

Minutes
Watertown Historical Commission
Thursday, September 8, 2011
Lower Hearing Room
7:00pm
Adopted October 13, 2011

Historical Commission Members Present: David J. Russo, Jr., J. B. Jones, Marilynne K. Roach, Elisabeth H. Loukas, Thomas Melone

Historical Commission Member Absent: Donald S. Berg, Susan T. Steele

Staff Present: Christopher J. Hayward, Daphne M. Collins

Public Present: See attached Sign-In Form

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

1) Public Hearing – Public Hearing – Demolition Permit – 44 Grenville Road, to demolish a single-family structure to be replaced with a new single-family structure. The Estate of Evelyn McGowan, owner. Leonard T. Holt, applicant.

Leonard T. Holt, applicant, informed the HC that the property and proposal is for his residence. He noted that the single-family property, surrounded by the Oakley Country Club, is to be demolished and replaced by a single family residence. He reported that the property has no distinctive interior details, and he listed all the visible problems with the structure. He said that the new house will conform to all the established zoning set backs.

Russo reported that his historic research on the property indicate that the plot was merged with the adjacent property in the 1890s. He stated that the first property owner was John O'Brien in 1897.

Russo asked if the proposed structure could be scaled down. Holt said that he could but that he didn't think that what he was proposing was disproportional. Russo argued that the neighborhood was a collection of worker's cottages of modest proportions. Holt contended that there were larger, newer structures on Marcia Road. Russo substantiated through historic maps that the neighborhood existed since the 1850's, known as the Common Street neighborhood with a distinct sense of place.

Holt informed that the house is in poor condition and that he will be replacing it with an architectural significant one.

Bernard Longhron, executor of the estate of Evelyn McGowan, indicated that the house was in need of repair and that no person of historic significance lived at the address. As the executor, he stated that the beneficiaries were in support of Holt obtaining the property since he wished to be an owner-resident of the property. He also noted that Holt has approached all the neighbors about his plans and they are supportive of the demolition.

Jones noted that the present property fits in the neighborhood. He wondered if the worker cottages still exist. Russo affirmed that they all exist and that the larger scaled structures are later infill.

Melone noted that across the street from 44 Grenville are newer homes. He thought that the cottages lacked consistency.

Jones thought the question should be whether the new proposal will diminish the scale of the neighborhood.

Vote: Melone moved to determine 44 Grenville Road as not preferably preserved. Jones seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

2) Public Hearing – Landmark Designation – 77 Riverside Street to consider the Landmark Petition and the Landmark Designation Report. Thomas Mark & Ernesta Krackiewicz, owner applicant

Mark Krackiewicz explained that he has owned 77 Riverside Street since 1973. He reported that as the homeowner and steward of the property he was interested in designating the property as a Historic Landmark under the Watertown Landmark Ordinance. He noted the property composed of 3 lots in a 2-family zone made the property attractive to development pressures without the landmark designation protection.

Russo reported that the Bigelow House was built in 1806 and was the 4th oldest house in Watertown. Bigelow was a Justice on the Massachusetts Court and was a candidate for Congress. According to Russo the property is the only example of its kind in existence in Watertown and its exterior has great architectural integrity. He also noted that the property can be researched back to colonial times, and that until 1905 the property was designated as agricultural.

Russo recommends that the HC request the Town Council to landmark the property. He informed that once a property is landmarked under the Watertown Historic Landmark Ordinance any exterior change has to come before the HC for review. Russo felt that the history of the development of the property could allow limited additions to the property.

Joyce Kelly, Historic Society of Watertown, supported the Landmark designation for 77 Riverside Street.

Melone supported the landmark designation based on the property's architectural significance and historic person connection.

Vote: Jones moved to recommend to the Watertown Town Council that 77 Riverside Street be granted a landmark designation under the Watertown Historic Landmark Ordinance. Loukas seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

3) Faire in the Square – The HC wished to participate in the Faire in the Square and rent a booth next to the Historical Society of Watertown.

- 4) **Signage** – Kelly reported that the list of historic sign replacements had been prioritize. The priority is Victory Field, Curtis Stone, and Common Street Cemetery-Meeting House. Soldiers Monument is on hold until next year. The Historical Society is waiting to hear about the results of a grant application to fund sign replacements. The Committee will discuss the Arlington Street Cemetery Signage to be funded by a donation from Tufts Health Plan.

- 5) **July and August 2011 Minutes** – Approved.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.