

Newburyport Historical Commission
City Council Chambers
July 17, 2014
Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Linda Smiley called a regular meeting of the Newburyport Historical Commission to order by at 7:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were members Linda Smiley, Malcolm Carnwath, Ned McGrath, Stephen Dodge and Margaret Welch. Peter Binette was also in attendance.

3. Applications

None

4. Advisory Review

Andy Port

Inn Street Fountain

Andy Port described the planned work for the Inn Street fountain and the area surrounding it. The fountain was at the center of the urban renewal effort and its stones came from the central waterfront. It was shut off several years ago due to water quality issues. Storm water from Inn Street mixed with the water from the fountain, making it unsafe for the children that would play in it.

The top priority is to make the fountain operable. A raised gutter system would capture the storm water that flows down Inn Street and would prevent it from mixing with the water in the fountain. The fountain might also be made interactive. Children might use a pedal or rope to influence the flow of water or control lights that would shine on it.

The unevenness of the bricks around the fountain has created a tripping hazard and they would be reset. Interpretive signage placed near the fountain would tell the story of the urban renewal process. New plant materials would be added near the playground and fencing installed to protect it.

Revenue from the Green Street parking lot would be used for the work, along with CPA funds. A State grant might be the source of additional revenue. Mr. Port said after feedback has been received from the public, he would return to the Commission with refined design details. Linda Smiley said she supports the concept that has been presented.

William Mattos

19-21 Pleasant Street

William Mattos said he is a principal in the company that manages Mercantile Place. He wishes to re-point the brick by mechanical means, which is prohibited in the Downtown Overlay District. Mr. Mattos is to appear before the Planning Board on August 6 to seek an exemption. He said a façade grant was received from Preservation Massachusetts in 1983 and that organization has overseen the past re-pointing of the brick by a grinding method. He submitted a

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letter from Preservation Advisory Services indicating the proposed methods are acceptable to the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

Linda Smiley introduced restoration mason Matt Blanchette. Mr. Blanchette showed the Commission members the type of blade he uses with an oscillation tool and said this method is just as efficient as the use of a grinder. He spoke of the importance of the curing process and matching both the type and color of the mortar. He said the process of misting the mortar and covering it with polyethylene is necessary and often neglected. Linda Smiley said the Planning Board would be notified that the Commission is in agreement with the report submitted by Mr. Mattos with the exception of the type of tool specified. The Commission will recommend that blade and oscillating tool described by Mr. Blanchette be used.

5. General Business

First Religious Society Unitarian Universalist Church

26 Pleasant Street

Review of Draft Preservation Restriction

Bill Hennehan described changes to the plans for the work on the church. Originally the paint on only the front façade and steeple was to be removed to bare wood by a shaving method. A decision has been made to remove the paint from the whole building in this way. Mr. Hennehan said only about 100 linear feet of damaged clapboards would be removed. Custom-milled hemlock would be used to replace the pine.

The restoration of one dozen windows had been planned. When the two windows that were expected to be in the worst condition were removed, it was found that the tightening of the transoms and mullions would be sufficient. The same treatment will now be given to all of the windows in the structure. Wood petrifier would be used to treat the end grains.

Due to the amount of water damage was found in the steeple, the front façade is now to be scaffolded. The work should be completed by the end of September.

Linda Smiley said the First Religious Society is doing the work in a careful and loving manner that will add 200 years of life to the building. The Commission received a partial draft of the preservation restriction. A section on the description of the structure that will include a list of the features the Commission wishes to be preserved will be completed within the next ten days.

6. Minutes

Linda Smiley moved to approve the minutes of the March 6 meeting as submitted. Ned McGrath seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Linda Smiley moved to approve the minutes of the April 17 meeting as submitted. Ned McGrath seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

The approval of the minutes of the March 20, April 3 and June 19 meetings was tabled.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.