

Newburyport Historical Commission

October 14, 2021

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

3. Demolition Delay

50 Boardman Street

Lisa Mead represented the applicant, who is proposing to remove a small garage at the rear of the property. It is not clear if the accessory structure is 100 years old. The structure was not shown on the 1914 Sanborn map but appeared on the 1924 Assessor's map. Attorney Mead said the garage is structurally unsound and cannot be used as a garage or shed due to its condition. The applicant has attempted to stabilize the structure to prevent it from collapsing. No work is proposed for the main structure.

Marc Cendron moved the structure is historically significant. Peter McNamee seconded the motion. The motion failed by 0-6 vote (Glenn Richards, no; Joe Morgan, no; Malcolm Carnwath, no; Christopher Fay, no; Marc Cendron, no; Peter McNamee, no).

4. Amended Demolition Plans

a) 22 Olive Street

Lisa Mead and Ernie DeMaio represented the applicant. Changes have been made to the plans based on comments made at the previous meeting. The proposed bay window on the south elevation was replaced with a double-hung window that would match the other windows on the Russia Street façade. The chimney on the west façade was shortened and made slenderer. The windows were moved away from the chimney, which would now be located over the brick façade. The windows were aligned from floor to floor, giving the façade a more orderly appearance. The entry and sidelights on the east façade would be restored. The existing materials would be repaired and repainted. Any damaged material would be replaced, but none has been observed to date. Some brick at the rear of the original structure would be exposed when the existing single-story addition is removed and this wall would be restored. The windows on the north façade, which is not visible from Olive Street, are smaller to accommodate the kitchen and bathrooms. The applicant agreed to use copper for the downspouts. The metal roof proposed for the connector has not been changed.

Mr. DeMaio said the first floor of the existing structure is 1,620 square feet and the second story is 1,512 square feet. The proposed first floor area of the addition and

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mudroom is 900 square feet. The second story would be 1,008 square feet. The existing structure is 3,132 square feet and 1,908 would be added for a total of 5,040 square feet.

These figures were later refined. The living space of the existing structure includes 108 square feet of the connector. The new unit and its portion of the connector is 1,908 square feet. The total addition is 2,016 square feet. The demolition of the single-story addition would reduce the size of the existing structure by 493 square feet. The net living area being added would be 1,523 square feet. The existing lot coverage is 24.7% and this would be reduced to 23.6%. The existing open space is 67.8% and would be reduced to 65% because of the additional parking area and sidewalks.

The meeting was opened to comments from the public. Carol Zamprogna, 20 Olive Street, said the view of the property has not been accurately depicted, as the plans show trees in the location of her house. The proposal is too large and does not preserve the character of the neighborhood.

Amy Badger, 21 Olive Street, said a new home would be added in a back yard and the NHC has a responsibility to the neighborhood. The proposal would negatively impact the neighborhood, which has a great number of historic properties.

Micah Donahue, 16 Olive Street, said that an entire second home would be added to the lot, which would change the character of the property.

Elizabeth Hallett, 23 Olive Street, said the existing two-family deserves to have a yard. The proposal reads as two separate homes. A new home is being added behind a historic home and it does not look like an addition.

Tom Kolterjahn, 64 Federal Street, said the applicant has made efforts to fix the windows and the removal of the bay window is an improvement. However, the structure has not been made smaller. It reads as two homes and not an addition. The size of the addition would need to be significantly reduced to fit into the neighborhood. The addition and connector look longer than the existing structure.

Stephanie Niketic, 93 High Street, said the proposal still reads as two buildings, a conjoined mass. She said it looks like something that would be seen in a non-historic subdivision. It is two structures with a connector. The connector does not make the addition an integral part of the existing building, as is required by zoning.

Carol Lipsky, 26 Olive Street, said owners buy houses to live in them while developers buy houses to make a profit. The yard is being sacrificed.

Ned McGrath, 28 Olive Street, said the existing structure is the gem of the neighborhood. The proposal would create an R-3 feeling in a R-2 neighborhood. The addition might be attractive, but it does not belong in this location. The yard has been important to the neighborhood. An opportunity would be lost if the land were to be covered by a building. It should be a gracious garden of the period. The character of the neighborhood would be lost to infill. The streetscape and view from Russia Street and Olive Street should be preserved. The public comment period was closed.

Christopher Fay said he thinks the proposed addition is too big. He said Russia Street is small.

Malcolm Carnwath commented on the asymmetry of the windows on the north façade, which he said is inappropriate for a Federal structure. He said while he

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understands this has been done to accommodate the interior space, the purview of the Commission is the exterior of structures. He is otherwise not opposed to the proposal. He said the hands of the applicant are tied by the zoning laws.

Marc Cendron said he is sensitive to the concerns of the abutters and the proposal would change the character of the existing structure and the neighborhood.

Peter McNamee said he also shares the concerns of the abutters. He is not opposed to the addition but he has an issue with the connector. He asked if it could be shortened by having a single entry. Ernie DeMaio said it might be possible to remove an entry door on one side of the connector but this would not lead to a reduction in its size.

Glenn Richards said the drawings do not show the neighborhood context. While there are concerns about infill, this is the purview of the Zoning Board. The design has been improved since the first presentation. The Board appears to remain concerned about the size of the addition and the connector.

Joe Morgan moved to approve the proposed addition and lift the Demolition Delay. Peter McNamee seconded the motion. The motion failed by a 3-3 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, yes; Christopher Fay, no; Marc Cendron, no; Peter McNamee, no).

Peter McNamee encouraged the applicant to investigate the shortening of the connector. Christopher Fay said the proposal is a separate house and not an addition. He said he will continue to oppose the plans until it reads as an addition.

Attorney Mead said the applicant will look into the removal of one of the entry doors in the connector but she does not think it would be possible to reduce the size of the connector due to zoning requirements. She said the applicant could construct a large addition that is the same height as the existing structure by right but has chosen a proposal that is more appropriate for the neighborhood. She requested that the matter be added to the agenda for the October 28 meeting.

b) 30 Winter Street

The Demolition Delay was imposed at the August 12 meeting. Eric Primack submitted a memo on the details of the plan. The existing clapboard would be repaired and replaced where necessary with a 3-inch reveal. The wood trim would be restored and replaced where necessary to match the existing trim. The existing side doors would be retained. The front façade would not be changed. The sizes and patterns of the windows would remain the same. They would be replaced with black solid vinyl windows with exterior grates. Peter McNamee pointed out that the plans include an estimate for white vinyl windows from Paradigm Window Solutions. The plans must be changed to be in keeping with the intentions of the applicant. The window manufacturer has not yet been decided.

In the revised plans, the height of the addition was reduced to make the gable visible. The roof of the addition would be almost flat. The existing addition would be demolished to eliminate the concerns about its structural integrity and any negative impacts raising its roofline would have on the original structure.

Joe Morgan said the flat roof gives a good result for the main portion of the building. He said that as long as the addition could be demolished without the bones of the main structure and its ell being touched, he would no longer feel that a structural report would be necessary. Mr. Primack said he would consult a structural engineer if any problems were encountered. He said it should not be necessary to alter any part of the original structure.

Joe Morgan said some of the existing windows should be retained. They are in poor condition but were well constructed and are salvageable. Mr. Primack said he has a buyer for the property who does not want wood windows. Glenn Richards said applicants are encouraged to preserve existing windows but this cannot be required. In this case, it was recommended that the applicant restore the wood windows on the front façade as a minimum. He pointed out that a homeowner is not prevented from replacing original windows with vinyl ones. He said the building is one of a few of its vintage and is in poor condition. The developer is willing to restore the house with wood siding and trim. It would be correct except for the material of the windows. The use of vinyl windows could perhaps be seen as a compromise.

Malcolm Carnwath moved to accept the plans as submitted with the condition that the specifications on the windows shall be corrected and to lift the Demolition Delay.

Peter McNamee seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-1 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Marc Cendron, no; Malcolm Carnwath, yes).

c) 64 Liberty Street

Lisa Mead and Juli McDonald represented the applicant. At the September 23 meeting, the Commission requested additional information on the plans to remove an addition and replace it with a one and two-story addition on a larger footprint. The applicant submitted line drawings in place of the sketch plans. The sizes and locations of the windows were finalized. The windows on the second floor of the west elevation of the addition would match the size of the existing second-story windows in the same elevation of the original structure. Dimensions and details on materials have been added to the plans. The materials would match those of the original structure and the windows would be wood. The ridge of the original structure is at 29'-1". The ridge of the two-story addition would be at 22'-10" and the ridge of the one-story addition would be at 13'-8".

Malcolm Carnwath moved to approve the plans as submitted. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Christopher Fay, abstain; Marc Cendron, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, yes).

4. Correspondence

The Commission was copied on a letter from MHC to Duncan McBurnie stating the preservation restriction for the People's United Methodist Church at 64 Purchase Street has been approved.

5. Updates from the Chair

Glenn Richards encouraged the members to consider taking his place as the NHC representative on the Community Preservation Committee.

6. Minutes

Marc Cendron moved to approve the minutes of the September 23, 2021, meeting. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Christopher Fay, abstain; Marc Cendron, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, yes).

7. Adjournment

Malcolm Carnwath moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:13 p.m. Marc Cendron seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Marc Cendron, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, yes).