



CITY OF NEWBURYPORT
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
60 PLEASANT STREET • P.O. BOX 550
NEWBURYPORT, MA 01950
(978) 465-4400
WWW.CITYOFNEWBURYPORT.COM

DCOD Draft Historical Report

Meeting Date	13 May, 2021
Property Address	276 High St.
Applicant	Christopher and Holly Ragusa c/o Lisa Mead, MTC
Project description	Demolish non-original portions of a “contributing” carriage house or “barn,” restore the remaining original section and relocate it on the same property/lot.
Plan(s) of Record:	Submitted files: “276_high_st_dcod_hc_report_request_0.pdf” and “276_high_street_hc_presentation.pdf”

Key findings:

- The NHC does not oppose the removal of the later, poorly constructed sections; and it supports the plan to restore the original timber framed structure;
- The original structure should NOT be moved back to the rear of the lot as proposed, and moved no more than 1-2 feet back from its current location if at all.
- In keeping with the Secretary's standards, the restoration of the original barn should keep as much of its original design as possible and not rebuilt to a new design.

Significance of the historic building/structure proposed for demolition:

The subject structure is a “carriage house” or “barn” which is a highly visible and prominent companion to a Greek Revival style residence on High Street. It sits at the end of a drive and in close proximity to the residence, as carriage houses – those that remain – do throughout Newburyport (ref. 24 Broad St. and 195 High St.). The fact that the structure is specifically listed as “contributory” on our District Data Sheets is unusual and, we think, significant. One could even suggest it is more “contributory” than the residence, because similar examples are so rare. The NHC feels strongly that the few meaningful “accessory structures” that remain are very important to preserve.

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

“Accessory structures” such as this are important evidence of our city’s social and economic history, and we don’t have many of them left. The “setting” being High Street, home to many of the city’s best and most cherished examples of historical structures, means that we must be very mindful of the visibility and importance of this structure, and quite careful about its fate.

In Boston, where many such ancillary buildings have been lost, the Boston Preservation Alliance laments that Boston has, as a result, lost “the history of travel, neighborhood development, and everyday life that went with them, along with their architectural charm.” Shall we not try our best to avoid a similar fate?

Recommendations to SPGA:

- The NHC does not oppose the removal of the later, poorly constructed sections.
- The NHC supports the restoration of the original timber framed structure *in keeping with the Secretary's standards*. That is, it should be repaired and restored keeping as much of its original design as possible and not be rebuilt to a new design.
- the original structure (the section proposed for restoration) should NOT be moved back to the rear of the lot as proposed, and might be moved no more than 1-2 feet back from its current location if moved at all.

Elaboration

The board feels strongly that the historical relationship between the barn and the residence should be maintained. The two structures are closely related and tell a story about life in Newburyport in the latter 19th century. The predominant view of the property, which is from High Street, clearly shows the two structures in their natural relationship (see image below). Moving the barn to the proposed location will destroy this relationship, and thereby lose historical context for both structures. The DCOD ordinance, consistent with the Secretary’s guidance, discourages moving historic structures from their original location. Since the section of the barn to be removed is to the right (SE side), nearer the lot line, the applicant might consider locating the SE side of the restored barn on that ‘footprint.’



The proposed architectural design for the restored barn departs significantly from the original structure, whose design is straightforward and not ornamental. In contrast, the proposed

design which is much more elaborate. The simple existing historic entry door and the hayloft door should be retained, along with the curved corners of the barn doors. The metal roofs should be eliminated from the design as having a detrimental impact on the historic structure.

These changes (location and design) are not appropriate, and are contrary to both the Secretary's Standards and the DCOD ordinance. The Secretary recommends against "Removing or relocating buildings ... thereby destroying the historic relationship between buildings and the landscape" and against "substantially changing buildings and their features ... which are important in defining the overall historic character of the property so that as a result the character is diminished." The DCOD ordinance specifically includes the moving of a structure, either within a lot or to another lot, as "demolition" subject to a DCOD Special Permit.

Respectfully submitted,

Glenn Richards, Chair, Newburyport Historical Commission

Patricia Peknik, Vice-Chair, Newburyport Historical Commission