

Newburyport Historical Commission

December 14, 2023

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 Biff Bouse, Joe Morgan, Glenn Richards, Christopher Fay and Marc Cendron and alternate member Ed Noymer. Members Andrew Bernhardt and Chris Sawtelle and alternate member Allen Marquis were absent. Also in attendance were Planning Director Andy Port, Planner Katelyn Sullivan and note taker Gretchen Joy.

3. Demolition Delay Applications

a) 11 Greenleaf Street

Ben Taylor and Lee Dearborn represented the applicant, who is proposing to construct an addition to a single-family home that was built in 1875 according to District Data Sheets. The structure is listed as contributory and there is no Form B. The single-story addition at the rear of the structure appeared on the 1906 Sanborn map but not the Sanborn map of 1900.

Biff Bouse moved the structure is historically significant and considered for preservation. Marc Cendron seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-1 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Marc Cendron, no; Christopher Fay, yes; Ed Noymer, yes).

The applicant is proposing to remove a significant portion of the rear addition. Its sidewalls would be reinforced to be used as a part of the proposed two-story addition. The existing porch on the side of the structure would be enclosed and a covered porch would be added.

Lee Dearborn said the addition would allow for the construction of a new bedroom on the second floor and would let more natural light into the structure while minimally expanding its footprint. The addition would have a flat roof in order for the third-floor windows to be preserved.

Ben Taylor said the proposed addition would not be as tall as the main part of the structure. The addition to be removed is a minor part of the house and adds little to its historical significance. The proposed addition would be clad with clapboards. One-over-one windows would be installed to match the windows in the main structure. The window and door trim and corner boards would match those of the existing structure. He added that many houses in the neighborhood have rear additions.

Biff Bouse said the removal of the existing addition would not be detrimental. The addition appears to be blocky in the drawings, but would be subordinate to the main structure. Glenn Richards said it would be obvious that the addition was not a part of the original structure.

Joe Morgan moved the structure is preferably preserved. Christopher Fay seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-1 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, no; Marc Cendron, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Ed Noymer, yes).

Marc Cendron moved to accept the plans as presented and lift the Demolition Delay. Biff Bouse seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Marc Cendron, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Ed Noymer, yes).

b) 20 Lafayette Street

The applicant, Ray Johnson, is proposing to demolish an accessory structure to a house that was built in 1896. The one-car garage appears on the 1924 Sanborn map. Mr. Johnson said the garage is in poor condition and is a safety hazard. A 10' x 20' prefabricated shed would be installed in a similar location on the property. No work is being proposed for the main structure.

Joe Morgan moved the structure is historically significant and considered for preservation. Marc Cendron seconded the motion. The motion failed by a 0-6 vote (Glenn Richards, no; Biff Bouse, no; Joe Morgan, no; Marc Cendron, no; Christopher Fay, no; Ed Noymer, no).

c) 376 High Street

The applicant, Renee Bourdeau, is proposing to construct a two-story addition at the rear of a house that was constructed around 1800 or 1850, according to the District Data Sheets. The structure first appears on the Sanborn maps in 1914. Ms. Bourdeau said many additions have been constructed and removed over time.

Biff Bouse moved the structure is historically significant and considered for preservation. Marc Cendron seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Marc Cendron, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Ed Noymer, yes).

The entrance to the structure is located on Plummer Avenue. The proposed one and two-story addition would be visible from High Street. Scott Brown said the addition would be set back nine feet from the High Street façade. The existing bay window on the first floor would be removed. The hipped-roof of the addition would distinguish it from the main structure. The details of the addition would match those of the historic structure and it would be clad with red cedar clapboards.

Joe Brown said the addition would be of a different style than the main house but would be compatible with it. He said he likes the style of the conservatory building and thinks it is too bad it would not wrap onto High Street.

Marc Cendron moved the structure is preferably preserved. Christopher Fay seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Marc Cendron, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Ed Noymer, yes).

Joe Morgan moved to accept the plans as presented. Marc Cendron seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Marc Cendron, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Ed Noymer, yes).

Christopher Fay left the meeting.

4. DCOD/DOD Advisory Review

a) 87 High Street

Andy Sidford represented the applicant, who is proposing to remove more than 25% of the exterior walls of a carriage house. The NHC is to provide an advisory report to the ZBA. No work is being proposed for the main structure.

Mr. Sidford said a previous owner had received approval to restore the carriage house and to construct an addition to its rear. The foundation was poured and the floor was built, but the plans were not completed. The current owner is proposing to proceed with the original intent, but the carriage house is now in too poor condition to be retained. It would be demolished and a new timber-framed structure would be constructed in its place. The interior sheathing boards would be retained and reinstalled.

Joe Morgan said that according to the Ordinance, the Commission is to provide an assessment of the historical significance of the structure. The applicant is proposing to demolish the original historic structure. He said the Commission should inform the ZBA that the historic structure is worthy of preservation. If it was built at the same time as the house, it would have been constructed in 1799. Andy Sidford said the engineering report states that much of the original frame was replaced over time and very little of it remains.

Marc Cendron said the house has been restored to late 18th century standards. Nothing recognizable of the interior features remains. The applicant is proposing to convert a historically significant carriage house into a game room. The structure would be completely rehabilitated and a minimal amount of its original features would be preserved.

Glenn Richards said the original use as a building to house carriages has gone by. Andy Sidford said the frame is not restorable. Joe Morgan said the structure was not designed for human habitation. It was an uninsulated shed, although a beautiful one. Some elements of the building remain and should be preserved. It could be a restoration project, but this would not respond to the proposed use, which requires a habitable, heated building. The opinion of the Commission should be that the demolition of the historic structure would not be desirable. The ZBA would be the board to decide if the building could be demolished, which requires a quantitative decision following an evaluation of the cost of rehabilitation with respect to the appraised value.

5. Other Business

a) Proposed Excavation Work Required Behind Custom House

Andy Port said a waterline connection must be made behind the Custom House as a part of the construction of the expanded park. The work area is located away from the building, near the bike path. The connection would be installed, the area would be backfilled, and the lawn would be reestablished. Directional drilling would be implemented and the surface of the brick walkway would not be impacted. The work is expected to take one week.

A preservation restriction was previously placed on the property. In a letter dated August 11, 2022, MHC indicated that the park expansion project would have no adverse effect on the historic resource. On December 7, 2023, MHC indicated it would be agreeable to the scope of the project under the terms of the preservation restriction. A representative of the City and the Custom House would be present when the six-foot trench is excavated and work must stop if archaeological resources are discovered. MHC is not requiring any special protocols to be put in place.

Marc Cendron moved that the Commission does not expect any adverse impact on the historic resource from the work. Biff Bouse seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Marc Cendron, yes; Christopher Fay, absent; Ed Noymer, yes).

b) Proposed Roofing Project for 280-30 Pleasant Street.

Forrest Speck and Ed Budelmann said the First Religious Society has applied for CPC funding for the reroofing of the sanctuary. The existing roof is 31 years old. It leaks and the support structure is unstable. New shingles with an ice shield and ventilation would be installed to protect and enhance the roof infrastructure. A preservation restriction was placed on the structure and NHC review and approval is required for a major scope of work.

Marc Cendron moved that the Commission does not expect any adverse impact on the historic resource from the work and to authorize the Chair to write of a letter of support for CPA funding. Biff Bouse seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Marc Cendron, yes; Christopher Fay, absent; Ed Noymer, absent).

c) CPC Representative

Biff Bouse agreed to represent the Commission on the CPC. Glenn Richards thanked Joe Morgan for his work in this role.

6. Minutes

The approval of the minutes of the November 4 meeting was cancelled due to the lack of a quorum.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:52 p.m.