

Minutes
of the
Watertown Historical Commission
Thursday, October 16, 2008
Council Chambers
7:00pm

Historical Commission Members Present: Russo, Berg, Jones, Roach

Staff Present: Magoon, Hayward, Collins

Public Present: See attached Sign-In Form

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

Steve Magoon, Director of Community Development and Planning, was introduced to the HC.

1. Public Hearing Demolition Request Continuance – 27-29 Gleason Street, a two-family dwelling, Paula Ganon, owner

Hayward informed that the applicant requested an additional continuance. Members were concerned that a continuance makes it difficult for neighbors to stay engaged and informed. They preferred that the applicant reapply.

Vote: Jones moved not to grant a continuance for 27-29 Gleason Street. Berg seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

2. Public Hearing Demolition Request – 153 Lexington, a single family and garage, James Clausson, applicant; Dorothy F. Adamo, owner

Joe Flaerty, representative of the applicant, reported that the building was built in 1938 with a garage. It is aluminum sided. According to Flaerty, the owner is working with the contractor to develop to sale rather than sale directly due to the downturn in the economy. Flaerty said that the design was selected to be compatible with other homes in the neighborhood. He reported that 50% of the homes in the neighborhood are 2 families and that the lot, by right, can be a two-family. He informed that he was unable to locate information on the architect of the building. Flaerty did not consider the property historically significant. He proposed a tear down to allow for two condos, side-by-side townhouses with ornamental peaks, and shutters. He offered to make changes to the design details. He explained that there will be a four-car underground garage accessible from the rear. He proposes landscaping with sod and shrubs. The development will have two side yards and a back yard. Presently the property is assessed at \$400,000, but he expected the final project will be assessed at \$1.1 million.

Jones reported that the present structure is not of major architectural value. However, he felt that the structure is sound and fits well within its neighborhood. He felt the proposed project was a “Queen Anne” facade with a “Mary Jane” side. He asked if the side elevation and its massing could be improved. He wondered about the benefit of two townhouses vs. two free-standing, single family homes. Flaerty responded that he felt the two family townhouses were a better use of the lot. Jones preferred two separate structures.

Berg reported that his research indicated that the house was built in 1912. He felt it was not of any architectural merit. Flaerty reported that his date came from the Town Assessors’ data. Russo explained that the Assessors building dates are frequently wrong.

Abutters on Edenfield Ave. requested more information from the developer on the parking in the rear.

Collins informed that Anne Corsi, 151 Lexington, was not able to attend but had called the office requesting that the single family use be preserved. She was also concerned about the increase in size and massing of the proposed project.

Joyce Kelley, Historical Society of Watertown, suggested that photos of the interior be taken and be filed with the Society.

Flaerty reported that what he proposed could be done by right and that no other Commission review was required.

Russo was not against the demolition on architectural grounds. He thought the house, street and lot were nice. He felt there was no reason to consider a demolition delay or assign it a preferably preserved status. He thought the property should be saved. However, he considered that there were no historic grounds to justify a delay on the project.

Jones reported that the street is a mix of two-families and single-single family homes. He acknowledged that the developer appeared to listen to neighbors' concerns, and saw no reason to prevent the demolition

Vote: Jones moved that 153 Lexington Street was not preferably preserved. Berg seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

3. Public Hearing Cancelled – Demolition Request – 130 Galen Street

Staff reported that abutters were notified in mailing about the cancellation of public hearing. A copy of the applicant's letter cancelling the Demolition Permit Request for 130 Galen Street was included.

Russo received a copy of the *Project Notification Form* from MHC that the demolition of 130 Galen Street was reviewed by MHC and that it was determined to be unlikely to affect significant historic or archaeological resources. Staff will contact Jonathan K. Patton at MHC for the file documents and further information.

4. September Minutes. Adopted.

5. Boston Post Cane

Kelly forwarded information she found on the last recipient of the Watertown cane. Roach will contact Chris Helm of the TAB about a possible article on the cane.

Russo requested that the item be place on the November agenda. He will contact John Flynn for information on the oldest Watertown resident.

6. Oral History. Roach reported that an oral history project on the Watertown High School was being conducted.

7. **New England History Festival.** Roach reported that a history festival will take place on November 15 at the Hibernian Hall from 5-9pm.
8. **Before / Now Photos** in the TAB continues. Members continue to photograph present locations to match old Watertown photos for the TAB.
9. **Preservation Agent Report**

Hayward reported that the garage at 432-442 Pleasant Street was condemned by the Building Inspector.

Russo requested status information on the cellular towers at Union Church.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.