Commission is being asked to comment prematurely because the plan for the garage has not yet been fully developed.

The Commission members asked to receive information on the percentage of land that would be taken from each property. Malcolm Carnwath commented the properties being discussed are important to the fabric of the historic district. A site visit will take place on January 23 at 10:30 a.m.

Sarah White moved that a letter be drafted stating the Commission members unanimously reaffirmed their decision that the demolition of the structure at 90 Pleasant Street would have no adverse impact on the National Register District and expressing their concerns about issues related to the constructed of the parking garage. Mark Bilodeau seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Sarah White moved to table further discussion of the issue to the next meeting. Mark Bilodeau seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Preservation Restriction for 6-8 Oakland Street

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Sarah White moved to table the item to the January 27, 2016 meeting. Mark Bilodeau seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

5. Minutes

The approval of the minutes of the December 10, 2015 meeting was tabled until the January 27, 2016 meeting.

6. General Business

The pre-application form submitted to MHC was approved. The grant could provide \$15,000 to survey 105 properties. The Commission shall seek a matching grant from the Community Preservation Committee.

7. Correspondence

A letter was received from Melvin Nagler regarding the intermodal parking facility.

8. Adjournment

Sarah White moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 p.m. Mark Bilodeau seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. The next regular meeting will be scheduled for Wednesday, January 27, 2016.