

Minutes
Historic District Commission
and
HDC as Historic District Study Committee (HDSC)
Wednesday, October 24, 2012
7:00pm
Lower Hearing Room
Adopted November 28, 2012

Members Present: Harvey Steiner, Kenneth Sheytanian, Linda Sternberg, John Hecker, Carolyn Famiglietti; and David Russo (HDSC), Marilynne Roach (HDSC) , Joyce Kelly (HDSC)

Members Absent: Robert Childs

Staff Present: Christopher Hayward, Daphne Collins

Public Present: (See Sign-In Form)

Steiner chaired.

1. 917 Belmont Street Historic District Study – Ongoing Preparation of the Preliminary Study Report

Steiner presented for inclusion to the record an updated schematic of the chronology of additions to 917 Belmont Street prepared by Russo.

Presentation of Survey Results – Collins reported that the completed Survey Questionnaire with comments had been received from the property owner. She summarized its contents. Collins reported that the Methodology Section of the *Draft Preliminary Report of the Proposed 917 Belmont Street Historic District* – Dated 10/24/12 (*Preliminary Report*) had been updated to reflect the survey results. In addition, she noted that the completed Survey Questionnaire was included in the Attachment section of the *Preliminary Report*.

Proposed Amendment Language of the Historic District Ordinance – Steiner presented the following language, developed in consultation with Chris Skelly at MHC, which would allow the creation of 917 Belmont Street Historic District for review and consideration:

Section III(a) - There is hereby established under the provision of G.L. c. 40C a historic district to be known as the 917 Belmont Street Historic District, which is described on a plan known as "Proposed 917 Belmont Street, Watertown Historic District," dated XXXX, filed with the Town Clerk and the South Middlesex Registry of Deeds.

Steve Tannenbaum, Board Member of the Walker School owner of the property, highlighted sections of the Historic District Ordinance 0-2002-16 of concern. Tannenbaum objected to Section II. He felt it was not applicable to 917 Belmont Street.

Tannenbaum requested clarification to Section IV regarding HDC membership. Collins responded that the language of the Ordinance would allow for the owner of 917 Belmont Street HD to be considered for appointment. However, under the Conflict of Interest Law an appointee has to recuse themselves from items regarding their or abutting properties that come before the HDC.

Tannenbaum requested a clarification on Section VI what financial threshold constituted a "Certificate of Hardship" because of the owner's financial challenges.

Tannenbaum questioned what architectural time period would have to be followed for proposed changes under Section VII. Steiner responded that structure as it is on the day of the establishment of the Historic District will become the reference point to proposed changes.

Steiner requested that Tannenbaum submit his comments and concerns regarding the HD Ordinance in writing.

Vote: Sternberg moved to amend the existing Historic District Ordinance to include Section IIIa - language for the proposed 917 Belmont Street Historic District. Hecker seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Proposed Amendment to the Design Review Guidelines (DRG) - Russo submitted revisions to the existing DRG applicable to 917 Belmont Street for discussion and consideration. Hard copies were made available to the HC, to the owner and public (see attached). Russo presented his revisions and rationale. Russo suggested that the HDC provide flexibility and allowances in the proposed DRG in consideration of the school owner's usage.

Tannenbaum noted that the property owner needed to respond quickly to site and student security concerns in particular when making decisions on lighting and fencing. Tannenbaum also raised concerns about the ability to install temporary signage for school events.

Steiner requested that Tannenbaum submit his comments and concerns regarding the DRG in writing.

The following amendments were made to the existing DRG to develop the proposed 917 Belmont Street DRG:

Section 5.3 – Remove

Section 5.4 – All roofing should be repaired or replicated in kind.

Section 5.5 – Remove

Section 10.1 - A public hearing before the Commission is not required to repaint a wooden building or structure. We encourage you to consider color and finish consistent with buildings of the same age to promote historical integrity.

Section 15.1 - Traditional materials (wood, cast or wrought iron, granite and stone) are recommended.

Section 17.1 – Remove

Section 18.2 – Remove

Section 21.1 - Outbuildings, including but not limited to garages, sheds, greenhouses, gazebos and swimming pools, are subject to approval if they are visible from a public way or place. Visually filling the lot from side to side with house and outbuildings detracts from the landscape component of the historic streetscape, and is not appropriate. The Commission will consider size, scale and placement of the outbuilding(s) itself, as well as its/their relation to the lot size and other structures on the lot.

Section 22.2 - The Commission will consider the appropriateness of the size, massing, scale, height, and shape of the building or structure in relation to the land area upon which the building or structure is situated. The Commission may impose dimensional and set-back requirements in addition to those required by Watertown's Zoning Ordinance.

Section 22.6 - New construction should respect the existing historic streetscape. The historic relationship of buildings to the street, including setbacks and open spaces, should be maintained.

Vote: Famiglietti moved to accept the revisions to the existing Design Review Guidelines to create the Proposed 917 Belmont Street Historic District Design Review Guidelines. Hecker seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Vote: Sternberg moved to accept the Draft Preliminary Study Report of the Proposed 917 Belmont Street Historic District (10.24.12). Famiglietti seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

2. August 29, 2012 HDSC Minutes & September Minutes – Approved.

3. Old Business – None

4. New Business – None

Meeting Adjourned at 8:45pm

ATTACHMENT

General Design Guidelines Revisions – by David Russo

Materials

Synthetic or imitation materials (such as vinyl, and in some cases, aluminum, etc.) are not appropriate and will normally not be approved. As new materials are developed that are indistinguishable from natural or traditional products, the Commission will consider their use on a case-by-case basis.

1.0 Doors

1.1 In general, existing original or later appropriate doors visible from a public way should be retained and repaired wherever possible, including fanlights, sidelights, surrounds, canopies, transoms, and other features which the doorway comprises. The original entrance design and arrangement of door openings should be retained. Enlarging or reducing entrance/door openings for the purpose of fitting stock doors (larger or smaller) will not generally be approved.

1.2 If an applicant concludes that an existing door cannot be repaired or is an inappropriate door, the proposed replacement door should be made of wood and, if glazed with muntin bars, have true divided lights.

1.3 Original hardware should be maintained, including locks, hinges, door knockers, mail slots, etc.

2.0 Windows

2.1 Original or later windows, trim and features should be retained and repaired except in cases when they are beyond repair. The complete replacement of all windows in a building in which only some are in disrepair will not generally be approved. Retrofitting original window sashes with weather-stripping and/or insulated glass is encouraged.

2.2 When a determination has been made that the window is beyond repair, the replacement must be based on physical, photographic, or documentary evidence. The replacement window shall be all wood, and of the same dimensions for muntin and frame, same design, and same number of panes as the original or existing window. For new construction, windows should be wood, true divided light. Single-paned, historically accurate, true divided light wood windows are most appropriate, but simulated divided light windows may be considered depending on age, significance, and prominence of structure. Windows with snap-in or removable muntins not supporting glass will not ordinarily be approved. Vinyl, aluminum or metal replacement sash, (including metal-clad or vinyl-clad) are not generally appropriate. No vinyl or clad windows shall replace wood windows. The number of lights within a window (e.g., 6/6, or 2/2) should be consistent with the original units, if present, or with the number of lights historically used

in the period. The style of the window should be consistent with the architectural style of the building or addition.

2.3 Stained glass or decorative windows should be retained.

3.0 Shutters

3.1 If appropriate for the building, existing shutters and hardware shall be retained and repaired whenever possible. Shutter removal requires approval. Where replacement is necessary, new shutters shall match original or be of an appropriate type for the building. Shutters shall be made of wood. Vinyl, aluminum or metal shutters are not permitted.

3.2 Shutters should reflect their original use. Their size should be such that they cover the entire window when closed (arched windows should have arched shutters, etc.). Base shutter dimensions on window dimensions. Hang shutters so as to appear operable. The slats should point up when shutters are open, and down when closed over the window.

4.0 Awnings

4.1 Awnings may be allowed if appropriate for the style of the building.

5.0 Roofs

5.1 The roof shape and slope shall be preserved as integral to the period of the building.

5.2 In new construction, harmonious roof pitches are a major consideration. The roof shape, slope, and materials should be appropriate to the style of building or structure.

~~5.3 Slate is an important historical material. Its maintenance and repair is encouraged.~~

~~5.4 All roofing should be repaired or replicated in kind, including decorative patterns and style.~~

~~5.5 All decorative metal, such as iron cresting, finials and weathervanes should be retained.~~

5.6 Roof top HVAC and other mechanical elements, including soundproofing elements, should be placed out of view.

5.7 Skylights should be placed out of view. Skylights, if approved, should be minimized in both number and size. In no case will a “bubble-type” skylight be approved.

6.0 Dormers

6.1 Dormers are an important element contributing to the total architectural look and style of the structure. Changes should be undertaken carefully. Dormers that were part of the original design should not be altered in scale or form. New dormers should match

existing ones and should correspond in style with the architectural features of the building. Dormers should be small in scale, and facades visible from the public way should not appear as though an additional story has been added. The original proportions of the roof should be retained.

7.0 Chimneys

7.1 Chimneys are distinctive roof features and should be retained in most cases. Chimneys should not be altered, shortened, or removed, but rather, repaired as necessary. Even if an interior fireplace is to be removed, every effort should be made to retain the existing exterior stack. Bricks and mortar should match the existing materials. Details of chimney work, to scale, and samples of brick and mortar must be submitted. The retention of original historic brick materials is encouraged.

8.0 Gutters

8.1 The preference is to replace like with like, such as wood gutters with wood. However, if gutters are being replaced it is preferred that the gutters be replaced with the material that would have been present when the structure was first built.

8.2 Gutters may be of wood, copper, painted aluminum, or galvanized steel. Unpainted mill-finished aluminum is generally not appropriate for flashing, gutters and downspouts.

8.3 In older buildings, gutters were often designed as part of the eave profile. In these cases, the gutters become a particularly important architectural feature and should be repaired whenever possible; if they are beyond repair, they should be replaced with like materials and design. Hung gutters (those not designed as part of the eave) should be as unobtrusive as possible. Downspouts should not obstruct the view of the structure's corner wall elements.

9.0 Masonry and Stucco

9.1 Original masonry and mortar should be retained, wherever possible, without the application of any surface treatment. Old mortar should be duplicated in composition, color, and texture. New mortar should reproduce original in joint profile and size.

9.2 Care must be taken in repointing to match the existing joint width and to avoid overcutting of the joints. Joints should not be overfilled with mortar onto the face of brick.

9.3 Replacement brick and mortar should be carefully matched in size and color to the originals, and follow traditional brick coursing if visible from a public way.

9.4 Foundations should be repaired or extended with the materials of the existing foundation.

9.5 Existing stucco should be repaired with stucco mixture that duplicates the original in appearance, i.e., color and texture.

9.6 The applicant will be required to provide a sample of proposed masonry materials.

9.7 Sandblasting should not be used to clean brick because of the resulting “pitting” of the brick surface and potential other damage. Gentler cleaning methods shall be used.

10.0 Painting Wood Exteriors

10.1 A public hearing before the Commission is not required to repaint a wooden building or structure. We encourage you to consider color and finish **consistent with buildings of the same age** ~~compatibility with adjacent structures in choosing your colors and finish~~ to promote visual harmony of the streetscape **historical integrity**.

11.0 Siding

11.1 Appropriate siding materials are clapboard, brick, stucco, and on certain historical styles, wood shingles.

11.2 Original siding material should be retained whenever possible and deteriorated material repaired or replaced with new material that duplicates the original as closely as possible.

11.3 The removal of non-original siding materials, trim and imitation wood clapboards such as vinyl and aluminum is encouraged.

11.4 Artificial siding, including, but not limited to, vinyl, aluminum, asphalt, and artificial brick and stone, are not appropriate in the historic district.

11.5 Trim and detailing should not be removed.

11.6 Replacement wood siding or shingles should replicate the materials, dimensions, detailing and patterns of the original.

12.0 Steps, Stairways, Railings

12.1 Steps, stairways and railings are important features of entryways and porches. Where possible, original features and detailing should be retained or repaired in the same design and material. When existing features are not original, replacement design and materials should be appropriate to the style of the building.

12.2 Deteriorated or missing elements and decorative ornamentation shall be replaced with materials and elements to match original, or be appropriate to the original.

12.3 Stonework may be repaired, replaced or extended using the existing type of stone or brick. New work should be appropriate to the period and character of the building.

12.4 Railings may be wood or wrought iron. A drawing of railing design must be provided.

13.0 Walkways

13.1 The Commission recommends that brick, stone, gravel, plain concrete or exposed aggregate concrete are appropriate materials in most cases for walkways. Asphalt is discouraged and concrete and asphalt made to simulate other material is not acceptable. Although walkways at grade level do not require a public hearing, the Commission encourages you to follow the guidelines set forth above.

14.0 Stone and Masonry Walls

14.1 Stone and masonry walls are distinctive features of historic homes and should be maintained.

14.2 The design of new walls, including retaining walls, should be appropriate in scale, architectural style, and material, to the building, its site, and the surrounding properties. Walls should not prevent or restrict public views of buildings. Brick walls should use historically appropriate brick. Bricks and mortar joints should be compatible with the building in color, aggregate and joint profile. Stone walls may be dry laid or set in a mortar that is historically appropriate in color, aggregate and joint profile.

15.0 Fences

15.1 Architecturally significant fences should be maintained and repaired or restored whenever possible. Iron fences, and original ornate wooden fences should be maintained. Traditional materials (wood, cast or wrought iron, granite and stone) are recommended.

15.2 The following are not appropriate in the historic district when visible from a public way: (i) plastic or vinyl fences, (ii) chain link fences, (iii) split rail fences, (iv) stockade fences, (v) lattice fences, except as a side or rear yard garden element.

15.3 The design of fences should be appropriate in scale and architectural style to the building, its site, and the surrounding properties. New fences should not prevent or restrict public views of buildings.

15.4 Fences, which are subject to review and must have a Certificate of Appropriateness to be erected, should not obscure the view of the house from the street. New front fences and the front yard portion of side fences should be open in character so as not to create visual barriers.

~~15.5 When a fence is proposed in front of a building, it should be open and low so as not to block the public view. Fences should be compatible with the existing building in material, proportion, style and historic period and should enhance the streetscape.~~

~~15.6 More solid, taller fences may be appropriate to provide privacy or safety but should be located where they have minimal visual impact from public streets, ways or places.~~

~~15.7 Where privacy is an issue, we suggest a “living” fence or hedge. Plantings are not subject to review by the Commission.~~

16.0 Lighting

~~16.1 All lighting and lighting fixture changes visible from a public street, way or place are subject to review, including but not limited to:~~

- ~~a) Lighting fixtures as an appurtenance to the structure (such as on a building exterior, porch, deck, pathway, driveway, post, and any area visible to the public), as elements of the landscape, and elements of architectural ornamentation;~~
- ~~b) Quality of illumination on the site and on building exteriors;~~
- ~~c) The intensity and distribution of light is also taken into account, particularly as it affects neighboring properties and the ambience of the district; and~~
- ~~d) Illumination of signs.~~

~~16.2 Any lighting plan and its total effect on the property should be carefully considered. Give thought to the task or activity that requires illumination and to the minimum amount of light needed.~~

~~16.3 Up-lighting, such as for facades, signs, fountains, and landscaping, are generally not appropriate.~~

~~16.4 Lighting of entire building facades is limited to special cases of buildings that are considered community landmarks. Lighting of the landscape or “wash” lighting of buildings or trees is not permitted. Planned “on-all-night” lighting is not appropriate in the historic district.~~

17.0 Light Fixtures

~~17.1 Original light fixtures, where they survive, can be important and rare architectural features, contributing significantly to the structure’s historic resource value. For this reason, original or later appropriate light fixtures should be retained, and if possible, repaired using recognized preservation methods. Deteriorated or missing elements should be replaced, if possible, with like materials. Replacement should be based, if possible, on physical or documentary evidence.~~

17.2 New light fixtures should be of a design and scale that is appropriate to the style and period of the building rather than imitate styles earlier than the building or structure. Historical style lighting fixtures may appear appropriate in the daylight, but many of these authentic-looking fixtures are among the worst in creating nighttime glare from their unshielded lamps or bulbs.

17.3 Lamps (light bulbs), in general, should be fully shielded inside the fixture so that the lamp is not visible from adjacent buildings, pedestrians, and motorists. It may be appropriate in some cases to have a low lumen lamp (25 watts incandescent) as an alternative. Many historic-style (non-original) fixtures can be easily altered to shield the lamp. In the best case, light is ordinarily directed below the horizontal plane of the fixture (typically referred to as a "full cut-off" fixture). Light should be maintained on the property, not spilling beyond the bounds of the property line.

18.0 Signs

18.1 New and additional signs are subject to review by the Commission. The basic design, color, size and scale of a sign will be reviewed to determine whether it integrates with the architectural character of a building and the streetscape. Wooden signs are appropriate in the historic districts. Synthetic signs are generally not appropriate. Sign lighting is rarely appropriate. If proposed, the lighting should be in keeping with the style of the sign and appropriate to the business it represents. Lighting should illuminate the sign with as little spillage as possible.

18.2 Signage for commercial properties is also subject to review by the Commission in addition to any other permitting requirements.

19.0 Fire Escapes

19.1 Fire escapes should be designed and constructed with the same attention required for other major alterations. The Commission recommends that to the extent possible, fire escapes be placed where least visible from a public way, and as necessary, landscaping be added for screening purposes.

20.0 Modern Equipment

20.1 Modern equipment includes utility and other mechanical equipment located outside a building and visible from a public way, including but not limited to, antennas, cellular towers, satellite dishes, propane and other tanks, dumpsters, utility meters, alarm systems, HVAC equipment (including but not limited to air conditioners, heating units, ducts, fans, and solar collectors) and associated mounting devices, strapping, fasteners, cables, and related equipment.

20.2 Modern equipment should, in general, be as small and inconspicuous as possible.

20.3 All modern equipment should be installed in locations which (a) create the least disturbance to the historical appearance of the building, (b) involve the least additional structural alterations, and (c) are screened, hidden or otherwise shielded from view to the extent possible.

20.4 Modern equipment placed on the ground should be sited in the rear of the building and may be screened by vegetation, walls or fences. Front yard locations are strongly discouraged. If modern equipment is mounted on a roof, it should be located behind chimneys, sloped roofs and parapets or placed in the central portion of flat roofs behind sight lines as seen from ground level or other portions of the roof not visible from any public way. Flues and vents should be concealed in chimneys or cupolas. Electrical wires and other cables should be run inside the building, underground, or along the foundation.

20.5 Modern equipment should be painted to blend in with the building and surroundings, when possible.

20.6 Utilities should be underground, where possible.

20.7 Seasonal air-conditioning units do not require a Certificate of Appropriateness, but the Commission encourages discreet placement at the rear or sides of the building.

20.9 Applications to the Commission for approval of modern equipment shall specify the location, dimensions, and describe outward appearance of all such equipment.

21.0 Outbuildings

21.1 Outbuildings, including but not limited to garages, sheds, greenhouses, gazebos and swimming pools, are subject to approval if they are visible from a public way or place. Visually filling the lot from side to side with house and outbuildings detracts from the landscape component of the historic streetscape, and is not appropriate. The Commission will consider size, scale and placement of the outbuilding(s) itself, as well as its/their relation to the lot size and other structures on the lot ~~and adjacent and nearby lots.~~

22.0 Additions and New Construction

22.1 The Commission will review all proposed alterations of, and additions to, existing structures and all new construction.

22.2 The Commission will consider the appropriateness of the size, massing, scale, height, and shape of the building or structure ~~both~~ in relation to the land area upon which the building or structure is situated ~~and to buildings and structures in the vicinity.~~ The Commission may impose dimensional and set-back requirements in addition to those required by Watertown's Zoning Ordinance.

22.3 Individual features such as doors and windows should be compatible in proportion, size, shape, location, and pattern with similar features on other contributing structures in the District.

Additions

22.4 Alterations and additions should be compatible with the character of the building and earlier additions in terms of size, scale, massing, material, location and detail.

22.5 New additions should be designed in a manner that makes clear what is historic and what is new. The original portion of the building and additions should continue to be recognizable. Additions should be designed so that the character of the existing building is not radically changed, obscured, damaged, destroyed, or rendered subordinate to the addition. Additions should be subservient to the original structure; be differentiated from the existing building (i.e., set back from the existing wall plane); not obstruct the visual integrity of the original structure; be in harmony with the original in size, scale, style and materials; and be located where least visible from public view. The streetscape should also be considered in the design of additions.

New Construction

22.6 New construction should respect the existing historic streetscape. The historic relationship of buildings to the street ~~and to other properties in the District~~, including setbacks and open spaces, should be maintained.

22.7 The style of architecture, materials, the composition and the architectural details of new construction will be reviewed by the Commission.

23.0 Demolition

23.1 There is a presumption in favor of retaining all existing buildings and structures. Demolition or removal of a building or structure located in the Historic District (whether or not the structure is subject to public view) requires approval from the Commission prior to the issuance of a demolition permit. The Commission will consider approval only if the building or structure to be demolished has no historic or architectural merit or historic relationship to the Historic District.

Removal and relocation shall be considered only as an alternative to demolition.

23.2 If an application for a demolition permit is based upon structural instability or deterioration, the applicant shall provide a technical report prepared by an architect or engineer registered in Massachusetts detailing the nature and extent of the problems and a reasonably adequate estimate of the cost to correct them.

23.3 Where a new building or structure will replace a building or structure to be demolished or removed, approval of the new structure by the Commission is required as a condition to demolition approval. In addition to the plans and specifications ordinarily

required for a new building or structure, the applicant shall submit a timetable and such other guarantees and assurances for the completion and replacement of the building or structure as the Commission may require.

24.0 Amendments and Severability

24.1 The Commission reserves the right to amend these Guidelines.

24.2 If any part of these guidelines is deemed to be invalid, illegal or unconstitutional, then that part shall be severed from the text and the remaining section of the Guidelines shall continue to be in full force and effect.