



TOWN OF WATERTOWN
Historical Commission
Administration Building
149 Main Street
WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02472

Elise Loukas, Chairperson
David Russo, Vice Chairperson
Thomas Melone, Member
Susan Steele, Member
Marilynne K. Roach, Member
Joseph Panto, Member
Matthew Walter, Member

Minutes: Thursday, September 13, 2018 Philip Pane Lower Hearing Room 7:00 p.m.

Historical Commission Members Present: Elise Loukas, Marilynne Roach, Matthew Walter, Thomas Melone, Joe Panto, Susan Steele

Member(s) Absent: David Russo

Staff Present: Andrea Adams, Susan C. Jenness

Elise Loukas, the Chairperson of the Historical Commission opened the meeting and explained the jurisdiction of the Historical Commission, (HC).

- 1. Public Hearing- 58 Chapman St.** to consider the application for demolition of an existing wood frame single family house built in approximately 1910. Proposed are two new town house units. Kamel Alhady, applicant, 58 Chapman St. LLC owner

Kamel Alhady appeared to review the project and said he found no architectural or historical significance of the building, or to who had lived there.

Melone inquired about the conditions inside of the home. Alhady said it was in terrible shape and had been stripped of all valuable fixtures and appliances but that it had hardwood floors. He handed out a proposed site plan at the meeting.

Loukas asked about the difference in height between the existing structure and proposed one. Alhady said the building is going from 22 ft. to 126 ft.

Public Comments

Lindi DiLorio- 166 Chapman St. Appeared and had also called and left a message in the Historical Preservation Office about her concerns with the loss of so many trees on this site during construction of the proposed project.

She explained that allowing this house to be constructed would be like building a huge wall between the two smaller houses on each side. She asked about the abundant trees planted around the house and Alhady said he is keeping almost all of them. Loukas asked him to have a conversation with the neighbors in the immediate area to explain the details of his intentions for the trees after the meeting.

Pam Eggers- 78 Chapman St.- Appeared to explain she had felt fortunate that this single family house was still there and that it would change the character of the neighborhood should it be demolished. She said that she had recently moved into the neighborhood and had just attended her very first block party.

After a discussion a motion was made about the house at 58 Chapman St.

Motion: Steele made a motion that the house at 58 Chapman St. is not preferably preserved. Walter seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached that the house at 58 Chapman St. is not preferably preserved.

2. **Public Hearing- 301 Common St.** to consider the demolition permit application submitted for 301 Common St. a 1-family dwelling built in approximately 1875. Proposed is a new single family residential dwelling, Kenneth Leitner, applicant, Vatche Seraderian, owner

Leitner explained that there had been a previous demolition delay hearing on this house in November 2015 and a delay had been imposed which lifted in November 2016. He also said that there had been a communication mishap between the owner and the Building Inspector at the time Ken Thompson that led to a delay in the permitting process which went dormant as a result which was why there were back before the board.

Leitner explained that in the meantime the owner had been paying taxes on the house and he has full intentions of moving forward with the project and building a single family home to move into with his family.

Leitner asked the HC to consider a vote of preferably preserved without any period of delay. He shared the minutes from the meeting in 2015 with the Chair to review the last hearing before the HC in 2015.

Public Comments - N/A

Motion: Melone made a motion that the house at 301 Common St. was preferably preserved. Roach seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached that the house at 301 Common St. was preferably preserved with one recusal by Loukas.

A discussion was held on the second part of the vote. Melone asked if anything would be gained by invoking a delay. Roach said she felt it would create an opportunity for someone to do something to save this unique home if a delay were imposed. Walter said that this was a unique building worth saving and that he wanted to make a choice to prevent the threat of a demolition. Steele and Panto agreed.

Melone asked Leitner if his client would be willing to move the house. Leitner said that his client never said the house was not preferably preserved. Leitner explained that this situation was due to a communication issue with Kenneth Thompson, the Building Inspector at the time.

Adams, Senior Planner for the Town and Acting Preservation Agent at the hearing informed the HC that in her years of working at the Cape Commission for Preservation that moving a house in a similar situation to this instance was only successful once.

Melone began a dialogue with his commission members to see if there was anything they could do to save the house. Steele reminded the group that it was their charge to save houses like this. Walter agreed and said he wanted to try even in light of the inconvenience it might cause the owner. Walter and Panto agreed that potential home buyers in Watertown should not purchase unique homes with historical and architectural character if they do not want to endure the demolition delay process.

Motion: Walter made a motion to impose a one year delay on the house at 301 Common St. Melone seconded the motion to impose a 1 year delay.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to impose a one year delay with one recusal made by Loukas.

3. **Public Hearing 148 Cypress St.** to consider the demolition application submitted for a 1 family colonial with vinyl siding and an asphalt roof built in approximately 1900. Proposed are two new town house units. Kenneth Leitner, applicant, Doctors/148 Cypress St., LLC, owner.

Leitner said that the house was built across the street from an ironworks in 1892 was the result of a property which was sub divided.

After the project review Walter asked Leitner if the owner had considered building off the rear of the building. Leitner said no and said he felt the building has no significant history. He also explained that parking is very tight on the site.

Melone asked about the inside of the house and Leitner said it is average to below average.

Walter asked to what extent they had gone to blend the house in to the neighborhood and referred to the current plans as not being very ambitious and generic looking.

Leitner said that the current house is a hodge podge of renovations over the years, much more so that the house on Chapman.

Walter said that this house is a business plan that does not match the character in the neighborhood. Leitner said that the proposed plans do not have to match the neighborhood.

Leitner said that no one is under obligation to match what exists in the neighborhood.

Callnan offered that the HC could come and take a site visit.

Loukas offered to the members of the HC that she understood what the petitioner was saying and this house underneath all the additions is just a box. She also reminded them that the new design was not their purview.

Steele added that if they wanted to add a nice porch that could improve the new structure being imposed.

Public Comments- N/A

Historical Commission Discussion

Walter said he had concerns with the streetscape and that this was a cheap design that was not beneficial to the Town.

Loukas reviewed the Ordinance for the Commission again and summarized it is not so much what is proposed to go there, it is about whether or not the Town would be impacted if the existing structure were to be demolished.

Steele said she had all kinds of opinions about what would fit well in this spot, but as far as what is there, this house is not historic.

Loukas asked if there was an opportunity for the petitioner to work with the plans so that they fit the new structure into the period of the neighborhood.

Adams asked the HC if they would characterize their concerns about the new construction as too massive, unrefined or unarticulated. She explained that if the HC could articulate some of those characteristics to the petitioner, planning staff could meet with them and work on the plans to address some of those issues to improve the design.

Steele added if they could make a large porch and not just an entryway porch, it could be more engaging with the street.

Loukas asked if anyone from the commission would benefit from a continuance.

Walter said his issues were with the design and said they could do something better for that neighborhood.

Loukas said the design is not in the HC purview and the streetscape is. Walter pointed out this neighborhood is much more broadly defined.

Loukas said the point the applicant is trying to make is that if you took off the front porch and the side add on, what is left is a box period. Is that preferably preserved?

Melone said he found the house pleasing but there was no significance about the architecture. Roach and Panto agreed.

Motion: Melone made a motion that the house at 148 Cypress St. was not preferably preserved. Steele seconded the motion.

Vote: A 5 to 1 vote was reached that the house at 148 Cypress St. was not preferably preserved.

4. Minutes: From July 12, 2018 Historical Commission Meeting

After a brief discussion, a motion was made on the minutes from the July 12, 2018 Historical Commission meeting.

Motion: Steele made a motion to adopt the minutes of the July 12, 2018 Historical Commission Meeting. Melone seconded the motion.

5. Commission Discussion- 805 Mt. Auburn St- Notification of Section 106 Filing

The HC held a conversation about the invitation they received to comment on the proposal made by SPRINT to modify and upgrade an existing Sprint facility on top of the building/rooftop at 805 Mt. Auburn St.

It was discussed that there are already many antennae and existing pieces of equipment on the structure at the present time and modifying and upgrading the existing facility would not cause a major impact.

The Clerk informed Loukas that Russo had already been in touch with the office about this proposal and was well aware of the project. Loukas deferred to Russo on making a comment on the letter if he deemed it was appropriate.

6. Discussion Items

- a. Old records at former Police Station- Adams informed the HC that the boxes they had packed with material they intended to preserve had been moved by Karen O'Reilly the Animal Control Officer who was using that space to contain animals in her custody. She has since been informed that the boxes were organized by the HC in a particular order and said she will not move the boxes again in the future.
- b. Update on Belmont St. property repairs- Adams informed the HC that there is currently no news on the development of an opportunity for the HC to visit the Belmont St. property to make assessments on repairs the building is in need of before and they explore ways of funding the repairs in part by donations of material and time by willing parties.