

Newburyport Historical Commission
City Council Chambers
December 19, 2013
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, Stephen Dodge, Margaret Welch, Malcom Carnwath and Ned McGrath.

3. Minutes

Linda Smiley moved to approve the minutes of the December 5, 2013 meeting as amended. Margaret Welch seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

4. Demolition Applications

BullDawg USA Realty I, LLC c/o Law Offices of Robert L. Brennan, Jr., PC
37 Middle Street

Roofline change

Robert Brennan spoke on behalf of the applicant, Andrew de Bernardo, and said because it is more expensive to restore a historic structure than to construct a new one, the third floor of the 37 Middle Street property must be converted to living space in order for the project to be economically viable. He provided alternative design concepts that would increase the ceiling height of the third floor.

Some residents of neighboring properties spoke in favor of the project, as they would not be able to attend the public hearing. Rowan Hochstedler, 39 Middle Street, said the building is in need of attention and he is not opposed to the proposed roofline change. He said is more concerned that the work takes place than with the aesthetics of the project because a renovated structure would improve his property values. A couple from Liberty Street said the previous owner had not taken care of the property and they are looking forward to it being improved.

Linda Smiley responded that while the Commission members recognize the building must be maintained, the mandate of the Commission is to preserve the historic character of the city. She said she is not opposed to the dormer that has been proposed for the rear of the structure because it would not be visible from Middle Street. However, allowing a long shed dormer to be constructed on the front of the structure would set a precedent and she could not support that part of the proposal.

Margaret Welch said the shed dormer is a modern form and asked if the applicant would consider changing the shape of the dormer. She added that because the street is narrow a dormer that is set back from the roof edge would be less intrusive. Mr. de Bernardo said he would be willing to change the form of the dormer. Ned McGrath suggested he explore investment tax credits, as the Massachusetts Historical Commission would consider the structure to be one that contributes to the National Register District.

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Commission members agreed that while they would not approve it, option three of the four alternatives submitted represents a step in the right direction. In this scenario the dormer has been moved back from the edge of the roof and does not read as a fourth story. Malcolm Carnwath suggested the windows on the upper floor be made smaller, as would be typical of the Federal style. Margaret Welch said the classic solution would be the use of two separate dormers. Linda Smiley said she would prefer the dormer to be of clapboard and brick colored. She suggested that a 12" knee wall be added and the ridge be raised approximately 18". She said this would be acceptable because the ridges on the block are not consistent and the change would not be visible from the street. Classic dormers could be added to the front of the structure to provide light or skylights could be installed. The public hearing will take place as scheduled for January 2, 2014.

5. Adjournment

Linda Smiley moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m. Margaret Welch seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.