



TOWN OF WATERTOWN

Historical Commission

Administration Building

149 Main Street

WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02472

Elisabeth Loukas, Chair
David J. Russo, Vice Chair
Marilynne K. Roach, Member
Susan Steele, Member
Thomas Melone, Member
Joseph Panto, Member
Matthew Walter, Member

Minutes: Historical Commission Meeting, Thursday September 10, 2020 at 7 PM remotely by Zoom Link <https://zoom.us/j/454877888> and dial in number 1 (646) 558-8656

Members Present- Elise Loukas, Chair, David Russo, Vice Chair, Marilynne Roach, Thomas Melone, Susan Steele, Joseph Panto, Matthew Walter

Members Absent: N/A

Town Staff Present: Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner, Larry Field, Senior Planner Susan Jenness, Assistant

Others Present: Kenneth Leitner, Don Cusano, Brian Connaughton, Beverlee Brackett

Loukas opened the meeting and briefed attendees of the following information regarding the format of the meeting and that members of the HC would be voting by poll. All manners of public access were outlined for all.

The Historical Commission of the City known as the Town of Watertown will hold a public hearing on Thursday, September 10, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. In accordance with the Governor's Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G. L. c. 30A, § 20, relating to the 2020 Covid-19 emergency and to avoid group congregation, this meeting will only have remote opportunities for participation with public access provided as follows:

1. Televised on Watertown Cable Access Television: wcatv.org/government-channel/
2. Join the virtual meeting online: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/95648117955>
3. Join the virtual meeting audio only by phone: (877) 853-5257 or (888) 475-4499 (Toll Free) and enter Meeting ID: **956 4811 7955#**
4. There was also an opportunity to email comments to sjeness@watertown-ma.gov prior to or during the meeting.

Loukas explained that she would recuse herself from the public hearing on 18 Warren St. because of her professional affiliations with a participant in the process.

1. **Public Hearing- 15 Bridgham Ave.-** to determine if any or all structures located at this address are preferably preserved and if a demolition delay will be imposed. Assessor

records indicate structures were constructed in 1952. Brian Connaughton, Applicant, Excelsior Development Partners, LLC, Owner

Connaughton began his review for members of the board by stating he has collaborated on this proposal with Schreiber, Magoon and Mena from Community Development and Planning, and that the project is accepted according to the Zoning By-laws. Connaughton described the existing structure as a ranch built in 1952 without any historical or architectural significance of the building to speak of.

Members of the HC were free of any initial questions, although Russo inquired about a detail in the elevations. Connaughton clarified he was observing a small deck and gable facing the street.

Public Comments made

Laura Coughlin Unsworth- An email was read by Loukas that had been submitted for comment during the public hearing by Laura Coughlin Unsworth from 77 Holt St. She referred to the recent project 63 Holt St. that was approved for demolition by the HC in January, and commented that this approval changed the fabric of this street. She said that the street was once tree lined with yards that were played in by children, and now it has begun turning into a street with towering developments that take advantage of every square inch of space for financial gains.

Unsworth reported the loss of 21 mature trees as a direct result of the recent project, and remarked that during the ongoing pandemic her family has been existing inside their homes deprived of outdoors. She also noted that her windows have remained closed in the house, due to the construction noise and dust. She asked members of the HC to consider what the outcome would be if they allowed 15 Bridgham Ave. to be demolished after the recent approval of 63 Holt St. proposal. She summarized the impact this was having on the fabric of her neighborhood.

Bruce Fulton of Mangano Court spoke about his concern living directly behind the site due to the potential for a construction accident. He specified that a Bobcat could fall down into his property causing damage. Loukas asked Connaughton to reach out to Fulton to discuss the project and concerns Fulton has about the project moving forward on the lot behind his home and he said that he would.

Public comments were closed.

Commission discussion.

Roach said she agreed with the abutter that the neighborhood is changing for the worse referring to the loss of trees, and the construction of big buildings going up. She said she

wished they could do more. Melone commented that the boundaries of their role as a historical commission is to focus on the architectural and historical significance. He said that he felt they should report these issues that are being routinely raised during public hearings to the Building Department. Panto agreed with Melone on the 1952 Ranch at stake in the hearing. Walter said there should be no question where he stood as a member of this board. Russo said while this was a 1952 Ranch house, the windows had been replaced over the years, and there was not much historical interest in this structure.

Motion: A motion was made by Panto that the structure at 15 Bridgham St. was not preferably preserved. Melone seconded the motion.

Poll: A unanimous poll was reached to accept the motion that the structure at 15 Bridgham St. was not preferably preserved.

2. **Public Hearing- 18 Warren St.-** to determine if any or all structures located at this address are preferably preserved and if a demolition delay will be imposed. Assessor records indicate the structures were constructed in 1954. Kenneth Leitner, Esq.
Applicant/Owner

Loukas recused herself from the proceedings on 18 Warren St. for professional affiliations per her disclosure at the opening of the meeting. Russo assumed the role of Chair in her absence.

Leitner reviewed the proposal specifics regarding the existing structure and history of the house. He reported that the cape style house was 1 ½ stories tall, and had been built in 1954 by the Nicholas Marizio family. His research disclosed that after World War II the house had been modernized with vinyl siding, and the windows had been replaced, and the roof was shingled. He summarized that he had been unable to come up with any historical or architectural significance at all.

Historical Commission Comments

N/A

Public Comments

Beverlee Brackett of Elmwood Ave. who was present for the remote meeting said she was an abutter to the project and she was surprised that residents could receive a notice from the Town informing them that a house in their neighborhood was just being taken down without ever having seen the proposed plans for what was going in. She reported that she attended the hearing to find out how tall the building would look from her house at 29 Elmwood. Leitner took her contact information and made a commitment to contact her the following day to provide a set of proposed plans, and to answer all her questions that were just not related to the purview of the historical commission.

Public Comments closed.

Commission Discussion

Melone said this was a typical issue, and very decent house in good condition but there was no character unusual enough to justify imposing a delay. Roach said this was the same type of situation as the last house was to her. Panto said this saddened him because there was nothing wrong with this house. He said he wished there was something they could do to keep this house in the Town's heritage. Walter said he agreed with Panto that this was the same type of situation as the previous hearing on Bridgham. Walter said that they should be able to modify the ordinance. Russo said he found a permit for this house that was actually from 1951. He said he found the structure to be in its integrity with the addition of a dormer and new windows. He said it was well sided and scaled for an affordable house.

Motion: Walter made a motion that the house at 18 Warren St. was not preferably preserved. Panto seconded the house.

Poll: A unanimous poll was reached that the house at 18 Warren St. was not preferably preserved, to the exception of Loukas who recused herself from the entire public meeting.

3. Review- Minutes from July 9, 2020

After a brief review of the minutes a motion was made by Russo.

Motion: Russo made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 11, 2020 meeting. Roach seconded the motion.

Poll: A unanimous poll was taken to approve the minutes of the July meeting.

4. Discussion Items

- a. **Legal Notices-** Chair Loukas decided to table this discussion and to discuss legal notices with members of the Planning Staff further over the coming month.

Motion: A motion was made by Russo to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 PM. The motion was seconded by Roach.

Poll: A unanimous poll was reached agreeing to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 PM