

Newburyport Historical Commission

March 23, 2023

Online Meeting

Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Glenn Richards called an online meeting of the Newburyport Historical Commission to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. Roll Call

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

3. Demolition Delay Applications

a) 9 Chapel Street

John Sava presented the plans to construct an addition to a single-family home. The original two-story Italianate structure was built in 1870. A major alteration took place in 1970, when the front door was removed and the main entrance was relocated to the driveway side of the structure. The second-story windows were made shorter, a bay window was added and vinyl siding was installed.

Joe Morgan moved that the structure is historically significant. Biff Bouse seconded the motion. The motion passed by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Chris Sawtelle, yes).

Glenn Richards said the Commission may determine a structure is not preferably preserved if it has been so significantly altered that it no longer contributes to the streetscape. Biff Bouse said the removal of the front entrance was disruptive to the original design and the details have been removed, but the scale of the structure is still present and it is worth preserving. Andrew Bernhardt said he does not think the structure is worthy of being preserved.

Joe Morgan moved the structure is historically significant and preferably preserved. Chris Sawtelle seconded the motion. The motion passed by a 5-1 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, no; Christopher Fay, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Chris Sawtelle, yes).

Mr. Sava said larger, two-over-one double-hung windows would be installed in a symmetrical manner on the Chapel Street façade so as to restore the balance that was lost when the front door was removed. The bay window would be removed. The vinyl would be replaced with cementitious siding. A two-car garage with a master suite above it would be constructed and attached to the main structure with a two-story connector. The roof peaks of the garage and connector would be lower than that of the original house. French doors leading to a patio would be added to the rear of the structure. A standing seam metal roof would be used on the addition.

Bill Bouse said the side-hall style was not intended to be symmetrical. The plans would give the structure the feel of a suburban house, and it would no longer be the modest workers' home that it was. The new structure would be large and the garage would be prevalent. The past of the original house is being ignored.

Joe Morgan said the structure has been too altered to be considered worthy of preservation. There are no remaining characteristic details and there is no ornamentation for the Commission to discuss preserving.

Andrew Bernhardt said the structure is not historical and the proposal would be an improvement over the existing conditions.

Chris Sawtelle said there are only a certain number of houses from this period in the city and they should be considered for preservation. However, this structure has been altered and has no remaining detail. He approves of the plans and thinks it is important that the historic structure would be retained.

Christopher Fay said the most prominent feature in the new plans is the two car garage. He said it is not the role of the Commission to be concerned with the conveniences of the modern family. The existing house would be lost to the 21st century updates. He said it was a working person's house and the lack of detail makes it interesting.

Glenn Richards said the structure in the rendering of the proposal looks like many houses in the neighborhood today and the original part of the structure is visible.

Christopher Fay moved that the structure is preferably preserved. Biff Bouse seconded the motion. The motion passed by a 4-2 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, no; Christopher Fay, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, no; Chris Sawtelle, yes).

Andrew Bernhardt moved to approve the plans as presented and lift the Demolition Delay. Chris Sawtelle seconded the motion. The motion passed by a 4-2 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, no; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, no; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Chris Sawtelle, yes).

b) 31 Overlook Street

Ben Taylor represented the applicant. He said there is no Form B for the structure, which was built in 1945, and it is not listed on the District Data Sheets. The building has many structural deficiencies and its members do not meet building codes. The exterior sheathing must be replaced, along with the windows and most of the flooring. The applicant is proposing to demolish the structure and replace it with a house on pilings that would meet FEMA standards.

Biff Bouse moved that the structure is historically significant. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion failed by a 2-4 vote (Glenn Richards, no; Biff Bouse, no; Joe Morgan, no; Christopher Fay, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Chris Sawtelle, no).

4. General Business

a) Review of Proposed Preservation Restriction

64 Federal Street

The owners of the property, Tom and Linda Kolterjahn, wish to place a perpetual preservation restriction on the interior and exterior of the Georgian-era Daniel Plumer House. City Council must approve the restriction, which would be held by Historic New England.

Dylan Peacock of Historic New England said the organization has a preservation easement program that protects privately owned historic homes. The property at 64

Federal Street has elements that can be dated to the 1730s. The existing structure was built or added to in 1771. Mr. Peacock reviewed the features that would be protected. The restriction would be flexible for the kitchen, with the exception of the fireplace and associated paneling, attic, bathrooms and rear ell. He asked that the Historical Commission recommend the approval of the restriction to the Mayor and City Council. Approval at both the State and local level is needed in order for the restriction to be perpetually binding. The MHC has reviewed the draft restriction and given it preliminary approval.

The meeting was opened to comments from the public. Stephanie Niketic, 93 High Street, said the restriction is a gift to the public. The house has been lovingly restored to be preserved for future generations.

Andrew Bernhardt moved to recommend to City Council the placement of a perpetual preservation restriction on the Daniel Plumer House at 64 Federal Street. Biff Bouse seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Chris Sawtelle, yes).

**b) Request for Minor Modification of Approved Demolition Plan
182 Merrimac Street**

Chris Crump said it has been found that some of the post and beam framing has been compromised. Some main structural beams have been cut. The beams around the perimeter eave line have dry rot and insect damage and must be replaced. The roof would be removed to make the building structurally sound. The ridge of the new roof could be up to 12 taller than the existing roof and could have a slightly different pitch.

Joe Morgan said the applicant should return to the Commission after the design team has a clear idea of the way in which the problem would be solved. The existing profile of the roof should be retained if possible. Mr. Crump said he has consulted with a structural engineer. The structure is compromised and salvaging the existing materials might not be the best long-term solution. The new roof system would be safer than the existing. The materials used would determine the height, and these might change based on the proposal that is received.

Biff Bouse moved to approve the proposal to repair/replace the roof of the structure to conform with the original design with the sole exception of the ridge height which may be a maximum of 12 inches higher with the understanding the roof pitch may change slightly and the applicant shall submit the final plans to the Office of Planning and Development as soon as the structural plan is determined. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Chris Sawtelle, yes).

c) Boards and Commissions Information Session

Glenn Richards, Chris Sawtelle, Andrew Bernhardt and Biff Bouse will represent the Historical Commission at an informational session on City Boards for citizens to be held on May 4.

5. Correspondence

None

6. Updates from the Chair

Glenn Richards said he is following up on the draft preservation restrictions for 98 High Street and 344 Merrimac Street. He introduced new member Chris Sawtelle, who moved to the city in 1973 and was recommended by Malcolm Carnwath.

7. Minutes

Glenn Richards moved to approve the minutes of the February 9 meeting. Biff Bouse seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, abstain; Chris Sawtelle, abstain).

8. Adjournment

Biff Bouse moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:08 p.m. Christopher Fay seconded the motion. The motion was approved.