

Minutes
Watertown Historical Commission
Thursday, November 14, 2013
Watertown Lower Hearing Room
7:00 p.m.
Adopted December 12, 2013

Historical Commission Members Present: David J. Russo, J. B. Jones, Marilynne K. Roach, Thomas Melone, Susan T. Steele, Elisabeth H. Loukas

Member(s) Absent: Donald Berg

Staff Present: Christopher J. Hayward, Patricia Mihelich

David J. Russo chaired. The meeting opened at 7:00 p.m.

- 1. Public Hearing– 49 Chester Street** – Demolition Permit Application to demolish a garage not to be replaced. Applicant: Peter Georgopoulos; Owner: Dennis Dyer

Peter Georgopoulos, applicant, there are already 3 parking spaces on the property and the unused garage is taking up land space. He plans to demolish the structure and plant grass.

Jones identified that the building was built in 1924 for \$200.

Joanna Erickson, 48 Chester Road, supported the demolition of the garage but concerned about the renovations being done to the house.

Vote: Steele moved to find 49 Chester Road garage as not preferably preserved. Jones seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

- 2. Public Hearing – 192 Pleasant Street** – Demolition Permit Application to demolish a single story brick building in deteriorating condition to be replaced with seven townhouse units. Applicant: JW Construction; Owner: Pleasant Development.

Hans Stauch, architect for the applicant, reported that the structure on 192 Pleasant Street was built in 1950. All the structures on the property will be removed and they are building seven townhouse units that would add significant value to the property. The property is contaminated with mostly heating oil and will be cleaned up.

Colleen Sexton, 193 Pleasant Street, asked what is the time table regarding the demolition of the building?

Hayward informed her that they also have to come before the Conservation Board for approval of the new plans in December before the demolition can be done.

Melone felt that there is no beauty or value in the existing building to keep it and the new proposal was in keeping with the surrounding neighborhood.

Vote: Melone moved to find 192 Pleasant Street building as not preferably preserved. Steele seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

3. Public Hearing– 50 Church Street – Demolition Permit Application to demolish a two-family residence in deteriorating condition to be replaced with a new two-family residence.
Applicant/Owner: Carl Attardo.

Carl Attardo, applicant, stated that the condition of 50 Church Street is such that remodeling is not feasible. The present structure sits on the rear lot line and based on today's set back requirements it is not meeting the standards. Therefore we are asking for your approval to demolish.

Loukas asked him to go into detail as to why it is not feasible, such as what is exactly wrong with the house, is there termite or water damage? Are the floors sagging and the roof falling in? Is there mold and mildew? Attardo stated that the house does not have most of those problems but Ken Thompson, Watertown Building Inspector, inspected the building and in his opinion the house is not going to fall down but the interior is not desirable.

Jones felt that it would be easy to remodel and had Attardo consider doing that. Attardo stated that the cost would be a point of no return.

Russo – Are you the owner of the property? Attardo – No, we have a contract with the Real Estate Company. Russo – I did not see it on the multiple listing. Attardo – The house was not listed, I was contacted by the Real Estate agent. Russo – Is the present owner here? Attardo – I do not know. Present owner, Kathy Downs, then comes forward from the audience.

Downs proceeded to tell the board about the history and condition of the house. Her family bought the house in 1971. The original house was built sometime in the 1700's and over the years has continuously had different types of additions added, so much so there is no style to the house. The present condition is really poor, the floors are buckling and uneven, the foundation is in pieces. A water main broke this past April and there is damage from the break. There is a family of raccoons that inhabit the house.

Loukas inquired as to why Downs did not put the house on the market. Downs felt that the house was in such bad shape that it was a tear down. Russo responded that is not necessarily the case. Jones felt that there are a lot of people out there that would love to bring the house to its original Georgian state; this is an 18th Century house with bad additions. Downs invited the board to tour the house. The house has not been maintained.

Joanne Erickson, 48 Chester Street, supports the preservation of the house. The Church Street area is the center of historic Watertown and she feels that it is the target of a lot of developers. The house is 1840 and is one of the town's great treasures.

Alfred Flanagan, 56 Church Street, his fence does hit the house and there are a lot of raccoons on the property.

Lia Kirakossian, 56 Church Street, appreciates the historic value of the historic homes and should be preserved when beautiful. But this house is an eyesore and in horrible condition. There are no remnants of the old house visible.

Roach informed the board that the house was a past Town Librarian's, Mary McNally, childhood home. Russo said that the home was inventoried in 1982 by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and that the house was built between 1830 -1850, before the Civil War. Although Jones agrees with the owner regarding the existing condition of the house it is in fact not a strong reason to demolish it. The core of the house is still there and we could end up with a real jewel.

Russo asked if the historic nature significant enough to delay? Jones feels that it is significant that we need a delay so that we can do some research and review the information. Russo also feels that

Vote: Jones moved to determine that 50 Church Street is Preferably Preserved. Steele seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Vote: Jones moved to impose a 12 months demolition delay on 50 Church Street. Melone seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

The committee will visit the house on Sunday, November 17th at 2:30 p.m. and review the decision at the December meeting.

4. October Minutes – Approved

5. Discussion on adding historical information to Town's GIS database.

Steele noted that there has not been a lot of progress but met a woman from the UEP Department at Tufts University at Watertown Planning meeting. Steele drafted a letter to her that the Historic Commission would like to develop a useful GIS database and would they be interested in helping.

Next step is to work with the Planning Department and see what we might get started. As we go forward what areas of the town do we want to focus on? We should tag along with what the Town is doing and start simple.

6. Old Business

Russo will meet with Daedalus about doing an evaluation on the Arlington and Common Street Cemeteries. There was continued discussion about landscaping and planting.

Jones went to the Planning Board meeting which he made comments regarding the Bacon Street development.

Hayward presented the granite replica of the bronze plaque.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.