

**Minutes**  
**of the**  
**Watertown Historical Commission**  
**Thursday, January 8, 2008**  
**Lower Hearing Room**  
**7:00pm**

**Historical Commission Members Present:** Russo, Berg, Jones, Roach, Melone, Steele

**Staff Present:** Collins

**Public Present:** See attached Sign-In Form

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Russo chaired. The meeting opened at 7:00p.m.

- 1. Public Hearing – Demolition Permit for 24-26-28 Arsenal Street, to demolish a three-story structure, which formerly housed Casey’s Bar on the ground floor and four dwelling units on the second and third floor, and construct a 5-story 22,242 s.f. mixed use containing retail space on the first floor and 14 residential units above, Robert Bray, owner.**

William York, representing the applicant, informed that the project, Arsenal Residences, had been presented before all the different Town reviewing entities – Planning Board, ZBA, and Site Plan Review - throughout the past year. He noted that the project received a unanimous approval from the Planning Board and the ZBA.

York indicated that the project would be a 5-story building. The top floor will be set back so that it appears as a 4-story building. York said that the project plan is for the construction of 14 residential condos to be located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> floors, commercial space to be located on the first floor, and parking to be located below ground.

York informed that the existing building was built approximately in 1930. The first floor was the former site of Casey's Bar, with four units of residential rentals on the second floor. He reported that the building was 70 years old and was not significant. He noted that the building was a mansard with a kicked-out front. He indicated that the property was located in the Watertown Square Master Plan area.

Jones questioned how the proposed project fit in the context in the neighborhood. He raised his concern about the pedestrian access to the building. York responded that there was no garage door and that access was through the opening.

Russo inquired what "cultured brick." was. Bray responded that it was a real brick.

Based on his research, Melone informed that the building was a Second Empire, built in 1870 to 1875.

Russo noted that the assessor's information is often incorrect when identifying the year a building is built, as in the case for this property which identified it in 1910. However, the roof type identifies the building as being built in the 1870's.

Bray reported that the property has been vacant of tenants and that the property is in deplorable condition.

Melone indicated that the property was owned by a Thomas Ferdon, a painter, in 1898. He reported that since 1886, the property was commercial on the bottom floor and residential on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. He noted that there was a photograph in a library book of the property as a carriage repair shop.

Russo questioned whether the existing design was considered in the new structure. York responded that they did not consider it. The proposed design, said York, followed the Watertown Square Master Plan guidelines. He indicated that Bray only considered a new development at the site.

Muriel Doherty, 8 Riverside Street, inquired if the applicant considered maintaining the façade and gutting the interior. Bray responded that he did not consider that option and that he followed what was allowable by zoning.

There was concern that the proposed project did not fit with the present neighborhood. She was concerned that the building height would set a precedent for taller buildings in the neighborhood. York argued that the height was not the purview of the HC, and it was allowable under Smart Growth considerations and set backs encouraged by the Watertown Master Plan. Russo countered that a demolition could be delayed because of its relationship to the existing neighborhood and that it can be considered by the HC.

Melone noted that Watertown has other mansards structures. He identified the Marshall House and others on Mount Auburn Historic District, Franklin Street and Fayette Street. The present property, in comparison, had been remodeled. However, he felt its condition did not preclude it from being restored, although, much would have to be done to preserve it.

Roach felt it was the last of its type - a commercial/residential mixed use. She hoped preservation could be considered.

Jones noted that the 1875 context and the structure's relation to its neighborhood no longer existed. Berg concurred with Jones.

Russo informed that Second Empire structures are limited in Watertown and that mansards are rare. He felt that the replacement project will overwhelm the neighborhood and abutters. However, he didn't feel that the project would impact the historic neighborhood. Jones concurred and noted that the proposed building had other taller buildings to match in the Watertown Square area, such as the Otis Building.

**Vote:** Jones moved that 24-26-28 Arsenal Street was not preferably preserved. Berg seconded the motion. Ayes – 5, Opposed – 1(Roach). The motion was **approved**.

## **2. Support Letter for the Charles Riverfront Restoration Project**

Russo submitted a draft letter in support for the Charles Riverfront Restoration Project for HC review and approval. Roach clarified that the area was not the actual Clapp landing site, but it was an area where significant historic events occurred. The HC approved the submission of the letter of support.

## **3. Invitation to Comment – 341 Mount Auburn Street**

Steele illustrated the height of the antenna on an image of the existing building.

Joyce Kelly, representative of the HSW, noted that the antenna would detract from the design even if it were painted to match. She felt it was not in keeping with the building.

Malone noted that the proposed fence is not part of the integrity of the building and that the antenna was not in keeping with the building.

A comment letter will be submitted with HC concerns.

#### **4. Invitation to Comment – 7 Galen Street**

The proposed antenna is an internal system. Steele felt the antenna was slender and not a big deal. HC will not comment on the proposed antenna.

#### **5. December Minutes. Approved.**

Kelly requested the telephone number of Len Holt to contact him to photograph 27-29 Gleason Street.

#### **6. Outbuilding Inventory**

Russo provided an updated list of outbuildings to begin the photography and inventory of the outbuildings. Members selected streets to inventory.