

Minutes
Watertown Historical Commission
Thursday, June 12, 2014
Watertown Lower Hearing Room
7:00 p.m.

Historical Commission Members Present: David J. Russo, J. B. Jones, Elisabeth H. Loukas, Thomas Melone, Donald Berg, Marilynne K. Roach

Member(s) Absent: Susan T. Steele

Staff Present: Christopher J. Hayward

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

- 1. Public Hearing – 17 Hazel Street** - Demolition permit application submitted for detached garage to not be replaced. Lee Dearborn, applicant/builder; John Ciccolo, owner.

John Ciccolo had bought the house with the intent of renovating it and is not interested in keeping the detached, deteriorated concrete block garage. He prefers to create a landscaped, open, lawn space in the location. An addition is proposed for the rear of the house. Berg credited the owner with wanting to renovate existing house.

Public comment

No members of the public had comments.

Vote: Berg motioned that the garage at 17 Hazel St is not preferably preserved, Melone seconded, all voted in favor for the demolition.

- 2. Public Hearing – 28-30 Prentiss St** – Demolition permit application submitted for an existing two-family house to be replaced with similar. Gary H. Ruping, applicant/owner.

Gary Ruping, owner of 28-30 Prentiss St. presented to the Commission that the existing two family home is “economically obsolete” condition due to the significant expense of asbestos removal, approximately \$10K. The new two family home will be built to conform to existing zoning setbacks.

Loukas questioned the term economically obsolete and what it meant to Ruping. Ruping responded by saying the cost of asbestos removal and remediation would outweigh the cost of full demo and rebuild which makes current building economically obsolete besides the fact that the overall condition of the house is very poor. Berg mentioned that asbestos can be sealed in and covered. Ruping said he has done this before but the poor quality of the house does not make this feasible.

Public comment

Maureen Murphy – owner of 38 Prentiss St. She looks forward to anything new there as the current building concerns her with health issues such as asbestos and rodents.

Clyde Younger – owner of 188 Acton St. He has concerns with how historical value is determined. Russo replied that historic merit is given by significance in architecture, inhabitants, builder, architect.

Fred Zartarian – owner of 27 Prentiss St. Thanks to the new owner for buying. The existing house is an eyesore.

Al Valentino – 21 Prentiss St. Questions about frontage but happy to hear house is coming down.

Vote: Jones noted that historical value of house has long been concealed and motioned that the house is not preferably preserved. Melone seconded that motion. All voted in favor for demolition.

3. Public Hearing – 12-14 Warren St Demolition permit application submitted for an existing two-family house to be replaced with similar. Richard LeClair, Attorney rep for owner Thomas Cappadona and builder Michael Dallaire.

Leclair noted that the existing house does not represent any unique architectural style and does not fit in within the neighborhood. He knows of no known historic significance associated with existing structure. Structure that is proposed with have more historic character through architecture than the existing structure.

Leclair also noted that he was embarrassed that the existing tenants had not been notified by the current owner that this demolition hearing was taking place.

Jones questioned what is wrong with the existing house. LeClair responded that the heating system and its asbestos components make it more cost efficient to demolish and start new.

Russo asked if an addition could be built and LeClair responded that an addition would not be allowed by right due to zoning conflicts. Also, LeClair responded that his developer could not afford to pay what he is paying for the property with the added expense of an addition. Rebuilding is cheaper.

Loukas commented that renovating these houses is doable but developers are looking to make big profits. LeClair replied that the business plans of many landlords are not to put big money into older homes but to knock them down and start over. He hasn't had any clients succeed with renovations.

Public Comment

Bob Dirico -114 Waverley Ave. Knows neighborhood very well, has lived there for 46 years. House fits in the neighborhood and is noticing that new houses popping up around town are all the same. The new proposal is the just like the rest of them. Watertown is a great mix of houses and people. Does the house have historic value, no, but it fits in the neighborhood.

Clyde Younger – 188 Acton Rd – Requests delay for the concerns of the existing tenants.

Mark Brueger – 15 Warren St – Knows home owner. His kids play with one of the tenant’s kids. Feels house is not ready to be torn down.

Jim Lawler – 14 Warren St – Loves living in Watertown. He has 11 years of history in that house. All his family memories are in that house. It would be a shame to tear it down.

Discussion: Russo commented that there is nothing wrong with the house but that the HC’s purview is to find historic merit.

Jones commented that he is conflicted that the building has little historic value and the proposed building will not do violence to the neighborhood. He questioned what the value is of reusing this existing property that would be better for the neighborhood. The HC has no power over zoning conflicts such as this structure has.

Vote: Jones motioned that house is Preferably Preserved, second made by Loukas. Four in favor, two against.

Demolition delay vote: Jones motioned that no delay should be issued, Berg seconded. All voted in favor of no demolition delay.

4. Section 106 Review/Invitation to Comment - 805 Mount Auburn Street – Telecommunication Facility EBI Consulting, Ms. Amber Courselle

Russo requested that a letter he drafted be edited and sent to EBI Consulting. Hayward to edit and send out.

5. Old Business

Hayward advised the HC that a representative for 24 Bacon St contacted him regarding demolition. This building was up for demolition and before the HC in 2006. A one year delay was given though the house was never demolished. Because the demolition permit is issued by the Building department, any expiration dates follow the Building codes. The permit that was issued and never acted on in 2007 has now expired and if 24 Bacon St is considering demolition, a new permit will have to be applied for which will require review by the HC.

Hayward will continue to update the HC will further information.

6. New Business

- Rachel Sachs Jones, 59 Adams Ave, brought to the HC’s attention an article she found in a Belmont newspaper about demolitions in that town.
- A request was made to invite Steve Magoon, Director of Community Development and Planning and Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner to the next meeting to discuss various zoning concerns related to single family housing.
- Melone suggested that the HC get involved with proposals for signage/sculptures for Davenport Delta.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.