

## **Newburyport Historical Commission**

April 8, 2021  
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, Peter McNamee, Joe Morgan, Christopher Fay and Marc Cendron. Patricia Peknik and Malcolm Carnwath were absent. Also in attendance were Planning Director Andy Port, Planner Katelyn Sullivan and note taker Gretchen Joy.

### **3. Demolition Delay Historical Significance Determination**

#### **a) 29 Harding Avenue**

A site visit took place on March 29. Glenn Richards said it is likely the structure had been a Plum Island cottage. It does not appear it was intended to be a permanent structure. A part of the structure might date from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which would make it historically significant. The garage is on a concrete slab and is relatively new.

Christopher Fay said the building is in poor condition and structurally deficient. It would not be worthwhile to attempt to retain it on another part of the site. Folk art was found on the rear wall, which Glenn Richards will photograph.

The meeting was opened to comments from the public. Tom Kolterjahn, 64 Federal Street, said the 1930s kitchen could be salvageable. He was not able to give the structure a definitive date, but the framing leads him to believe it was built between the 1870s and the 1930s. He does not think it is worth saving. The middle ridge is compromised and it would likely not survive a move.

Joe Morgan moved the structure is historically significant but not considered for preservation. Christopher Fay seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Marc Cendron, yes).

#### **b) 14 Highland Avenue**

Lisa Mead and Aileen Graf represented the applicant, who is proposing to remove a portion of the structure and replace it with a two-and-a-half-story addition. The house was constructed around 1939 and was expanded over time. A two-story addition was constructed at its rear and dormers were added to its left side. Ms. Mead said the original style of the house is not clear. Its ridge runs perpendicular to the street, while the ridges of other houses on this side of street are parallel to the street. She said the stairs to the second floor in the original structure are inadequate. The ceiling on the second floor is six feet at its highest point and the top of the dormer is at five feet. The transition between the original house and the addition is awkward. The height of the first-floor ceiling in the addition is lower than that of the original structure.

The meeting was opened to comments from the public. Erica and Jake Vartabedian, 12 Highland Avenue, said the proposal is out of scale with the houses on the

street. The houses on the north side of the street are of the bungalow style and form an intact streetscape. The existing front façade of 14 Highland Avenue blends with the other houses and this continuity is important. The proposed house does not reference the bungalow style. It would overwhelm the other structures and negatively impact the streetscape.

Wade Amos, 6 Highland Avenue, said the proposal would disrupt the historic character of the neighborhood and he is concerned about its height.

Dan Lambert, 2 Highland Avenue, said a pattern of architecture exists on the street. The neighborhood is one of working class homes. Together they form a streetscape. The meeting was closed to comments from the public.

Christopher Fay said the structure should be preferably preserved. He said the houses on the street are unique and contribute to the character of the neighborhood.

Joe Morgan said that the comments of the abutters are valid. According to the ordinance, the Commission may designate a structure as historically significant by itself or within the context of a group of buildings. He said when considering the proposed changes, the Commissioners should be aware of the streetscape.

Christopher Fay moved the structure is historically significant and considered for preservation. Peter McNamee seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Marc Cendron, yes).

The neighbors submitted several letters written in opposition to the proposal. Ms. Mead said the buyers of the property wish the address these concerns and intend to alter the plans. She asked for comments from the Commission that might guide the change to the plans and requested a continuance.

Christopher Fay said the original house would be subsumed by the new construction and would be lost. He said the existing house contributes to the character of neighborhood and the proposed design would not be consistent with the neighborhood.

Joe Morgan said the proposed changes are excessive relative to the original structure. He said the applicant should be able to gain livable space without increasing the height of the structure to 2.5 stories. He said the scale of the proposal should be reduced and a compromise should be reached.

Glenn Richards said the proposed structure would loom over the other houses in the neighborhood. He requested that the applicant label the heights of the existing and proposed structures with relation to the grade rather than sea level. He asked if a structural engineer has determined that the existing structure would be able to handle the increased load. Aileen Graf said the structure on the first floor is sound. The top level of the original structure might be unstable.

Joe Morgan moved to continue the public hearing to the April 22 meeting. Mark Cendron seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Marc Cendron, yes).

**c) 22-24 Auburn Street**

Landers Symes said the structure was built in 1938 and is in poor condition. Christopher Fay moved the structure is not historically significant. Peter McNamee seconded the

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motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Marc Cendron, yes).

**4. Approval of Minutes**

Peter McNamee moved to approve the minutes of the March 25, 2021, meeting. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Marc Cendron, yes).

**5. Adjournment**

Joe Morgan moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:28 p.m. Peter McNamee seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Marc Cendron, yes).