



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

Elise Loukas, Chairperson
Thomas Melone, Member
Susan Steele, Member
Marilynne K., Member
Joseph Panto, Member
Matthew Walter, Member
Richard Glenn, Member
Edward G. McCourt

Minutes: Thursday, January 9, 2023, Remote Meeting 7:00 p.m.

Historical Commission Members Present: Elise Loukas, Susan Steele, Marilynne Roache, Richard Glenn, Joseph Panto, Ed McCourt

Member(s) Absent: Matthew Walter

Public Present: Robert LeBlanc, Mark. Maroodian, Sarah Cohan, David Russo

Staff Present: Larry Field, Senior Planner, Susan C. Jenness, Assistant

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1. Loukas opened the meeting and introduced the members of the Historical Commission to their new member Ed McCourt. McCourt summarized details of his work and academic experience and said he was pleased to be a new member of the Historical Commission. Members of the Historical Commission welcomed McCourt.
 2. **Acceptance of Minutes** - Review and Acceptance of Minutes from December 12, 2022, Meeting.

The minutes from the December 12, 2022 meeting were reviewed.

Motion- Roach made a motion to accept the minutes from December 12, 2022. Glenn seconded the motion.

A roll call was taken, and all agreed with the motion.

3. **Public Hearing-** to determine if the house and garage at 300-302 Waverley Ave. are preferably preserved and if a demolition delay will be imposed. 300-302 Waverley Ave., LLC, Owner/Robert Leblanc, Applicant

Leblanc presented the proposal on the demolition application to demolish describing the structures at 300-302 Waverley Ave., which he described as a two-family house, built around 1930. He confirmed the house had undergone a number of updates effecting the details of the original structure, specifically, the trimmed doors which had been replaced; and the windows were now vinyl ones.

Leblanc confirmed he discovered nothing significant about the owners of the house, or of the house itself, in his research. Leblanc pointed out the lot across the street where the house had been replaced on a nearly identical lot of land. Leblanc informed HC members he had developed the house at 295-297 Waverley Ave. in recent years.

He summarized he thought the new proposal would give life to the neighborhood while looking very much like a single-family house. The new structure includes a number of thoughtful amenities found in modern houses; it will be ready for solar energy, it will have off street parking for 4 vehicles, and it will include electric charging stations for two cars per each unit.

HC Questions

McCourt clarified he had done considerable research that indicated the house was built in the 1920s. He was familiar with Joe Hauswirth, the long-time owner of the house, who had meaningful ties to the community through a variety of service, as well as being a Veteran. Loukas said McCourt's historical research was very helpful and indicated it was now time for members to ask the applicant questions if there were any. McCourt said he was all set for questions.

LeBlanc said he did not find what constituted as historical information of the house in his research. He pointed out the house at 293 and said it was a beautiful, historic house with the original chimney and details and his new proposal would be even less imposing as this house. Glenn asked for square footage in the original structure vs. the new one. He said the proposed 1st unit is roughly 2200 square feet, while the second unit is 2800 square feet. The original structure is roughly 16-1800 square feet per floor.

Public Comments

Mark Maroodian the owner of 832 Belmont St. which is a home on the Mass. Registry of Historic Homes, had submitted documents that were distributed in the meeting packets to members of the HC. In his packet, he stated that the history of the house, and its style define the character of the neighborhood. He recalled the owner, Joe Hauswirth stated he added historic value to the house. The documents submitted by Marooudian were screen shared with everyone present.

Commission Comments and Discussion

Panto stated he did not see anything spectacular about the house, other than the age of it. He said he felt this proposed structure is a lot better than others that had come before the HC, and many don't even blend with the streets. Steele agreed with Panto's opinion that this new proposal will make a nice addition on the street. Roach said there must be some way to use the yard space to create a turnaround for cars to park off street if, and the house could be renovated rather than Watertown losing another old house. McCourt said that the east end of Watertown is newer, and he felt losing two or three more of these old homes is the loss to Watertown. He said he would like to ask Leblanc and other developers to consider developing more like Watertown. He said he could not deny the impact or feel this could have of the street, but he did appreciate the developer had gone out of his way to create a façade with historic overtones to sustain the feel of the street, and that the proposal had valuable utilities.

Motion: Panto made a motion that the house at 300-302 Waverley Ave. was not preferably preserved. Steele seconded the motion.

Roll Call: One member opposed the motion, the rest of the members agreed with the motion that the house at 300-302 Waverly Ave was not preferably preserved.

4. **Tribute to J.B. Jones-** 2017 Special Recognition Award, long time member of the Historical Commission and friend.

Russo, former Chair and longtime member of the Historical Commission paid tribute to J Jones, who passed away in October after a brief illness, shortly after his dear wife, Rachel. In attendance for his tribute, was Sarah Cohan, Jones' great niece, attending from the kitchen designed by Jones for his sister, in the last decade of his life.

Russo said Jones was a member of the HC from 2006-2017, who received a special recognition award for outstanding service over 11 years. Russo said Jones was a gifted architect with over 30 years' experience at the world-renowned firm *Architects Collaborative*, based out of Cambridge, Massachusetts. Jones created his second career as an abstract artist, working from his studio space in Somerville, once he retired from architecture.

Commented [FL1]: Seems like an omitted word or two

Russo said Jones' base of knowledge was useful, and welcomed by his colleagues, and the developers and residents appearing before the board. Russo said Jones' had an impactful and creatively inspiring delivery to his comments. "T-Zone Roulette", was a phrase he coined, "when referring to the city's growing issue of the demolition of single-family homes, being replaced by two family structures. Russo recalled the night Jones metaphorically described the last original house standing on a highly developed street as "a last dead leaf blowing in the winter breeze."

Russo recalled Jones' generous and unique style when advocating on behalf of the structures that came before the Historical Commission that he felt were worth fighting for. He frequently took out his own set of plans in the middle of the meeting to draft and discuss innovative solutions that would allow a precious gem of the city to continue to stand in grandeur. Russo said Jones' contributions were greatly missed when he stepped down from duty on the Historical Commission.

Sarah Cohan, the great niece of Jones, led those present on a virtual tour of the stunning kitchen designed by Jones, as another layer of the legacy of this special man who will be remembered for years to come.

5. Discussion- The scope of work to be included in the application to the Massachusetts Historical Commission responding to the letter inviting Watertown Historical Commission to submit a full application for a \$20,000 survey and planning grant.

Field reported that the city agreed to pay the local match for the Historical Commission's application to the Massachusetts Historical Commission to inventory the Southside neighborhood. He reported the biggest gap in the city's documentation of historic resources is the area between Galen St. and California St., where homes were largely built between 1850 and 1920.

In October Steele and Walter walked the neighborhood, with Steele taking photos to use with the information gathered by Russo. Field and Loukas have been working on drafting the application, for this grant that Watertown has never applied for. Field reported that there are around 140 properties built before the 1920's in the area originally proposed in November (between Galen and Watertown Streets and a few blocks east of Galen St. The survey scope could be expanded in area (picking up area between California and Watertown Streets) or in age (home built between 1920 and 1930). If the scope was expanded, the survey would be more selective in order to end with the same number of properties. Field said that he and Loukas were talking with a MHC staff member on January 13 to discuss the application, including how to best focus the proposed survey.

Field asked for feedback about how to focus the inventory in the application. Steele asked Field his opinion. He referred to a 1980 Report regarding inventorying of the city, then a town, and number one on that list was a reference to houses from 1870-1910's that were more distinct than the houses from the 20's and 30's. Members agreed that Field and Loukas should proceed with an application based on what they learn in their MHC discussion.

6. Agent Report-

Field reported progress on the inventory work regarding the Form B's begun by Russo that have missing details in them. There are roughly 100 in the process. Field has continued to look for an architectural historian to complete the forms started by Russo.

Field reported that the Amendments to the Demolition Delay Ordinance are being reviewed by the City Attorney at KP Law and once that is complete, it will go back to City Council for a public

hearing and vote. Field said he will keep members of the HC informed when there is more to report.

7. Discussion- Historic Preservation Awards- Options for Nomination Categories.

Members of the HC reviewed the document of the existing categories that had been combined with the additional categories being proposed by Walter. Steele asked if she could have some examples of the nominations for the Environmental Award. Jenness said she could go back into the records and find the printed invitations for the last few Historic Preservation Awards Ceremonies so that members of the HC could see who the nominees were, and what the work was that they became nominated for, and she would send the information out for the next meeting for discussion when Walter is in attendance.

Motion: Panto made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 PM. Steele seconded the motion.

Roll Call: All members who were polled agreed to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 PM.