

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: February 14, 2024 PLACE: City Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:00 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Public Hearing

PRESENT: Janet Buck, Chair; Payson Whitney; Jason Cohen; Rachael Sack; Abigail Hammett
Ingrid Marchesano, Clerk to the Board; Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner; Larry Field,
Senior Planner

This is a hybrid meeting attended by the staff. All votes will be done via roll call.

10-30 Manley Way

Payson Whitney motioned to continue the petition to March 13, 2024 meeting as requested by the petitioner.

Abigail Hammett seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0 In favor

Janet Buck Roll Call: Rachael Sack, Abigail Hammett, Jason Cohen, Payson Whitney.

321 Arsenal Street – Determination of Director/Planning Board for a minor modification for historic Building 312 to a support request to Mass Historical Commission (MHC) for their approval for rehabilitation and updates to the exterior, including items such as windows, doors, a new entrance (replacing a window), roofing and rooftop mechanicals and safety equipment.

Susie Markin, Alexandria team is present for this request. We are proposing exterior changes to Building 312. Before going to MHC, we are here to request the Planning Boards determination. We have done the renovation on north side of the building, now we are proposing to update the entire building, replacing all non-historic windows and 5 non-historic entrances, part of roof needs to be redone, catwalk that is unsafe added, replace gutter and repair existing masonry walls. Plans showing existing and proposed buildings, showing historically accurate elevations and multiple angles.

Gideon Schreiber, Planning Board is permit granting authority, changes to the historic site go to Planning Board site and then to Mass Historically Authority. This is a request for determination, it is not necessary to have a written document.

Jason Cohen, why not add restrain on mechanical equipment. Anything that would require petitioner to screen roof equipment, something that creates visual buffer.

Abigail Hammett, there is a provision in the Zoning Ordinance for screening of mechanical equipment.

Gideon Schreiber, if Alexandria is replacing HVAC system, the Planning Board can ask, and they can present it to MHC.

Abigail Hammett, exposure to mechanical equipment should be changed, screening would help.

Rachael Sack, contrast is interesting, I don't see it as an eyesore.

Janet Buck, major effort to screen, it might require more effort, I agree with Rachael.

Jason Cohen, we would not be able to see it, but screening might provide more attention.

Payson Whitney, something maybe done but not major screening.

Jason Cohen, a new entryway on the north façade, would it not be more historically appropriate. Change of the single continuous side door.

Gideon Schreiber, some original pieces were preserved, some were preserved. The petitioner is showing 2 alternatives.

Janet Buck, I was involved in the first renovation. I would like to recommend the submittal to MHC with minor modification.

Payson Whitney motioned that this is a minor modification to Building 312 at 321 Arsenal Street and we would add light screening around the mechanical equipment on the roof.

Abigail Hammett seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-1 In favor

Roll Call: Janet Buck-Y, Abigail Hammett-Y, Jason Cohen-Y, Payson Whitney-Y Rachael Sack-N

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Payson Whitney motioned to approve Minutes of the 1/10/2024 meeting.

Abigail Hammett seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0 In favor

Roll Call: Janet Buck-Y, Rachael Sack-Y, Abigail Hammett-Y, Jason Cohen-Y, Payson Whitney-Y

OTHER

Planning Board Rules of Practice & Procedures

A discussion and possible consideration to adopt a new and complete copy of the rule and regulation per the City Code, Tittle III Subchapter1 §31.02. Rules and regulations to be filed with the City Clerk.

Gideon Schreiber, there have been questions about Rules of Practice and Procedures which the Planning Board does not have. The item on the agenda is whether the Board wants to think about it. Is there anyone who would like to take the lead? Would the Board like to have a document that would get filed with the City Clerk?

Payson Whitney, we do need something, I have some samples from other cities, they call them guidelines. We need more time for review, we need a time limit on applicant presentation. We had a presentation that had 85 slides. We need to provide reasonable limits. Applicant has to submit no less than 30 minutes, all comments 1 week ahead of the meeting. We do not need to have a vote every year. If public comments are submitted 1 hour before the hearing, they might not get heard. Everyone gets a chance to speak once.

Abby Hammett, staff report presentation is very helpful. Repetitive public comments cannot be discouraged, they have a value. There is an order of presentation and comments, hearing has to be followed.

Janet Buck, we had a public hearing last month, there is not always consistency. It happened with the Cannistraro property. If we don't let the public react, it will be a problem.

Gideon Schreiber, if the Planning Board requires too many changes, we have to re-notice the project. Projects change all the time, but if the changes are major the project has to be readvertised, it has to be legally added.

Jason Cohen, if we do not want to preclude the public from commenting on the changes, we need to choose our words more carefully. The public knows that their questions might go unanswered. There have been changes, all questions and comments are equal. We need structure/guidelines through the process.

Payson Whitney, some projects take many hearings, the hearings get closed.

Larry Field, when you use the word deliberate you are ready to make a decision.

Abigail Hammett, hearing the applicant answer the question immediately is preferable.

Janet Buck, I hear from the public that they are not being heard. It is difficult, we don't have obligation to answer comments. We will take the comments into consideration at the end.

Rachael Sack, I did some initial research. Public comments should be directed to the Planning Board not the applicant. It can be answered later.

Jason Cohen, we need a time limit, the presentation should be brief.

Janet Buck, this is a conversation between the Board members. If the public has comments, they should submit them to the staff.

Payson Whitney, what is the rule making process. Individual members of the Board can send comments and the staff can combine it. We need to have enough time to consider the guidelines.

Rachael Sack, we need to let the public comment, it will help us and them. Duration of the meeting has an impact too. We all have jobs, it will negatively impact the Board and the public.

Abigail Hammett, there should be time at the end of a meeting for discussion. It would provide information why we vote in a certain way.

Jason Cohen, I have been on the other side as an applicant, we were told to come back next month.

Payson Whitney, maybe the changes should start with the agenda, when there are too many cases.

Gideon Schreiber, the state law states that the cases have to be heard. There are special meetings to allow for that, it is difficult and unfair to the applicant if they cannot be heard in a timely fashion.

Janet Buck, I like the idea of staff preparing draft of tonight's comments.

Janet Buck adjourned the meeting at 8:45 pm.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 8:45 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____