



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

Minutes: Thursday, November 10, 2022, Remote Meeting 7:00 p.m.

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

Member(s) Absent: Thomas Melone

Public Present: Rosemary Sheehan, Kamal Alhady, Norman Karlop, George Mavrogiannidis, Chris Krebs, Joe Grillo, Gary Shaw

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

1. Acceptance of Minutes – Review and Acceptance of Minutes from November 10th Meeting

Roach asked to make two small changes from the minutes for accuracy.

Walter said he wanted changes in the October 13th minutes because they do not accurately portray his written proposal to change the nomination categories of the Historic Preservation Awards or the comments he made during the meeting. Walter further stated that he thought the minutes did not objectively describe his comments and that Loukas's defense of the award categories was presented more accurately than his criticisms.

Jenness said she was not trying to make Walter's comments look a certain way and that she always tries to do her job with integrity. Loukas defended the history of Jenness's work over numerous years.

Loukas said that since Walter was asking for significant changes it would be appropriate to continue review of the minutes to the next meeting and give Walter an opportunity to listen to the recording and propose specific changes that could be incorporated before the next meeting.

Motion: Glenn made a motion to continue the minutes to the December meeting for Walter to submit his request for updates to the December meeting. Panto seconded the motion made by Glenn.

Roll Call: After a roll call, it was determined the review of the minutes were continued until the December meeting after Walter had submitted his corrections into the office.

2. **Public Hearing-** to determine if the house and garage at **112 Forrest St.** are preferably preserved and if a demolition delay will be imposed. Kamel Alhady, Applicant/ Karen Lucas, Owner

Alhady was present to review the proposal with his team.

Alhady stated that the house was going to be sold the following week to a new owner. He explained the house had been sold 2-3 times since it was built. During his research he found no historic significance and stated that both the inside and outside of the structure need a lot of work. Alhady sent in a proposal for 2 townhouses, that he characterized as normal two-story structures.

Commission Questions

Walter asked if the houses condition was too far gone for renovation. Alhady said the inside and outside are not safe and a lot of the conditions were not up to code. He was unsure of the structural soundness because there is no way to get down to the basement due to the living conditions and a large dog who will not allow anyone to enter.

Mavrogiannidis who is the architect on the project said he tried to find a feature that would allow them to build around the character of the existing structure and was not able to find that. He explained that the building could be condemned and if the Health Department saw it, they would condemn it. Glenn clarified he thought the structure was built in 1910. Panto asked how they knew about the condition of the house without having been inside the basement.

Public Comments

Joe Grillo at 110 Forrest St. said his family knows the history of the building and would be happy to answer questions. Grillo said he was concerned about this demolition because of environmental hazards. He asked for assurance there would be adequate environmentally protective measures taken so his loved ones and neighbors would be safe. Loukas assured him the Health Department would be interested and actively involved in securing the area from environmental hazards. As to the existing conditions of the structure, Grillo said the house is not up to code, and the electrical is not current, the construction is very old, and the beams are exposed inside. He said there is one bathroom upstairs, one downstairs located in a separate apartment with a kitchen, bedroom, and small living room.

Walter said the structure had an interesting unique older style featuring a turret with peaked bay windows. He theorized the house could be taken down to the studs and rebuilt. Panto said he liked the unique features that had add ons, but still retained the original feel. He said he believed if they put the work in, they could make it look nice, while maintaining the bones of the original house.

Walter pointed out a house up the street built around the same time that had been worked on recently that looked quite attractive, with two or three units built in.

Glenn said he was interested in knowing what percentage would be added to the current structure given the proposal. Glenn also stated at this point, he would require more information to say this house should not be preserved. Panto explained he thought they did not have all the information that would be needed to find the structure was not preferably preserved, such as a structural engineering report that would explain what we need.

Motion: Walter made a motion that the house at 112 Forrest St. was historically significant and preferably preserved. Roach seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Steele declared she had technical difficulties throughout the hearing and felt the need to abstain from voting. The remainder of the members agreed with the motion made by Walter.

Walter stated he had a good eye for structural issues and this house looks like it could be gutted and rebuilt. Loukas asked about the foundation and asked members of the commission if this is the house that they should try to save.

Mavrogiannidis explained that the value of this site is the land, renovating this house would cost the same as building two new townhouses.

Loukas asked if the applicants would agree to continue the hearing so they can see the inside of the house. Applicants said that no one can get into the house, and they can not even enter the basement to see the foundation. The owner also has a dog that prohibits anyone from entering the house in safety.

Motion: Walter made a motion for a one-year delay for the house at 112 Forrest St. Panto seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Steele abstained from voting. The remaining members of the commission agreed with the motion made by Walter.

3. **Tribute-** To JB Jones, long time member of the Historical Commission, Recipient of the 2017 Special Recognition Award at the Historic Preservation Awards.

Loukas explained that David Russo the former Chair of the Historical Commission was unable to be at this meeting to tribute Jones. She informed those present Russo would be available at the December meeting.

4. **Commission Discussion-** Demolition Delay Ordinance/Regulations.

Field briefed the members that staff from the Planning Office have been supportive of the demolition delay modifications that were being proposed by the HC. Field explained that there has been staffing changes in the Zoning Enforcement and Building Commissioner since the Commission's regulations and changes were proposed. Field reported that the next appearance

before the City Council Economic Planning Committee will be held on November 21, at their second meeting to discuss this subject. Field will keep the HC advised.

5. Commission Discussion- Historic Assets Inventory

Field reported that the Historical Commission will apply to the Massachusetts Historic Grant for the 2023 round of grant awards. The city is committed to making the local match required of the process.

Field identified two scopes of concentration to consider for the assets inventory. The first scope is the area south of the Charles River, the second would be to concentrate on the raw data created by David Russo and converting that southside data to form B's. Field said the Commission could proceed with the southside as a grant application and could hire an architectural historical to provide analysis to Russo about the buildings he collected data on.

Steele and Walter went on a neighborhood walk and both reported a great mix of architecture styles, some which were from similar styles Russo would likely know a lot about. Most structures were 2 families, built generously, in nice neighborhoods to fit nicely into civil war and periods earlier than WWI. Steele commented that a fair number of neighbors came out to talk with them about the houses and the neighborhood. She referred to the areas they covered as high quality with a nice variety. The streets they walked were Capitol, Union, and Elliot Street.

Loukas authorized Field to continue working on the details for the grant application.

6. CPC Updates by Matthew Walter

Walter reported that the CPC is now determining which projects to vet. He said there are mostly housing applications that had issues

7. Agent Report

Field already reported updates from the agent.