

Newburyport Historical Commission

July 22, 2021
Online Meeting
Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Glenn Richards called an online meeting of the Newburyport Historical Commission to order at 7:03 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were members Glenn Richards, Peter McNamee, Christopher Fay, Patricia Peknik, Malcolm Carnwath, Joe Morgan and Marc Cendron. Also in attendance were Planning Director Andy Port, Planner Katelyn Sullivan and note taker Gretchen Joy.

3. Demolition Delay

22-24 Olive Street

Lisa Mead represented the applicant, who is proposing to change the roofline of Federal-style house built around 1830. She said the two rear additions, one of which dates from 1888, would be removed.

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

Attorney Mead presented the project. In addition to the demolition of the additions, the applicant is proposing to remove the workshop, greenhouse and shed from the rear of the lot. The brick on the original structure would be cleaned, repaired and repointed. The plastic shutters would be replaced with wood ones. The chimneys would be refurbished and the wooden doors, transoms and sidelights would be restored. The locations of the doors and windows on three sides of the structure would not be changed.

A new addition would be constructed at the rear of the structure. Attorney Mead said the addition would not interfere with the views of the existing structure. The addition would be shorter in height and smaller in footprint than the existing structure. One window and some of the rear façade would be exposed by the removal of the existing additions. She said proposed materials would not copy the materials of the existing structure, but would complement them. The design of the roof would be similar.

Ernie DeMaio of Tektoniks Architects described the proposed addition and connector building. He said 257 square feet of the original façade would be exposed. The roof of the addition would be lower than that of the historic structure and the connector building would be set back from it. The brick would be painted a lighter color. HardiePlank siding would be used for the addition.

The hearing was opened to comments from the public. Stephanie Niketic, 93 High Street, said the addition is not compatible with the original in terms of scale and proportion or materials and it would seem to be two buildings rather than one. The materials are modern. The new building would be set apart from the existing one but would not be in harmony with it.

Tom Kolterjahn, 64 Federal Street, said the Newburyport Preservation Trust opposes the proposal in its current form. It is excessive and would have a significant impact on the neighborhood. The roof would overlap with the historic structure and

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would change its character. He said he would comment further at a later date on the steps that should be taken to preserve the wonderful original house.

Michael Tucker, said he represents abutter Carol Zamprogna. He said the modest one-story that is to be removed might have historical significance of its own. It would be replaced with a two-story breezeway and a second single family home. The homes in the neighborhood are modest and the existing home already has one of the largest finished floor areas in the neighborhood.

Amy Badger, 21 Olive Street, said the proposal is too big and would be incongruous with the neighborhood. There would be no room on the property for open space or a shed. The houses in the neighborhood are among the oldest in the city. The Commission should act to maintain its integrity.

Carol Zamprogna, 20 Olive Street, said she disagrees with the assertion made in the presentation that the proposal would not be visible from Olive Street and would not impact the streetscape.

Micah Donahue, 16 Olive Street, said he had proposed to extend the roofline of his own home and realizes now this would have been a mistake. The small project he undertook is more in keeping with the neighborhood. He opposes the proposed project.

Elizabeth Hallett, 23 Olive Street, said she agrees with the others speakers. The addition would be too large. It would negatively impact the neighborhood and the view of Olive Street and Russia Street both. She wants the historic neighborhood to be maintained.

Heather Shand, 43 Warren Street, said the structure is in a special part of town. The proposed addition is excessive and would not suit the neighborhood.

Frances Moore, 19 Olive Street, said the proposal saddens her and the infill behind the wonderful building is not needed. The public comment period was closed.

Patricia Peknik asked about the existing and proposed ridge height and the existing and proposed square footage. The ridge of the addition would be two feet lower than that of the existing structure and the ridge of the connector would be 3.5 feet lower than that of the existing structure. The applicant will provide the figures at a future meeting. The footprint of the existing structure is 38' x 39'. The footprints of the addition and connector would be 33'-8" x 26'-6" and 14'-9" x 12'-0" respectively.

Joe Morgan asked if it is necessary for there to be a two-story connector. Attorney Mead responded that this is a zoning requirement.

Christopher Fay said Russia Street is small and narrow and the addition would overwhelm it. He said the neighborhood contains open space and he questioned the need to develop every square inch.

Joe Morgan said the original structure is a good example of the historic fabric of the beautiful neighborhood. He said the size and scale of the proposed structure would not be incompatible with the neighborhood, which is dense. He is concerned about the architectural quality of the proposed addition, which he said would not be respectful to the original property. It would not pick up on its rhythms. The double windows would be out of character with the historic structure and the blankness of the lower story would be incorrect.

Patricia Peknik said that with regards to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, the proposed additions would be differentiated from the historic structure, but it would not be compatible with it. Its materials, size, scale and massing would be out of character with both the original structure and the neighborhood. The addition would not be subordinate in height and would be intrusive on Russia Street.

Malcolm Carnwath said the original house is one of the finest examples of the period in the country. The addition should be smaller. As proposed, it would be too large and would not respect the value of the historic structure. It would detract from the neighborhood.

Mark Cendron said the proposal is appalling and would destroy the integrity of the historic building. The design is awkward and not pleasing and it would have a negative impact on the neighborhood.

Peter McNamee said the proposal makes a token nod towards the original structure. It could be in any new development. The proposed windows do not make sense. Glenn Richards said he agrees with the comments on the fenestration.

Patricia Peknik moved that the structure is preferably preserved and to impose the Demolition Delay. Christopher Fay seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 7-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Patricia Peknik, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, yes; Marc Cendron, yes).

The applicant requested a continuance. Peter McNamee moved to continue the application to the August 26 meeting. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 7-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Patricia Peknik, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, yes; Marc Cendron, yes). A site visit was scheduled for Wednesday, July 28 at 6:00 p.m.

4. General Business

Andy Port said a list of the top 100 properties that should be added to the survey is being confirmed. The RFP is being drafted and MHC will be asked to review it.

5. Updates from the Chair

Glenn Richards said he would be absent for the August 12 meeting and Patricia Peknik will act as chair.

6. Minutes

Peter McNamee moved to approve the minutes of the July 8, 2021, meeting. Marc Cendron seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Marc Cendron, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Patricia Peknik, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, yes; Joe Morgan, abstain).

7. Adjournment

Christopher Fay moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m. Malcolm Carnwath seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 7-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Patricia Peknik, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, yes; Marc Cendron, yes).