

**Minutes**  
**Watertown Historical Commission**  
**Thursday, February 9, 2012**  
**Lower Hearing Room**  
**7:00pm**  
*Adopted March 8, 2012*

**Historical Commission Members Present:** David J. Russo, Jr., J. B. Jones, Marilynne K. Roach, Elisabeth H. Loukas, Susan T. Steele, Thomas Melone

**Member Absent:** Donald S. Berg

**Staff Present:** Christopher J. Hayward, Daphne M. Collins, Steve Magoon

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

---

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

**1. Signage**

Magoon reported that Joyce Kelly spoke to him about the need for additional funds to pay for priority signs/plaques replacements. He noted that Capital Funds or Commander's Mansion monies could be allocated. He requested a list of the missing plaques to cross reference against his list. Russo reported that funding had been secured from the O'Neill Foundation and Friends of the Riverfront.

**2. Watertown Square Development - Discussion**

Russo was concerned about the 4-5-stories replacement structures in the Watertown Square Commercial District. He felt that the scale of the buildings could negatively alter the Mt. Auburn Commercial District, as the by-right replacement of the Galway Tavern demonstrates.

Magoon reported that the Watertown Economic Development Study identified the Watertown Square business district as a priority economic development focus. The report indicated that if redeveloped and improved properly the underutilized and undervalued commercial properties of the district had the potential to bring in more tax revenue to the Town, as the commercial tax rate is two times that of residential. Magoon noted that the trend shows commercial values decreasing while residential value are increasing, creating a burden on residents. However, there is an opportunity for growth and prosperity if there is an allowance for appropriate density. Magoon noted that the Town will be undertaking a Comprehensive Plan and is looking for participation and input. Possible proposals are a deck parking behind CVS to generate investment on the existing properties and increasing density and height limits to Watertown Square properties.

Jones suggested a Master Plan to create a vision and scale to the Watertown Square commercial district. Magoon noted that the CP would review a broader range of issues than a Master Plan.

Magoon invited the HC to weigh on replacement designs when reviewing demolition permits. He agreed that design may be more important than size. He concurred that the Galway Tavern replacement did not have design importance.

Steele suggested that a significant building should be replaced by an equally significant one. She offered a moratorium to the area while the CP is developed. Magoon responded that the Watertown Square area is so significant that a zoning amendment would be preferable in the short term than to a moratorium. In addition, he noted that the Square is essentially built out and the opportunities for redevelopment are limited. He didn't feel the time element and demand justified a moratorium.

### 3. **Davenport Delta**

Magoon reported that the open space, historic and deed information on the site lead to the street reconstruction plans to be reconsidered. The traffic calming improvements have been simplified, and the delta land taken will be replaced with open space at another place in the area.

Jones was concerned about any taking of the deeded Delta.

Russo suggested that a tree be planted at the site of the replacement land to make the connection to the Delta and that a historic marker/sign be placed to reintroduce the historic nature of the site.

Jones requested that the "No Dumping" sign be removed.

### 4. **Watertown Historical Commission Ordinance Update**

Hayward submitted following language which would define *Demolition*:

*Demolition - "the act of pulling down, destroying, removing or razing a building or commencing the work of total or substantial destruction with the intent of completing the same." In addition to complete demolition of a building, the following actions may require a demolition permit:*

- *removal of a roof (for example, raising the overall height of a roof, rebuilding the roof to a different pitch, or adding another story to a building),*
- *removal of more than 25% of the exterior walls of a structure, measured in linear feet.*

Hayward indicated that the ordinance is not clear on "substantial demolition" which needs to be clarified. Hayward informed that the recent enforcement at 119 Robbins Road where the developer removed half of the garage without HC review demonstrated the weakness in the ordinance.

Russo was concerned that with the definition the HC will be reviewing too many projects. He suggested adding a clause that staff be authorized to review and identify projects for HC review. Russo and Loukas will review the language.

**Vote:** Jones voted to adopt sections 3.7 & 3.8 to the Watertown Historical Commission Ordinance. Melone seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

#### **5. Arlington Street Cemetery Signage**

Roach reported that she completed a draft lay-out and was working along with Clare Murphy and Joyce Kelly from the Historical Society of Watertown to finalize the sign which includes a plot location map.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20pm.