

## **Newburyport Historical Commission**

June 22, 2023

Online Meeting

Minutes

### **1. Call to Order**

Vice Chair Biff Bouse 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, Biff Bouse, Chris Sawtelle, Andrew Bernhardt, Marc Cendron and Glenn Richards. Christopher Fay was absent. Also in attendance were Planner Katelyn Sullivan and note taker Gretchen Joy.

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

None

### **4. DOD/DCOD Advisory Review**

#### **a) 149 High Street**

Kim Turner said the project to restore the Bartlet Mall would help preserve the City's cultural heritage and history. The water is stagnant and unhealthy. In order to keep the water at a consistent level and circulating, the pond would be lined and a bedrock well and outfall would be installed. A small pump house would be constructed to store the wet well and pump.

Chuck Griffin reviewed the history of the Mall, which was the city's original common. In the early 1900s, Charles Eliot developed a plan for a park with a sloped lawn and high-branched trees. Eliot's plan included a granite edge around the pond that did not come to fruition but is as part of the current plans.

In the original plans for the restoration of the Mall, a vault for the pump house was to be embedded in the slope near the playground. Engineers have determined the vault would be costly and create logistical challenges. The check walls would be highly visible and would create a cemetery-like appearance. The current plans call for a freestanding building with an interior space that would measure 12-foot square. It would be located next to the dock and would be of brick with a slate roof, if funding permits. The location of the building near the ramp would provide easy access for maintenance.

Marc Cendron said the pump house should be of brick and its features should match those of the courthouse. Biff Bouse said the proposed design appears industrial in nature and architectural interest should be added. Chuck Griffin said the design could include more architectural details. Windows were not proposed to eliminate the possibility of noise from the pump. He said he is concerned about the rising cost of materials.

Joe Morgan said the Mall is one of the earliest projects of Charles Eliot and was intended to mimic nature. He said the plan should respond to the original intent of Eliot. The pump house would be an intrusive object, while a vault could be hidden anywhere on the site. He said the vault could be sealed and accessed from above by a hatch. He said the goal of the project is a clean pond and he does not see the need for a dock. The project should not be undertaken at this time if there are not adequate funds available to do it

correctly. He said Eliot did not like the courthouse and therefore matching the features of the pump house to it would be irrelevant.

Chuck Griffin responded the engineers want the door to the pump to be at grade. He said Eliot did not oppose the entire building, just the foundation. Only the façade that faces the pond has the appearance of the Bulfinch design. He would be unsure of which façade the pump house should be made to match.

Kim Turner said there is a desire in the community to bring recreational boating back to the pond. Boats would contribute to the health of the pond by circulating the water. She said money was not the only factor in the decision not to bury the pump. The individual who would maintain it in a confined space must be licensed. An underground vault with cheek walls would not be less visible than the building. She said the proposed location of the pump house is the preferred one for a number of reasons. The needs and desires of a number of permitting authorities must be taken into consideration.

The meeting was opened to comments from the public. Patricia Peknik, 4 Dove Street, said she agrees with Commissioner Morgan. A concealed vault would be preferable to a utility shed. The Mall is the city's oldest landscape and there is an intentional relationship between it, the old gaol, the cemetery and the school. She said City Council discussed reallocating funds earmarked for the Mall restoration to the waterfront park project. If the plans include an alternate of wood siding, that is the material that will be used.

Joe Morgan added the design issue should be separate from the budget issue. The Mall deserves better than a decision that is made due to insufficient funds. The pump house would not be faithful to the original historic landscape. The park was not originally completed according to Eliot vision due to a lack of funding and that mistake should not be made again. If there are not funds available for the park as envisioned, a way to supplement them should be found.

Marc Cendron moved to authorize the Chair to draft an advisory report to the Planning Board for review and approval at the next meeting. Andrew Bernhardt seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Chris Sawtelle, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Marc Cendron, yes).

## **5. Updates from the Chair**

None

## **6. Minutes**

Glenn Richards moved to approve the minutes of the June 8 meeting. Andrew seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Chris Sawtelle, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Marc Cendron, yes).

## **7. Adjournment**

Glenn Richards moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. Marc Cendron seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Chris Sawtelle, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Marc Cendron, yes).