

**Minutes
Watertown Historical Commission
Thursday,
November 5, 2015
Town Council Chambers
7:00 p.m.**

Historical Commission Members Present: David J. Russo, Marilynne K. Roach, Thomas Melone, J.B. Jones, Donald S. Berg, Elise Loukas

Member(s) Absent: N/A

Staff Present: Christopher J. Hayward, Susan C. Jenness

(Adopted 12-10-15)

Russo chaired. The meeting opened at 7:00 p.m. with a description of the public hearing process for the Historical Commission (HC) by Russo.

1) Public Hearing Continuance – 301 Common St. - Request to demolish a 1-family dwelling built in approximately 1922. Proposed is a new 1 family residential dwelling. Vatche Seraderian, applicant/owner

Kenneth Leitner appeared on behalf of the applicant and owner. He stated that the owner plans to move back to Watertown to live in this home which he referred to as a nice gingerbread style home.

Commission Questions

Jones asked if they could schedule a site visit which had been previously anticipated and Steele agreed.

Leitner requested to move forward with the vote at the meeting that night and proposed he could return once the owner has plans to move forward with future plans for the home.

Loukas elected to abstain from the voting process for 301 Common St.

Public Comments-N/A

Commission Discussion

Russo commented that the house had been moved as he learned in his research there were a series of buildings at the bottom of the hill. This building was one of those and was probably built either in 1867 or 1871. Russo read through the list of previous owners.

Leitner stated that the owner would like new construction but he would discuss the possibility of other ideas including restoration of the structure.

Jones offered the HC would be happy to give him support with some ideas of what could be done with the existing house.

Melone agreed that the small rooms are consistent with classic cottage buildings of that period and how nice it would be to keep it.

Steele agreed it was a very interesting building.

Motion: Jones made a motion that the house at 301 Common St. was preferably preserved. Roach seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote which excluded Loukas was reached that 301 Common St. was preferably preserved.

Motion: Jones made a motion for a 12 month demolition delay. Roach seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote to the exclusion of Loukas was reached to delay the demolition of 301 Common St.

2) Public Hearing Continuance - 30 Fayette St - Request to demolish one side of a 2 family dwelling built in approximately 1919. Proposed is to build a new unit to match the other side of the dwelling. Junming Gao, applicant/owner

Gao, applicant and owner of the home, appeared on his own behalf. He referred HC members to the recently filed amended proposed plan which was submitted consistent with the suggestions made by the commission at the last meeting. The new plan featured a gable which had been moved 2 feet.

Commission Discussion

Russo appreciated the 1841 presentation and saltbox roof line and said he felt very comfortable with that. Jones was in agreement with Russo's statements.

Russo reminded HC that a delay had been imposed and that now they could entertain lifting the delay.

Motion: A motion was made by Steele to lift the delay at 30 Fayette St. based on the newly submitted proposed elevations discussed by the HC at the November 5, 2015 meeting. Jones seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to lift the delay at 30 Fayette St based on the newly submitted proposed elevations discussed at the November 5, 2015 meeting.

3) Public Hearing - 276 Waverley Ave - Request to raze the existing single family, two story residence and garage. Proposed is a two story, two family dwelling. Naim Khoury, applicant/owner

Leitner explained that during the July Meeting this home was found preferably preserved. He said that the new owner had spent time and money to prepare new plans which had been received by members of the commission. He explained how the new owner canvassed the neighborhood and spoken to the owner of 275 and 277 Waverley Ave.

The new elevations include a street scape both on Harnden Ave. and Waverley Ave. He pointed out that the shutters and dormers have been enhanced to match the neighborhood and also mentioned the changes to the window. The view from Waverly Ave. has maintained its' symmetry and the architect broke up the side walls to add details.

Leitner asked that the commission reconsider the delay previously imposed.

Motion: Steele made a motion that the building at 276 Waverly Ave is not preferably preserved. Melone seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached that 276 Waverly Ave is not preferably preserved.

4) Public Hearing - 134 Edenfield Ave. - Request to demolish a single family bungalow and garage, built in approximately 1925. Proposed is a new 2 unit townhouse. Robert Marshal, applicant/owner

Anthony Cardillo representing Mr. Marshal is also buying the home from the owner. He acknowledged the signature of Mr. Marshall on the plans.

He stated that the house was built in 1925 as a bungalow ranch style, and that the house has had 4 other owners over the years, while no owners have significant histories to mention. The house is in the T-Zone, there are about 7 other bungalows and all were built somewhere in the 1920's.

He explained that the basement floods frequently, the roof is in the state of deterioration and that there is a mold problem inside the house

He described that he would like to build a new 2 condo unit townhouse of new construction, while preserving key features of the current house. He intends to keep the gables roof and incorporate covered porches. The footprint of the new construction will be less that what is there now. There will be 2 driveways instead of one.

Mr.Cardillo showed pictures of 136 Edenfield which is a house he recently built to show his finished product.

Commission Comments

Melone pointed out that 136 is similar but not entirely the same

Jones mentioned that the street scape is about to lose a bungalow.

Public Comments

Robert McCarthy-165 Lexington St. resident. He stated that his rear yard abuts this house. He felt like there is a trend of single family houses being bought and developed into many additional units. He said he had the same kinds of issues Cardillo has with his house when he bought it, but explained that he was able to abate them without demolishing the house. He also works in the construction business himself.

Mark McAndrew of 136 Edenfield Ave.-He stated that he owns a single family bungalow purchased in March of 2011. His family had a desire to live in this neighborhood as it was when they bought the house. He has spent significant money and time to improve his single family home. He said if he knew then what he knows now, he would not have purchased his current home. He apologized for getting emotional.

Commission Comments

Loukas explained that we have grappled before with changing the character of neighborhoods and if we allow this 2 family to go in where there was a 1 family, well, this is shifting the character of the neighborhood. She went on to explain that she is at the point where she is growing increasingly concerned about this standard. Enough is enough she remarked.

Jones warned the residents in attendance that this was a zoning problem and that abutters should be calling on their councilors. He explained that this was not an unreasonable plan or an unreasonable proposal at all.

Motion: Steele made a motion that the house at 134 Edenfield Ave. is preferably preserved. Melone seconded the motion.

Vote: A Unanimous vote was reached that the house at 134 Edenfield Ave. is preferably preserved.

Motion: Loukas made a motion to enter a 12 month delay at 134 Edenfield Ave. and to schedule a site visit for the commission to see the house and neighborhood. Melone seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to enter a 12 month demolition delay at 134 Edenfield Ave and to schedule a site visit for commission members.

Cardillo asked to address the commission about the possibility of setting up a site visit. He was allowed to discuss with the HC. He expressed interested in scheduling a date and time that would enable him to get on the December 10, 2015 meeting agenda.

Cardillo will be in touch with the Conservation Office to schedule the visit.

5) Invitation to Comment – Proposal to locate T-Mobile USA communication antennas on the building at 519 Arsenal St. – EBI Consulting.

The invitation was briefly discussed. The commission passed on making comment.

6) Minutes - October 8, 2015-Minutes from October 8, 2015 were adopted with minor modification.

7) Old Business-

Steele reminded members of the commission about the Preserving Our Neighborhood Event now scheduled to take place next Thursday evening, November 12th at 68 Waverly Ave.

She explained that David Gamble will likely talk about what they learned from the public processes focusing on Design Guidelines. She anticipated that he would talk about the tools that would be available so that we can use them in the cause of neighborhood preservation.

917 Belmont St. was briefly discussed. There was an agreement what had been entered and was meant to be at the registry of deeds. Russo went to the registry and it was not listed there.

Loukas summarized the next steps to be taken as the following.

- a) To find an answer about what actually happened.
- b) To make a decision on how it will get fixed.
- c) We need to get a copy of the agreement as soon as possible.

Agent Hayward responded that he has access to the deed and agreed that he would get a copy to the commission members in the morning. Hayward also informed them that there were only two people who were working on the repair project for 917 Belmont St. being himself and Steve Magoon, Director of Community Planning and Assistant Town Manager so that it would take some time or additional help.

8) New Business

Future of Branch Libraries discussion

A casual discussion progressed about what HC members had been learning about the recent condition of the closed town libraries. It was believed that in 2011 a committee was formed to oversee the North Branch and perhaps the East Branch.

HC discussed potential ideas that would lead to finding appropriate occupants interested in using the buildings and would also be able to afford funding for the eventual repair and restoration of the buildings which were referred to as treasures of the town history.

HC was interested in attending a site visit with Steve Magoon, the Director of Community Development and Planning.

The Agent said he would speak to Magoon about scheduling dates and times when he would be available to attend a visit with commission members.

Discussion on invitation to partner with Watertown Housing Authority for providing historical art work and historical lectures for Senior and Disabled residents of public housing.

The Conservation Clerk addressed the HC that she had recently received two telephone calls from a member of the staff at the Watertown Housing Authority. She had been informed that the Housing Authority is interested in showcasing historical photos of the town in two buildings which house elderly and disabled residents in the town. In addition to the request for donation or lending of art work, there was an additional request to explore the possibility of having guest speakers who would come and hold events for the residents of the building to come and learn about the history of the town.

Melone volunteered to connect with the representative from Watertown Housing Authority to discuss the ideas and concepts and to explore the potential for the Historical Commission and perhaps the Historical Society to be of service to the elderly and disabled in this cause.

Meeting adjourned.