



CITY OF WATERTOWN
Historical Commission
Administration Building
149 Main Street
WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02472

Elise Loukas, Chair
Marilynne K. Roach, Member
Joseph Panto, Member
Matthew Walter, Member
Richard Glenn, Member
Edward G. McCourt, Member
Jamie Gordon, Member

Minutes: Thursday, July 10, 2025, HYBRID Meeting 7:00 p.m.- Locations, Zoom and Third Floor Conference Room

Historical Commission Members Present: Elise Loukas, Marilynne Roach, Edward McCourt, Matthew Walter

Member(s) Absent: Joseph Panto, Richard Glenn, Jamie Gordon

Public Present: Lisa Feltner, City Councilor, Miljana Ojdrovic, Peter Ojdrovic, Aleksander Ojdrovic, Julie White, Joyce, Liz, Adriana

Staff Present: Larry Field, Senior Planner, Susan C. Jenness, Assistant

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1. **Call to Order**
 2. **Roll Call**
 3. **Acceptance of Minutes-**

A. Review and acceptance of Minutes from May 8, 2025 Historical Commission Remote Meeting

The minutes from the May 8, 2025, the Historical Commission Remote Meeting were reviewed. There were no modifications requested.

Motion- McCourt made a motion to accept the minutes of May 8, 2025, meeting as

submitted. Walter seconded the motion.

Roll Call- Commissioners were polled and all present agreed with the motion made by McCourt.

B. Review and acceptance of Minutes from the June 26, 2025 Historical Commission Remote Meeting

The minutes from the June 26, 2025, meeting were reviewed. There were no modifications requested.

Motion- Roach made a motion to accept the minutes of June 26, 2025, meeting as submitted. McCourt seconded the motion.

Roll Call- Commissioners were polled and all present agreed with the motion made by Roach.

4. Public Hearing-

- a. This hearing was continued at the May 8, 2025, meeting, to determine if the house at **12-Wheeler Lane** is preferably preserved and if a delay will be imposed. Miljana Bovan/Peter Bova, Applicant/Owner

Miljana Bovan presented submissions showing the existing conditions of the house in response to Commissioner concerns voiced at the last meeting. Bovan also updated Commissioners on the work that had been done in response to the issues and concerns brought up by the Commissioners and members of the public, at the May 8, 2025, public hearing.

Bovan reported that the new elevations were drafted to incorporate suggestions that were made by the City's on-call, third-party consultant architect. Bovan revealed that two new peaks were added to the façade of the house, along with a larger front entryway door, and the number of units in the new structure were reduced from six to five after meeting with Planning staff and the architectural consultant.

In reference to the existing issues in the house, Bovan referred to the photos in the submission depicting a bulging stone wall, the previous electrical fire, and gas leak at the home. She summarized that restoration of the existing structure, given all the issues with the present condition, was not an option, and a demolition delay would not serve the greater good.

At the close of her presentation, Bovan assured commissioners their new design was designed to complement the other homes in the neighborhood, is designed to be energy efficient and eco-friendly, and it is going to add much needed additional housing to the City.

Commission Questions

McCourt asked Bovan if her new plans had addressed the vernacular of the architectural issues and the concerns raised at the last meeting. Bovan and Ojdrovic explained that they changed the flat roof to have two gable peaks, they have a larger front door and a different approach on the parking, all of which were based on suggestions made by the City's architect. They said the revised design made it more consistent with the neighborhood. McCourt thought fitting 5 parking spaces under the building was still a lot and wondered how adding more cars to the street would impact neighbors, referring to a neighbor who spoke at the earlier meeting about cars traveling at high rates of speed on the street.

Roach, and Walter had no questions.

Loukas stated that nothing in the inspection report identified anything unfixable, nor did the report compare the cost of repair vs. new construction. Ojdrovic replied that the fieldstone wall is bulging, the building needs a new foundation, there are no bathrooms near the bedrooms (requiring the occupants to use narrow, dangerous stairs at night), the house needs all new plumbing, electricity, and the windows and walls are rotting. He concluded that nothing in the building is worth saving. He listed items from the report, sills rotted, foundation falling apart and bulging, roof sagging, electrical fire, failing sewer system and rotted wood in a windowsill encased in asbestos. Bovan stated they wanted to create an eco-friendly structure that fits in the neighborhood.

Public Comments

There were no comments to add from the public.

Commission Discussion

McCourt said he was not sold on the style of the building addressing the vernacular of the architecture, he was not happy about the potential for additional congestion on the street and not keen on so many apartments, adding to the existing problems on the street.

Roach said the building was in tough shape and it had been badly cared for. However, she noted that Wheeler Lane was designed with identical buildings and demolishing this house would greatly impact the neighborhood look. She thought the latest design was better but still departs from the original style.

Walter said this building did not rise to the significance that merits saving and just because it is fixable, does not necessarily mean it should be saved. He acknowledged Roach's point about the neighborhood's similar buildings but thought this did not rise to the level needed for historical significance. He said the new building would be more beneficial to the city than the existing one.

and pointed out that many of the comments were really about issues that should be addressed during the permitting phase.

Loukas said this is an old house like lots of others that need new plumbing, and wiring. Walter said he would agree with Loukas that the cost of modernizing plumbing and wiring in an old house is not sufficient reason to demolish it—if the house was historically significant. Loukas said she was hoping that the applicant would provide financial data to help the Commission understand the costs of repair vs. building a new house. Loukas said that sometimes the cost of repair is so high that it has made a difference to the Commission.

Loukas and Walter exchanged perspectives on the application. Loukas said she believes the house is significant, but in weighing whether it is preferably preserved, she was hoping to get more information on the relative costs. Walter said he does not think cost estimates are reliable and, instead, he is focused more on whether the historical significance is enough to second-guess the owner's interest in demolition. Loukas noted that a delay gives the Commission time to work with the owners and see whether the building can be preserved in whole or in part.

Motion- McCourt made a motion that the house at 12-Wheeler Lane was preferably preserved. Roach seconded the motion.

Roll Call- Walter was against the motion, all others were in favor, so the motion passed 3-1.

Walter suggested that the vote on demolition delay be delayed because only four of the seven commissioners are present. Loukas noted that they would not be permitted to vote anyway, because they missed this meeting. Loukas said she called members before the meeting to confirm their attendance.

Loukas outlined the options for a vote on imposing demolition delay. She noted that a delay period can be lifted or shortened by the Commission. Walter said that a delay in this case would accomplish nothing, in his opinion, because the applicants are clear they want to move forward with their proposed project. He added that a delay would not benefit the community and would be a mistake.

McCourt moved that a two-year delay be imposed. Roach said such a delay was pretty steep and thought that a delay of one year or less would be more appropriate to determine whether a preservation option could be found. McCourt suggested that Roach make a motion.

Motion- Roach made a motion that a one-year delay be imposed on the demolition to give time to work with the city. McCourt seconded the motion.

Roll Call- The vote was 3-1 in favor of the motion (Walter voted against). A one-year delay was imposed on the house at 12-Wheeler Lane.

Field made a brief Agent Report as follows. The Southside survey is now complete. Loukas and Field are discussing how to distribute the study to the public at large. Walter asked if there is a new project to focus on next. Field said there are some ideas being discussed. McCourt asked if Commissioners could get copies and Field agreed to send out copies by email to Commissioners.

The remainder of agenda items were tabled to the September 11, 2025, Historical Commission meeting.

Adjournment

Motion- Walter made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 pm and McCourt seconded.

Roll Call- all those present agreed to adjourn the meeting.