

**Minutes
Watertown Historical Commission
Thursday,
August 13, 2015
Lower Hearing Room
7:00 p.m.**

Historical Commission Members Present: David J. Russo, Marilynne K. Roach, Susan Steele, Elise Loukas

Member(s) Absent: Thomas Melone, J.B. Jones, Donald S. Berg

Staff Present: Christopher J. Hayward, Susan C. Jenness (adopted 10.8.15)

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-Continuation - 301 Common St-Request to demolish a 1-family dwelling built in approximately 1875. Proposed is a new single family residential dwelling. Vatche Seraderian applicant/owner

Kenneth Leitner represented the owner of 301 Common St. It was determined that the house was built in either 1867 or 1871. There was a discussion about whether or not Commission Member Loukas should recuse herself. The Agent said that the commission could use her if she was needed by the rule of necessity.

There has been and continues to be an issue with getting the necessary material for the hearing to come together. Mr. Leitner moved for a continuance until the September 10, 2015 meeting.

Motion: Roach made a motion for a continuance. Steele seconded the motion.

Vote: Unanimous. A unanimous decision was made granting the continuance.

2) Public Hearing Continuation - 79 Morse St-Request to demolish a 1-family dwelling built in approximately 1890. Proposed is a two family residential dwelling. Andrew Crawford/Torre St. Savour applicant/owner

Kenneth Leitner and the HC members consulted their calendars to set a time for a site visit.

A visit was scheduled for the HC members to walk through the house at 79 Morse St. on Monday August 24 at 7 PM.

3) Public Hearing-Continuation - 193-195 Watertown St. Request for Demolition of a 3 family structure with multiple additions. Proposed is a new duplex, side by side unit. AnnaMaria J. DeAngelis, applicant/owner.

Attorney Adrian Martin appeared to represent the owners. He discussed the numerous additions that had been added onto the house over the years and that the house was not what it had originally been. He used a metaphor of an old wood panel sided vehicle that had been repaired with a plastic bumper painted over in metallic paint.

The realtor Jean Maurazzo appeared to answer questions about previous attempts to sell the property. She discussed the obstacles of trying to sell the property which abuts a supermarket parking lot. Also discussed was how costly it would be to renovate the home due to the state of disrepair.

Public Comments: N/A

Commission Discussion: Russo stated that the house was likely built in the 1870's and predated permitting.

Steele commented that without pictures and permits it seemed unlikely the house is what it once was.

Russo offered that the basement was L shaped and that the foundation followed but the brush outside was overgrown and made it hard to see from outside. He inquired about involving the Building Inspector which had not been done.

Loukas questioned if people were ever able to look inside the house when on the market. Maurazzo answered that it had been shown briefly when the house was on the market at an earlier date and added that only a developer would be interested in this home due to all the circumstances.

Steele said she felt painted into a corner. Russo stated that this house is an actual farmhouse and that there will not be any farm houses built in the future. He reviewed the 3 additions on the back of the house and said the era is around 1846. He said that this was an incredible dilemma to the HC tonight and urged HC members to keep two questions in mind in order to drive the discussion and decision forward, "What is the significance of this house?" and "Why is it significant?"

Roach stated that it did not seem likely anyone would want to preserve this home. Loukas stated that she was unsure and if any developers had seen the house and wanted to work with the existing structure. Maurazzo stated again that this was just too much work.

Motion: Steele made a motion that 193-195 Watertown St. was Preferably Preserved. Roach seconded the motion.

Vote: There was a unanimous vote that 193-195 Watertown St. was Preferably Preserved.

The commission discussed whether or not it would be likely for a developer to want to take on renovating the structure. Roach and Steele both agreed that it was highly unlikely.

Motion: Steele made a motion that there should be no delay imposed on the demolition of 193-195 Watertown St. Roach seconded the motion.

Vote: There was a unanimous vote that no delay should be imposed on the demolition of 193-195 Watertown St.

4) May 14, 2015 Minutes reviewed and approved.

5) June 2, 2015 Minutes reviewed and approved.

6) June 11, 2015 Minutes reviewed and approved.

7) July 9, 2015 Minutes reviewed and approved.

8) Old Business:

Susan Steele discussed a recent series of meetings held to discuss the future of holding a community forum focused on Historical Preservation. The meetings involved Steele, Town Council Member Palomba, Community Development and Planning Director Steve Magoon, Tia Tilson and Maria Saez from Hovey St., Miss Dyke from Thornton St., also Ms. Link and Lisa Feldman.

Discussed at the meetings were questions about the following issues in regard to Historical Preservation.

- 1) What tools are in place?
- 2) What tools are not in place?
- 3) What tools could be in place?

The planning Department has been in touch with David Gamble about the issues of Neighborhood Character, Community Character and how to create technical language around that.

9) New Business

Chariman Russo shared the sad news of the passing of long time Watertown resident and prominent member of the community E. Joyce (Graceland) Munger. She

celebrated the rich history of Watertown over a span of 60 years in service to the town. Russo and the commission members made mention of her involvement in the planning of numerous, successful community events over the years and recalled her service to an extensive list of committees and boards she volunteered on. It was repeated numerous times through the discussion that she was deeply respected, and held in high regard and that she will be missed for many years to come.

Joyce Kelly, member of the Watertown Historical Society rose to thank the (HC) members for their service. She said she could see them all struggle with trying to save houses in Watertown to preserve the historical and architectural heritage of the town. She urged the members to use the demolition delay ordinance more frequently as a means of finding more solutions leading to creative re-use of the houses before they are all gone.

Agent Hayward informed the HC members that the new owner of the Arsenal mall had approached him to discuss his plan to attend a meeting before the HC to help formulate some ideas and plans for the new vision of the mall which is to become a destination place.

Hayward has been speaking with Andrea Adams the town's Senior Planner about the documentation process leading to National Registration of locations and buildings in the town.

Russo and Hayward discussed the possibility of having a two year delay crafted into the town ordinance. Hayward has spoken with Chris Skelly of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council about what steps would need to be taken to bring this about. It was agreed that it is important that the commission members have the right tools so that they can effectively focus on saving the houses without the dilemmas of the individual home owners and buyers bearing any pressure on the decisions being made.

Meeting adjourned.