

## **Newburyport Historical Commission**

City Hall Auditorium

May 7, 2015

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, Stephen Dodge, Margaret Welch, Malcolm Carnwath, Mark Bilodeau and Ned McGrath. Assistant Building Inspector Peter Binette was also in attendance.

### **3. Demolition Applications**

#### **Russell Gourley**

8 Alberta Avenue

Full Building Demolition

Sarah White recused herself from the discussion. Russell Gourley said the owners of 6 Alberta Avenue wish to acquire the adjacent property at 8 Alberta Avenue. They are proposing to demolish the existing structure and leave the lot as open space. Mr. Gourley said the house, which was constructed in 1934, is a derelict one in a neighborhood of otherwise nice homes.

Mark Bilodeau moved the structure is not historically significant. He said the neighborhood is not a historic one and the house is in poor condition and not worthy of saving. Stephen Dodge seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

#### **Janine and Richard Minor c/o Blatman, Bobrowski, Mead and Talerman, LLC**

#### **11 Overlook Street**

Full Building Demolition

Lisa Mead represented the applicant, who is proposing to demolish a dwelling that was constructed around 1920 as a shed. The structure is 4.2 feet below base flood elevation. A 1,447 square foot house would be built in its place on pilings.

Sarah White moved the structure is not historically significant. Mark Bilodeau seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

### **4. Advisory Review**

#### **Andrew Sidford, Andrew Sidford Architects**

Atkinson Building, 35-41 Water Street

Informal Discussion

Andy Sidford said in order for his client to open a restaurant in the Atkinson Building the doors must be change to meet the building code. The existing doors would be retained and the trim would be changed to all the doors to swing out. The other sets of doors on the front façade would not be changed. Sarah White will send a letter to Mr. Sidford, Andy Port and Gary Calderwood stating the Historical Commission approves of the change to the doors.

## **5. General Business**

### **Archaeology Review of the Ale House Culvert and Update on the Drainage Culvert Project between Merrimac Street and the Merrimack River**

Jerry Mullins said he would like the brick culvert that runs under the former Davis Electric building and Brown's Wharf to be studied and documented before it is demolished. He asked the Commission to request that an archaeologist be on site during the project. Rumors have circulated that the culvert had been used for smuggling. Sarah White said she has done research on the culvert and has found no evidence to suggest it was used for either slaves or rum running. Andy Port said the size of the culvert in certain sections is not large enough to have accommodated any of these uses and it appears evident the culvert was created for drainage purposes.

The culvert was discovered while work was being done to construct the Ale House. Cracks in the culvert make its continued use unsafe. The DPS has yet to decide if the culvert would be filled or removed. A new drainage line is to be added through the Waterfront Trust parking lot.

There is also a concern about excavation along the river due to the timber that was found at Coombs Wharf. The City does not wish to add to the cost of the project by having an archaeologist on site. The study for Coombs Wharf added approximately \$40,000 to the cost. The Commission members agreed that it would not be necessary for an archaeologist to be on site during the construction. Sarah White said a graduate student be able to take on the project for school credit. She will ask some of her contacts for recommendations and will work with Andy Port to provide some degree of archaeological resources for the site. The members agreed the age of the brick should be determined to provide information of the development of the city. Photographs will be taken of the culvert and its location documented.

### **Parking Garage at Merrimac and Titcomb Streets**

The brick building on the corner of Titcomb and Merrimac Streets would be demolished for the construction of a parking garage. A consultant for the FTA has determined the building would be eligible for listing in the National Register. The Commission members do not agree with the consultant that the building should be individually listed in the Register. They discussed the form their response should take. They did not wish to add to the cost of the project by further engaging the consultant in a discussion on the structure. It was decided a short letter would be sent to the Massachusetts Historical Commission. An addendum would be attached to the letter that would indicate the reasons the Commission members do not believe the structure should be preferentially preserved.

### **Preservation Restriction for 223 High Street**

The Planning Board had previously approved a plan to subdivide 223 High Street. In exchange for the construction of four units at the front of the property, a preservation restriction would be placed on the Queen Anne structure that sits back from High Street. In addition, land at the rear of the property, which abuts the Nock School, would be transferred to the City. The plans were delayed and a new developer has now become involved with the project. The land is not yet within the City's control but the City is ready to move ahead with the construction of new playing fields behind the Nock School.

The Commission had approved of the elements of the preservation restriction when it had been originally proposed but the document must now be updated to meet requirements of the

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State. Andy Port asked the Commission members if they would accept an alternative to the preservation restriction in order that the field project might move forward. A temporary restriction that would expire in 30 years would be put in place. A perpetual restriction would supersede the temporary one upon the completion of the review process. The property owner and Planning Board had originally agreed that a perpetual restriction would be placed on the structure. The Commission members said they would be in favor of whatever measures might be needed to allow the land transfer to proceed, provided they receive written confirmation that a perpetual preservation restriction would be placed on the property at a future date.

### **4 F Street**

Jack Van Loan informed the Commission at the April 16 meeting that he intends to demolish his home at 4 F Street. Peter Binette said the property was deeded as a lot in 1948. This indicates the structure is less than 75 years old and it would not be necessary for the Commission to review a demolition application.

### **6. Minutes**

The approval of the minutes of the April 16 meeting was deferred.

### **7. Adjournment**

Ned McGrath moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:32 p.m. Stephen Dodge seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.