



TOWN OF WATERTOWN

Historical Commission

Administration Building

149 Main Street

WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02472

Elise Louikas, 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 June 11, 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, Susan Jenness, Assistant

Others Present Remotely: Kenneth Leitner, Esq., Cal McCarthy, Darrell Sander, Scott Miller, J. McGuire, Jason Gordon, Brian Melhuish, Suzie Markin

Russo opened the meeting as Loukas recused herself from the first public hearing. He briefed attendees of the following information regarding the format of the meeting and all manners of public access.

The Historical Commission of the City known as the Town of Watertown will hold a public hearing on Thursday, June 11, 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.

- 1. Public Hearing- 764 Belmont St.-** to review the demolition application for a 1 family home built in 1960 including accessory structures. Kenneth Leitner, Esq. Applicant/ 764 Belmont St. LLC, Owner

Leitner appeared on behalf of the owners. He reported that the structure was built by James Russell Lowell in 1927, and that the plot was subdivided in 1960. He reasoned that if this

discussion had taken place back when the demolition delay ordinance was first adopted by Town Council, then this structure would not have been under the jurisdiction of this commission.

Leitner described the house as a simple ranch and estimated there are about 200 other ranch type homes in Watertown. He clarified that there was nothing distinguished that stood out about the house, and he was able to find nothing historic or architecturally significance about the building in his research.

Russo asked for clarification on the proposed structure and materials, and Leitner said it would be a two family, side by side structure, with a separate gable for each side and one main gable, and two separate front doors.

There were no further comments by members of the board.

There were no public comments.

The public hearing was closed.

Melone said he saw no distinctive qualities of this otherwise pleasant house in a neighborhood with mostly 2 family homes up to 2 ½ stories high. He said he saw the new structure as harmonious with the rest of the street.

Panto agreed with Melone.

Steele and Roach had no comments.

Motion: A motion was made by Melone that the structure at 764 Belmont St. was not preferably preserved. Panto seconded the motion.

Vote: A vote was reached that the structure at 764 Belmont St. was not preferably preserved by unanimous poll.

Loukas stepped back in to Chair the remainder of the meeting.

2. Public Hearing- 142 Forest St.- to review the demolition application for a 1 family home built in 1924 including accessory structures. Cal McCarthy, Applicant/GAYK Co., LLC, Owner

Cal McCarthy appeared on behalf of GAYK Co., LLC. He described the current structure as a colonial with a hip roof situated in a 2 family zone. He said he was proposing to demolish the existing structure which was in very tough shape, to replace it with a single family home.

McCarthy described the foundation as being in okay condition, but that the interior was in very bad shape from what appeared to be water damage that was not repaired. He said this

house was not an outlier, but there have been a lot of similar projects of this type in town over the last 10-15 years.

Melone inquired about the water damage issue. McCarthy said it appeared there had been frozen pipes that burst and so all along the ceiling, walls so that now the floors are all sloped. He said the kitchen had been partially demolished and the house was no longer habitable any longer as it is. He summarized the whole existing structure as a structure sagging into the chimney.

Steele asked about materials proposed on the exterior of the new structure. McCarthy said he plans to use vinyl. She asked if he considered renovating the interior. He said that was considered but it would be a huge amount of work that costs a lot and what he really wanted to do was build a nice new structure.

Public Comments

Jason Gordon asked about the height of the new structure. McCarthy said the natural elevation to the left is the same height as surrounding structures, but in the back it may appear a few feet higher at the ridge because of the slope of the yard..

While discussing the back of the house, McCarthy stated there was not enough room to make a turnaround driveway, so there will be one driveway on each side of the house with a 4 foot buffer on each side.

Public Hearing closed.

Loukas began comments with Steele who said she was sorry the house was in such bad shape. She thanked McCarthy for considering renovation and affirmed she wished he would consider something other than vinyl. McCarthy explained he did not like hardie board/plank and has seen it does not age well. He said he expects Hardie board will come to swell like composite decking over time. McCarthy said painting a house every 5-7 years can be overwhelming for some, which is why he believes vinyl siding, which stands up really well and requires so little upkeep is the best choice.

Melone said he could assess what bad condition the house was in from the photos, and that. McCarthy shared very good reasons why renovation would not be a good solution. He summarized this was a classic square building now sagging inward from water damage which would be expensive and difficult to restore. He said there was just not enough to try to preserve it.

Panto said this was a case where there were not many of these houses left in Watertown, but he agreed photos show this one to be in bad shape. He said he thought it was a shame there was only one of these houses left on the whole street.

Walter said that even if this house was in good shape, he really did not think it rose to the level of trying to save it. He mentioned the HC as having no zoning control which gave them

little control, but if they had design review as their purview, there may be more things they could do to lean in on situations like this..

Roach said that the water damage worked against renovations, and over all this was not as good as some of the other structures they have seen and worked to save.

Russo said he would liked to have seen a structural report because he could not make out from the photos whether the structure was really and truly compromised. Russo said he thought this house could be a beautiful one but he was not sure it was one he should fight for.

Motion: A motion was made by Walter that the structure at 142 Forest St. was not preferably preserved. Steele seconded the motion.

Vote: A vote was reached that the structure at 142 Forest St. was not preferably preserved by unanimous poll.

3. Public Hearing- 38 York Ave.- to review the demolition application for a 1 family home built in 1954 including accessory structures. Darrell Sanders, Applicant, A & Q Development, LLC Owner

Sanders appeared on behalf of A & Q Development, LLC. Miller was also present for the hearing.

Sanders said he had researched the street which was largely developed in the 1930's and 50's with singles. He said there was nothing significant about the architect, the builder or the previous owners. He reported there was a lot of damage inside and out, including a lot of water damage in the back of the house that was never addressed.

Sanders said the new structure will be about the same height as surrounding structures, and will be a cape style side by side structure that will blend in well with neighborhood. He said he will be using hardie plank on the new exterior.

Melone pointed out there is a cape style home on the right, a garrison colonial on the left, and two family structures across the street.

Melone said he thought this was something someone could renovate but that he had never viewed the inside of the building. He agreed that the side by side structure would not be out of character with the surroundings.

Walter said he was glad that the developers seemed to take so much pride in what they were building. Steele, Panto and Roach agreed,

Russo reviewed the building cards from the Building Department from 1953, and explained that the street had been changed from Bailey Rd. to York Ave. in 1960. He noted in 1983 an

addition was built and while the structure has maintained integrity and is a cute little house, it is not one he felt led to fight for.

Motion: Steele made a motion that the structure at 38 York Ave. was not preferably preserved. Melone seconded the motion.

Vote: A vote was reached that the structure at 38 York Ave. was not preferably preserved by unanimous poll.

4. **Review-** Minutes from April 9, 2020 and the May 14, 2020 Historical Commission Meetings.

Motion: A motion was made by Melone that the minutes were accepted as modified and then seconded by Roach.

Vote: The motion was accepted with modifications by unanimous poll.

Motion: A motion was made by Melone that the minutes were accepted as modified and then seconded by Steele

Vote: The motion was accepted with modifications by unanimous poll.

5. **Discussion Items**

- a. Section 106 Letter- World Tech regarding Mass. DOT proposed project to rehabilitate Mt. Auburn St - <https://mountauburnstreet.com/>

Loukas mentioned that last month commission members were pondering the idea of asking that signage regarding the historical assets of the town be included in this Mass. DOT project to rehabilitate Mt. Auburn St. She inquired of Schreiber of any updated material he had to offer. Schreiber pointed out the link on the agenda item and said that the project files are all available to view by following the link.

Schreiber urged members of the HC to feel free to write a letter in response to the request for comment indicating that they would like to ask if signage could be incorporated into the project intended to rehabilitate the sidewalks, crosswalks and other rehabilitative work included in the scope of the intended project. He urged the letter should be kept simple. Loukas agreed she would take the time to work on a proposed form of letter for the next meeting.

- b. Arsenal on the Charles submissions to Mass. Historical Commission by Alexandria Real Estate Equities Inc. and Epsilon:
 - a. 343 Arsenal Street and 100 Talcott Avenue, update
 - b. 300 N. Beacon St. letter

Schreiber showed a series of slides of the submissions that had been submitted by Alexandria Real Estate Equities, as a follow up to their presentation on the repositioning of the buildings that had taken place at the May meeting.

There was a sample of two different gray colors offered as options for painting color at 343 Arsenal St. and 100 Talcott Ave. Members said they may write a comment letter to Mass. Historic if they decide it is important enough to comment on the two similar colors.

Russo said he really appreciated the background and that he could see the 1922 plane company building was built with the arsenal in mind. He pointed out the alteration on the north side and remarked he could see the integrity yet also see the alterations, but he felt no need to make real comments into a letter.

Loukas asked if anyone else had anything else to report. Walter pointed out that they had lost momentum on their discussion about the Demolition Delay Ordinance and what they could do to improve it. Loukas said that ZOOM meetings seem to be the new norm and said she saw no reason why the conversation could not continue although she said everyone seemed too tired at the end of a full agenda to plunge into the subject.

Walter offered to host members at his house for a socially distanced gathering to discuss proposed changes to the Demolition Delay Ordinance. Schreiber said that because of Open Meeting Laws only 3 members could be present, or else it would have to be posted as a meeting with an agenda. Walter said Schreiber would be a huge part of the discussion and hoped he would come. Schreiber said that he is consumed by a large number of obligations as he is an essential part of the COVID-19 team addressing many more concerns than usual.

It was determined that Walter, Steele and Loukas will meet to begin discussing the Ordinance and they will contact one another about setting up a time. Once they have new information to discuss, they will put an item on an upcoming agenda to share with the whole commission and town staff.

Motion: A motion was made by Melone to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 PM. Panto seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached and polled accepting the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 PM.