

Newburyport Historical Commission

May 28, 2020
Online Meeting
Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Glenn Richards called a regular meeting of the Newburyport Historical Commission to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were members Christopher Fay, Glenn Richards, Patricia Peknik, Malcolm Carnwath (joined at 7:25), Peter McNamee, Joe Morgan and Ron Ziembra. Also in attendance were Planning Director Andy Port, Planner Katelyn Sullivan and note taker Gretchen Joy.

3. Demolition Delay Applications

342 Merrimac Street

Dan and Judith Lynch

Partial Demolition/Roofline Change

Lisa Mead and David Keery represented the applicant, who is seeking approval for the partial demolition of a 1785 Federal-style house. The house is located in the Merrimack Shipbuilding District. It was modernized during the Greek-revival period and includes several features typical of this style. A portico was added to the front of the structure at an unknown date, but is present on an assessor's map from 1924. A two-story el at the rear of the structure was constructed prior to 1880 and was expanded sometime after 1924. The structure was later converted to two-family use and a pressure treated second-story deck and stairs were added at its rear.

Malcolm Carnwath moved the structure is historically significant and preferably preserved. Ron Ziembra seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 7-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Patricia Peknik, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Ron Ziembra, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, yes).

The applicant is proposing to revert the structure to single-family use and build a second single-family house at the rear of the property, facing Merrimac Court. A demolition permit is being sought for the removal of the second-story bay on the front of the structure. A triple window would be added to the façade above the front door. The applicant is also requesting permission to demolish the extension of the el at the rear of the structure. This would be replaced with a one-story addition with a deck above it. A second-story deck and stairs would also be removed. A demolition permit is not needed for this portion of the work. The existing barn is to be retained.

A Section VI-C Special Permit is needed for the work. The applicant sought input from the Commission before beginning the process in an informal discussion at the July 11, 2018, meeting. The Commission voted at that meeting to inform the Planning Board it would accept the placement of a preservation restriction on the structure. The item is on the agenda for the June 3 Planning Board meeting. The preservation restriction would fulfill the public benefit requirement. The details of the restriction must be approved by the NHC, MHC and Planning Board and would be overseen by the Zoning

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Enforcement Officer. Attorney Mead said the process is a collaborative one and the applicant must have approval for the preservation restriction in order to move forward with the plans.

Attorney Mead said that with the exception of the transom above the side door and the sidelights surrounding the front door, none of the windows are original. The applicant is proposing to replace all of the existing windows with new six-over-six windows from the Marvin Integrity Series. The front door would be replaced with a Simpson exterior door with Simpson four-light sidelights. The trim would be repaired or replaced to match that of the existing door. The clapboards would be retained and repaired as necessary. The window trim would also remain and would be repaired. Any new trim would match the existing.

The hearing was opened to comments from the public. Stephanie Niketic, 93 High Street, said unacceptable alterations could put the preservation restriction at risk. She would like confirmation that none of the windows are historic. The window frames should be retained and wood windows with true-divided lights should be installed. A single window above the front door would be historically accurate and its trim should be milled to match that which exists. She asked if it would be necessary to replace the front door. It appears to be from the Greek-revival period. The glass in the sidelights is old. The door on the east should also be retained. A center chimney is shown on the plans. The original chimney should be retained and it should not be replaced with a faux one, as is often being done in the city. She asked that the Commission members examine all of the features the applicant is proposing to replace to determine their historic value.

Patricia Peknik reviewed photographs she took of the structure and others in the neighborhood. She said the style of the trim can be found on other structures in the ship building district, which places its dates at the 1840s. She said the house is a good example of the Greek-revivalization of an 18th century structure.

Glenn Richards commented that the structure was modernized at some point in history and those features might have acquired a historic significance in their own right. Malcolm Carnwath said the structure is a nice Federal-period house. He would like the portico to be removed and a single window added in its place, perhaps with sidelights that match those at the door. Peter McNamee said that the triple window would compete with the door and he would prefer a single one without sidelights. Joe Morgan said the symmetry of the front facade is typical of the Federal period and the chimney is a strong contributing element. Ron Ziemba said he would prefer a triple window on the front façade because it would add light to the interior.

Patricia Peknik moved to impose the Demolition Delay in order for the Commission to work with the applicant on the details of the plans. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Patricia Peknik, yes; Christopher Fay, absent; Peter McNamee, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Ron Ziemba, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, yes).

The Commission members will visit the site on Saturday, May 30 at 8:30 a.m. The applicant will present revised plans at the June 11 meeting.

4. General Business

- A discussion on the ordinance will take place at the June 11 meeting.
- The application for 3-5 School Street had been continued to this meeting but was not properly noticed. It will be on the agenda for the June 11 meeting.
- The revised plans for the Institution for Savings will be presented at the June 3 Planning Board meeting.

5. Approval of Minutes

Christopher Fay moved to approve of the minutes of the May 14, 2020, meeting as submitted. Malcolm Carnwath seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 7-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Patricia Peknik, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Ron Ziemba, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, yes).

6. Adjournment

Malcolm Carnwath moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:33 p.m. Glenn Richards seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.