

Newburyport Historical Commission

January 12, 2023

Online Meeting

Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Glenn Richards called an online meeting of the Newburyport Historical Commission to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were members Glenn Richards, Joe Morgan, Biff Bouse, Christopher Fay, Andrew Bernhardt and Marc Cendron (joined at 7:13). Also in attendance were Planner Katelyn Sullivan and note taker Gretchen Joy.

3. Demolition Delay Applications

5 Gloria Street

Lisa Mead represented the applicant, who is proposing to construct a two-story addition to a single-family home on Plum Island. The structure was built as a cottage around 1900. It has no Form B and is not listed on the district data sheets. Attorney Mead said many changes have been made to the structure. It was remodeled in 1996 and it is far from its original form. There are no remaining period details.

Christopher Fay moved the structure is historically significant. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion failed by a 0-5 vote (Glenn Richards, no; Biff Bouse, no; Joe Morgan, no; Marc Cendron, absent; Andrew Bernhardt, no; Christopher Fay, no).

4. Requests for Letter of Support for CPA Funding

a) Newburyport Custom House Masonry Repair Portico Roof

Greg Colling described the project to repair the masonry on two facades of the Custom House. In 2005, the east and north sides were repointed. The work was not overseen by a preservation consultant and the mortar mix was incorrect. The south and west facades were repointed correctly in 2013. The two remaining façades will be repointed with Portland cement and lime mortar. Other work would include the spot repair of individual granite stones that have cracked and the repair of the groin vault in the basement. The work is being undertaken to prevent water and water vapor from entering the building.

The meeting was opened to comments from the public. Chris Silva said the work would help to preserve the integrity of the exterior of the historic structure.

Biff Bouse moved to provide a letter of support for the CPA application. He said the building is important to the City. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Marc Cendron, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Christopher Fay, yes).

b) Downtown Lighting Project

Katelyn Sullivan said the DPS and Mayor's Office have submitted an application seeking \$115,957 to replace 290 street light toppers with energy efficient light fixtures. The new fixtures will mimic the historic form of the existing lights.

Joe Morgan said the Commission should determine if the application is eligible for CPA funds. The existing fixtures date from the urban renewal period of the city's history. According to the criteria, the funds must be used for the acquisition, rehabilitation, preservation or restoration of a historic resource. He said that while the project is laudable, the existing fixtures are not historic and the application would not be eligible for CPA funding. Glenn Richards said he will draft a letter stating the replacement lamps would not have an adverse impact on the downtown, provided the LED lighting has a warm temperature that resembles that of a gaslight.

c) Atkinson Common Rock Tower

Ted Boretti, Chair of Parks Commission, described the application for CPA funds for the first phase of the project to restore the rock tower at Atkinson Common. He said the tower is unique and a significant feature of the park. There is currently no plaque or signage noting that 70 men were hired in 1935 by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration to construct the tower.

Today the tower is in a state of decline. The stairs are rotting, the gates are welded shut and the windows are barricaded. The Belleville Improvement Society has been raising funds for the restoration of the tower for many years.

Biff Bouse said the project is deserving of CPA funding. Christopher Fay said the tower should be restored. It contributes to the message that Newburyport was an industrial city that survived the Depression. Joe Morgan commented that the second phase should be done first. In the second phase of the work, a roof enclosure will be installed over the stairs to prevent the penetration of water and snow.

Christopher Fay moved to provide a letter of support for the CPA application. Biff Bouse seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Marc Cendron, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Christopher Fay, yes).

d) City Hall Renovation Feasibility Study

Katelyn Sullivan said that City Hall, which was built in 1851, is in need of interior modifications. The building is not welcoming to the public, the office space is not effectively organized, many offices have no natural light and the systems should be upgraded. The Mayor's Office is seeking \$47,000 in CPA funds to hire a consultant to provide a preliminary analysis, a schematic design, a phasing strategy and cost estimates. NHC approval would be needed for the work, as a preservation restriction has been placed on the structure that includes both its historic interior and exterior features.

Joe Morgan said that while the building is a historic resource, the CPC must decide if the applicant meets the criteria for funding. The project involves space planning for adapting the historic structure to an ongoing contemporary use. Marc Cendron agreed that this is a CPC matter. He said that no design work has been proposed on which the NHC would provide an opinion.

Glenn Richards will draft a letter to Kim Richards and Mayor Reardon stating the NHC does not object to feasibility study but it must be remembered that any changes to the interior of the structure would require NHC review and approval.

5. Correspondence

A letter from MHC regarding the installation of an antenna at 37 1/2 Forrester Street was received and filed.

6. Updates from the Chair

Glenn Richards announced that elections will take place at the next meeting for the positions of Chair and Vice Chair.

7. Minutes

Glenn Richards moved to approve the minutes of the December 22 meeting. Biff Bouse seconded the motion. The motion passed by a 4-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Marc Cendron, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, abstain; Christopher Fay, abstain).

8. Adjournment

Christopher Fay moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 p.m. Marc Cendron seconded the motion. The motion was approved.