



**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, January 13, 2022, Remote meeting 7:00 p.m.

**Historical Commission Members Present:** Joe Panto, Chair, Marilynne Roach, Matthew Walter, Susan Steele, Richard Glenn

**Member(s) Absent:** Elise Loukas, Thomas Melone

**Public Present:** Heather Kane, Kenneth Leitner, Linda Glazer, Sandra Erickson

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

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Panto chaired the meeting in the absence of Elise Loukas. He opened the meeting just after 7:15 PM. once a full quorum was present after Steele arrived.

**1. Review-** Minutes from December 9, 2021

The minutes from the December 9, 2021, meeting were reviewed.

**Motion:** Walter made a motion to accept the minutes from December 9, 2021. Steele seconded the motion.

**Poll:** The minutes were accepted from the December 9, 2021, meeting after Panto took a poll of all present members.

**2. Public Hearing continued from December 9, 2021, to allow for a site visit- 53 Copeland St.- to review the demolition application for a 1 family house built in 1945. Frances Mills, Owner, Kane Built, Inc. Roger Kane, Applicant/Owner**

Panto explained that this project had been reviewed at the December Historical Commission meeting, and at that time some members felt they wanted a site visit to see the condition of the inside of the house in person, to better assess the value of the existing structure. He said that all members present at the meeting attended the visit, except for Walter who said he did not need a site visit.

Panto asked members to go around and discuss what their thoughts were after a site visit.

Steele commented that the house was in rough shape, she learned there would be 4 units built on the site, and after viewing the inside of the house, she said it was not worth trying to save. Glenn said he assessed the heights of all the ceilings in the home and what he found was the ceiling upstairs was not high enough to meet code standards. He elaborated that a lot of houses built in that period were not built using high quality materials and were constructed quickly which was the case with this house, and not worth saving. Roach said the outside of the house was nicer, and she saw some interesting features in the living room. She said to her knowledge there was nothing historical about the house, which she characterized as a bungalow with problems. Panto said he thought it was a necessary exercise to go on the site visit to make his decision. He said he said that Glenn's analysis furthered his opinion, that this particular house was not worth trying to save.

Ms. Glazer who is an abutter who spoke at the December meeting asked if she could get some information on what is going to be built on the site. Jenness offered to speak with Dorey in the morning from the office and get contact information about the proposal from the building team.

**Motion:** Walter made a motion that the structure at 53 Copeland St. was found not preferably preserved. Glenn seconded the motion made by Walter.

**Poll:** A poll was taken, and all members agreed with the motion made by Walter.

3. **Public Hearing- 51 Quirk St.-** to review the demolition application for a 1 family house and lean to are preferably preserved and if a demolition delay will be imposed. Kenneth Leitner, Applicant

Leitner said that the existing house is a multi-flat unit, but he could not come up with a style to assign to it. The lot was subdivided in 1870 and in 1958 they reduced the sizes of the lots of the neighborhood which was owned by the Quirks at that time. It appeared this was a bungalow style farmhouse that a dormer had been added too, and in his research, he was able to find no architectural or historical significance. Leitner noted that when researching the assessor's records, he discovered that the land on the site was assessed at more than two and one half the value of the house.

#### **Public Comments**

N/A

#### **Commission Comments**

Steele said the building had no distinctive style and that she felt all the additions onto the original structure had absorbed that. Roach said it was likely this was a house shaped house, but all the additions contributed to it not being much of a house to live in. Glenn said he echoed the previous

comments, and while he found this to be an old home, it was not an asset to Watertown. Steele said the house was not an asset to the history of Watertown. Walter said this is an old house and if we could strip away what was over the original structure, it is hard to imagine this would be found preferably preserved. Panto said because of its age alone he felt it should receive a second look, but this was clearly not an asset to Watertown.

**Motion:** Steele made a motion that this house at 51 Quirk St. was not preferably preserved. Glenn seconded the motion made by Steele.

**Poll:** A poll was taken, and all members present agreed with the motion made by Steele.

#### **4. Tribute to Roger Erickson**

David Russo, former longtime member, and Chair of the Historical Commission was present before the Historical Commission to give tribute to Roger Erickson. Erickson was a previous board member and Chair from the earliest days of the Historical Commission. Erickson's daughter Sandra Erickson had been notified of the tribute and was in attendance to hear Russo pay tribute to her father.

Russo spoke the following words at the tribute.

I was sorry to learn of Roger Erickson's passing on December 9th. I've been asked to say a few words to remember Roger for the record of the Historical Commission.

In 1995, the old St. Patrick's Church at the top of Church Hill Street was demolished. It was an early and intact Italianate style building built in 1847 and was the first Roman Catholic church in Watertown. As this building was particularly significant, there was a general feeling in town that there wasn't sufficient process surrounding the demolition of this building specifically and these kinds of demolitions more generally. As a result, the Town reconstituted the Historical Commission and passed the Demolition Delay ordinance to help manage the demolition of our built environment.

Enter Roger Erickson.

On October 11, 1995, the first meeting of the new Historical Commission was convened, which included Roger. Roger was a regular, strong, and unceasing voice on the commission for the preservation of the town's historic resources. He served as a commissioner until 2003 when, in recognition of his skill, he was elected as Chairperson. He resigned his post in 2005 after 10 years of service to this Commission and the Town of Watertown.

During his time on the Commission, his comments, insights and contributions were noteworthy. Often, petitioners would present a proposal to demolish a given house and would provide details on the particularly dire condition of the house including rotting roofs, crumbling foundations, animal incursions, termites' infestations, and other problems. These potential mitigating factors were, of course, important, but they had nothing to do with the basic question as to whether there was any

historic merit to the house. After the parade of horrors, Roger would often respond with a basic truth. He'd say: "it's a grand old place," which looked to an objective observer that he ignored the presentation, but he didn't. These houses were grand old places, and it was a good reminder for the Commission that we need to focus first on historic merit before moving to any mitigating factors.

Roger was dogged in his advocacy for the Town's built environment. He was proud to say that each structure before the Historical Commission was evaluated on its own merits. He understood that there was no one else advocating for these buildings at our meetings and it was incumbent on us to give each building a fair, full and thorough evaluation. The deck was stacked against some of these building: many had been neglected for some time and needed some updating, or houses were in zoning districts that encouraged demolition. Roger had a keen eye, focused on historic worth and merit. He will be missed.

Sandra Erickson spoke when Russo was finished. She said that Watertown meant so much to her father. She also recalled that her father was lucky enough to do his fair share of travelling in his life, and he was always so happy to come home to Watertown, where he found his forever home.

Both Erickson and Russo both reminisced fondly about how Erickson loved both Watertown and speaking on behalf of the structures who did not have the ability to speak for themselves.

## **5. Review-Discussion**

### **A. Demolition Delay Ordinance Review and Recommendations for updates**

Panto said he felt led to table the discussion on the Demolition Delay Ordinance because Loukas was not in attendance. Members agreed with him it was best to continue the discussion until Loukas was present to review the most recent updates she had made to the body of work that they have been crafting as a team.

Steele explained that she was unhappy with a recently built structure on the corner of Bridgham and Fairfield. She said it is unpleasant and she was not sure how that was allowed. She said she was interested in finding a way to never let that happen again. Walter said that Watertown is truly in need of Developers Guidelines.

Panto said that while this is an important issue, it should be tabled for discussion when Loukas is back as Chair.

## **6. CPC Updates on CPC Business by Matthew Walter**

Walter said the CPC is currently in possession of 4 application to proceed for a full review. He has been conducting research on the two project applications that were received for Historic Preservation.

The first project came before the Historical Commission for an informational meeting and was filed by the Historical Society. The application proposed to remove the murals that are hanging on the

walls of City Hall to be transported to an art historian for refurbishing and Walter said he was fully in support of that project.

The second application proposal was filed for replacing/refurbishing the grape arbors at the Commanders Mansion. The mansion is on the States listing of historic buildings. Walter went on a site visit to look at the arbors in person. He found that the arbors were built in around early 1980's which does not make them historical. He also pointed out that the application did not support the landscape area was listed on the historic registry either. Walter pointed out that the arbors were not well built or designed. He suggested this is a great idea for a project, but it should have been filed as Open Space, or somehow the arbors would need to be documented as having historical value.

Walters colleagues thanked him for his research and asked him if he was able to give feedback to the applicants who the project could be filed and meet the eligibility standards in the future. And Walter said he would be able to do that and has made plans to make suggestions how they can refile the applicant and meet all the requirements.

## **7. New Business and Updates for members of the Historical Commission**

Town Staff had no new business to report. Roach said she wanted to report that the sign for the Schick House was delivered, and she felt relieved and excited to let everyone know. She reminded everyone that the Demolition Delay was up later this month, so the timing of the arrival of the sign was fortunate.

**Motion:** Glenn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 PM. Roach seconded the motion.

**Poll:** Members were polled, and all agreed to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 PM.