



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

Elise Loukas, Chairperson
Thomas Melone, Member
Susan Steele, Member
Marilynne K., Member
Joseph Panto, Member
Matthew Walter, Member

Minutes: Thursday, May 13, 2021 Remote meeting 7:00 p.m.

Historical Commission Members Present: Elise Loukas, Chair, Joseph Panto, Marilynne Roach, Matthew Walter, Susan Steele, Thomas Melone

Member(s) Absent: N/A

Public Present: Kenneth Leitner, Marci Loeber, Hugh Hahn, Donna Pennino

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

Loukas opened the meeting with the intentions of recusing herself for the public hearing taking place for 104 Arlington St at which point Joe Panto will act as Chair.

1. Review- Minutes from April 8, 2021 meeting.

After a review of the minutes from the April 8, 2021 meeting, a motion was made accepting them.

Motion: Roach made a motion to accept the minutes from the April 8, 2021 meeting. Walter seconded the motion.

Poll: A unanimous poll was reached accepting the motion made by Roach.

Loukas stepped out and Panto took over as Chair for 104 Arlington St. Panto explained to those present the process that would be followed in the demolition delay hearing, and he clarified what issues would not be addressed at the hearing by members of the Historical Commission.

2. **Public Hearing- 104 Arlington Street-** determine if the lodge style building located at this address is preferably preserved and if a demolition delay will be imposed. Kenneth Leitner, Applicant/Exchange Authority LLC, Owner

Attorney Kenneth Leitner appeared to represent the owner. He explained the building was the site of the Italian American Club before the membership dwindled, leaving it the site of a very deteriorating building with multiple additions.

He described the building style as a colonial with a gable and he noted that a porch that had been added, with a layer of vinyl siding leaving no signature of an architectural or historically significant building. He also clarified he learned in his research, that the building had never been owned by anyone with significance as far as he was able to uncover.

Leitner described the neighborhood as having a dominant commercial style going north on Elm St. to Arlington St. Leitner clarified that this neighborhood no longer supports this style of building, as it is now so commercially developed at this time.

He summarized that the loss of this building would take nothing away from the character of the neighborhood at all.

Walter asked to look at the structure up on the screen. The site was projected up on the screen as the neighboring structure to Sterritt Lumber. The Assessors records indicated it had been built around 1890, and that it had housed a fair number of purposes over the years, from housing a realtor, until becoming home to the Italian American Social Club. The building cards indicated there had been a fair number of additions and enhancements to the building over the years.

Roach noted the Gothic Style Revival Windows and noted the width of the eaves from the picture. Field, the Town Senior Planner was able to clarify that the Assessors records indicated it was built in 1890. Panto asked Leitner about the condition on the inside. Leitner said it was disastrous looking, and said it was so bad, there was no membership in the club. Steele commented that on the surface, from the perspective of the structure, it looked strong as if it might have good bones. Steele also noted they had not seen the interior. She confirmed the GIS maps recorded 1890 as the year built. Melone had no initial comments.

Public Comments- N/A

HC Discussion

Walter began by stating if this building was in its original state, without countless alterations, it might have some redeeming character. He summarized that it was unfortunate that the alterations had destroyed the character. Steele agreed with Walter, although she wondered it was worth seeing the inside of the building. Roach said she thought if the structure was sound, it could be worth trying to save, but probably nothing else about the building was worth saving. Panto said he went by to look at the building, and the in the photo it was much better looking than seeing the building in person. He summarized it no longer retained the character of what it once had been.

Motion: Walter made a motion that the building at 104 Arlington St. was not preferably preserved. Steele seconded the motion.

Poll: A pool was taken of the Commission, minus Loukas who had recused herself, and it was unanimous among the remaining members that the structure at 104 Arlington St. was not preferably preserved.

Loukas returned to the role of Chair once the public hearing on 104 Arlington St. had been closed.

3. **Public Hearing - 580 Pleasant Street-** determine if the industrial style building and 2 sheds located at this address are preferably preserved and if a demolition delay will be imposed. William T. Griffith Jr., Applicant/Owner

Marci Loeber of Griffith Properties was present along with Hugh Hahn the Senior Project Manager and VHB to present the proposal to the Historical Commission.

Marci explained that the site was located just south of Russo's Market and left of the Skating Rink, and the area west of the site had been a landfill consisting of 160,000 square feet. The existing structures are one industrial style building with 2 accessory sheds. The building was constructed in 1963, and it expanded in 1966. The remaining buildings on the site were constructed in 1973 and 1982 are not under jurisdiction of the Demolition Delay Ordinance.

The current building has very few windows, and the proposal is to remove the façade and install windows and develop a building for a life science-based facility. The entire inside of the structure will be gutted to build all new bathrooms.

Commission Questions

Walter commented that the building was not historically significant, and he did not believe the Historical Commission should be present to review a structure like this one at all. Panto agreed he did not find it historical at all. Roach, Steele and Melone all stated they had no questions.

Public Comments- N/A

Motion: Walter made a motion that the structures at 580 Pleasant St. were not preferably preserved. Panto seconded the motion.

Poll: A poll of the entire Commission was unanimously in agreement with the motion made by Walter.

4. Review/Discussion-

- Update on Demolition Delay Review and Recommendations for updates.

Loukas reported she and Field held a discussion on the next steps for possible updates to the Ordinance. They are combining all comments for possible improvements that were made by members of the Commission over the last year and working with the state model for a Demolition Delay Ordinance. Loukas and Field will share this body with members of the small group of members by email and by the next meeting they hope to have something in writing to share for discussion at the June 10, 2021 meeting.

- Update on Historic Plaque Program- How will shared research duties be facilitated.

Loukas reported she spoke to Russo who is ready to start working with members of the Commission who will take over the shared duties of conducting research for the Historic Plaque Program. Jenness reported she has been in touch with the applicants and providing them with periodic updates on the restructuring of the research aspect of the program and on the status of the re-opening of the Historic Preservation section of the Watertown Free Public Library.

5. Updates- Community Preservation Committee by Susan Steele

Steele reported there is a Zoom meeting for Community Engagement regarding the Draft of the Community Preservation Plan. The CPC is currently discussing a timeline for the application process. In June there will be a meeting for the adoption of the plan for funding for 2022. She said the engagement in Watertown Housing has been particularly

information and she is looking forward to the Open Forum for the entire Town coming soon.

6. New Business

Walter asked for an update on the replacement member of the Commission who would take over the old slot left by the departure of Russo. Field said he would communicate that concern to the Town Managers Office who is busy right now focusing attention to the budget.

Motion: Roach made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 PM. Walter seconded the motion.

Poll: A unanimous poll was reached agreeing to accept the motion made by Roach to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 PM.