

Newburyport Historical Commission
Joint Meeting with Planning Board
City Hall Auditorium
May 17, 2017
Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Sarah White called a special meeting of the Newburyport Historical Commission to order at 7:11 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were members Sarah White, Malcolm Carnwath and Mark Bilodeau. Stephen Dodge and Ned McGrath were absent.

3. General Business

City of Newburyport

83 Merrimac Street and 90 Pleasant Street

Major Site Plan Review, DOD Special Permit, Special Permit for Use

Andy Port reviewed the latest design for the parking garage. Planning Board Chair Jim McCarthy asked if there is an objection to the demolition of the Fitness Factory building. Sarah White responded the Newburyport Historical Commission has voted that the removal of the structure would not negatively impact the historic assets in the National Register Historic District surrounding it.

Jim McCarthy then asked if the proposed design of the facility would fit in with the historic fabric of the city. The proportions, rhythm of openings and materials of the simulated storefronts have been changed in an attempt to make the facades appear more like the storefronts in the downtown area. The proportions were derived from the two and three story buildings on State Street. The six-over-six windows are larger than others in the downtown but have been scaled to match the size of the wall. A two-over-two window was added for variety but interrupts the rhythm of the other windows and will be changed. A discussion took place on the color of the faux muntins. A darker color would be preferable but in this instance would not be visible. The design team was asked to determine if the size of the garage door opening has been reduced as much as possible and if Hardy Board could be used for elements where painted aluminum is planned. The team will continue to modify the design in response to the comments made and will provide a materials board. Comments made by the public focused on traffic and not the removal of the structure or the design of the facility.

Berkeley Investment, Inc.

260, 268, 270, 274 and 276 Merrimac Street

Discussion of Special Permit Conditions Regarding Preservation Restriction for, and Rehabilitation of, the 1690 House

The City adopted an ordinance that included a condition the 1690 House be preserved and a preservation restriction be placed on it. The decision of the Planning Board was consistent with this ordinance and conditioned the special permit on the requirement that a preservation restriction shall be placed on the structure in perpetuity and that this restriction shall be approved by the Newburyport Historical Commission (NHC) and the Massachusetts Historical

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Commission (MHC). A draft restriction has not yet been sent to the MHC. The usual practice is for the details of the restriction to be worked out at the local level before it is forwarded to the State agency. It is not yet known if the MHC would approve a preservation restriction on the 1690 House. There is a concern that too many features have been removed and it is no longer a historic structure. MHC Preservation Planner Michael Steinitz has asked to receive pre-existing and existing condition photographs before being sent the entirety of the draft restriction for review.

Attorney Lisa Mead represented the applicant. When questioned she said she believes the MHC would approve the preservation restriction provided it has the support of the NHC. Sarah White said the NHC has not voted to accept any proposal submitted by the applicant. The members wish to receive feedback from the MHC before making their decision. However, the members have indicated they are interested in a restriction that would preserve the remaining elements of the structure.

The Planning Board members decided it is premature for them to consider the matter. Neither the MHC nor NHC has indicated it would not approve the preservation restriction. If either group fails to accept the restriction, the special permit would be reopened.

Attorney Mead requested the NHC send a letter of support for the preservation restriction to the MHC. The Commission members agreed to send a letter to the MHC that does not give a formal acceptance of the preservation restriction thus far but would inform the agency they would favor of a restriction being placed on the structure and would wait for MHC feedback before making a decision. As a first step they wish the pre-existing and existing condition photographs to be sent to the MHC.

Sarah White moved to send a letter to the Massachusetts Historical Commission that provides the thoughts of the Newburyport Historical Commission on a preservation restriction for the 1690 House and seeks the advice of the MHC on the matter. Mark Bilodeau seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

The Planning Board members went on to discuss paragraph #11 of the 2015 modification to the special permit, which required a list to be prepared of the interior elements that would not be preserved and would be made available to a third party. While some emails were sent and some items were exchanged, this list was not made. The Planning Board found the applicant did not fulfill the requirement of item #11 of the special permit.

4. Adjournment

Sarah White moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:15 p.m. Malcolm Carnwath seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.