



CITY OF NEWBURYPORT
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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DOD Historical Report

Meeting Date 23 April, 2020

Property Address 31-35 Market Square, Unit 1

Applicant John A. Santaniello

Project description Replace existing ground floor (in restaurant area) windows with new windows within existing openings but with new configuration and operation.

Plan(s) of Record:

Please refer to plans submitted 27 March and appearing on the posted agenda for the NHC meeting of 23 April, including the "Revised plans (2/26/20)," "4 lite option (3/5/20);" "6 lite option (3/5/20);" "Revised plans (3/10/20)" and "Muntin bar detail (3/10/20)" documents.

Significance of the historic building/structure proposed for demolition:

The Massachusetts Historical Commission has provided extensive background information on the "Form B" for this address, so I will not repeat that here. I will, however, point out what may, or should be, obvious: Market Square is one of the key focal points of historic Newburyport – perhaps its most important historic locale. Therefore, it is appropriate that we consider any proposed changes to this area with great care to ensure that we protect this irreplaceable cultural resource.

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

31-35 Market Square is an integral part of the "West Row," one of the prominent, major downtown structures built after the devastating fire of 1811, and as such it is critical to the historic architectural integrity of the square.

Recommendation to SPGA (Planning Board):

There have been several discussions among the board, individual board members and the applicant, both within meetings of the Historical Commission and in less formal settings. At this point, we have the following observations and recommendations:

As to installing operable windows (that is, windows capable of being opened), it is most important that the functionality (the capability to be opened) does **not** necessitate structural

forms that adversely impact the character of the building, and by extension, Market Square. Our specific concern is that the stiles, rails and muntins dividing the lights will likely be uncharacteristically wide to an unacceptable degree.

The problem is this: the present configuration consists of groups of 9 or 12 lights (or panes) separated only by narrow muntins, each about 1.25" wide. But **operable** windows must be built as multiple separate units within the same overall window opening. Each individual, movable unit or sash will require vertical stiles on both sides, and horizontal rails top and bottom, to provide structural support. Stiles are wider than muntins, and where two stiles meet, this extra width is doubled. The result may be seen on the submitted plans, as revised 10 March, on page A2.02, which shows existing and proposed elevations. (See also *Illustration 1*.) The submitted "Muntin bar detail (3/10/20)" document indicates that the stiles are to be 3 inches wide, and muntins to be 1-15/16 inches (and too shallow or flat as well). A window with those specifications would have solid vertical elements over 6 inches wide where before there was only a muntin of about 1.25." We feel that this is not acceptable.

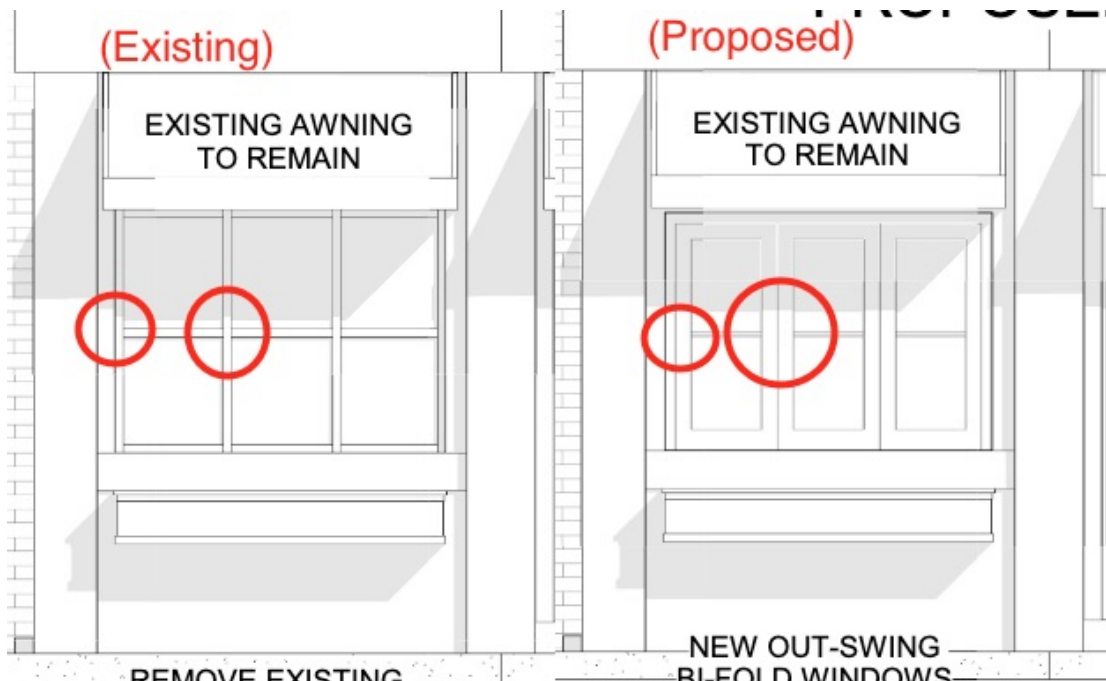


Illustration 1: Excerpt from plan page A2.02, with differences highlighted.

On the contrary, we would expect that any new windows shall have dimensions of the lights, stiles, rails and muntins that are similar to the current configuration, which in turn appears to be very similar to the configuration shown in the photograph on the Form B. We are highly skeptical that it is possible to build wooden framed windows that meet those requirements. It might be possible to achieve it by using metal as the framing material, since it is stronger than wood so it need not be so wide. The metal could also be given a profile and color such that it is very similar to a wood product in appearance, and therefore compatible with the Market Square environment. Chrome or stainless steel would be very inappropriate, but painted steel,

cast iron, etc. would be OK. (Although I expect cast iron would be prohibitively expensive.) In any event, the muntins should be about 1.25 inches, as they are now, or at most not more than 1.5 inches wide.

I think the commission feels that installing windows that are operable, while not really accurate in the context of a historic storefront, is permissible if, and only if, the windows are (when closed) a close match in appearance to existing and/or historical precedent. It may be that, given the current use of the structure, windows that open are desirable from a contemporary urban planning point of view; that is a judgement I leave to the Planning Board and Planning Director.

The Planning board will also need to consider the likelihood that windows opening in the manner proposed will almost certainly project beyond the plane of the exterior wall. The NHC did not address the impact that may or may not have on Market Square pedestrian traffic.

Respectfully submitted,
Glenn Richards, chair.