

**Minutes  
of the  
Watertown Historical Commission  
Thursday, February 9, 2006  
Council Chambers**

**Historical Commission Members Present:**

**Russo, Chairperson**

**Light**

Roach

O'Looney

Jones

Berg

**Members Absent:**

Lane

**Staff Present:**

Hayward

Collins

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

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The meeting opened at 7:30p.m.

**1. Public Hearing – 80 Walnut Street, Demolition Permit, Wayne Brosco, applicant**

The applicant has not communicated with the HC. This Public Hearing on this item was closed.

**2. Public Hearing – 24 Bacon Street, Demolition Permit, Demetrius Zarkadas, owner**

Demetrius Zarkadas reported that the structure could be from the mid to the late 1880's. He could find no records that the structure was older than 1880. He indicated that the property was zoned 2-family and is located in a mixed use neighborhood that has single, two-family, condos, and commercial buildings. The empty property on the street, owned by the Town, is littered with rusted equipment and backfill. He felt that the Town's disregard for the empty lot indicated a disregard for the historic nature of the street and structure. He said he wanted to donate that structure to the Town to be relocated. No matter the outcome of the building, he intends to build a two-family for his sister and his parents after the one-year delay.

Zarkadas noted that the results of his deed search indicated a structure appearing on the lot in 1857. The original property-owner was Michael Conroy, an immigrant. According to Zarkadas, the family was of no historic note. The Zarkadas bought the property from Conroy's descendents.

O'Looney inquired about the age of the windows, Zarkadas noted they were rope/pulleys possibly from 1910-1920.

Roach indicated that older buildings were frequently moved and the structure could be older than when it appeared on the deed. Zarkadas said he found nothing indicating the move in Library records. Roach and Jones noted that interior architectural features could indicate age.

Russo reported, based on research at the Registry of Deeds, that the property was conveyed by a Grace Gallagher to Michael Conroy in 1852 as a plot of land. He felt it was possible that the house could have been built in the 1730's, based on the architectural style of the building, and moved to the site. He was unable to ascertain that without Town records. He felt that the house itself may provide more clues on that.

Russo informed that the structure appears in the 1855, 1865, 1869 census and the Town maps of 1875, 1889, 1898, 1900. He felt that a structure was at the site as of 1852 and it may have been moved to the site. He felt it was impressive that the Conroy family owned the structure for 125 years.

Jones supported moving and saving the building. He felt it may be a 1730's structure by its massing. He wanted further research to be conducted to determine the age of the building, in particular if it turns out to be 1730 salt box. Jones felt that by the location and ownership the structure was a worker/laborer house. Roach and Russo supported further investigation.

Giovanni Cimino reported that it would cost \$10,000 to \$20,000 to move the structure; this figure did not include foundation work.

Russo believed it was historically significant based on it being built in about 1852.

Russo suggested that a demolition delay would provide a cooling-off period to investigate preservation options for the structure.

**Vote:** O'Looney moved to determine that 24 Bacon Street is a preferably-preserved significant building. Roach seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Vote:** Light moved to impose a 12-month demolition delay on 24 Bacon Street. Jones seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

**3. Public Hearing - 38 Dexter Avenue, Demolition Permit, Giovanni Cimino, applicant**

Giovanni Cimino reported that he was the owner of 38 Dexter for the past 18-months. The building was built in 1948-1950. He is in negotiation with the Watertown Housing Authority to donate and move the structure to the adjacent property. He may move the structure to another site. However, he is seeking a demolition permit to proceed if negotiations fail.

Russo noted that the building was built in 1947.

**Vote:** O’Looney moved to determine that the demolition of 38 Dexter Avenue would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural heritage of the Town. Berg seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

#### **4. Public Hearing – 15 Beacon Park, Demolition Permit, Mark Irgsusi**

Stephen Winnick represented the applicant. Winnick reported that the structure was a single family built in a two-family zone. He indicated that the applicant intended to build a two-family, one-and-half-story home. The total square footage will increase from 1,060 to 2,000 square feet. He noted that the property was zoned T since 1924 and that there were three two-family structures in the neighborhood. He reported that what was proposed was within zoning guidelines and height limits. He characterized the building as lacking characteristics of a bungalow and that it had been “mongrelized.” He felt that the proposed project was an improvement and congruent to the neighborhood.

Russo questioned what he considered to be “congruent.” Winnick responded that the height and proposed porch detail made it congruent.

O’Looney questioned whether there could be symmetry to 41 Beacon.

Jones felt that the project was a substantially larger project than the existing building. He felt that the neighborhood was unique and that as a neighborhood it was historically significant. He argued that though 21 Beacon Street was tall it fit in the neighborhood and that the proposed project did not. He noted that the neighborhood was a construct of delicately placed, small houses sited thoughtfully on the parcels and they all match.

Light indicated that the HC is charged to look at the historic character of neighborhoods.

Robert Mentum, 18 Beacon Park, made a presentation on the history of Beacon Park going back to the early settlers. He informed that the land was purchased by George Briggs in 1910 and named the street Beacon Park. Briggs was an architect and builder who designed/built all the properties on Beacon Park. Mentum felt that to remove one of the structures would change the neighborhood and would open the doors to the conversion of single family to two-family structures.

John Voris, 142 North Beacon Street, made a presentation on the bungalow. He noted that neighborhood appears in the Town's Sanford maps of 1916, 1920, and 1928. He reported that 4 out of the 20 houses were of the bungalow style. He described the neighborhood as carefully thought out, unique and non-transient.

Mary Keenan, 10 Beacon Park, spoke about the connection of the neighborhood and the Perkins School for the Blind. She described that many neighbors were employed by Perkins and that the neighborhood served as off-campus housing for the Perkins community, housing graduate students. She noted that Briggs built the development considering the connection with Perkins. She felt that the proposed house will be jarring to the neighborhood. She presented a letter of support for the preservation of the building by resident, Larry DeStefano, who was unable to attend.

Councilor Marilyn Petitto Devaney, 98 Westminster Avenue, reported that Watertown was the 9<sup>th</sup> densest town in Massachusetts. She supported the preservation of the neighborhood. She indicated that she supported the zoning change that would limit two-family structures to lots of 7000 square feet or larger. She noted that the applicant's lot is 5,100 square feet.

Robin Fidler, 21 Beacon Park, was in support of the preservation of the 15 Beacon Park.

Mark Irqusi, the applicant, spoke of his efforts to please the neighborhood and he noted that the neighborhood already had 2-family structures.

Allison Morrill, 31 Beacon Park, reported that she bought her property from the original owner who lived to be 100 years. She reported that there were stone entrance markers to designate the neighborhood. She felt the proposed project would not be congruent with the neighborhood.

Councilor Jonathan Hecht, 159 Russell Avenue, felt that buildings connect us to the past and maintain sense of neighborhood. He felt the placement of the building is important to the context of neighborhood.

Clifford Ruah, 31 Beacon Park, felt that the proposed property encroaches and breaks the setbacks of the original neighborhood.

Councilor Mark Sideris, 30 Union Street, supported a demolition delay.

Jones described the neighborhood as unique and that its architectures reflect that. He felt the house was integrated in the neighborhood. He noted that the bungalow style was not as popular on the East and that it should be restore. He felt the property if restored would be more valuable.

Light felt it was not responsible to allow the demolition of the structure.

Russo reported that the HC imposed a 1 year demolition delay on a bungalow on Russell Avenue because of the rarity of the syle. Jones proposed eight months.

**Vote:** Light moved to determine that 15 Beacon Park is a preferably-preserved significant building. Berg seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Russo suggested a period of less than a year be considered, possibly seven months.

Light proposed a conservative approach of a one year delay, lifting the period based on outcomes. O'Looney concurred.

Russo noted that there was no neighborhood in Watertown with such cohesiveness and he suggested a shorter delay.

**Vote:** Jones moved to impose an 8-month demolition delay on 15 Beacon Park. Light seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Russo urged the applicant to work with the HC.

### **Informational Item – 917 Belmont Street**

Laura Warneck, architect, presented preliminary plans. She reported that the design was based on programmatic requirements imposed by the Department of Education and the school needs. The plan proposed maintaining the existing front and scale of the building. The new part will match the existing structure and architectural detail will be preserved. The plan proposed to retain the existing foundation and continue along the line of the back structure. She felt preserving the back would be inappropriate for usage and by cost. The programmatic needs are for a 50'X 50' space with new systems.

Jones wanted to see the 1830s building, section 1 and 2 of map, preserved (see attached).

Russo queried why they were wedded to the gym being located in that space?

Warneck responded that it was too much effort to save a "history relic" for only its façade without consideration to the needed usage.

Steve Tannenbaum wished the back building wasn't there so that they could build a 50' x 50' gym. Berg proposed preserving the building and building an adjacent gym. Warneck noted that if they preserved the back section, the school would still need a 50' x 50' space and there would be no programmatic need for the preserved space. Tannenbaum informed that they'd rather build new art space than reuse the existing space. Tannenbaum noted that there was no planned programmatic expansion.

Russo suggested saving section 1 and 2 and building a stand along gym. Tannenbaum argued that the school did not have the money for such a solution and that the design was based on curriculum for the students.

Jones requested that additional effort be made to preserve section 2 and a use for it.

Ellen Donato, 15 Knowles Road, spoke in support of the proposed project. She reported that the present developer had demonstrated a good relationship with the neighborhood and she felt they were good neighbors.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00pm