

Newburyport Historical Commission

November 10, 2022

Online Meeting

Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Glenn Richards called an online meeting of the Newburyport Historical Commission to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were members Glenn Richards, Andrew Bernhardt, Biff Bouse, Joe Morgan. Marc Cendron and Christopher Fay were absent. Also in attendance were Planner Katelyn Sullivan and note taker Gretchen Joy.

3. Demolition Delay Applications

182-184 Merrimac Street

Chris Crump represented Anthony Bonacorso, the owner of the Federal-style structure that was built around 1800. Joe Morgan moved the structure is historically significant and considered for preservation. Biff Bouse seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes).

Mr. Crump said the structure contains six units, two on each floor. He said many changes had been made to the building over the years and it has lost its historic integrity. The siding and trim are vinyl. A pressure-treated wood, three-story deck and egress stairway with a gable roof had been added at its rear.

The applicant is proposing to remove the gable roof above the rear stairway unit and replace it with a flat roof that would provide a deck for the third-floor units. A 10-foot shed dormer would be added to provide access to this deck. The existing deck would be encased with a white composite material and black composite railings would be installed on the stairs and the sides of the balconies. Glass panels would be installed on the front of the balconies.

All existing windows would be replaced with black, aluminum-clad double-hung windows with simulated divided lights. The windows on the front and sides of the structure would be six-over-one and the rear windows would be one-over-one. The rear windows would be slightly taller than the existing windows. The size of the front and side windows would be as close to that of the existing windows as possible. Two new windows would be added on the right side of the building. Windows previously existed in this location, but had been framed into the existing walls.

The vinyl siding would be removed and the cedar siding would be restored. If the restoration of the cedar siding is not possible, Hardie Plank siding would be installed. The exterior trim and soffits would be replaced with white composite material.

A new covered entry with an eyebrow roof and brackets would be constructed on the front of the structure. An eyebrow dormer would be added on the attic level of the front elevation.

One abutter submitted a letter of support. There was no other public comment. Biff Bouse said the proposed changes would improve the rear of the structure, but the style of the proposed front dormer would not be appropriate for the period of the house.

Andrew Bernhardt agreed with these comments about the changes proposed for the rear of the structure and said he is not concerned with the front dormer.

Joe Morgan said the existing rear decks are unsafe and unattractive and he has no issue with the proposal for their improvement. He said eyebrow roofs and dormers are features from the end of the 19th century. The age of the structure should be respected and the front entry and dormer should be reflective of the correct period. The cedar siding should be restored. Where replacement is necessary, the siding should match the existing clapboards.

Glenn Richards agreed with the comments about the proposal for the rear of the structure. He said the style of the proposed front dormer and roof over the entry would be inappropriate for the structure. The recessed panel of the corner boards is also from a later period. He said the windows should be six-over-six rather than six-over-one. A doghouse dormer would be appropriate for the period. He asked if the applicant considered installing a skylight instead.

Mr. Crump said many structures in the city have eyebrow features and he is seeking to add more style to the building by adding characteristics from another period. He also said the purpose of the dormer is to allow light to the attic level. It would not be possible to construct a large enough doghouse dormer to provide as much light as he desires. Glenn Richards asked if the applicant had considered skylights.

Joe Morgan moved the structure is preferably preserved. Andrew Bernhardt seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes).

Joe Morgan said historic elements should be retained and new elements should not harken to other periods. He said if contemporary elements are to be added, they should be contemporary. They should not be creative interpretations from other periods, as this would confuse their context. Biff Bouse said the Federal style is mathematical and boxy. Organic or curved forms should not be used.

The applicant asked the Commission to approve the plans for the rear of the structure so that this work might take place before the winter. The front dormer and entryway could be addressed at a later time. He was told it would not be possible to approve the application in a piecemeal way.

Joe Morgan moved to approve the plans as submitted and lift the Demolition Delay. Glenn Richards seconded the motion. The motion failed by a 0-4 vote (Glenn Richards, no; Andrew Bernhardt, no; Biff Bouse, no; Joe Morgan, no).

4. General Business

a) Review of Draft Historical Advisory Report for 100 State Street

Glenn Richards circulated the draft advisory report. He said he would like to add language to the document that would indicate the proposal would be allowed with the condition that it could be executed without causing damage to the historic framing or structure that would make its future removal impossible.

Andrew Bernhardt moved to approve the draft advisory report for 100 State Street as amended. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes).

b) Request for Comments for Telecommunications Facility at 37 1/2 Forrester Street

Jake Shappy and Zachary Longley said the initial plan had been to enlarge the stealth enclosures. The project has been reduced in scope and now no change is being proposed that would alter the exterior appearance of the enclosures. It is no longer necessary for the Commission members to consider the matter.

5. Updates from the Chair

None

6. Minutes

Biff Bouse moved to approve the minutes of the October 27 meeting. Andrew Bernhardt seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Andrew Bernhardt, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes).

7. Adjournment

Andrew Bernhardt moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:48 p.m. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved.