

Newburyport Historical Commission

October 28, 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. Glenn Richards announced that Patricia Peknik has resigned from the Commission. Also in attendance were Planner Katelyn Sullivan and note taker Gretchen Joy.

3. Demolition Delay Applications

4 Plum Street

Lisa Mead and Jeff Allsopp represented the applicant, who is proposing to construction an addition to a house built around 1800. Christopher Fay moved the structure is historically significant and preferably preserved. 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).

The applicant is proposing to remove the one-story mudroom that was constructed sometime after 1924 and replace it with a 2.5 story addition. The existing gable roof system would be removed and replaced. A bay window would be added on the east side of the structure. A dormer that meets the guidelines would be added to the Elm Street façade.

Mr. Allsopp said the existing frame is insubstantial. The roof and post and beam gable structure would be removed. The vertical addition would extend to the ridge. Only wood would be used for the proposed work. There would be no vinyl or composite materials.

Attorney Mead said similar additions and bay windows exist on other structures in the neighborhood. Three close neighbors submitted letters of support.

No one from the public spoke in favor of or in opposition to the application. Marc Cendron asked about the windows and the purpose of the dormer. Mr. Allsopp said the windows would be simulated divided lights. The existing third floor window on the front façade would be replaced with a triple window. The dormer would provide light to the new living space on the third floor and would create headroom in a bathroom.

Joe Morgan said the proposal is reasonable and modest but he would like to receive a report on the condition of the framing from a structural engineer. Attorney Mead said the Building Commission would be the party to determine that the building is being correctly constructed and this is not the role of the Commission. The architect intends to hire a structural engineer, but it is not required for a report to be submitted to the Commission. Glenn Richards said applicants must now sign an affidavit about the limit of work and must return to the Building Commissioner if it is found the work must

exceed that which was proposed. Mr. Allsopp said the building was not well constructed. The addition will require support, but this would be done in a way that would not translate to the exterior of the building.

Christopher Fay said a large addition is being proposed for a small house on a small street. The proposal would overwhelm the existing structure and negatively impact the neighborhood.

Marc Cendron said the dormer on the Elm Street façade would change the character of the house significantly. He would prefer it be removed from the plans. He said he would not support a dormer of a reduced size, as this would also impact the character of the house.

Glenn Richards said the dormer would be visible from both Elm Street and Plum Street and it would change the character of the structure. He said while the footprint of the structure at ground level would not change, the second and third floors would be larger than the first floor. He said he would prefer for the dormer and addition not to extend to the ridgeline so that the shape and proportion of the original structure would be discernable. The addition has the appearance of being constructed at the same time as the original structure. According to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, the addition should be differentiated from the original structure. He added that in the examples shown by the applicant of structures in the neighborhood that have been altered, most of the additions were awkward.

Joe Morgan said the building might not be able to withstand the proposed changes. He wishes to know how the third floor addition would impact the first floor.

Malcolm Carnwath moved to approve the plans as presented and to lift the Demolition Delay. Peter McNamee seconded the motion. The motion failed by a 2-4 vote (Glenn Richards, no; Joe Morgan, no; Peter McNamee, yes; Christopher Fay, no; Marc Cendron, no; Malcolm Carnwath, yes). Attorney Mead requested that the item be placed on the agenda for the December 9 meeting.

4. Amended Demolition Plans

22 Olive Street

Lisa Mead and Ernie DeMaio represented the applicant. Attorney Mead said the connector is now being called a hyphen. Its length been shortened by one foot and cannot be reduced any further. One of the exterior doors in the hyphen was eliminated, which requires a certain amount of interior space for accessibility. One window was removed on the Russia Street side of the hyphen. The chimney in the new addition was added to the east elevation in the plans. The total amount of new construction is 1,984 square feet and 493 square feet is being removed from the existing floor area. The net gain of the new construction is 1,491 square feet. The lot is 10,758 square feet. A smaller portion of the lot would be covered in the proposal than with the existing conditions due to the removal of outbuildings. Attorney Mead said the proposal meets the Standards of the Secretary of the Interior. A list of exterior specifications was provided.

Ernie DeMaio said the applicant has been responsive to all comments of the Commission. The hyphen has been modified to the greatest degree possible, which has

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resulted in the loss of some living space. It was not possible to remove a door from both sides of the hyphen. The north façade has been made more orderly by simplifying the number of window types. The interior space was reorganized in order that all four windows on the west façade might be aligned.

Mr. DeMaio went on to describe the way the proposal meets the Standards of the Secretary of the Interior. The addition is subordinate to the historic building. The addition is shorter than the original structure. The separation by a hyphen reduces the impact of the addition. The two volumes are not unified. The hyphen and the addition are set back from the original structure. The addition is shorter than the original structure and its eave lines are lower. The new addition is visually separate from the original structure. The form and integrity of the original structure have not been impaired. The hyphen and addition could be removed without causing damage to the critical elements of the original structure.

Attorney Mead said the applicant has chosen to work with the Commission to allow the structure to continue as a two-family home. She said it could be converted into a single-family home with no relief. This would require the interior to be gutted. She said the proposal is the best opportunity for preserving the original structure, as it retains the historic elements of the interior.

Glenn Richards asked about the windows. Mr. DeMaio said the existing windows are vinyl with grilles between the glass. They are in good condition and are not to be replaced. The new windows would be vinyl with simulated divided lights.

Malcolm Carnwath said that while he is generally opposed to infill, the plan is a good one and the Commission should endorse it.

Joe Morgan said the project meets the Standards, although he prefers the alternative design the applicant presented for the single-family home. He asked if the driveway could be made longer to remove cars from Russia Street. Mr. DeMaio said the applicant wishes to retain yard space and limit the amount of paving.

Christopher Fay said the Commission has a moral obligation to the historic home and the neighborhood. He said he is not in favor of the proposal and neither are the neighbors. He said the single-family alternative should be pursued, although he does not believe this is what the applicant wants. He said the Commission has gone as far as it can in the process and does not have the final say.

Peter McNamee agreed with comments of Mr. Fay and also expressed his preference for the single-family alternative. He said the applicant has been responsive to the Standards and the design is acceptable. He said the Commission has gone as far as possible with the improvement of the design and the process should move forward.

Glenn Richards said that while the houses are small on Russia Street, which creates an impression of openness, Olive Street is dense. He does not think the Commission could object to the size of the addition.

Malcolm Carnwath moved to approve the plans as presented and lift the Demolition Delay. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-2 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Peter McNamee, yes; Christopher Fay, no; Marc Cendron, no; Malcolm Carnwath, yes).

5. DCOC/DOD Advisory Review

17-21 State Street

Lisa Mead represented the applicant, who is proposing to replace the storefront windows on the first floor of the building, to restore the banner sign over these windows, and to change the name on the banner sign from Fowles to Brine. She requested that the Historical Commission provide an advisory report to the Planning Board on the significance of the historic building and the relative importance of the building within the DOD. She said the issue of the operability of the windows is outside of the purview of the Commission.

Attorney Mead said the existing windows date from 1940s and are not original to the structure. She said the applicant is proposing to replace the windows with operable stacking windows. The windows would be placed within the existing openings. The aluminum header would remain. New metal trim would be added around the window frame. The two windows adjacent to the doors would be fixed. Attorney Mead said the windows had been replaced in response to changing economic times and the applicant is proposing a further change due to the current conditions.

Dan Ricciarelli of Seger Architects described the plans for the storefront. No changes would be made to the Federal-style upper floors. The entire original storefront would be restored. The cream and black Vitrolite panels would be retained and restored. The plate glass would be removed and bifold windows would be installed in an aluminum frame. The windows would stack on the interior of the restaurant. The size of the window openings would not change. The existing hanging sign would be retained and restored. A new hanging sign for the restaurant would be added. The lettering on the banner sign would be removed and the sign would be repainted with the name of the restaurant. The incised lettering of the existing sign would remain. Black spandrel glass would be used to repair the central column.

Glenn Richards asked about the reference to a black fiber panel in the plans. Mr. Ricciarelli said that is an error and should read glass Vitrolite panel. He also agreed that the metal is aluminum and not galvanized, as is indicated in the plans. He said the recommendations of Dr. Judith Selwyn would be followed for the restoration of the façade. Glenn Richards will prepare a DOD Advisory Report.

6. General Business

Authorization for Approval of Work Subject to Preservation Restriction - 262

Merrimac Street

Dennis Flynn described the plan to install a retractable awning over the rear patio at the 1690 House. The awning would not impact of the view of the house from the street. The condo association has approved the plan, as have the abutters to the rear. Glenn Richards was not in favor of the striped fabric, but it did not appear that a solid fabric would be available.

Marc Cendron moved to approve the installation of the awning. Peter McNamee 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).

7. Correspondence

- a) The NHC was copied on a letter from MHC to Ben Taylor of MTC, LLC indicating the preservation restriction for 342 Merrimac Street has been executed.
- b) MHC sent an announcement of the FY22 Survey and Planning Grant Cycle.
- c) MHC sent a letter stating the preservation restriction for 64 Purchase Street has been approved.

8. Updates from the Chair

Glenn Richards said an election will be held at the January meeting, at which time a new vice chair would be selected.

9. Minutes

Joe Morgan moved to approve the minutes of the October 14, 2021, meeting. 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).

10. Adjournment

Christopher Fay moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:34 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).