

**Minutes
Watertown Historical Commission
Thursday,
June 11, 2015
Lower Hearing Room
7:00 p.m.**

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

Member(s) Absent: Susan Steele

Staff Present: Christopher J. Hayward, Susan C. Jenness

Russo chaired. The meeting opened at 7:00 p.m. with a description of the public hearing process by Russo.

- 1) **Public Hearing – 7 Ellen Terrace - Request to demolish a one family dwelling built in approximately 1956. Proposed is a two family residential dwelling. Estate of Catherine Cusack, Applicant/Owner.**

Leonard Holt appeared for the applicant. He is seeking to demolish and redevelop this home into a 2 family townhouse dwelling where 11 Ellen Terrace is the only other house on this dead end street. 7 Ellen Terrace has always been owned by the Cusack family according to records. Jones noticed a driveway in the photos and asked to whom it belonged. Holt replied it belongs to Steve Miller who has an address at 870 Belmont St.

The proposed building plans are 20% less the size than is allowed by zoning and Holt said he thinks it would be a significant improvement to the neighborhood.

Jones-questioned who the garage on the left of the plans belonged to and Holt answered that it belongs to Mr. Steven Miller who has a Belmont St. address.

Public Hearing:

Steve Miller owner of 870 Belmont St rose to speak on this project that directly abuts the rear of his property. He voiced concern that the application for a demolition permit was erroneously filed and urged the commission to investigate that. Further, he stated that he liked being the only other small colonial in the neighborhood. He stated that the function of this board is to preserve the historical and architectural heritage of this town urged the board to give a one year demolition delay.

Elizabeth Park-She stated that she lives behind another property developed by Mr. Holt's at 2 Granville Rd. She added that he recently cut down about 20 sugar maple trees at another site where he was developing. She said that when he develops he

tends to cut down all the trees around it. She urged the commission to be aware of that.

Commission Discussion:

Jones clarified that this project conforms to current zoning regulations and that the project is being proposed according to right.

Melone probed the issue Miller brought up with how the application was filed and Russo assured commission members that all was officially correct with the filing of this application.

Melone stated that this is not an unusual 50's ranch and said that he saw no basis for saying that it should be preserved. Jones added that the developer has offered to meet with any parties who have questions at the end of this hearing.

Motion: Jones made a motion that this house is not preferably preserved. Berg seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote is reached that the house is not preferably preserved.

2) Public Hearing – 29 Harrington Street - Request to demolish a single family colonial built in approximately 1920. Proposed is a 2 family house with a finished basement. Eleanor Delraso, Applicant/Owner.

Commission member Loukas recused herself from discussing and voting on the public hearing for 29 Harrington Street.

Carl Attardo presented proposed plans for the owner. He stated that the house is currently in dire need of updates. It is a 3 bedroom, 2 and ½ bathroom house with vinyl siding.

Public Comments:

Lynn Waldron from 28 Harrington St. rose to inquire about whether or not it was true that asbestos would be removed from the house. Russo responded that when there is asbestos being removed from a project that there would be regulations governing the processes by the Building Department and Health Department.

Sandra Cresdello from 25 Harrington St. rose to say she was concerned with parking and snow removal issues. She stated that the demolition would change the historical nature of the neighborhood as it has been.

Thomas Delraso, son of the owner of 29 Harrington St. rose to say that it is not a historical house. It is zoned for a 2 family and what is going to be built will be so much better for the neighborhood.

John Giordano of 25 James St. who abuts the backyard of the site asked if he could hear more about the configurations of the lot. Agent Hayward gave him a copy of the proposed plans.

Richard Currier of 34 Harrington Rd. rose to say that traffic, parking and all the kids in the neighborhood will be affected. He was also concerned that he would see a stone wall when he came out of his house after these condos are built.

Teresa Dennison-33 Harrington St. rose to say it breaks her heart that this house is being demolished and that condos are being built in a neighborhood where there are a lot of kids living.

Angela Carturacone-An abutter to 29 Harrington St. rose to say this was a distinguished home. She predicted future noise issues and traffic concerns and felt this would have an impact on property values.

Commission Discussion:

Melone inquired if there were owners prior to the Delraso family. Russo stated that there were not.

Jones spoke on the texture of the neighborhood and stated that this was just replacing one home with another about the same size and by the time these issues get here to us it is too late. He urged people to get to their representatives for some change.

Berg stated for the public that parking and noise are not issues that can be resolved by the Historical Commission.

Motion: A motion is made by Jones that this house is not preferably preserved. Melone seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote is reached that the house is preferably preserved.

- 3) **Public Hearing - 321 Main Street - Request to raze residential structure, built prior to 1912. Proposed is to provide a parking lot for commercial tenants at the property. Eugene J. Ricci Trustee, Applicant/Owner.**

Kenneth Leightner presented proposed plans for the owner. He stated that the house was built around 1900 as part of the Homecroft Movement to get people out of poverty and into cultivating the land. The Ricci family now seeks to demolish the house and use it for parking for commercial tenants to increase parking space.

Commission Discussion:

During the commission discussion, Leightner offers that the family would be willing to move the building, the point is that they just do not want it there any longer due to mixed space of the lot. Melone asked if there was an entrance to the lot on Main St. and Leightner responded there is but drivers have passed the building before they notice it. Commission members think it is so unusual to have a six family home and are so surprised the owners would let this one go.

Berg and Melone discussed scenarios for creating additional parking space. Melone suggested they offer more spaces behind the building. Berg wondered about moving the house on the lot to the right and creating a couple of lanes.

Public Comments:

Eugene Ricci, owner of the building at 321 Main St. rose and introduced himself as the son of the man who bought the property. He urged the commission members to realize in what bad shape the house is in and how dried out the inside of the house is in its current condition. He said there is not a level spot inside and it would be impossible if not cost prohibitive to repair what has aged and gone wrong inside.

Additional Commission Discussion:

Loukas would like to see a one month continuance so they can go and look and see the bones of the house. She voiced concern that Watertown character is leaving house by house.

A visit is scheduled for July 15 at 5 PM for a visit.

Motion: Berg made a motion to table the decision. Loukas seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to table the decision.

- 4) **Public Hearing - 33 Robbins Road** - Request for authorization to review the demolition of a garage, built in approximately 1928, which was previously demolished without a permit. Proposed is to build a new, larger garage. John Bartley, Applicant/Owner.

William York appeared along with John Bartley the owner of the garage.

Mr. York began by explaining how unfortunate the circumstances were and how sorry Mr. Bartley was as well as embarrassed.

He explained that it was about one year ago when Mr. Bartley began the process of expanding the 2 car garage to house his father's prized possession. He went to Zoning and Planning to discuss setbacks. He went to the Building Department and applied for a demolition permit and was dealing with a local contractor. There was a misunderstanding about the sequencing of the procedures and the contractor went ahead and demolished the garage without the Historical Commission sign off. There was a lengthy discussion between York, Bartley, the Historical Commission members and Agent Hayward.

It was determined that it would be a hardship for Mr. Bartley and his siblings to wait for two years until they can actually complete the construction of the new garage to house their father's collectible automobile in.

It was also determined that while a mistake was made by the contractor, it was still clearly a mistake and it seemed there was nothing to be gained by holding the stay on construction for the duration of the full two years.

Roach added that sometimes contractors are responsible for making decisions that result in mistakes. She also inquired if the commission could lift the ban once the fine had been paid in full. The answer was yes the commission could lift the ban. Bartley went to get his check book and wrote a check for the full amount of the fine.

Jones stated that in light of all things considered, if the building had been reviewed by the commission prior to the unlawful demolition, they would have agreed for the demolition to take place and rendered a decision as such. After thinking a few moments he determined that lessons had been learned and it was time to let this one go.

Motion: Jones made a motion to lift the 2 year ban. Berg seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to lift the 2 year ban.

5) April 9, 2015 Meeting Minutes review an adopted.

Meeting adjourned.