

**Minutes
Watertown Historical Commission
Thursday,
December 11, 2014
Lower Hearing Room
7:00 p.m.**

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

Member(s) Absent: None

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

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

1) Public Hearing – 202-204 Pleasant St. – Demolition permit for a 20x20 Cinder Block Garage to create a landscape area. Matt Keys, applicant/owner.

Matthew Keys presented. The garage in discussion abuts the river path and new construction which Keys referred to as dilapidated. The garage formerly abutted the old industrial property that used to be there. Keys stated that the garage now sticks out like a sore thumb. The owner knows of no architectural or historical significance of the building.

Commission member Jones asked Keys if he planned to replace the garage. Keys is not rebuilding and has planned only for green space which he feels will blend in better with the development of the area.

Commission member Berg agreed that more green space is good.

The public meeting is closed.

Historical Commission (HC) Discussion-Berg stated that he felt the cinder block structure had no redeeming qualities and re-stated that more green space is good and would benefit the property.

Melone stated that the structure will appear more consistent in the area without the garage.

Motion: Berg made a motion that the building is not preferably preserved. Roach seconded.

Vote: Unanimous vote that the building is not preferably preserved.

Public Hearing is closed.

- 2) **Public Hearing - 162 Arsenal Street – Demolition permit for a Block Building w/ Garage Doors for a new project approved by Zoning.** Edward Nardi, Cresset W/S Venture LLC, applicant/owner.

Ed Nardi presented for Cresset W/S Venture LLC. The request is to demo a 2 bay garage that fronts along Arsenal Street and is adjacent to another single story block building occupied by Peter Fuller. He is not aware of any historical or architectural value of the building which now serves as a storage area for Peter Fuller which he believes has no utilities inside at this time.

In the spring Crescett W/S Venture LLC obtained a special permit for a mixed use development which is to be a 35,000 sq. ft. retail space along with a 297 unit multifamily apartment complex as depicted in submissions. 162 Arsenal will be part of the multifamily complex, part and parcel of the entire Crescett W/S Venture LLC project.

Melone was not clear about the location of this building or some surrounding buildings and their ages. Clarification was made by Nardi as to the ages of all the surrounding buildings for the commission.

HC Discussion- There was no discussion.

Motion- Jones made a motion that the building is not preferably preserved. Roach seconded the motion.

Vote: Unanimous vote that the building is not preferably preserved.

Public hearing is closed.

- 3) **Public Hearing – 76 Westminster Ave. – Demolition permit for one story single family house and detached garage to be removed for construction of a new two family dwelling.** Thornbush Properties, LLC, applicant/owner.

Doug Agule presented for Chatham Development who is developing the property for the owner. The building is a single family structure built in about 1950. Agule is not able to state any significant historical or architectural value of the building.

Jones asked how the height related to the development of the surrounding neighborhood. Agule replied it would be about 35 feet which would be a similar in height to other nearby structures. The new structure will be a two family development which fits in with the surrounding buildings as well.

HC Discussion- Loukas discussed what she believed to be the historic value of 76 Westminster Ave. which was the home of her former English teacher. Berg agreed as well.

Jones stated that he felt that the home is now somewhat of an anomaly where so much has been developed around it. Melone agreed.

Steele was happy to see Cedar being used in the new plans.

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

Vote: Unanimous vote that the building is not preferably preserved.

Public hearing is closed.

4) Single Family home demolitions in Two Family Zoned areas discussion.

The chairman, Russo passed around a Watertown zoning map from 1931 and discussed zoning from that period of time. Russo presented a similar map from 1935 zoning and followed with a discussion on the trends of zoning at that time. Russo presented a zoning map from 1979 and further discussed this map as well.

Russo stated that he brought along the maps and information to share in order to bring context into what is happening with zoning in Watertown today.

Discussions were held on various processes in place in which one is to seek permission to build and develop along with the proper channels for doing so.

The Design Guidelines were discussed as a means of defining elements which contribute to a neighborhood although the Design Guidelines will not deal with one and two family developments.

Jones expressed interest in exploring how the public views defining of a neighborhood.

Steele expressed interest in viewing a map of homes built in the 1800's so that the commission members could see if the homes were in clusters or patterns.

Roach wondered out loud if people knew the stories of how the historically and architecturally significant homes were built, if that would get more people interested in the historical preservation.

The Chairman stated that it needs to be known by the HC what is to be preserved as the town council expects the commission to preserve.

Steele made reference to the video of the Somerville planner talked about during the November meeting who has become known for utilizing tools that measure what fits and what does not fit into developing neighborhoods.

5) Discussion on inviting City of Somerville Planner to speak in Watertown in regards to the measuring/preserving character of the Town's neighborhoods.

A review of the discussion from the November HC meeting around inviting the City of Somerville Planner to come to speak in Watertown was held.

Russo asked the Agent Chris Hayward if there had been any news of the town setting up a meeting with the Somerville Planner. The Agent replied that Steve Magoon had mentioned receiving Russo's email and that he was planning on replying to him. Hayward told the chair he would ask Steve Magoon to get back to him.

6) November 2014 Minutes were adopted with modifications.

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.