

Newburyport Historical Commission
City Council Chambers
May 2, 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, Tom Kolterjahn, Margaret Welch, Ned McGrath, Sarah White and Bill Todd.

3. Applications

Murray and Lynda Berkowitz c/o Worthen Taylor

2 Woodwell Avenue

Roofline Change

Mickey Berkowitz said he and his wife recently purchased a house that might be one of the five oldest in the city. He sees himself as a steward of the property and he wants to maximize its historic value but he also wants change the roofline to add third-floor sleeping space. He is not interested in constructing an addition because he does not wish to become involved in the zoning process. He said the proposed steeper roof pitch would be historically accurate and he wants to reuse as much of the existing material as possible.

Tom Kolterjahn said the beams would be too short to be reused with the altered roof pitch. He said house is of the first period and has wonderful early bones. The framing in the attic appears to be original. He added the powder post beetle damage is superficial and the beams are solid. He said he is concerned about losing the original roof structure and he thinks there is not much to be gained by the change in pitch.

Sarah White said it is very expensive to change the roof for the small amount gained in usable space. Mr. Berkowitz said he wants to add a bedroom for his children and grandchildren and his builder has told him the roof is not safe. He said he would have to rebuild it even if he did not want change the pitch. His builder also said the beetle damage is significant. Linda Smiley said she is concerned the roofline change would destroy the lines of the house.

Tom Kolterjahn handed out a sketch of a small three-story el that would add significantly more space and would be fitting for the structure. Mr. Berkowitz said he would still need to demolish an unsafe roof and he repeated he does not want to be involved with the zoning board. Sarah White said only a special permit for nonconformities would be required to construct a 15-foot addition in the side yard. Linda Smiley said a side addition would impact the look of the house as much as the change to the roofline. She acknowledged that steeper pitches were found on houses of this period and the existing roof is damaged. She said she believes the owner would take care of the structure and would reuse some of the materials. Tom Kolterjahn said he was persuaded by the applicant's arguments. Ned McGrath suggested that the work begin at the bottom of the structure because the new roof would increase the load on the foundation. Tom Kolterjahn moved to accept the plan as presented. Margaret Welch seconded the motion. The motion was approved with Ned McGrath abstaining.

4. General Business

St. Paul's Church

Bronson de Stadler said the church's building committee is involved in the fifth year of the restoration of St. Anna's Chapel. The work to the chapel's exterior is almost complete. Mr. de Stadler said he believes a spray sealant that has been applied to the exterior wall will stop the leak that has been occurring on the side of the chapel that faces the river. Work will now be focused on the interior of the structure. The heating system is to be replaced and Mr. de Stadler asked if the Commission would allow air conditioning to be added at the same time. He said it is important to keep the chapel at a comfortable temperature because it is to be used for community activities. The Commission members said they would work with the building committee to determine an appropriated location for the system. A solution might be to house the condensers in the attic.

Merrimac Ale House

Bill Harris said the plans for the Ale House have changed greatly since they were last shown to the Commission. He requested that the Commission send a letter to MHC indicating the construction would adversely affect a historic resource and asking that the project be reviewed. He said the applicant incorrectly indicated the structure is not historic. The building is located at the edge of Merrimac Street, an area that has been archaeologically prolific, and a historic tunnel system is located under it. He would like an archaeologist to be on call when the foundation is being excavated or when trenching is being done for energy improvements. A second adverse impact would be to the historic view corridor. The ridgeline of the new section of the restaurant is to run parallel to the river where it would maximize the disruption to the view corridor. He said the proposed structure would cause the city to lose its connectivity to the water and he wants to make the public aware of the importance of the view corridors. Tom Kolterjahn moved to authorize the chair to draft a letter to MCH. Linda Smiley seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Custom House

Tom Kolterjahn provided an update on the work to the Custom House. He said that while it is normally not desirable to remove original material from a historic structure, the pintles that were used to hang the shutters have rusted and stained the granite. In the winter water around the pintles has frozen and as it has expanded it has cracked the granite.

Kelley School

Linda Smiley said the City has increased the amount requested in its CPA application for the Kelley School. An estimated \$375,000 is needed for masonry work, accessibility improvements have been ballparked at an additional \$375,000 and the City is seeking \$35,000 for a feasibility study. Tom Kolterjahn said a high quality historic structure report should be prepared. He added that it would not be necessary to complete all of the work at one time and the City must set priorities. Linda Smiley agreed to review the RFP.

17 Ship Street

Linda Smiley said she and Tom Kolterjahn met with the owners of 17 Ship Street. A one-year demolition delay was imposed on the structure at the January 17, 2013 meeting.

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She said the owners appeared to be interested in learning about the options that would be available to them as an alternative to demolition.

5. Minutes

Tom Kolterjahn moved to approve the minutes of the April 18, 2013 meeting as amended. Margaret Welch seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.