



CITY OF WATERTOWN

Historic District Commission

Administration Building

149 Main Street

WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02472

Harvey Steiner, Chair
Linda Sternberg, Vice Chair
Elizabeth Hayes, Secretary
James Bensinger, Member
Robert Bloomberg, Member
Jae Hyoung Kim, Member

Minutes: Historic District Commission Meeting- Thursday July 25, 2024, at 7 PM
remotely by Zoom Link <https://zoom.us/j/92090463343> and dial in numbers (877) 853-5257 and (888) 475-4499.

Members Present- Harvey Steiner, Linda Sternberg, Robert Bloomberg, James Bensinger, Jae Hyoung Kim

Members Absent: Elizabeth Hayes

Town Staff Present: Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner, Susan Jenness, Assistant

Others Present Remotely: Terry Morris, Esq., Benny Architect, Andrew Mazzeo, Gerry Mazzeo, Peter Lee

Steiner chaired the Historic District Commission, (HDC), meeting.

1. **Minutes-** Review and Acceptance of Minutes from the May 22, 2024, Historic District Commission Meeting.

Requests were made to update the minutes from the May 22, 2024, meeting.

Steiner conducted a roll call vote of the approval of the minutes as amended.

Roll Call- Members were polled by the Chair and all present agreed to accept the minutes as amended.

2. **Informational Meeting-** Initial exploration of conceptual plans for reuse of an existing building in the Historic District, located at 72 Mt. Auburn St., LLC, Owner/Terry Morris, Representative.

Gerry Mazzeo began the discussion highlighting the reality that Watertown needed more housing as a pressing matter. Developing more housing through creative reuse of this building would provide great value to businesses and to the greater community at large. Steiner pointed out the purpose of this meeting was to look at the proposal which was very conceptual at this point. Schreiber pointed out the Historic District Commission meets infrequently and rarely to discuss changes such as in this instance.

Benny the architect reviewed the proposal with members of the HDC, staff and others present. He started in the rear of the structure and highlighted the increase in greenspace, the entryway to parking under the building, and the multi family structure above that included parking spaces on site as mandated by Zoning.

On the front façade, the porch was viewed with an entryway door with a ramp access into a 3-story proposed addition, with three units on each floor. The southside elevator is a route to parking. The East elevator is on the corner.

Commission Questions

Kim began the questions. He clarified that the proposal was to add a structure on top of an existing structure within the setbacks of zoning. He acknowledged that given the differing colors of the structure, it was easy to distinguish what was the original and what the additions were. He pointed out that the access to parking on site was extremely close to the corner. Gerry Mazzeo pointed out the parking access was the same as it is now for businesses. Mazzeo said in shifting to residential use in the future, the frequency of residents entering and exiting would naturally go down. Schreiber pointed out that because of the Mt. Auburn St. Improvements project, and Watertown Square project, there will likely be zoning changes. Bensinger clarified there would be 9 units with 2-3 people likely in each unit with a total of 13-14 spaces for parking. Bloomberg asked if there would be any low-income housing offered in the new proposal. Schreiber explained the city has a 15% quota in new developments, but this is not part of the commission discussion. Sternberg pointed out the group would be well served by a site visit to see in person how it could work out adding a structure on top of a charming historic house. She summarized that that she felt this current proposal overwhelms the nature of the original structure.

Steiner said this would be a good time to talk about things they would like to see in the proposal. He thought it might be good to consider retaining 72 Mt. Auburn as independent to the new structure with an entrance to the new on Summer St. Bloomberg said he agreed with Sternberg that the current conceptual plan diminishes the existing structure and takes away from its historic nature.

Schreiber pointed out mass is crucial and how this new building connects with the existing structure. Bensinger asked how they could plan to maintain the historic look. Schreiber explained that at Arsenal on the Charles, Mass. Historical Commission

conditioned the development in ways by replicating materials to blend in the new with the old, and at times contrasting when appropriate. Gerry Mazzeo asked for thoughts on the roofline, whether flat or gable would be preferred. Schreiber pointed out on the Summer Street side there was a structure with 2 or 3 gables on the roof. Jae reiterated the biggest challenge he could see was parking access at the corner, and he thought the varying colors of the separate buildings was good.

Terry Morris said the members of the HDC had given their team a lot to talk about. He confirmed he thought mansard and flat roofs were not good choices, and maybe some tweaks to the massing were a good idea. He said they would take the time to go back to the drawing board and come back to share and receive feedback at a future meeting.

Schreiber said he appreciated all the comments made by commission members. Morris said they will give their architect the time they need to redesign the plans. Schreiber said he thought it as a good idea to have a site visit so they could see how the two buildings could be joined.

Agent Report

Schreiber reported the solar panel installation at the Marshall House has been updated with the right placement behind the back stairs. He reminded members of the Mt. Auburn St. project was still ongoing and updates were posted on their website.

Steiner announced although the high school was not in the Historic District, he wanted everyone to know it looks like it is really coming together.

Motion- Sternberg made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8 pm. Bensinger seconded the motion.

Roll Call- Members were polled and all agreed with the motion made by Sternberg.