

Newburyport Historical Commission

July 13, 2023
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, Biff Bouse, Andrew Bernhardt, and Glenn Richards. Glenn Richards introduced alternate member Ed Noymer. Marc Cendron, Chris Sawtelle and Christopher Fay were absent. Also in attendance were Planning Director Andy Port, Planner Katelyn Sullivan and note taker Gretchen Joy.

3. Demolition Delay Applications

a) 8 Forrester Street

Architect Douglass Jack represented the applicant, who is proposing to construct a one-story addition to a contributing side-hall Italianate structure that was built around 1880.

Andrew Bernhardt moved the structure is historically significant and considered for preservation. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Ed Noymer, yes).

A one-floor sunroom would be constructed at an angle off an original single-story section of the house. Mr. Jack said the addition would be minimally visible from the street and it would be secondary to the volume of the historic structure. The top of the ridge and the fascia would align those of the existing one-story section. The two-over-two in the addition would match the existing windows. The angle of the addition would minimize its impact on the yard.

Joe Morgan said the proposal has a light touch and would not impact the view of the main structure from the street. Biff Bouse said the angle of the new construction would differentiate it from the original structure.

Joe Morgan moved the structure is preferably preserved. Biff Bouse seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Ed Noymer, yes).

Andrew Bernhardt moved to accept the plans as presented and lift the Demotion Delay. Ed Noymer seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Ed Noymer, yes).

b) 5 Buck Street

Ben Becker represented the applicant, who submitted an application in 2019 for the demolition of a portion of the roof. The Commission voted at that time that the structure was historically significant and the plans were approved. The work was completed and the applicant has now submitted plans for an additional project.

Andrew Bernhardt moved the structure is historically significant and considered for preservation. Ed Noymer seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Ed Noymer, yes).

The applicant is proposing to change the roofline on an existing one-story bay window bump out on the side of the structure. The bay would be upwardly extended to increase the size of a second-floor bedroom. Two existing second-floor windows would be removed to accommodate the bay. The windows on the sides of the bay would be narrow, one-over-one windows that would match those on the first floor of the bay. The third window would be two-over-two. The windows in the bay would be shorter than the remainder of the second floor to accommodate the furniture in the bedroom. The existing windows on the second story are shorter than those on the first floor. The windows in the newly added bay would be shorter than the existing second-story windows. On the first floor, an existing window in the bay would be replaced with a transom to accommodate the installation of a gas fireplace. The applicant will select a fireplace unit that would fit with the configuration of the windows as shown on the submitted plans.

Biff Bouse said he is not in favor of the transom and the windows in the new bay should be the same height as the remaining second-floor windows. Glenn Richards said the house has been significantly altered over time and the shorter windows would not be highly visible.

Joe Morgan moved the structure is preferably preserved. Biff Bouse seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Ed Noymer, yes).

Joe Morgan moved to accept the plans as presented and lift the Demotion Delay. Andrew Bernhardt seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-1 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, no; Joe Morgan, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Ed Noymer, yes).

4. DOD/DCOD Advisory Review

a) 149 High Street

Glenn Richards circulated the draft advisory report he prepared for submission to the Planning Board. Biff Bouse said the report should more clearly state that if a structure is to be added to the site, brick should be used for its cladding.

Joe Morgan said a significant amount of history is associated with the landscape. Charles Elliot followed the principles of design for a pastoral setting and enhanced the natural features of the site. A pumphouse would be an intrusion of the natural contours of the pond. His preferred solution would be an underground buried vault that would be accessed by a hatch in the proposed location of the pumphouse. The applicant stated at a previous meeting that this alternative was rejected in part because of the requirement for confined space certification. He said that according to the OSHA website, it is possible to obtain this certification after the successful completion of a one-hour webinar. He said many utility structures are located underground and accessed by a plate or hatch and he does not think this was a creditable response by the City. The Elliot design should be protected and the Commission should not accept the construction of any visible structure

in the historic landscape. The pumphouse, if necessary, would more appropriately be located on the upper grade along High Street. The granite curb should have a low profile edge and be flush at the beach. The kettle pond should appear as a natural water body. He said the draft report should not comment on the design of the pumphouse, as this would signal that the Commission would be receptive to its construction. He said it would not be acceptable to suggest support for any above-ground structure.

Glenn Richards said that according to the Ordinance, the Commission is to prepare a report that provides the historical considerations and context. His draft report reflected the Standards of the Secretary of the Interior for landscapes.

Biff Bouse said it did not appear a great deal of attention had been paid to the design and orientation of the structure. He said the report should more assertively state the preference for no structure and that if one is necessary, the Standards should be applied. More thought should be given to the orientation of the pumphouse.

The Planning Board is expecting to receive the report prior to its July 19 meeting. Glenn Richards moved to authorize the Chair to inform the Planning Board that no above-ground structure would be historically appropriate for the site but if one must be built, the Commission would appreciate being consulted as to its design. Andrew Bernhardt seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Ed Noymer, abstain).

5. Updates from the Chair

The Commission may be asked at a future date to review changes relating to the cell phone antennae in the steeple of the Unitarian Universalist Church on Pleasant Street.

6. Minutes

Andrew Bernhardt moved to approve the minutes of the June 22 meeting. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Ed Noymer, abstain).

7. Adjournment

Ed Noymer moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:42 p.m. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Ed Noymer, yes).