

Minutes

**of the
Watertown Historical Commission
Thursday, December 11, 2008
Council Chambers
7:00pm**

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

Staff Present: Hayward, Collins

Public Present: See attached Sign-In Form

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

- 1. Introduction of New HC Members** – Russo introduced Tom Melone and Susan Steele who were recently appointed to the HC.

- 2. Public Hearing – Demolition Permit for 27-29 Gleason Street, Leonard T. Holt, applicant; Paula Ganon, owner and applicant of record**

Leonard Holt, developer, presented historical information on the property based on a title search. He informed that he wanted to build a two-family at

the site that would conform to existing zoning laws. He commented that the existing property was in deteriorated condition.

Melone questioned the set backs. Holt responded that the set backs of the new project would match the existing set back.

Jones questioned whether the proposed project would fit in with the neighborhood. Holt explained that all the existing two-family houses in the neighborhood were wider than what he was proposing. He said that the 35' height was what was allowed by zoning and that height would provide a better roof.

Berg questioned if the proposed project was a 2 ½ story structure like the existing one and whether the new project would sit in the existing footprint. Holt responded that the property was a different style and that it would have a new depth.

Steele questioned the materials being used. Holt responded that it would be clapboards similar to his Quincy Street project.

Joyce Kelly, HSW, requested access to photograph the interior of the building from Holt. Holt granted access.

Jones noted that the 27-29 Gleason Street had limited value and was of a generic style. He expressed concerned that the new replacement would be a radical change to the scale of the existing neighborhood. He acknowledged that what was proposed was a 2009 2-family style. Berg concurred.

Russo felt that there would be a loss to the neighborhood by the demolition but not injuriously so.

Steele reported that though there were two-family properties on the street, the majority of the neighboring structures were small single families. She noted that the neighborhood was built at the same time in the 1930's and 1940's and that both the single and two-family structures were scaled accordingly.

Jones suggested that the introduction of the new proposed structure would create a hodge-podge style to a harmoniously scaled neighborhood. However, he acknowledged that what was proposed was a sign of the times. He regretted the change to the neighborhood which he felt was not an improvement.

Russo read a letter from Christopher Greeley, 21 Gleason Street, who did not support the demolition of the project.

Roach questioned the need to replace the existing 2-family with a 2-family. She suggested preserving the original one.

Vote: Berg moved to determine 27-29 Gleason Street as not preferably preserved. Steele seconded the motion. Yeas – 5, Abstention-1(Jones). Motion adopted.

3. November Minutes – Adopted.

4. Boston Post Cane

Russo reported that 2009 was the 100 anniversary of the Boston Post Cane Recognition Award and that this year could provide an opportunity to identify a new Watertown elder. Russo discussed the Boston Post Cane with Chris

Helms, editor of the Watertown TAB, who was concerned that a cane might suggest infirmity to a contemporary elder. He suggested fundraising.

Jones wondered where it is as big a deal to identify the eldest person in Watertown as it was 100 years ago. Melone suggested a loving cup instead of a cane.

Discussion questioned whether the recognition should be awarded to the eldest or the longest living resident of Watertown.

Russo will continue to discuss item with Chris Helms. Roach will contact the Council on Aging for their suggestions. Russo requested that the item be placed on the January agenda.

Kelly informed that Addie DeLorio was 105 years old and may be the oldest resident in Watertown. Steele suggested that whatever recognition be connected to the community.

5. Outbuilding Inventory

Russo informed MHC has a database online on how to organize an inventory. Russo recognized that the Assessors Office can provide a list of every property with outbuildings. Russo will bring a Watertown map to assign areas to members. He requested that members identify the buildings that they know.

6. 531 Main Street – Invitation to Comment

Jones noted the proposed changes to the antenna for 531 Main Street was an improvement to the original proposal. Russo felt that the HC should continue to object. He recommended that a letter be sent identifying the HC's ongoing concerns about the location of the antenna and its affect on the integrity to the building.

Steele noted that the antennas are removable and are not permanent. Melone identified that the funds received from the leasing of the towers for an antenna is an important source of funds for churches.

Russo will draft a letter.

7. Partnership of the Historic Bostons

Roach informed that Historic Bostons will hold joint effort to celebrate Charter Day on September 7, 2009 with ongoing celebrations in communities throughout the Boston area. A possible reenactment may be preformed at the Fowle House for Watertown. The next meeting is January 23, 2009 at the British Consulate.

Meeting adjourned at 8:02pm.