

## **Newburyport Historical Commission**

February 9, 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 and Christopher Fay. Andrew Bernhardt and Marc Cendron were absent. Also in attendance were Planner Katelyn Sullivan and note taker Gretchen Joy.

### **3. Demolition Delay Applications**

#### **7 Norman Avenue**

The applicant requested a determination on the historical significance of the structure. No public hearing has been scheduled at this time. Braden Monaco said he is seeking approval for the full demolition of a single-story that was constructed in 1947. He said the structure has no foundation and is in poor condition. The siding, doors and windows are vinyl. He said nothing in the home is salvageable and the layout would not meet the needs of a modern family. It would not be possible to add a second story to the structure due to the lack of a foundation.

Biff Bouse provided the history of the neighborhood. He said the neighborhood is comprised of mid-century Cape-style homes that were constructed for veterans returning from World War II. Many houses of this type were mass produced and transported to the building site.

Christopher Fay said the neighborhood is interesting from a historical perspective. He is concerned that the demolition of the structure would set a precedent that would lead to the removal of other houses in the neighborhood. He said the vinyl siding is not a concern, as it could be removed. The needs of the modern family are not a consideration for the Commission, which is charged with preserving history. It is not only Federal-style homes or those that were owned by sea captains that should be preserved. The houses in this neighborhood were built for returning GIs and they are a part of the city's history.

Glenn Richards said that if the Commission does not find that the structure is historically significant, it would not be able to comment on the replacement structure. A finding that the structure is historically significant would allow the Commission to review the plans for the replacement structure within the context of the neighborhood. The form and size of the existing structure are indicative of its time and he is concerned about preserving the scale of the neighborhood.

Joe Morgan said neither the building nor the streetscape has anything to recommend itself for historic preservation. It is a very small house and its only prominent feature is the two car garage.

Christopher Fay said people across the country grew up in houses like this and they have a historical significance. Some of the larger-scale houses in the neighborhood were modified before the Commission had purview over them.

Biff Bouse said the structure is simple and not necessarily appealing, but it is from an important period in the history of architecture.

Glenn Richards said the quality of the construction of the house does not make it viable and it is not currently marketable. He asked if the Commission members agree that the house should be replaced but in a way that preserves the neighborhood context and does not damage the streetscape. He reminded them that four affirmative votes are needed for a motion to pass.

Joe Morgan moved that the structure is historically significant. Biff Bouse seconded the motion. The motion failed by a 2-2 vote (Glenn Richards, no; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, no; Christopher Fay, yes).

Joe Morgan said more houses of this period will be coming under the purview of the Commission. He said that some of these post-war houses might merit Form B documentation. This would help the Commission understand the reason they should be preserved. Glenn Richards said the Commission has funding for a consultant to generate these forms.

#### **4. Election**

Christopher Fay moved to nominate Glenn Richards for the position of Chair for one year. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes).

#### **5. Correspondence**

The Commission was copied on a letter from MHC commenting on the draft preservation restriction for 344 Merrimac Street. One requirement was that the agreement that the chimney would be preserved from the basement up must be included in the body of the restriction.

#### **6. Updates from the Chair**

Glenn Richards said the draft preservation restriction for 98 High Street must be amended to include the preservation of the interior features.

#### **7. Minutes**

Biff Bouse moved to approve the minutes of the January 26 meeting. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes).

#### **8. Adjournment**

Christopher Fay moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved.