

28 Olive Street
Newburyport, MA 01950

To: Newburyport Zoning Board of Appeals c/o City Planning Department
From: Ned & Patricia McGrath Delivered by hand
Date: December 14, 2021
Subj: 22-24 Olive Street Agenda item - this date

Chair Ciampitti and Zoning Board of Appeals Members:

Please consider the following regarding the application for a Special Permit for Non-Conformities (undated) and the Zoning Determination dated 6/30/21 submitted on behalf of applicant dba 22-24 Olive Street LLC.

We do not support the applicant's desire to replace 20th century one story kitchen addition(s) to this two story antique brick two family duplex running along Olive Street - as described as 22-24 Olive Street. We could possibly support the replacement of said (demolished) additions with architecturally and historically appropriate two story ones (facade materials, windows, roof lines, etc.) contiguous with the existing rear walls of the 22 and 24 Olive Street units.

Examples of large 18th and 19th century historic development as referenced in an Historical Commission meeting cannot serve as development standards in the 21st century. One reference is the large "row house" at 29-35 Olive Street built in the 19th century for employees at then neighboring factories. The "row house" occupies a considerable amount of space across the street from 22-24 Olive Street.

Olive and Russia Streets are located in the Demolition Control Overlay District and are zoned R2. The applicant's attorney notes that: "The R2 for a two family requires 15,000 square feet and the property includes 10,758 ...".

Two uninhabitable structures on the two properties include a 384 square foot "shed frame" and a 60 square foot "greenhouse RS" (Vision 2021 assessment). The combined total of 444 square feet of lot coverage for these uninhabitable structures is barely a speck in terms of the size of the existing residences and the proposed 2 story addition. Requesting a variance for an "addition of more than 500 square feet" sounds reasonable by comparison. However, the proposed two story brick addition and connector structure are considerably larger than 500 square feet. Functionally, the extant 20th century additions to 22 and 24 Olive Street served two generations of the previous owner's family, and could have been said to be appropriate to the home.

We assume that the present kitchen (described in the 2021 Vision assessment as "modern", and which is proposed for demolition) will be replaced. Perhaps a kitchen is planned for the new addition (as well). We reflect upon the possible scenario where these two (2) properties on two (2) plots of land connected by a "hyphen" (connector) to one large addition might be converted to three (3) condominiums or perhaps four (4) and based upon a favorable ZBA decision. We shudder to think how further detrimental this would be to an already dense and historical neighborhood.

We are concerned as to why the present request for extra parking spaces has been made. The proposed addition(s) is/are to become part of the original two-family dwelling that already presents with two driveways, one serving #22 on Olive Street and the other serving #24 on Russia Street. We have not seen permitted driveway increases with other home additions in the area.

Any increased parking needs based on this proposed development would prove detrimental to the neighborhood. Historically, Olive Street was referred to as Olive Lane, and its narrow course from Merrimack Street to Congress Street, we suspect, remains unchanged. Russia Street is just as narrow.

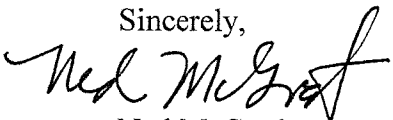
The fire hydrant diagonally across from 22-24 Olive Street, and close to the entrance to Russia Street is frequently blocked by parked vehicles. During hydrant flushing, neighbors have concerns that the hydrant will not be seen and flushed for fire safety. Any additional on street parking demands will, no doubt, be detrimental to the neighborhood. We shudder to think that development with additional cars on these narrow streets will mirror parking / driving issues such as those now being experienced on Crow Lane (off Low Street) resultant from well-intentioned efforts to add affordable housing and meet other housing needs.

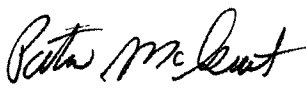
The proposed streetscape on Russia Street from the Congress Street perspective detracts from the view of the historic landscape. 22-24 Olive Street has two very large back yards. Preservation of historic landscapes with no infill is promoted not only by the City of Newburyport but also by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Massachusetts Historical Commission, and Historic New England.

In summary: In our estimation the proposed addition(s) at 22-24 Olive Street would be substantially more detrimental to our neighborhood than the existing structure. We oppose the development plan as presented.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,


Ned McGrath


Patricia McGrath