

**Minutes
Watertown Historical Commission
Thursday,
August 7, 2014
Council Chambers
7:00 p.m.**

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

Member(s) Absent: Donald Berg

Staff Present: Christopher J. Hayward

Russo chaired. The meeting opened at 7:05 p.m.

- 1. Public Hearing Continuance – 141 Pleasant St - To consider the demolition permit application submitted for an existing two family structure to be replaced by a new two family structure.** SPC Construction, applicant; Eleanor Pacious, owner, Michael and Rosemary Pacious, adult children of Eleanor Pacious

Loukas abstained.

Russo opened the hearing by discussing the findings of the site visit that was held on July 12, 2014. Jones detailed those findings with a chalkboard drawing showing the that the existing structure at 141 Pleasant St is divided into two sections, an 1830 section which faces Pleasant St and an 1880 section in the rear. It was observed that there is a 7-inch height difference between floor/ceiling of the two sections.

Jones also noted that the structure appears to be part of the first “expansion of Watertown”.

Public Comment

Robin Osten – 29 Forest St. Ms. Osten commented that the house at 141 Pleasant St is the only pre-industrial house left on the street and that development on the street is out of scale. She noted that the house is an important piece of historic fabric and advised the owners of low income loans and grants through the state which could be used for renovating. She is very concerned with the redevelopment trend in Watertown.

Public Comment closed.

HC Discussion – Melone noted that if the shell of the existing structure were preserved, a total gut renovation would be required. The floor height differences create many problems. Also he was not so sure that existing doorway is original after closer inspection.

Jones noted that first expansion houses are very much in danger but for this family, demolition is a practical matter and as far as the family is concerned renovation does not make commercial sense.

Russo questioned that if the house had been in more of a neighborhood setting it would fit in better than in its current location. He questioned whether it would be practical to gut and keep this house where its current location violates current zoning laws.

Motion: Jones motioned that the building at 141 Pleasant is preferably preserved. Melone seconded that motion.

Vote: All voted in favor that the house at 141 Pleasant St is preferably preserved.

HC Delay Discussion – Melone stated that he is concerned that a demolition delay would not accomplish anything.

Motion: Melone motioned that No Delay should be issued. Jones seconded.

Vote: All voted in favor of not issuing a demolition delay.

Russo requested that the applicant consider preserving as much of the building as possible. Jones commented that the new proposal is mundane and requested that some effort be made to add historic elements in appropriate proportions.

2. **Minutes of July 10, 2014** – Minutes were approved with minor changes.
3. **New Business** – Steve Magoon, Community Development and Planning Director/Assistant Town Manager, appeared before the HC to discuss single family house demolition concerns. Russo started by stating that in 2014 there are more demands for space which results in smaller single family homes being demolished for larger two family homes. Magoon replied that zoning does encourage lack of preservation in certain districts and that the current “T-zone” (Two family zone) in Watertown pre-dates his employment.

Draft language in the proposed Comprehensive Plan addresses zoning changes and rules. Jones and Russo commented that a change of the “T-zone” to an “SC zone” (Single family conversion) would provide a better mechanism for local input.

Magoon encouraged the HC to look at the fabric of certain neighborhoods and if the redevelopment proposal is out of whack, that the HC exercises its right to issue demolition delays.

The HC discussed the term of “Form Based” zoning. Magoon advised that Form Based zoning is regulating development to achieve a specific urban form.

Magoon recommended that the HC advise the draft Comprehensive Plan of significant neighborhoods where residents can be made more aware of that significance. Russo said the HC could prepare a list of significant houses, high risk zoning areas and forward those comments for addition to the draft Comprehensive Plan.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.