

Newburyport Historical Commission
City Council Chambers
March 6, 2014
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, Margaret Welch, Ned McGrath, Malcolm Carnwath, Sarah White and Mark Bilodeau. Peter Binette was also in attendance.

3. Demolition Applications

Tyrus Porter

178 Water Street

Roofline Change

Greg Colling said the first floor of this 1730 house is in the flood zone depicted by the new FEMA maps. The owner wishes to raise the house three feet in order to be above the base flood elevation and avoid the high cost of insurance. The foundation would be filled and the mechanicals would be located in an addition to the rear of the structure. A second small addition would be used as a mudroom. Louvers would be installed that would allow water to pass through a crawl space located beneath the house. Mr. Colling said a house located nearby that is of a similar period is situated 18 inches above the street. He said the action could be viewed as a new type of preservation; in the face of sea level rise, the house would be protected rather than carried away by water.

Linda Smiley said she does not recall seeing water in the street in this location. She said the action might be premature because Congress might change the flood zone maps or historic structures might be exempted. Ned McGrath said the measure is a drastic one and the buildings on the street have survived for hundreds of years. Sarah White pointed out the nearby house to which Mr. Colling referred was originally constructed above the level of the street, not raised to that elevation. She said elevating the house would change its relationship to its neighbors.

Linda Smiley moved the structure is historically significant. Mark Bilodeau seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Linda Smiley said because the alteration would set a precedent, she would like to hold a public hearing on the application. The Commission members must consider the impact on both the house and the neighborhood. Ned McGrath said he would like to learn how the issue of sea level rise is being addressed in other historic coastal communities and he would MHC to have the opportunity to offer its perspective. Linda Smiley will contact MHC and members of the storm surge group and inform them of the public hearing.

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February 20, 2014

City of Newburyport Dept. of Public Services, Water Division

Upper Artichoke Dam Gatehouse, Plummer Spring Road

Full Building Demolition

Erica Caserano of AECOM appeared for the applicant and said work is being planned on an existing dam. The valves that control the flow between the Upper and Lower Artichoke Reservoirs are not functioning properly. The 1915 structure that houses the valves is in poor condition. The applicant wishes to build a new inlet structure to convey the water between the two reservoirs. The gatehouse, which is difficult to access and presents security problems, would be demolished.

Linda Smiley moved that the structure is not historically significant. Sarah White seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

4. Public Hearings

None

5. Correspondence

A request was received from Linda Tully of the First Religious Society for a letter of support for a CPA application for work on the steeple on the meeting house. Linda Smiley will write the letter.

6. Minutes

Sarah White moved to approve the minutes of the February 20, 2014 meeting as submitted. Mark Bilodeau seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.