

Newburyport Historical Commission

January 25, 2024

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 Biff Bouse, Joe Morgan, Glenn Richards, Christopher Fay, Andrew Bernhardt and Chris Sawtelle and alternate members Allen Marquis and Ed Noymer. Marc Cendron was absent. Also in attendance were Planning Director Andy Port, Planner Katelyn Sullivan and note taker Gretchen Joy.

3. Demolition Delay Applications

42 Moulton Street

Chris Sawtelle recused himself from the matter. Lisa Mead represented the applicant, who is proposing to change the roofline of a bungalow style house that was constructed around 1940. The property is not listed on the District Data Sheets and there is no Form B. A two-story addition was constructed at the rear of the structure in 2003.

Biff Bouse said the property is located in a neighborhood that was once called Moultonville. His research showed the structure was constructed in 1934 or 1935. He does not think the rear addition destroys the character of the front bungalow-style part of the house.

Glenn Richards said there is a lot of variety in the neighborhood and there has been much change. Some remnants remain of the character the neighborhood once had. Joe Morgan said he does not find that the structure has much architectural interest.

Christopher Fay said the houses on either side of this structure have not been touched. The three houses in a row are appealing. He can visualize the house as it was when it was constructed and the people for whom it was built. He is concerned that the approval of the application could lead to a change being made to the other structures that are still in their original form. Attorney Mead said each decision is taken on its own and is not binding on other decisions. Allen Marquis agreed that each application should be taken individually.

Biff Bouse said the structure is historically significant. The addition would not have been allowed if the Demolition Delay ordinance had been in place in 2003. If the Commission determines the house is not worthy of preservation, it would be changed to the point that it would no longer have any architectural character. He said it is the role of the Commission to protect the architecture that is an important part of the city's history.

Andrew Bernhardt said the house would be considered historically significant if only its front portion were visible. Glenn Richards said the proposal would not have a negative impact on the neighborhood.

Andrew Bernhardt moved the structure is historically significant. Biff Bouse seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-1 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff

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Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Chris Sawtelle, abstain; Christopher Fay, yes; Allen Marquis, yes; Ed Noymer, no).

Andrew Bernhardt moved the structure is historically significant and considered for preservation. Biff Bouse seconded the motion. The motion failed by a 3-4 vote (Glenn Richards, no; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, no; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Chris Sawtelle, abstain; Christopher Fay, yes; Allen Marquis, no; Ed Noymer, no).

4. Updates from the Chair

Glenn Richards said the Ordinance is not clear on the amount of weight that should be given to the impact a proposal would have on the neighborhood. He would like to contact City Council members for their input. Andy Port said sending a memo to the City Council would be the appropriate step. The Planning and Development Committee could be asked for review of the language of Ordinance and Regulations. This would be preferable to an informal discussion with the current Councilors. The Ordinance was written by others and the matter has not been discussed recently.

Joe Morgan said the World War II era properties are marginal. They do not have much architectural detail and it is not possible to put them in a stylistic category. They are lacking the District Data Sheets that would provide the Commission members with the historical background necessary to make decisions on these properties. The documentation would provide them with guidance. Andy Port said grants could be used for this purpose, but the Planning Office lacks the staff to monitor a contractor. Glenn Richards, Joe Morgan, Christopher Fay and Chris Sawtelle expressed interest in meeting to address the matter.

5. Minutes

Christopher Fay moved to approve the minutes of the January 11 meeting. Andrew Bernhardt seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Glenn Richards, abstain; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, abstain; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Chris Sawtelle, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Allen Marquis, yes; Ed Noymer, abstain).

6. Adjournment

Joe Morgan moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m. Chris Sawtelle seconded the motion. The motion was approved.