

Newburyport Historical Commission

August 26, 2021

Online Meeting

Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Glenn Richards called an online meeting of the Newburyport Historical Commission to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were members Peter McNamee, Patricia Peknik, Malcolm Carnwath, Joe Morgan, Glenn Richards, Christopher Fay and Marc Cendron. Glenn Richards, Christopher Fay and Marc Cendron noted for the record that they have been certified to participate in matters continued from the August 12 meeting. Also in attendance were Planning Director Andy Port, Planner Katelyn Sullivan and note taker Gretchen Joy.

3. Demolition Delay

a) 22 Olive Street

The applicant requested a continuance. Marc Cendron moved to continue the public hearing to the September 9 meeting. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Peter McNamee, abstain; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Patricia Peknik, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, yes; Marc Cendron, yes).

b) 30 Winter Street

The Demolition Delay was imposed at the August 12 meeting. Some Commission members visited the site on August 26.

Eric Primack said he has been informed that he would not be required to change the second-story windows on the front façade due to the exemption from the building code for historic structures. The windows would remain 12-over-8. He said he believes it would be possible to restore only five of the existing windows. All windows would be removed and replaced with new simulated divided lights for a consistent appearance and energy efficiency. He intends to select a window with a grille between the panes and not on the exterior.

Mr. Primack said the roof of the addition would be raised to create additional head height on the first and second floors. An additional foot of head height is needed on the first floor and two additional feet are needed for the second floor. He wishes to eliminate the step-down between the main structure and the addition. He said the basement is solid, as is the framing of the rear addition. He said some additional detail has been added to the plans.

Christopher Fay said he has some concern about the height of the proposed addition. He said the house is in poor condition and appears it could fall down. The Commission should compromise on the windows if this would mean the structure would be saved. The structure could be the centerpiece of the neighborhood if it were properly restored.

Peter McNamee said he is opposed to raising the height of the rear addition in order to avoid a step down. He said this is often found in older homes and it does not bother him. He said photographs should be provided on each existing detail, as well as

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specific information on the replacement treatment. He said the Commission has received plans without adequate detail in the past and trim has been removed as a result. He asked about a comment made by the applicant that the trim would be replaced with flat stock. Mr. Primack said the trim would be replaced in kind and flat stock currently exists on the structure.

Marc Cendron said he is concerned about the proposed height of the addition and the public view from the Rail Trail. He asked the reason for the removal of the rear chimney. Mr. Primack said the chimney would be removed to allow for the installation of a third set of French doors on the rear façade.

Joe Morgan said that at the site visit he observed that the structure appears to be solid. He commented that the drawings do not include demolition calculations. It is not clear to him that load on the rear addition could be increased without intervention. He would like to receive a structural report on the condition of the rear addition. He said the rear gable should not be further obscured. He believes the roof should be flat, which would allow its proposed height to be reduced. He said seven foot ceilings would still be possible with a lowered roof. He wants to receive explicit detail about the materials that are to be replaced. The existing and proposed floor and ceiling heights should be shown on the plans, which would demonstrate the impact on the gable.

Patricia Peknik said the original windows must be retained, not just the size of the openings. In addition to requiring adherence to the Standards of the Secretary of the Interior, the Commission must also enforce the City's guidelines for historic windows, which indicate they must be retained and restored. Only windows that are beyond repair may be replaced. The City website contains information on restoring historic windows and their energy efficiency. She would like clarification on the type of simulated divided lights that the applicant is proposing to install. She said the window trim should not be flat stock. The slope of the existing roof should be maintained. She acknowledged the need for additional headroom, but said the proposed height is excessive. She is not opposed to there being a step-down between the main structure and the addition. She said the rear addition is older than 1888 and would have housed the kitchen. She agrees that it would be important to receive a structural report. Additional details should be included on the plans and no information should be conveyed through a memo.

Glenn Richards said the windows at the front of the structure appear to be restorable and must be retained. Replacement windows would not duplicate the appearance of the existing conditions. It is the responsibility of the Commission to require that work is done according to the Standards of the Secretary of the Interior. Windows are to be replaced only as a last resort. A window inventory should be conducted. The applicant should indicate which windows are not restorable and provide specifications on the proposed replacement windows. Simulated divided lights could have grilles on the interior and exterior of the windows. He would also like a better understanding of the implications on the raising of the roof of the rear addition. He said it appears a considerable amount of reframing would be needed. He agrees the plans are incomplete and said the Commission would not be able to approve them at this time.

4. Correspondence

a) MHC Pre-approval Letter for 342 Merrimac Street

A letter was received from MHC stating the preservation restriction for the Jacob Whitmore House has been reviewed and the Commission is prepared to approve it.

b) 190 High Street Notice of Intent to Sell

A letter was received from Theodore Nelson, Trustee of 190 High Street stating the Trust has entered into an agreement for the sale of the property and the expected closing date is August 27. Glenn Richards said the buyers have been notified of the preservation restriction.

5. Updates from the Chair

Glenn Richards said he, Joe Morgan and Patricia Peknik recently met with Building Inspector Greg Earles. Mr. Earles emphasized during the discussion that an owner is not required to renovate a structure to bring it up to code. A new addition must be code complaint, but renovations would not be required when the existing conditions are not being changed. A building inspector takes safety, code compliance and the historic nature of a structure into consideration on a case-by-case basis.

The Planning Office is making preparations for the scheduling of hybrid meetings at the Senior Center. At this time, masks are required in the City's public buildings. The Commission members expressed their opinion that hybrids meetings are generally not successful and the wearing of masks at meetings would be disruptive. The consensus was that remote meetings should continue for the present time.

6. Minutes

Peter McNamee moved to approve the minutes of the August 12, 2021, meeting. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, abstain; Patricia Peknik, absent; Malcolm Carnwath, yes; Marc Cendron, yes).

7. Adjournment

Marc Cendron moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m. Peter McNamee seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Patricia Peknik, absent; Malcolm Carnwath, yes; Marc Cendron, yes).