



TOWN OF WINCHESTER
MIDDLESEX COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
TOWN HALL
WINCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01890

Meeting Minutes

Date: February 14, 2022

Virtual meeting via Zoom

Members Present: Jack LeMenager, Chair
Bruce Hickey, Vice Chair
Jon Carlisle
Janet Boswell
Emily Dowling

Members Absent: Michelle McCarthy
John Clemson

Also Present: Brian Szekely, Town Planner
Guy Dixon
Rachael Edmonston
Bryan Tardif
David Feigenbaum
Sally Dale
David Tabenken
Heather and Chris Parker
Ian Gillespie
Jay Houllahan
Paul Soughley
Fulton Lee Harley

A quorum being in attendance, the meeting was called to order at 7:31 pm.

Public Hearings: Demolition permit applications

185 Mystic Valley Parkway (partial demolition)

Chair Jack LeMenager explained that the property at 185 Mystic Valley Parkway was a colonial-style house built in the 1860s and owned by Jay and Christina Houllahan. The Houllahan's were planning to demolish the rear ell of the house to create a larger kitchen, a mudroom, and more upstairs space.

Guy Dixon, the architect of the project, showed a model of the proposed addition. He explained that the house had an awkward two-story mass on the back that the owners wished to demolish. He noted that they planned to replace the demolished portion with a slightly larger two-story addition with a bigger kitchen and a mudroom. He emphasized that the main body of the house would not be affected.

Mr. Dixon also explained that the existing sill on the rear of the house was rotting and in need of replacement. He explained that a previous owner had attempted to create a concrete mud block over a wood sill underneath the rear of the property, which soaked up water and kept the back corner of the property perpetually damp. He stated that there was no way to redesign or build atop the existing mass at the rear of the house because it was structurally unsound. He added that there was a stairway to the basement in the mass was not currently up to code and would be replaced with a code acceptable stairway.

Commissioner Emily Dowling asked what materials would be used to construct the addition. Mr. Dixon replied that the same materials that were used to construct the original house would be used, including red cedar with matching materials and trim. He noted that the eaves and rakes were square cut and that they were not proposing to change this aspect of the property by adding storm gutters, except in the back addition to improve stormwater management.

Chair LeMenager asked if Mr. Dixon was surprised that the Winchester building commissioner, Al Wile, said that he required a demolition permit. Mr. Dixon responded that Mr. Wile had noted that a demolition permit was needed due to the age and historical significance of the property, along with the fact that the plans for this property included removing a portion of the foundation.

MOTION: The Historical Commission finds the property at 185 Mystic Valley Parkway historically significant.

VOTED: 5 in favor, 0 opposed (2 absent)

MOTION: The Historical Commission moves to grant a demolition permit for the portion of the rear of the house specified in the plans presented.

VOTED: 5 in favor, 0 opposed (2 absent)

82-84 Church Street

The property at 82-84 Church Street is a Queen Anne's duplex built in the 1880s in a historically significant neighborhood. The applicant, Bryan Tardif, and the architect of the project, Fulton Lee Harley, emphasized that this was not a complete demolition of the building.

Mr. Harley shared the plans for the project and explained his interest in the materials, shingles, and style of Queen Anne's houses. He stated that the proposed addition was on the back of the structure and would be a two-story addition that would improve the functionality of the space. He noted that the current structure had steep stairs, sloping roofs, thin floors, and awkward layouts, which forced tenants to walk through bedrooms to get to the bathrooms in the duplexes.

Mr. Harley noted that the addition would include a shed dormer on the back, a mudroom on the first floor, an entryway on the first floor, and crossing gables on the second. He noted that each of the apartments would have an attic with a bedroom and bathroom in each, for a total of four bedrooms in each unit. He added that the materials would include cedar clapboards on the lower

levels, shingles, Anderson 4000 series windows, historic windowsills, and a small hip roof in the back. He stated that the rear of the property would closely match the front.

Chair LeMenager asked if the addition would be built along the same footprint as the existing house. Mr. Harley answered that there would be a small addition on the back and a small eighteen-inch infill on the sides. The porch and entryway would go back nine feet and nine inches and would be six feet across. Chair LeMenager asked if the demolition permit was necessary because they were planning to demolish the roof. Mr. Tardif answered that the building commissioner had said that it was necessary.

The Commission had no questions. Chair LeMenager opened the discussion up to the public. Chris Parker, an abutter, noted that he was concerned about markings and an orange stake that had appeared on the property very close to his house. He asked if that was where the addition would be constructed. Mr. Tardif answered that the markings were from a survey, and Mr. Harley assured Mr. Parker that the addition would not come out any further than the existing porch. Mr. Tardif stated that he was frequently on the property and would be happy to walk the Parkers through the plans for the project. Heather Parker said that they would like that and that she was curious about what kind of landscaping would surround the project. Mr. Tardif said he was happy to work with the Parker's to create a buffer between the two properties that would be suitable to both parties.

Bill Foucher, a longtime resident of Winchester, said that he was impressed with the plans for this property and noted that any plans to renovate this property would be beneficial to the Church Street landscape.

MOTION: The Historical Commission finds the property at 82-84 Church Street historically significant.

VOTED: 5 in favor, 0 opposed (2 absent)

MOTION: The Historical Commission moves to grant a demolition permit.

VOTED: 5 in favor, 0 opposed (2 absent)

CBD Petition: 10 Converse Place

The Historical Commission had previously met to discuss the development of 10 Converse Place during their September and October 2021 meetings. On October 25, 2021, they had voted to endorse the design plans of the project at 10 Converse Place. Since then, the plans for the project had changed significantly, following the Winchester Planning Board's recommendations. Ian Gillespie, a developer working on 10 Converse Place, along with his colleague Paul Soughley and architect David Tabenken, addressed the Winchester Historical Commission to explain the changes to the plans for 10 Converse Place.

Mr. Tabenken noted that the Design Review Committee had met with the Planning Board and their design consultant, Philip Chen, on multiple occasions. They had received a great deal of

feedback and had incorporated that into a series of changes to the design of 10 Converse Place. Mr. Tabenken listed the changes, including:

- The residential entrance will be located on the northwest corner fronting on Mount Vernon Street
- Two commercial spaces will be included, one on Mount Vernon, and one facing Mill Pond
- Fourth and fifth-floor setbacks and radiused corners will help mitigate the building height and massing
- The base, middle, top, and continuity of the three-story line around the building will reinforce the village scale of the town center
- The east façade articulation will emphasize the townhouse scale and rhythm
- The fifth-floor dormers will break down the scale where the building meets the sky
- The three-story bay at the southwest corner will make a gesture toward the Main Street Bridge

Mr. Tabenken continued by showing an updated site plan, courtesy of Copley Wolff Design Group, to the Commission. He noted that a major goal of the project was still to create a large outdoor public space at the south end of the building facing the pond. He noted that Copley Wolff planned to incorporate the bike path that circled the pond, which would overlook stone steps into the water. The steps were suggested by the Conservation Commission. The Design Review Committee also aimed to make the pedestrian pathway down to the pond more accessible.

Mr. Tabenken continued by showing designs of the streetscape surrounding 10 Converse Place. He noted that the Design Review Committee had not yet settled on the materials of the buildings. He pointed out several of the changes incorporated into the design plans, including the angled bays, the walk-out balconies, a curved volume over the commercial entry, a canopy above the lobby entrance, and the fourth and fifth-floor setbacks. He also pointed out the new advanced car garage, which would be an automated system that would increase the amount of space for cars and reduce congestion.

Mr. Tabenken assured the Commission that Copley Wolff was working to design the landscape, which was not yet superimposed onto the design models. Mr. Tabenken also noted that the design of 10 Converse Place beckoned to other iconic Winchester buildings, such as the Town Hall, through its design.

Mr. Tabenken showed a comparison of the current landscape, and how the landscape would appear with the completion of 10 Converse Place. He explained that the proposed building would be approximately sixty-two feet tall, which was comparable to the existing “Laundry Building.” He continued by explaining the parking arrangements and the layout of the interior of the building. He explained that the building would contain six affordable housing units, out of a total of forty-three units in the building, and three live-work spaces.

Mr. Gillespie explained that the Design Review Committee was working closely with the Conservation Commission’s consulting group, Parterre, to design the landscape. The landscaping

would include a multi-use path, a sloped lawn, a terrace leading down to the water, and the aforementioned stone steps at the water's edge.

Commissioner Dowling expressed her concern that the stone steps may present a safety hazard to young children. She asked if there would be any buffer between the steps and the water to prevent children from falling or running into the pond. Mr. Gillespie and Mr. Tabenken answered that Copley Wolff was still working on the design. While they had not determined a suitable solution to Commissioner Dowling's concerns—which had been shared by other parents—they were working with Copley Wolff to create a landscape that was safe, beautiful, and functional.

Mr. Gillespie described the two commercial units that would be constructed at each end of 10 Converse Place, noting that each of the four facades of the building were different and that the east façade, in particular, was broken up to reduce the massing.

Commissioner Janet Boswell said that she was incredibly impressed with the new design of 10 Converse Place. She believed that the developers had addressed all of the problems with the original design and noted that she liked the new design far more than the old one. Commissioner Dowling agreed with Commissioner Boswell, stating that she was particularly impressed with how the architects had reduced the massing of the building and added more commercial space.

Mr. Gillespie reiterated that while the landscaping was not completed, he was very impressed with the work done by the team at Hacin + Associates.

Chair LeMenager agreed with Commissioners Boswell and Dowling and noted that he especially liked the addition of the curved elements to the design. He added that the project would add a new area for town residents to gather and relax, in addition to the town common and the benches at Thompson and Main streets. Mr. Gillespie agreed and stated that he envisioned town residents coming from the Winchester Library to enjoy the space outside of 10 Converse Place.

Commissioner Jon Carlisle and Vice-Chair Bruce Hickey agreed with their fellow Commissioners approval of the new plans.

Mr. Foucher, a former architect and longtime resident of Winchester, noted that during his career he used to consult in England. He stated that he loved Winchester because it reminded him of small English towns. He noted that while he was impressed with the work that was done to design 10 Converse Place, he still believed that the massing of the project would disrupt the character of downtown Winchester.

Mr. Gillespie acknowledged Mr. Foucher's concerns but added that the developers were governed by the Zoning laws and the PUD. He stated that he understood the importance of the character of downtown Winchester and wanted to honor the historical character of the area. Chair LeMenager noted that he had lived in Winchester for thirty-three years and knew how much development had occurred over the years. He added that while he understood Mr. Foucher's concerns, he accepted that development was inevitable and that it was better if the Historical Commission and other town boards had some control over the new developments. Mr.

Foucher stated that he lived in an old house and valued the historical character of the town. He concluded by reiterating that while he was impressed by the work of the developers and architects, he was still concerned with the massing of the proposed structure.

Brian Szekely, the Town Planner, wrapped up the discussion by noting that both a Site Plan Review and a Special Permit would be required for the project, though the Historical Commission was not the permit granting authority. He stated that while the site was already deemed a non-historically significant building, the Commission would have to vote on whether any of the town's historic resources would be negatively impacted by the development. He also added that the Planning Board wished to hear all of the Historical Commissions questions and comments– both good and bad– and urged the members to record any of their opinions on the project.

MOTION: The Historical Commission found that the project at 10 Converse Place has no adverse impact on the historical resources of the town.

VOTED: 5 in favor, 0 opposed (2 absent)

MOTION: The Historical Commission grants Chair LeMenager the authority to work with the recording secretary, Rachael Edmonston, to draft a memo describing the Historical Commission's sentiments regarding the project at 10 Converse Place to present to the Planning Board.

VOTED: 5 in favor, 0 opposed (2 absent)

Other matters

Reconsideration of “Substantially all” definition

David Feigenbaum shared his most recent draft of the definition of “substantially all.” It stated that:

Demolition of “substantially all of a building” is interpreted by the Winchester Historical Commission to mean pulling down, tearing down, destroying, or razing any of the following:

- 2/3 or more of the windows or window frames of the building or any façade of the building.
- 2/3 or more of the exterior doors of the building or of any façade of the building.
- 2/3 or more of the exterior cladding, sheathing, barrier layers, insulation, or framing of the walls of the building or of the walls of any façade of the building. The 2/3 shall be determined as a percentage of the area of the corresponding walls of the building or of the façade.
- 2/3 or more of the roof deck, roofing underlayment, and roof covering– with or without associated rafters, beams, or other structural members– that protect any space of the building designed to be used as living space for the people or storage space for property. The 2/3 shall be determined based on the vertical projections to the roof of the protected space and of the building footprint.

Mr. Feigenbaum reiterated that the Historical Commission should have the authority to decide when a building should be considered historically significant. He noted that the town needed to lay down simple, easy-to-understand rules that would allow applications to flow more easily to the Historical Commission. He noted that there was some confusion during that evening's demolition permit hearings which likely resulted from the building commissioner, Al Wile, trying to interpret the present definition. Mr. Feigenbaum said that the core of the definition should be the principle that some partial demolitions are substantial enough to warrant the need for a demolition permit, which should be issued only with the approval of the Historical Commission.

Chair LeMenager agreed and noted that he intended to speak with Mr. Wile regarding the definition of "substantially all."

Mr. Feigenbaum stated that he was also working on revising the building permit application. He noted that applicants should not have to fill out both a building permit and a demolition permit if their project only required one of the two permits. He stated that his updated version of the application would include the definition of "substantially all" that he had created— or a similar definition— to help clarify to applicants what should be considered "substantially all" of a building.

Chair LeMenager agreed and noted that the applicant from the night's demolition hearings seemed confused about the process.

Vice-Chair Bruce Hickey agreed with Mr. Feigenbaum's concerns about the definition of "substantially all." He added that the Historical Commission's deliberations over the definition had conflated the historical review process with the building department's duty to determine which permit to grant. He added that he liked Mr. Feigenbaum's current definition and his decision to use fractions and percentages to quantify what should be considered a substantial demolition, noting that a quantified approach would be easier for the building department to interpret. He added that over 50% of a building would have to be demolished in order to be considered substantial demolition and that the Historical Commission should determine an exact amount. Vice-Chair Hickey disagreed with Mr. Feigenbaum's assertion that the demolition of 2/3 or more of windows and doors should be considered substantial demolition. He added that he wanted Commissioner John Clemson's opinion on the definition.

Mr. Feigenbaum responded that the Winchester Town Bylaw stated that a building was a structure that protected people and things stored therein. He believed that the Historical Commission should set rules that were relatively expansive under the Bylaw. He thought that if an owner removed 2/3 of windows or doors from a property it would be substantially uninhabitable. He added that the Historical Commission should be liberal in the definition and should reflect the Bylaw's definition of a building as a structure sheltering people and things.

Commissioner Dowling asked if the 2/3 rule would apply to someone who wished to replace the windows in their house. Mr. Feigenbaum believed that it should because windows were often important historical features of a property. He noted that it would not be detrimental to the town

or the owners for the Historical Commission to review cases where applicants wished to replace their windows. Vice-Chair Hickey responded that this was a rule better suited to Historical Districts and that he didn't think that the Town vested the Historical Commission with the power to determine whether or not residents could replace their windows. Vice-Chair Hickey reiterated that he agreed with the general objectives of Mr. Feigenbaum's approach, but that he wished to hear from other members of the Commission, particularly Commissioner Clemson, before finalizing a definition.

Mr. Hickey also noted that there were other paragraphs in Mr. Feigenbaum's definition that he would like to revisit, particularly the portion regarding the façade of a house. He asked if Mr. Feigenbaum was referencing the exterior materials or walls of a property. Chair LeMenager agreed with the vice-chair's perspective and noted that Mr. Feigenbaum repeated the phrase "any façade" multiple times throughout the definition. He asked if Mr. Feigenbaum was talking about the walls or the façade of a house. Mr. Feigenbaum noted that the façade was meant to represent the aspect of a building that was confronted visually—the outside of the structure.

Chair LeMenager noted his appreciation for Mr. Feigenbaum's efforts and stated that he had substantially clarified the definition. He added that the definition allowed for a more objective interpretation which would help the Building Department. Chair LeMenager suggested that all of the Commissioners take Mr. Feigenbaum's definition and edit it with questions and comments to discuss during the next Historical Commission meeting.

On February 18, Mr. Feigenbaum and Chair LeMenager disseminated a new draft of the definition for "substantially all" (attached).

6 Glenwood Avenue

Chair LeMenager stated that he was worried that the Commission had received demolition permits for two projects (185 Mystic Valley Parkway and 82-84 Church Street) that should not have been considered as partial demolition projects. He added that another potential project, a duplex at 6 Glenwood Avenue, faced a similar dilemma.

Chair LeMenager noted that the Historical Commission had received a demolition application for the duplex on February 11, 2022. He stated that while the house dated to the late 1800s, it had been renovated and did not retain many of its original historical characteristics. The consultant, Claire Dempsey, who wrote the B Form for the property, had noted that its historical character had been compromised.

Mr. Szekely noted that the structure was conforming, and therefore did not need a Zoning Board of Appeals hearing. Chair LeMenager noted that Commissioner Clemson wished to hold a Historical Commission hearing to discuss the property so that the Commission would have control over the replacement structure. He added that the developer had submitted plans for the proposed replacement, which both he and Commissioner Clemson had deemed acceptable. Chair LeMenager and Vice-Chair Hickey believed that while they did not need to have a hearing, because this was an eligible building, they wanted to ask the rest of the Commission if they would like to hold a hearing.

Commissioner Boswell asked if the rest of the street retained a historic character. The Commission agreed that the fabric of the neighborhood maintained a cohesive historic element and determined that they should hold a hearing at its next meeting on March 7.

Approve Jan. 24, 2022, meeting minutes

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the January 24, 2022, Historical Commission Meeting.

VOTED: 5 in favor, 0 opposed (2 absent).

The meeting adjourned at 9:19 p.m. Next meeting: March 7, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Rachael Edmonston, Recording Secretary



3/7/22

Jack LeMenager

Date