



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

Elise Loukas, Chairperson
David Russo, Vice Chairperson
Thomas Melone, Member
Susan Steele, Member
Marilynne K. Roach, Member
Joseph Panto, Member
Matthew Walter, Member

Minutes: Thursday, June 13, 2019 Philip Pane Lower Hearing Room 7:00 p.m.

Historical Commission Members Present: Elise Loukas, Chair, Marilynne Roach, Matthew Walter, Susan Steele, Joseph Panto, David Russo, Vice Chair

Member(s) Absent: Thomas Melone

Public Present: John Cimino, Curtis Whitney, Todd Greenfield, Dennis Duff, Avo Asdourian, Sarah Ryan, Libby Shaw, Jamie Gordon, Jonathan Roy, John Labadini, James Scully, Janet Scully

Staff Present: Gideon Schreiber, Susan C. Jenness (Adopted 8/8/2019)

Loukas opened the meeting with the minutes.

1. Minutes- From May 10, 2019 Historical Commission Meeting.

After a review of the minutes a motion was made.

Motion: Roach made a motion to accept the minutes as modified. Steele seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached accepting the minutes as amended.

Loukas briefed the public about the process for the demolition delay hearings on the agenda.

2. Public Hearing Continuation- 70 Beechwood Ave.- to consider the Demolition Application submitted for the one family colonial built in 1900 Curtis Whitney, Applicant/Avo Asdourian, Owner

John Cimino of Cimino and Sons Contracting appeared before the HC for the continuation of the public hearing on the application for a demolition permit for 70 Beechwood Ave. He

reminded those present that he is a lifelong resident of the Town. He mentioned that there are numerous abutters who are very excited about the potential of the new project he is proposing.

Cimino said he hoped the members of the board were able to see that the framing of the house is no longer an 1800's frame. He also mentioned the foundation that was in a deteriorated condition.

He offered a breakdown of the numerous repairs and upgrades the house would need at a cost of \$395,000.00, when the house itself cost \$600,000. Cimino said that if a one year delay was imposed on the demolition application it would cost \$28,500.00.

He reminded the board that his projects are top notch referring to his project at Mt. Auburn and Boylston St. and turned the floor back over to the HC for inquiries.

Loukas asked the board if they had any questions for Cimino.

Panto asked if there was an engineer's report to support his opinion, and Cimino responded that if he hired an engineer they would rely on asking him to get answers to their questions, and he did not want to spend the money on that.

Curtis Whitney, the Insurance Agent and potential owner of the house came forward to explain that in his research he was unable to find a building certificate going back as far as the Commission's research did. He concluded that this house was a rebuild of what was there prior to the date indicated in Town records. Cimino stepped forward and said that if the frame was built in the era the board said it was, it would be a dowel system frame. He said the frame on this house was a conventional 2 by 4 system which indicates the frame is of a later date.

Russo said it was his opinion that there had been an addition built on the side and back of the house's original structure.

Public Comments

Loukas read an email in to the record by Sarah Ryan of Paul St. who wrote she thought this is a nicely proportioned house for the site, with a nice yard in the back of the house. She said her family was saddened at the prospect of the Town losing another 100 plus year old house. She urged the Town to do everything they could to save the house from demolition.

Commission Discussion

Roach commented that part of the house looked like an addition had been put on it and was definitely a house that had things done to it.

Steele said she expected to see sagging beams at the site visit but reported she saw a basement that resembled the basement in her own house.

Panto said he agreed with Steele that the basement looked like his too, and that he was interested in seeing more of the permits that had been issued over the years.

Schreiber reported there had been an addition on the house in 1917 by John Collins.

Russo said it was his opinion that an addition had been put on the sides and back of the original structure. He emphasized he was in no way saying they should live in the house as it is now, but he urged them to think of blowing out the inside and building out the back. He said he was not changing his opinion too much.

Loukas said she expected to see much worse than what she did, and she wondered why there would be no engineers report.

Roach said that she noticed the stairs going up into the bedrooms and the layout above and commented that they looked very old.

Panto wondered what the impact would be on the neighborhood if this house was demolished.

Schreiber said that the board would need to determine if the house was significant and if so, what type of delay would they impose, if any. He defined that preferably preserved could relate to the house and the neighborhood.

Loukas reminded the group that Walter was abstaining and that Russo would not vote as he was not present for the meeting last month.

Motion: Steele made a motion that the building at 70 Beechwood Ave. was preferably preserved. Roach seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached that the building at 70 Beechwood Ave. was preferably preserved. Walter had recused himself and Russo was not able to vote.

A brief discussion continued and Roach mentioned that the yard was unkempt but added that a weed wacker or hedge trimmers would resolve that.

Steele said she felt the value of the older homes increases as more and more of them are being demolished.

Panto asked for an explanation of what the delay period would allow for. Loukas explained that in the period of time the demolition was delayed for, a new buyer who would be interested in rehabbing the house might be found. She added that if the applicant was to come back to the board with new plans or more information about the condition of the house, the board could lift the delay if they decided to.

Roach said she thought the house could be saved.

A second motion was made as to imposing a delay on the demolition.

Motion: Panto made a motion to impose a 12 month delay on the demolition of 70 Beechwood Ave. Roach seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to impose a 12 month delay on the house at 70 Beechwood Ave. Walter abstained and Russo was not able to vote.

Loukas closed the hearing for 70 Beechwood Ave.

Cimino asked to step forward to make a further comment, which she allowed. Cimino explained that Perkins School for the Blind owns many of the buildings in the surrounding area and when they came forward to inspect this house as a potential to expand their campus, they turned it down.

3. Public Hearing- 74 Fitchburg St.- to consider the Demolition Application submitted for the single family colonial built around 1930. John Patrick McGurn, Owner/ John Carney, Applicant

Robert Annese the Attorney of record for the applicant appeared before the commission on behalf of John Carney.

He explained this was a very unique situation where the builder had gone to Building and Zoning and asked specific questions about how much demolition was appropriate without losing conformity. His client was informed that up to 50% demolition was allowed.

Annese explained that in the Town of Arlington, 50% would apply to both interior demolition, as well as to the exterior. Annese said that copies of the renderings of the building and plans were submitted and that it showed the existing building both front and back before demolition, as well as elevations. He pointed out that all was in scale with the other buildings in the neighborhood.

Loukas reported there were no recusals for the record.

Walter asked where the Town stood on the 50% rule. Annese said his architect informed him that his client was okay. However, there is no by law in existence in the Town that anyone can go to about the 50% rule, thereby knowing exactly what they can do.

Loukas pointed out that 2 walls and the roof seem to be more than 50% to her. Annese said that the roof was not part of the zoning review, and that the floor joists, foundation and walls were incremental removals.

Loukas asked for clarification about what demolition was in this instance, and Schreiber said the permit which was obtained in this instance was for interior demolition and for building.

Russo spoke up and clarified that he was very sorry the parties were before the board. He said he was ready to move on though, so that the Historical Commission could do their job and determine whether or not the building at 74 Fitchburg St. was preferably preserved.

Roach said that a permit for interior demolition should not include walls and roofs.

Russo pointed out that the plans looked very different. Carney, the applicant spoke up that the renderings were correct.

Public Comment

Girard Gilkey of 178 Orchard St. said that he is a 76 year resident of the Town. He reported that he saw nothing historical about this house. He said he was concerned about a 2 family being put up in the neighborhood and how that would impact parking.

Jamie Gordon of 84 Fitchburg St. said this house was similar to her house, which was built in the 1920's. She said she wished the owners were required to appear before the HC before they were allowed to demolish this house and that she would have come and spoken for it. She told Loukas that she was a co-signatory on the letter that came in from the abutters to the project earlier in May.

Steele pointed out there was not a lot of house to save. Loukas defined that the Commission's job was to discuss the structure that had been there.

Russo pointed out that this was a 4 square colonial revival, a duplicate of 62 Common St. and the scheme of the whole neighborhood. He recounted that this street was built for professionals and that these were basic colonial homes in a neighborhood on an anomalous street where there has been no other demolitions so far.

Walter said he was sympathetic to the neighborhood and that there are some styles of homes that rise to the occasion.

Loukas read section 2.3 C-2 of the demolition delay ordinance. She said there is a trigger about the 4 squares that are next to the Lowell School giving rise to the neighborhood and culture.

Walter pointed out he thought this was more of a zoning issue than for the Historical Commission.

Schreiber pointed out that this is a mix of single family and 2 family residents, and this particular theme is one that was sprinkled throughout this street and on to others. He pointed out it's been a higher density residential since the 1920's, with a mix of singles and two families.

Roach wondered what the town would do aside from the proceedings with the Historical Commission. Schreiber said there was currently a stop work order in place.

Loukas said that the focus needs to be on this particular house and whether or not it was preferably preserved.

Steele pointed out she would find it preferably preserved on account of how it sits into the neighborhood and what it contributes to the neighborhood.

Panto agreed it was a plain house but wondered if they could save it.

Loukas agreed with Steele that the Lowell School is the landing of the neighborhood and part of its character.

Russo said that Fitchburg was a very desirable street to aspire to.

Walter said that he thought the characteristics of the neighborhood are not enough.

Motion: Russo made a motion that the house at 74 Fitchburg St. was preferably preserved. Loukas seconded the motion.

Vote: 4 to 2 vote of the 6 members of the commission was reached agreeing that the house at 74 Fitchburg St. was preferably preserved.

Loukas clarified with Schreiber that the Ordinance itself will determine the next steps taken in this situation and Schreiber agreed with Loukas. Loukas said the Ordinance has the next steps and there are no more choices for the HC to make. She said the proceedings have now ended for Fitchburg St. and allowed Mr. Annese to step forward and make one more comment as she had allowed Cimino in the last proceedings.

Annese thanked Loukas and asked if his client could be granted an opportunity to create a set of plans similar to the house as it existed, to replace the structure that was originally there. He explained that a 2 year delay would be a financial hard ship on his client, but also on the members of the neighborhood who would have to exist in the aftermath of an incomplete project over a prolonged period. Loukas urged Annese to reach out to Town staff to propose solutions, or to learn about the next steps of the process through the Planning Department.

Schreiber welcomed Annese to contact him in the office for further information. Annese affirmed that neither he nor his client want to close the door on an opportunity to work this out. Loukas and Schreiber said they understood. Annese thanked the members of the board for their time and attention.

- 4. Public Hearing- 14 Cottage Lane-** To consider the demolition permit application submitted for portions of 14 Cottage Lane a 1-family colonial style house built in approximately 1900. Kenneth Leitner, Esq., Applicant/ Giuseppe and Anna Marian Della Cioppa, Owner

Loukas recused herself from the proceedings on 14 Cottage Lane for professional reasons and asked Russo to Chair. He accepted.

Kenneth Leitner appeared on behalf of the Della Cioppa family and explained they are proposing this project so that their two sons can move in with their families to reside.

Leitner explained that the site was sub-divided in 1861 by the Connolly family, and then slated to the Calnan family from 1917 until the 1950's. He said the house went on to 3 other owners over the remaining years but with no significant inhabitants.

Leitner described the structure as early colonial and said that it looks as if it was built around 1900's. He explained that the street scape seemed to match with their plans and that he found no historical significance to the house or any of the owners. Leitner said the main interest is that the family would like to continue their legacy on in this neighborhood.

Russo said he had done some research from the Town maps and saw the Connolly's sub divided the lot for rental property in 1875.

Roach said this was an Irish Laborer's neighborhood in its day.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Commission Discussion

Walter said when he went to look at the site he was surprised by the late Greek revival homes that were in tact as in Newburyport. He said this was a case even more so than Fitchburg St., and even more unique and endangered from the Civil War era.

Steele agreed with Walter and she expressed she was sympathetic to the owner, even though the HC focuses on the house and its inherent value.

Russo asked Leitner if they had considered building off the side or rear. He replied that inside it was just not what they wanted and it could not ever meet their new purposes. Leitner described the very low ceilings and that the family has no interest maintaining it in the present manner.

Russo explained that the HC did not expect them to live in the condition the house was in now, but he said thought they could change the inside of the structure. Steele said she knows of other such houses that have been updated with such things as new wiring and plumbing updates. Walter said that the neighborhood is old and the houses in it are mostly old too.

Russo spoke of the street and described it as one way in with one way out, near Mt. Auburn Cemetery and under the radar screen of developers.

Panto said he thought that the age is significant and we have seen other older homes being restored.

Motion: Steele made a motion that the house at 14 Cottage Lane is preferably preserved. Walter seconded the motion and said he did not like doing this to the owner occupant.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached that the house at 14 Cottage Lane was preferably preserved. Loukas abstained.

Walter said he wished they had a design that said they tried to preserve the structure. Panto said this house is in good condition. Steele said she would be sympathetic if they tried to preserve it. Roach suggested they update the inside.

Motion: Panto made a motion to impose a 12 month delay on 14 Cottage Lane. Steele seconded the motion:

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached imposing a 12 month delay on 14 Cottage Lane with Loukas abstaining.

Leitner commented after the hearing that the owners are not going to sell the house because they want new construction for the owner's kids and grandchildren. Leitner thanked the board for their time.

5. Public Hearing- 16 Waltham St- to consider the Demolition Application submitted for portions of the family conventional style house built in approximately 1850 including the garage, 2 sheds and a portion of the main building. Vahe Ohannessian, Applicant/ Patrick McKenna, Owner

Vahe Ohannessian was present to review the project for the HC and explained it was under a purchase and sales agreement with him being the buyer.

The project initially proposed to demolish the garage, bump out, and 2 accessory structures. The applicant explained that an easement was granted that changed the building coverage calculations, allowing for retention of the garage, and also allowed for an extension of 3 ½ feet for parking a full size vehicle parking.

Russo said he was surprised to see this proposal before the Historical Commission where people normally want to demolish buildings. He asked Ohannessian why he was proposing the project in this fashion. Ohannessian explained as an architect he would have preferred to demolish this structure and start all over again. He said that when he found out that demolition of an old farmhouse would probably result in a delay, he set about finding solutions that would include repurposing the original structure of the house. Russo thanked him for his honesty and for all the obvious consideration that was put into the proposed project.

Ohannessian explained that the front has an enclosed porch he would like to raze and put a small portico in its place, as a little brother to the slightly more modern, three story development out back.

Russo said he found the permits for the bump-outs in 1953, and discovered the house had been moved in 1941, but he was not clear where the house was moved from. Loukas urged Ohannessian to apply for a historical plaque and said that Russo would do more research on the history of the house that would be provided to him.

There were no public comments.

Commission Comments

Walter said he had done a good job and that this would be better for the neighborhood.

Russo said it was wonderful to see a bit of Watertown history being preserved, and that this was really an unexpected form as well as in such an unexpected place. He said he had no problems signing off on the demolition of the two out buildings that were probably built in the 1970's, along with the addition.

The other members had no problem with the proposal either.

Motion: Russo made a motion that the two out buildings and addition at 16 Waltham St. were not preferably preserved. Roach seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached that the two out buildings and addition at 16 Waltham St. were not preferably preserved.

6. Public Hearing- 42-44 Brimmer St. To consider the Demolition Application submitted for the garage at 42-44 Brimmer St. Vahe Ohannessian, Applicant/Maureen Bonta Owner

Ohannessian was present to review the project before the HC. He said the house is owned by two sisters and their husbands who were present for the hearing. He explained they all intend to retire in this property where they had been living for quite some time.

He explained that they are proposing quite a remodel inside and intend to remove a 2 story porch and installing a portico, and enlarge the covered decks. He said that they are proposing to demolish the garage to meet Floor Area Ratios and building coverage calculations.

Russo said that when he researched the building history of the garage, he found that the owner of the home in 1928 was Harry Carlin, and the architect was B. Boar.

There were no public comments when Loukas called for them.

Commission Discussion

Walter said the garage would not be a loss to the community. He also speculated that the plants and trees in the backyard would probably enjoy themselves more once the structure was removed.

Russo had no comments other than his building card research.

Steele asked if he was able to save the tree out in the rear but it was discovered that the tree was not in the backyard of this home.

Motion: Walter made a motion that the garage and porches of the building at 42-44 Brimmer St. were not preferably preserved. Roach seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached that the garage and porches of the building at 42-44 Brimmer St. were not preferably preserved.

Loukas thanked him for preserving the building in the previous project. She explained that he did what most people do at the back end, once a delay has already been imposed. She said that the Historical Commission was very happy to see him proceed in his chosen fashion which also preserved some of the history of the Town, while at the same time creating something new. Ohannessian thanked the Commission for the compliments and for working with him.

Motion: Russo made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 PM. and it was seconded by Roach.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 PM