Minutes
Watertown Historical Commission
Thursday,
July 9, 2015
Lower Hearing Room
7:00 p.m.

Historical Commission Members Present: David J. Russo, Marilynne K. Roach, Susan Steele, Donald S. Berg, J.B. Jones

Member(s) Absent: Thomas Melone, Elise Loukas

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 for the Historical Commission (HC) by Russo.

1) **Public Hearing Continuation from June 11, 2015 - 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 for 321 Main St. The HC continued last month's hearing in order to visit the site. Leightner restated for the commission that his client believed it is imperative that the house be removed from the lot because of the mixed use nature of the space. He had not spoken with the Building Inspector in regard to the current condition of the house. Leightner invited interested parties present to come and remove the building but no volunteers came forward.

   Russo invited comments from commission members.

   Jones said that while this house was from the Homecroft Movement, it had not been built by the movement and that it was already there and selected for it being situated on farmland. He found the history of the home being part of the Homecroft Movement a fascinating piece of Watertown history, while describing its' current condition as mangled from the multiple additions layered over the original structure through the years. He pointed out that the land around the building is long gone now and summarized that overall he was not able to endorse the building as being important to save.

   Berg added that commission members were not able to see much except the rear of the house and that even the shell was not visible. As to the historical farmland, he commented that it is all a parking lot at present.

   Public Comment: N/A

Motion: Berg made a motion that the house at 321 Main Street Preferably Preserved. Steele seconded the motion**.**

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

Russo stated that the Homecroft Movement was a significant part of history as it housed classes on weaving, farming, activities that encouraged people to get out of the being reliant on industry and back into a sustainable relationship with the land. He stated that lot of important things happened in this house and this is an important piece of Watertown's history so it is right that this house has been found to be preferably preserved. He asked if commission members would like to impose a delay and inquired whether or not members wanted input from the Building Inspector.

Jones mentioned that it would be helpful if the Homecroft Movement Association would come forward and offer to make improvements. Steele commented that even if the house does not remain standing, it would be nice to commemorate the location with a plaque to mark the significance of the location and what had taken place there.

Motion: Jones made a motion to impose no delay on the demolition. Berg seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached for no delay on the demolition.

2) **Public Hearing-79 Morse St-Request to demolish a 1-family dwelling built in approximately 1890. Proposed is a two family residential dwelling. Andrew Crawford/Torre St. Savour applicant/owner.**

Kenneth Leightner represented the owners of the home. Berg asked him if the home was structurally sound and Leightner responded that it was sound but there was a lot of bowing now. He called the structure architecturally non-descript with a porch built on sometime around the 1980's with pressure treated wood. The windows on the side the house were boarded up when a former owner stuccoed the house. Berg inquired whether or not people lived in the home now and Leightner said that they do but he had never been inside. Jones inquired about parking and there is a driveway on the right side when you are facing the structure.

Public Comment: N/A

The commission discussed the home. Russo said that he found that the house was older than it was listed in around 1865-1875 period. Steele noticed other similarly scaled homes down the street which contribute to the neighborhood and said it would be hard to lose this one as the new structure will really stand out in the neighborhood.

Jones inquired about renovation and the potential there was for someone coming forward willing to work with the current structure. Russo pointed out the house had

never been listed on the MLS. Berg noted he would like to see the house especially the interior as there are so few Italian 8 houses left in Watertown. Steele agreed.

Public Comment: N/A
Mr. Leighnter had no objections to showing the house but wanted to be sure not to delay the demolition over the period of one year.

Motion: Berg made a motion that the house was preferably preserved. Jones seconded the motion.

Vote: The commission voted unanimously that the house was preferably preserved.

Motion: Berge made a motion to place a one year delay on the demolition of the 79 Morse St. Jones seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous decision was made to delay the demolition one year.

3) **Public Hearing–301 Common St-Request to demolish a 1-family dwelling built in approximately 1875. Proposed is a new single family residential dwelling. Vatche Seraderian applicant/owner**

Mr. Kenneth Leightner appeared for the owner of 301 Common St. He sought a continuance of the public hearing until the August 13th meeting.

Motion: Berg made a motion to continue the public hearing. Steele seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous decision is made to continue the public hearing.

4) **Public Hearing-153 Robbins Rd-Request to demolish a 1-family cape style dwelling built in approximately 1931. Proposed is a new foundation and two story house. James and Linda Bass, applicant/owner.**

The presentation was made by James Bass, applicant and son of the owner. He sought to demolish the one family cape to build a two story townhouse. The house been vacant for two years as it had been demolished inside.

He described the inside of the 1 ½ story cape as being demolished right down to the studs and that there had been termite damage and flooding which had an impact even on the main support beams of the structure. Bass stated that they made attempts to renovate but that every time they took something out, something else went wrong.

Jones questioned the 17 ½ set- back. Bass's proposed solution is to conform to zoning at 25 feet. Steele inquired about the roofline and the surrounding houses are comparable to the proposed plans. After some questioning it was established that the

current plans are in conformance with zoning although subject to be slightly modified if needed.

Public Comment: N/A

Berg sees no significance to this conforming cape style home. He also felt it was fortunate that this new structure would be a one family and not a two family.

Motion: Jones made a motion that the house at 153 Robbins Rd. is not preferably preserved. Berg seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous decision was made that the house is not preferably preserved.

5) **Public Hearing-276 Waverley Ave-Request for Demolition of a single family structure built in 1940. Proposed is a two family dwelling to be constructed. Craig Myers, Deanna M. Dement-Myers, applicant/owner.**

The owner is represented by Laura Cannon.

She presented a number of pictures and plans. She reviewed that there was effort to renovate the property but this house is not a historically significant home and mentioned it was on the market for some time. She reviewed the features of the home in support of the application.

Russo asked if a quote was obtained to restore the home. Cannon replied it is in too much disarray to renovate. Russo sought further information about steps that were taken to renovate. The owner Deanna came up and responded that electricity, plumbing were all outdated and needed renovation and that the structure was damaged by termites in the basement. She never sought out estimates so has no idea how much it would cost.

Public Comment: N/A

Steele commented that she had visited the neighborhood and saw a couple of lovely single family homes and personally did not see how demolishing this structure would add value or character to the neighborhood. She stated further that a lot of people rewire and redo plumbing when they purchase a home. Berg added that this is part of being a home owner and offered that there must have been some people willing to do what would need to be done to renovate this home.

Russo called Mr. Gildea the builder up to speak with him about the plans. He reviewed the plans and questioned if they could create a front façade on the side of the building on Waverly Ave. Jones remarked that he saw no effort to make the new structure fit in with the other houses in the neighborhood. Steele asked if he had contemplated keeping the remaining structure and rehabbing it. The builder said that the house needed so much work that it was just not economically feasible.

Russo commented that he was concerned the current plans will have an effect on the architectural character of the neighborhood. Jones said and that there was a lot that could be done to fit the proposed structure into the neighborhood. He thought that the neighbors ought to be objecting to this proposal. He also suggested asking the developer to come back with a plan after he had made it to fit into the neighborhood better which he thought could be done within the budget.

Motion: Steele made a motion that the house was preferably preserved. Jones seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous decision was made that the house is not preferably preserved.

Motion: Jones made a motion for a one year delay on the demolition of 276 Waverly. Steele seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached for a one year delay.

Russo invited Mr. Gildea to come back next month to discuss the proposed plans after having some time to look at the details. He explained that the commission would be willing to lift the delay if the parties would come back with a reconfigured plan that fit into the neighborhood. Jones urged him to look at the neighbors and Russo offered he look at the forms in the neighborhood. Steele offered he work with the existing structure.

6) **Public Hearing-354 Arsenal St.-Request for Demolition of a 2 story block structure of 390 sf. Proposed is construction of a convenience store and gas station. Ziad Nabbit, applicant/owner.**

Frank Boyd represented Global Contracting Services and reviewed the proposed plans to demolish the existing block structure and to build a remodeled gas station with a convenience store.

There were no questions from the commission members.

Public Comment:

Dennis J. Duff who lives at 33 Spruce Street rose to comment. He is a former member of the Watertown Redevelopment Authority and has a great interest in beautifying Arsenal Street. He commented that he would appreciate the new proposal going forward with this plan.

Commission Discussion: Berg agreed with Mr. Duff.

Motion: Berg made a motion that the structure at 354 Arsenal Street was not preferably preserved. Roach seconded the motion.

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

7) **Public Hearing-193-195 Watertown St. Request for Demolition of a 3 family structure with multiple additions. Proposed is a new duplex, side by side unit. AnnaMaria J. DeAngelis, applicant/owner**

The proposed plans are reviewed by the builder Nicholas Biagiotti.

Russo asked about the original structure and Biagotti answered that the original foundation is Fieldstone with a crawl space beneath but that other additions had been added over it.

They had no photos of the interior. The home had been listed on the MLS. Jones remarked that the 1850's house is no longer visible and wondered if the old house could be revealed, they may be able to renovate the existing structure and perhaps add something on in the back. Berg reviews building cards and finds that most of the previous building permits were for cosmetic upgrades and made a guess that if the siding was removed the original structure would mostly be underneath. Nick Biaggiotti the builder responded that he believed that people are looking for modern homes and that is why these parties are moving for a demolition permit. Berg responded that many of the commission members live in old houses that are very modern inside.

Public Comments:

John Nicoloro a resident from 42 Irving St. suggested that if you take the vinyl siding off you many find a very beautiful house underneath. He also confirmed that he wanted to be here to defend these structures that are being demolished here where they want to put up newer ones that will not last 100 years. I would like Watertown to get these designers and contractors who are coming in here to work with these beautiful old homes that were already here.

Jeanne Maurazzo rose on behalf of the owners as their realtor. She said that this is really a two family home with an assessory apartment and one of the reasons why we did not use pictorials of the inside of the house is it is in such bad shape. These people are depending upon this sale so that they can complete a sale for something they can handle as these people are physically and financially unable to afford this.

Commission Discussion:

Roach asked if this house on the bird's eye maps was shown and it was determined that it was probably not. Jones stated that he was concerned because the commission could not see what was underneath and discussed how hard it would be to find that out. Berg speculated what it might look like if the siding were not there. Steele

suggested a commission visit to see the inside to determine more. Russo said he felt torn on this one and remarked it could be even older than it was thought. Roach said that even just seeing the foundation and maybe the basement would tell us a lot. It was also stated that the building inspector had not seen the house. Berg said he did not want to make a decision without more information. Russo agreed that he at least wanted to see the outside of the house.

An official date was set for the HC to make a site visit on July 13, 2015 at 1 PM.

Motion: Jones made a motion to continue the public hearing to the next HC Meeting. Berg seconded the motion

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to continue the public hearing until the next HC Meeting.

8) **Public Hearing-56-60 Irving St-Request to demolish** to consider the demolition permit applications submitted for **56-60 Irving St, consisting of 8 buildings proposed for demolition.** Proposed for these spaces is the Elan Union Market residential/retail project. YRT Corp. applicant/owner

Christian Regnier presented the plans for the public meeting and reviewed the overall project briefly. He stated that the Zoning Permit has been received about two weeks prior to this meeting.

- **Bldg. 2** (Parcel 1038 1 2) a single story warehouse constructed in approximately 1960;

After the plans had been reviewed, the commission briefly discussed **Bldg. 2.**

Motion: Berg made a motion that **Bldg. 2** was not preferably preserved. Steele seconded the motion.

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

- **Bldg. 3** (Parcel 1038 1 2) a single story concrete garage built in approximately 1900;

After the plans had been reviewed, the commission agreed the building was non-descript and that there were no concerns.

Motion: Steele made a motion that **Bldg. 3** was not preferably preserved. Berg seconded the motion.

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

- **Bldg. 4** (Parcel 1038 1 2) a two story concrete block warehouse built in approximately 1940;

After the plans had been reviewed the commission had no concerns.

Motion: Berg made a motion that **Bldg. 4** was not preferably preserved. Steele seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote is reached that **Bldg. 4** was not preferably preserved.

- **Bldg. 5** (Parcel 1038 1 2). a single story concrete block store built in approximately 1940;

After the plans were presented, the HC had no concerns.

Public Comments:

Lisa Feltner of 34 Parker St. rose to comment. She stated that Karl Neugebauer, a member of the Historical Society of Watertown lived in that space years ago. She urged members of the commission to seek creative use of the space as a way of preserving the roots of Watertown's history**.**

After the plans were presented the HC had no concerns.

Motion: Jones made a motion that **Building 5** was not preferably preserved. Berg seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached that the building was not preferably preserved.

- **Bldg. 6** (Parcel 1038 1 2). a single story concrete block warehouse built in approximately 1900;

During the presentation of the plans for **Bldg. 6,** Mr. Regnier stated that the design team had heard about concerns with respect to the demolition process from the folks who lived closely to the building. There are plans to create a process to keep the environment and surrounding abutters as free from impact as possible.

Public Comments:

Dianne LaMagna of 61 A Phillips St. rose to express her concern and to submit her contact information so that she could be included in the process of planning the demolition process.

Motion: Berg made a motion that **Bldg. 6** was not preferably preserved. Jones seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached that the building was not preferably preserved.

- **Bldg. 7** (Parcel 1038 1 2) a single story concrete block warehouse built in approximately 1940.

After presentation of **Bldg. 7** Roach mentioned that an episode of the television show Spencer for Hire was filmed on that site and that somewhere there is some film evidence of what Watertown looked like. There was no further comment about the building.

Motion: Roache made a motion that **Bldg. 7** was not preferably preserved. Steele seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached that the **Bldg. 7** is not preferably preserved.

- **Bldg. 8** (Parcel 1006 24A 0) a single unit office building built in approximately 1900.

Regnier stated that this building is in the location slated for the construction of a public open in the proposed plans. He further explained that there will be a process taking place for the public to become actively involved in the planning of what will be developed for inside the park. There are currently plans to hold two public meetings which will be announced once the Historical Commission has made their decision on the historical preservation of this building.

Regnier introduced Alissa Augenstein from Epsilon Associates, a Historical Preservation Consultant who was present to review the guidelines affecting the historical preservation of **Bldg. 8.** as well as review historical registry status of the building with state and federal agencies. A review of the historical records was conducted with Russo and Augenstein on the record.

Motion: Jones made a motion that the building was not preferably preserved. Steele seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached that the building was not preferably preserved.

Proposed for these spaces is the Elan Union Market residential/retail project. YRT Corp. applicant/owner

9) May 14, 2015 Meeting Minutes review

10) June 2, 2015 Meeting Minutes review

11) Old Business- Steele spoke to commission members on behalf of Town Council Member Palomba. Palomba asked that each commission member make up a list as specific as possible of what they would do if the commission had $2 million in Conservation Preservation Act **(CPA)** funding to spend. The lists are expected to be reviewed at a future HC meeting.

Meeting adjourned.