



CITY OF WATERTOWN
Historic District Commission
Parker Building- Room 2-A
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 February 27, 2025 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, Elizabeth Hayes, Robert Bloomberg, James Bensinger, Jae Hyoung Kim

Members Absent:

City Staff Present: Gideon Schreiber, Director of Planning and Zoning, Susan Jenness, Assistant

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

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

1. **Election for Officers for 2025-** Hayes made a motion to enter a slate to elect the officers from the previous year, Steiner as Chair, Sternberg as Vice-Chair and Hayes as Secretary.

Roll Call vote- All members agreed with the slate as entered by Hayes and the same officers were voted in for 2025.

2. **Minutes-** Review and Acceptance of Minutes from July 25, 2024, Historic District Commission (HDC) Meeting.

Two requests were made to update the minutes from the July 25, 2024, meeting.

Motion- Sternberg made a motion to accept the minutes from July 25, 2024, HDC Meeting. Bensinger seconded the motion.
Informational

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

3. **Discussion Item-** 80-92 Mt. Auburn St. Property owners request for initial discussion of future use and reuse of property including St. John's Episcopal Church Parish Hall and the Parsonage/Jessie Wheeler House located in the Watertown Historic District.

Jerry Mazzeo, realtor for the property, and Joel Grimm, from the Board of Trustees for the Church were introduced to begin a discussion. Mazzeo reported there were four proposed designs sketched by Affordable Housing that the sales and project team wanted to share with the Commission. The proposed drawings had never been presented to staff prior to the meeting. Schreiber pointed out that this was an informational meeting to share thoughts and the future reuse of the church and campus, and that review of any plans could be more appropriate at a future meeting.

Grimm explained that the church had been in service to the community for many years and he hoped to get some guidance from the Commission about what types of developments for reuse they would likely approve of before they embarked on a search for the right new owner of the site. He clarified that the current purpose of meeting with the Commission was to be able to communicate with potential new buyers about what could be allowed for future use and re-use in the future.

It was determined by members of the Commission; they were open to change in their official capacity as residents who protect the architectural value of the structures in the Historic District. Steiner said if they came back with plans at an appropriate time, he would be happy to see what they were thinking about for the reuse of this prominent site in the middle of the Historic District. Bloomberg indicated he would consider new plans that complied with the Ordinance in the Historic District and Zoning. Sternberg said it was a prudent idea for members to take a tour of the property. Grimm said he would coordinate a site visit with staff. City staff and the site's sales and development team will continue talking about setting up a future informational meeting to help communicate with potential buyers.

4. **Public Hearings**

A. 147 Mt. Auburn St.-Vagner Amorim, tenant, requests a Certificate from the Commission to allow a new aluminum business sign in the brick façade above the storefront. The applicant did not attend the public hearing, so the application was reviewed by Schreiber, as the Preservation Agent. Schreiber showed a sample of the new aluminum business sign and pointed out the location of where it would be hung, above the transom window. He said the mounting would take place by making only necessary holes in the process.

Commission Comments

Sternberg said she had visited the site and noticed the fonts on this sign are different from the fonts on the decal signs already hung in the storefront windows. Schreiber explained the decal signs in the window did not need approval and were hung by right. Sternberg asked if the Commission could make a request that the sign they were permitting could be conditioned to have a matching font to the decal signs. Schreiber agreed they could ask for that.

Motion- Hayes made a motion that the application for Certificate of Appropriateness was allowed, and that staff can recommend to the applicant all signs have coordinated fonts. Bloomberg seconded the motion.

Roll Call- All members of the board agreed with the motion made by Hayes and seconded by Bloomberg

B. 72 Mt. Auburn St- Bennie Ber, AIA, for owner (Young Construction Co., Inc) requests a Certificate from the Commission for changes to the site, including either an attached addition and/or new building for 8 residential units, maintaining the existing building (office and residential unit), as well as changes to the site plan with updated landscape and removal of surface parking.

Bennie Ber, Architect for the project outlined the teams plans for the meeting

Goals of Meeting

- Review two main approaches to development of 72 Mount Auburn Street through objectives of the Historic District Commission.
 - Discuss relative merits of each of the two options.
 - Identify a preferred approach to develop as the project moves forward.
 - Progress towards obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness from The Watertown HDC; brought two proposals and the team indicated they would like to have a consensus on which one is more likely to satisfy members of the Commission.
- Develop multi-family residence at 72 Mount Auburn Street alongside an existing historic structure;
- Preserve the existing structure as a character-giving element in the district.
 - Enhance the urban, cultural, aesthetic and historic richness of Watertown Square.

The team reviewed the first proposal with the following features and characteristics.

Option A

- Detached Addition.
- Architectural Expression Distinct from Existing Structure and

serves as a backdrop to showcase the historic house.

- Not Orthogonal to Existing Historic House; Rotated to Afford Better Views of Historic Structure; interstitial space flows from front yard to rear yard.
- Lower Front Wing in Deference to Historic House.
- Smaller Footprint — More Open Space.
- Quieter Presence Compared to Strong Features of Historic House.
- Exterior Materials More Typical of Contemporary Multi-Family Stock

The team reviewed the second proposal with the following features and characteristics.

Option B

- Attached Addition.
- Architectural Expression Pays Homage to Historic House; echoes gable pitch.
- Orthogonal to Existing Historic House; interstitial space is an intimate procession to main entry.
- Attic Gables and Dormers Form Upper Floor Habitable Spaces.
- Larger Footprint — Less Open Space.
- Attachment to Historic House Will Require Modifications.
- Exterior Materials More Typical of Smaller Residential Stock

Commission Comments

Bloomberg shared his impression which was Design A does not match a historic district design. Jae said he thought Option A is a very smart move because it shows contrast in the buildings. He did not think Option B had a flowing language taking place between the two buildings. Steiner stated that in his experience he did not believe the addition should necessarily look the same as the existing historical structure they were charged with preserving. Hayes indicated she had seen some developments that had used exceptional materials that would be suitable in this project.

Schreiber pointed out there were some square brick structured buildings around the corner on Palfrey and Marshall St. Steiner and Hayes exchanged ideas about clapboard and shake style materials to echo a historic house.

Sternberg said she liked Option A with a smaller massing and smaller footprint. Hayes said she liked Option A with landscaping and materials similar to those used at

32 Centre St. Hyoung was in favor of Option A which he said both celebrated and gave more prominence to the existing historic structure being preserved. Bensinger felt Option B was more consistent with the Historic District. Steiner said he thought the details were more dramatic in Option A.

Motion- Sternberg made a motion that the commission would like Ber to move forward with Option A with more details about the materials they would use. Bloomberg seconded the motion.

Steiner asked to clarify the group was comfortable with them letting go of Option B. Members agreed they were finished with Option B.

72 Mt. Auburn St. will come back to the April meeting with more details for the Option A design for further review with the commission.

C. 6 Patten St- Matt D'Agostino, GF Sprague Roofing-request a Certificate of Appropriateness for the removal of a dilapidated chimney that is not seen from the public way. The representative from GF Sprague did not appear for the public hearing. Schreiber presented their application and proposal in their absence. He showed several photos that illustrated how deteriorated the chimney had become and pointed out the location was clearly not visible from the public way.

Commission Comments

Bloomberg clarified that they were just removing an old chimney and not adding a new one. Steiner said he had no problem with the proposal that the Commission allow the removal of a deteriorated chimney not visible from the public way.

Motion- Sternberg made a motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the removal of the chimney. Bloomberg seconded the motion.

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