



CITY OF NEWBURYPORT
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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Demo Plan Review

Meeting Date 14 May, 2020

Property Address 12 Harrison

Applicant: Michael J. Gray

Project description:

Demolish existing rear section(s) and build a new addition on the same footprint. Part of the original gambrel gable elevation will be restored, and the rear elevation will be adjusted accommodate a proposed roof deck.

Plan(s) of Record:

Demolition Application dated 10 December, 2019 (nhc_demo_application.pdf); revised plans as shown in "12_harrison_street_progress_set_200506.pdf" dated 6 May 2020; and photographs in the file "12_harrison_street_photos_04-22-20.pdf" of 22 April, 2020.

Significance of the historic building/structure proposed for (partial) demolition:

This property is listed on the Newburyport District Data Sheet as contributing to the National Historic District, and is described in an accompanying "Form B" compiled by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. In 1980, when that survey was done, the house still maintained much of its characteristic 18th Century appearance.

The relative importance of such historic building/structure to its setting within the District:

This structure is an important contributor to the overall impression on a visitor to Newburyport's South End. This area contains many older structures, but few this old and, until relatively recently, as well preserved. The house is also quite visible from the Newburyport Rail Trail, which directly abuts it to the Northwest.

Recommendation to SPGA:

While the NHC voted to allow the project, it was not a unanimous decision and we had several reservations. The two main justifications for allowing the project are:

- Since the time of the historic survey (1980-81), several poorly designed and executed additions and alterations were made which have seriously degraded the historic

qualities which are seen in the 1980 photograph. The commission agreed that the changes proposed by the applicant would, to some degree, have the effect of reversing some of those changes in a favorable way. The aspect as seen from the Rail Trail in particular would be improved.

- Throughout the review process, the applicant has shown a willingness to work with the commission and has made several modifications which are significant improvements to his original plan. These can be seen on the “progress set” plans.

During the review, the applicant, their legal counsel and their architect agreed to two further changes:

- The vertical corner boards will be reduced in width from 8” to between 5 and 6 inches.
- The applicant agreed to consider, for the old, original part of the structure, using window sash in a 12 over 8 configuration, which is clearly shown in the Form B photograph, with full divided lights. This style is available in the specific Anderson model that the applicant has chosen.

Not discussed during the hearing, but nonetheless recommended by the commission, is that shutters NOT be placed on the old structure as they are not historically appropriate. Also, several members of the commission were opposed to the addition of ANY roof decks, but especially those that are highly visible from public ways.

The Building Commissioner and SPGA (Zoning Board of Appeals) should require that all the agreed-to changes shall be mandatory and enforced.

The NHC does not take a position regarding other zoning decisions for this project, such as the conversion from 2-family to single-family occupancy, but it should be noted that the property, as it looked in 1980, presents the aspect of a single-family dwelling. It is very likely that the unfortunate changes made since 1980 were done to enable a conversion to a 2-family dwelling.

Glenn Richards, Chair

Newburyport Historical Commission

25 May, 2020

Corrected & Revised 27 May 2020.