

Newburyport Historical Commission
Conference Room
February 10, 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, Stephen Dodge, Ned McGrath and Mark Bilodeau.

3. Demolition Applications

Bradley Kutcher

5 South Pond Street

Full Building Demolition

The applicant did not attend the meeting. Mark Bilodeau moved the structure is historically significant based on its age. Sarah White seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a four to one vote with Stephen Dodge voting against it. A site visit and public hearing will be held.

4. Advisory Review

Cutter's Court Realty Trust

3 Cutters Court

DCOD Advisory Review

Lisa Mead represented the applicant, who has applied to the Zoning Board to modify a pre-existing non-conforming structure. The applicant wishes to remove a rear addition constructed in the 1960s or 1970s and replace it with a two-story addition on the same footprint. The living area would be increased from 948 to 1,376 square feet. The roofline would be raised five feet but would be lower than that of the original structure. The form of the roof would be changed from shed to gable. The applicant does not intend to replace the chimney or retain the existing windows.

Ms. Mead said according to the DCO the Commission is permitted to comment on the significance of the structure and the importance of the structure with regards to the block in which it is located. She said the house appears on maps by 1871 and is listed as a contributory structure on the National Register District Index. No information on the owner of the house is available other than she was an Irish immigrant.

Ms. Mead said the structure is in poor condition and one of the foundation walls is bowing. The applicant would retain the sheathing and framing to the greatest degree possible.

Mark Bilodeau commented that the other houses on the street have chimneys and new houses are often evident due to their lack of chimneys. He said the two-story addition would change the character of the house. He would like to the NHC to recommend that skylights not be permitted.

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Ned McGrath said modest structures are often placed on the National Register because they were built for the workers at the neighboring mills. He suggested the gable returns be retained, which would maintain a sense of proportion between the first and second floor when the roof is raised.

Sarah White said she is concerned about entire structures being demolished through a process of serial replacement. She requested that any features of the house that are being removed, especially the windows, be made available for reuse.

The discussion was opened to comments from the public. Tom Kolterjahn, 64 Federal Street, said the city is losing its modest housing and the proposed changes to the structure would result in the loss of an affordable house. He also said the proposal would change the proportions of the structure, which would result in the loss of its character.

Stephanie Niketic, 93 High Street, said the neighborhood is a modest one that reflects a period of the city's history that is being lost. She said there is still a need for modest homes in the city. The raising of the roofline would change the form of the structure. She added that through serial demolition, a structure could be fully lost without the NHC or ZBA being made aware.

Ned McGrath moved to recommend the demolition of the rear addition and the raising of the roof as described be allowed with the condition the applicant follows the guidelines concerning the gable end returns the NHC will provided in its written opinion. Stephen Dodge seconded the motion. The motion was approved with Sarah White voting against it and Mark Bilodeau abstaining.

5. Minutes

The approval of the minutes of the January 27, 2016 meeting was tabled.

6. General Business

Members of the Belleville Church have requested the NHC write a letter of support for their CPA application. The funds that are being sought would be used for glazing and caulking the windows and painting the structure. Only one estimate for the work was obtained. The NHC members discussed whether preservation funds should be expended on painting, which is a maintenance issue. Malcolm Carnwath stated the building is of historical importance to the community and difficult for the small congregation to maintain on its own.

Sarah White moved to write a letter of support for the window work only that indicates the work must be performed according to the Secretary of Interior Standards and the applicant must seek quotes from more than one source. Ned McGrath seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a four to one vote with Malcolm Carnwath voting against it.

7. Adjournment

Malcolm Carnwath moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 p.m. Mark Bilodeau seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. The next regular meeting will be scheduled for Wednesday, February 24, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.