

## **Newburyport Historical Commission**

April 14, 2022  
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 Joe Morgan, Glenn Richards, Peter McNamee, Christopher Fay, Marc Cendron, Andrew Bernhardt and Malcolm Carnwath. Also in attendance were Planner Katelyn Sullivan and note taker Gretchen Joy.

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

#### **257-259 Water Street**

Lisa Mead and Scott Brown represented the applicant, who is proposing to convert a two-family structure to a single-family home. The structure was not shown on a map from 1884, but was included in the Assessor's records of 1898.

Malcolm Carnwath moved that the structure is historically significant and considered for preservation. Christopher Fay seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 7-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Marc Cendron, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, yes).

Attorney Mead said the structure is located in the FEMA VE zone. FEMA regulations for redevelopment in the floodplain require for a structure to be raised on pilings at least two feet above base flood elevation when the value of the improvements would be greater than 50% of the value of the structure. Attorney Mead said the proposed alterations would likely exceed 50% of the value of the structure. The alternative would be to demolish the structure and construct a new building that would meet the regulations. An exception exists for historically significant structures. The applicant is requesting formal written comments that would affirm the historical significance of the structure and its significance within the Joppa Historic District and would state that the structure would retain its historical significance upon the completion of the proposed renovations.

Scott Brown described the plans for the structure. No changes would be made to its footprint. The deck, side porch and attached shed would be removed. The roof at the rear of the structure would be reshaped. Dormers would be added to both sides of the roof that would be compliant with the guidelines. They would be lower than the roofline and would be set back from the front and rear elevations. All windows and doors would be replaced. Two-over-two windows with simulated divided lights would be installed. On the front façade, the four outer windows would be moved away from the center four windows. The window pattern on the left side of the structure would also be changed. The vinyl siding would be replaced with wood clapboards and shingles.

No one from the public spoke in favor of or in opposition to the application. Marc Cendron said the rear portion of the house is not original and the proposed work for this façade is not of great significance to him. He said he objects strongly to the dormers, which would significantly change the character of the house.

Newburyport Historical Commission  
April 14, 2022

Andrew Bernhardt said he agrees that the dormers would change the character of the house. The proposed design of the rear addition would also not be in keeping with the historical value of the home.

Joe Morgan said the proposed alterations would be an improvement in that the vinyl siding would be removed. He said the structure is of too little architectural or historical interest to cause him to object to the dormers.

Christopher Fay said the applicant is requesting a FEMA exemption on the basis of the historic nature of the structure while at the same time seeking to add modern features to it. He said he is not a fan of the dormers.

Malcolm Carnwath said he also dislikes the dormers but the proposal for the rear of the structure would be an improvement. A structure on pilings would not be suitable for the neighborhood.

Peter McNamee said the rear addition would not necessarily fit with the remainder of the structure but it would not be visible from the street. He likes the proposed new window pattern on the street facade. He said he intensely dislikes the dormers, and does not like the proposed window pattern on the west elevation.

Scott Brown said the applicant wishes to take advantage of the views from the third floor. He suggested that the dormer on the east side of the structure could be made as small as the one being proposed for its west side.

Glenn Richards asked if the Commission members are of the opinion the dormers would detract from the structure's contribution to the historic character of the neighborhood. Joe Morgan said the structure is not interesting and has few historical features. He does not see the structure as having historic value that would be transformed by the dormers. He said the issue is whether the dormers would fit the scale of the streetscape. It would be concerning for the building to be made so large that it would be out of scale with the neighborhood. Glenn Richards agreed that the Commission should consider the impact of the scale on the neighborhood.

Peter McNamee said he agrees that the structure is plain, but there are many structures in the city that are truly historically significant and more plain for which the Commission would not consider the addition of dormers. The building would look very new with the changes that are being proposed and the dormers would be going one step too far.

Malcolm Carnwath said the size of the dormers on either side of the roof should be the same and the windows on the dormers should be symmetrical. He believes the applicant would need the additional space that the dormers would provide, as the utilities are to be moved out of the basement.

Christopher Fay said it does not follow that the house would be demolished if it were to not have dormers. The Commission should be concerned with the character of the structure, not the amount of living space the applicant desires. He said the house is an old one in an old neighborhood where there are not a lot of dormers. He said the addition on the rear of the structure would provide for plenty of river views. He added that the Commission agreed to the installation of a low profile dormer on High Street and that dormer turned out to be highly visible. Peter McNamee said he also does not agree with the position that the project would not be worth doing without the dormers.

Applicant Bud Manley said it is necessary to move forward while respecting the past. The project would improve the structure for many generations to come. He said the Commission approved the plans for a nearby house that has dormers on both sides of the roof. He said his house would be an improvement for the neighborhood, even with the dormers.

Marc Cendron moved that the structure is preferably preserved. Andrew Bernhardt seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-1 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Joe Morgan, no; Peter McNamee, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Marc Cendron, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, yes).

Joe Morgan moved to approve the plans as submitted and lift the Demolition Delay. Peter McNamee seconded the motion. The motion failed by a 1-6 vote (Glenn Richards, no; Joe Morgan, yes; Peter McNamee, no; Christopher Fay, no; Marc Cendron, no; Andrew Bernhardt, no; Malcolm Carnwath, no).

Scott Brown said he will revise the plans so that the six windows on the west elevation are the same size. He asked about the addition of skylights. Marc Cendron said that dormers change the volume of the roof in a way that skylights do not. He would not object to skylights. Malcolm Carnwath agreed with this position. Christopher Fay said while skylights are not ideal, they are preferable to dormers. Peter McNamee clarified that the skylights should be used as a replacement for both the larger and smaller dormers that had been included on the plan. The applicant asked to be added to the agenda of the April 28 meeting.

#### **4. Updates from the Chair**

At the March 10 meeting, the Commission voted to approve a draft Advisory Report for the East Row Condos that included a recommendation that the Planning Board should review the materials and color selection for the brick veneer and coping in situ. Glenn Richards said this might be difficult to accomplish. He asked about sending a memo indicating the Planning Board should use the best means at disposal to ensure a good match. Joe Morgan said the parapet masonry is different from the ground floor masonry. It should be verified by someone other than the applicant that the proposed materials would be a proper match. Glenn Richards will look into the matter further.

#### **5. Minutes**

Peter McNamee moved to approve the minutes of the March 24 meeting. Marc Cendron seconded the motion. The motion was approved by 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Marc Cendron, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, abstain).

#### **6. Adjournment**

Peter McNamee moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 p.m. Marc Cendron seconded the motion. The motion was approved by 7-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Marc Cendron, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, yes).