



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

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

Minutes: Thursday, May 10, 2019 Philip Pane Lower Hearing Room 7:00 p.m.

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

Member(s) Absent: David Russo, Vice Chair

Public Present: John Cimino, Curtis Whitney, Todd Greenfield, Dennis Duff, Avo Asdourian, Sarah Ryan, Libby Shaw, Jamie Gordon, Jonathan Roy, John Labadini, James Scully, Janet Scully

Staff Present: Gideon Schreiber, Susan C. Jenness (Adopted 6/14/2019)

Loukas opened the meeting with the minutes.

1. Minutes- From April 11, 2019 Historical Commission Meeting.

After a review of the minutes a motion was made.

Motion: Melone made a motion to accept the minutes as modified. Roach seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached accepting the minutes as amended.

Loukas briefed the public about the process for the demolition delay hearings on the agenda.

2. Public Hearing- 165 Dexter Ave.-to consider the Demolition Application for a 3 Bay Garage.

Todd Greenfield from KS Partners, LLC. appeared to review the proposed demolition. He explained this was a concrete masonry unit that had a little basic power inside, similar to a

residential garage. He said that the CMU goes all the way up to the brick and that they want to go all the way up to the brick in the demolition. He said that they would repair the area with a little parging.

Steele asked if there would be any landscaping after the demolition had occurred. Greenfield said there very well could be some landscaping, and that he would talk to the owners about adding some nice plantings in the space.

Public Comments

Cynthia Agamiaz who resided at 34 Upton Rd. said she was wondering about the historical significance of this garage if any, and thought she could get some historical information about it here.

Loukas explained that sometimes buildings are discovered to have significance to them when members of the HC conduct research. She explained that that is not always the case and sometimes we find that a building is just a garage.

Schreiber said he searched the permits for the building and found out that in 1945 Morris, Lockhart and Morse who were the architects of this building, took out a series of permits all on behalf of the same company. Schreiber explained that this is one in a series of buildings that were built around the same time, and all used for business purposes together. He said that the Dexter Ave. garage was originally a single standing structure that became attached to another building at a later time.

Curtis Whitney said that he has been in the real estate business for 30 years and Dexter Ave. is known as an industrial area. He described the building as a very simple brick building. He said it is not in the best interest of the town to maintain this structure as there is no significant reason to preserve a simple cinder block garage in this town that has no historical significance.

Public Comments were closed.

Melone said that this was a perfectly nice garage building used for industrial purposes but he saw no historical or architectural significance to the structure.

Steele agreed with Melone.

Panto said he thought the site could just as nice without the structure.

Roach said this was strictly an industrial structure.

Motion: Melone made a motion that the building at 165 Dexter Ave. is not preferably preserved. Panto seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached that the structure at 165 Dexter Ave. is not preferably preserved.

3. Public Hearing- 81 Bromfield Ave. –to consider the Demolition Application for an Attached Single Bay Garage

Matthew Walter recused himself from the proceedings for 81 Bromfield Ave.

John Cimino, the builder appeared to review the project. He said that the garage is not serving its intended purpose which is to contain vehicles, because it is too undersized to hold one. He said his client is interested in taking down this structure down so they could fit 2 cars in the driveway. He also stated that many other residents in the neighborhood are doing the exact same thing. He also said he found no architectural or historical significance to the structure when he was researching it.

Schreiber the Senior Planner clarified that it was a semi attached garage.

Public Comments

One letter was received from Clyde Younger stating that he had no problem with the demolition of the garage located at 81 Bromfield Ave.

Public Hearing Closed

Roach commented that it was just a regular garage and she had no problem losing it.

Panto said that the house is very cute, and losing the garage should not have any effect on that.

Steele said she had no problem losing the structure, and that the house might look nicer when it is taken down.

Melone shared his thoughts which were that the reason this structure is coming down is because it is undersized to serve its function properly. He pointed out that most houses on the street have no garage so he sure there was no reason to retain the structure.

Motion: Panto made a motion that the structure was not preferably preserved. Roach seconded the motion.

Vote: Walter recused himself and the remaining members voted unanimously that the structure was not preferably preserved.

4. Public Hearing- 70 Beechwood Ave.- to consider the Demolition Application submitted for the one family colonial built in 1900 Curtis Whitney, Applicant/Avo Asdourian, Owner

Commission Member Matthew Walter recused himself from the proceeding in 70 Beechwood Ave.

John Cimino, of Cimino and Sons reviewed the proposed project to the members of the Historical Commission.

He explained that he brought along letters from neighbors and some pictures which he handed in to Loukas. He said that Cimino and Sons has a wonderful track record of building in the town for many years. He mentioned a property that he moved on to Mt. Auburn St. from Boylston St. and had recently developed.

He explained that in this instance he was contacted by Whitney about a home that became destroyed by severe water damage where the plaster and foundation had been virtually crumbled.

Cimino was allowed to read a text message from a neighbors Wayne and Linda Sutherland of 31 Pequotsette St. who said that they welcome new construction into the neighborhood and that it would be an improvement to what is there.

Cimino said that Avo Asdourian is the architect.

Russo who was not present for the meeting had submitted an email transmitting his historical research on the property for use by the Chair.

“Here’s some information about 70 Beechwood Avenue. I attach a document with excerpts from maps going back to 1874.

It was built sometime between May 1869 and April 1870. The tax records show the house as of May 1, 1870 but it is not taxed on May 1, 1869, so the date of construction falls sometime between these dates.

The original owner was Michael O’Halloran. He was born in Ireland in about 1835, immigrated to the United States in 1853 and married his wife Mary in 1863. They had three children Mary, Lizzy and Patrick. Michael was a vegetable dealer and likely farmed on his house lot and he also worked for the Arsenal as an “artificer” from 1857-1863. He’s considered a veteran of the Civil War.

Halloran bought the lot upon which 70 Beechwood Avenue was built on June 8, 1867 and the house followed several years later. Michael died sometime around 1917 and the owners thereafter were:

Carolyn Collins 1917–1948;
Wendell and Carrie Fuller 1948–1963;
Paul and Ann O’Reilly 1963–1972;
Sybil Campbell 1972–present.

My own feeling about 70 Beechwood Avenue is that it has retained much of its original architectural integrity. The additions made over time are sensitive to the original structure. It maintains its integrity of place, fitting perfectly onto the lot on which it was built. It is an intact example of a worker's cottage, a fast-disappearing housing type in Watertown. Historic significance is not limited to wealthy people and high-styled houses. Working class people and their stories are significant and deserve protection."

Melone asked how the property got so damaged by water. Curtis Whitney rose and explained that he was the insurance agent for the owner of the house who was away on the Cape when it was damaged by water. He explained that a pipe froze up on the 2nd floor while the owner was away that destroyed the home and all her property contained within. He reported that rabbits and raccoons are now living on the site that remains uninhabitable.

Whitney offered photographs of the interior and said the damage occurred during an extreme cold weather spell in March. He said that his office received a call from the local fire department that water was pouring out of the front door.

He explained that after the incident, he reached out to Cimino to assess the cost of rebuilding and the current owner was not in a position to afford it. He said that none of systems are working and all need to be entirely replaced.

Loukas suggested that McLaughlin, the Building Inspector could condemn the building if it was so bad.

Loukas asked Whitney why not rebuild the structure with the insurance money and he said the owner is not in a position of doing that.

Cimino explained that the structure would need to be razed so that they could completely re-do it.

Public Comments

John Labadini of 499 Main St. said he knows the house personally and it is tired looking and rotted and the owner is older, and it sad to drive by and see this. He said he has known John Cimino since grammar school and that he knows him to be a highly professional builder. He said he has also known Whitney for 30 years and feels the same about him, that they both always do what is right for Watertown.

Nick Kokinnis from 64 Beechwood Ave. lives next door. He said animals live there now and you can see them from the side door where the pipes froze. He said he has seen John Ciminis work on Pequosette and the homes he rebuilds are done just beautifully.

Letters Read into the record

Steve Anderson from 11 Edith Ave. wrote that he has known Cimino all his life. He stated that Cimino takes pride in his work and replacing tragic burned out properties, and that he hopes he will get to do this again.

Frank Papavasillo from 24 Pequesotte wrote that he has no problems at all with John Cimino building the proposed structure on this lot.

Debbie who said she was a resident on Pleasant St. said that this house is an eyesore across the street from Perkins School for the Blind that disabled people have to navigate by it. She said she hoped the developer would do the right thing and replace the sidewalk that needs to be replaced when the new structure is finished.

Loukas addressed all participating members of the board that they all needed to keep in mind that although people have spoken about the reputations of Cimino and Whitney, this decision must not be based on any of that information. She said it was critical that they all keep focused on whether or not the building was preferably preserved. She explained that while we have heard this building is an eyesore, it just needs some love and attention. The question for this commission said Loukas, is, "*is this house preferably preserved?*" She explained that in the past when we have faced similar situations, we have gone on a site visit and when we get there we can see if the building would be preferably preserved.

Steele said that she knows of John Cimino who does good work, but this house was never put on the market so that someone who would love to preserve it could come along and buy it. She said she wanted to visit the site. Panto, Melone and Roach agreed.

Whitney who is the insurance agent for the house said if the members of the commission wanted to see the site, they would need to sign a waiver of liability to protect the owner of the house.

Motion: Steele made a motion to continue the discussion until the June Historical Commission meeting taking place on the 5th, so that members of the commission can take a site visit and see the property in person. Melone seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to continue this discussion for members of the Historical Commission to go out for a site visit.

Cimino asked Loukas if she would like any additional documentation from other professionals about the condition of the structure. Loukas said it was up to him if he wanted to obtain additional documents, but a letter from an engineer speaking to the conditions of the building could help.

Schreiber added that if there is damage at this house, it should be documented whatever type of damage there is.

Whitney said he would be available after May 22, 2019 to meet members of the board for a site visit. Loukas asked Jenness to poll the members for availability for the visit.

5. Discussion Items

- a. Community Preservation Committee Update- Steele made up binders for each member of the Historical Commission containing documents that are used to define and structure the processes in the Community Preservation Committee Business in the following communities; New Bedford, Somerville, Cambridge and Newton.

The binders were separated by communities so that each member of the board could assess the processes and give feedback in a future meeting.

Steele reported that in November of 2010, New Bedford held a Preservation Forum. The focus of the group was reviewing over 40 historic sites in New Bedford. The properties either carried historical or architectural stories, and they also identified properties that were considered historical and most in most need of work.

Steele reported that Somerville has a proposal for demolition that she noted.

- b. Letter of Support for Mt. Auburn Cemetery Story Chapel by David J. Russo- As Russo was not present, this item was continued to the June 5, 2019 meeting.
- c. Letter of appreciation from Massachusetts Historical Commission to David J. Russo- Where Russo was not present, this item was continued to the June 5, 2019 meeting.
- d. Update to the Chair on 74 Fitchburg St.
- e. Update on 41 Paul St-
- f. 87 Summer St. - Schreiber reported that this item was not on the agenda, but he was asked by the Director of the Department to report this item to the board.

The owners of 87 Summer St. applied for a demolition permit for interior demolition of the 1840 farmhouse originally owned by Charles Whitney. Schreiber reported it would be noticeable in the coming days that they will be doing work on the house that involves demolition. But, he explained that the demolition does not meet the criteria that would trigger a hearing before the Historical Commission.

Loukas asked if the work would have an effect the streetscape and Schreiber responded that it would. She asked if it was over 50 years old and he responded that it was. He explained that substantial alteration does not require a public hearing before the Historical Commission.

Motion: A motion was made by Walter to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 PM. The motion was seconded by Roach.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 PM.