



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

Meeting Minutes

Date: August 3, 2020

Virtual meeting via Zoom

Members Present: Bruce Hickey, Vice-Chair
Janet Boswell
Jon Carlisle
John Clemson
Emily Dowling

Members Absent: Jack LeMenager, Chair
Jennifer Adams

Also Present: Brian Szekely, Town Planner Nick and Jennifer Warner
Maureen Meister Rachel Edmonston
Robert Paladino Robert Atchinson
Bruce Ringwall Clare Ringwall
Audrey Bosse Tagore Hernandez
Chris Mulhern Christian Prescott

A quorum being in attendance, the meeting was called to order at 7:36 p.m.

Public Hearing: Demolition Permit Application – 16 Niles Lane

Commissioner Clemson described the research completed to date on the Roop House and Garden. It is a rustic cottage designed by Jerome Bailey Foster and built in 1937. This house is an example of one of Foster's most extensive house designs in Winchester. National Register District ends right at the end of Niles Lane when this District was designated in the 1980s because the house is more recent than others built in the District. The house appears in excellent condition and much of the condition of the house appears original.

Bruce Ringwall, representing the applicant, relayed the client is interested in demolishing the building including the other buildings on site (garage, etc.). Client is proposing to build a single-family home on the site. There is no intent to divide the property into multiple lots. Owners of the site would like to retain much of the elements of the landscaping and some design elements of the original house on their proposed house. The architect, Robert Paladino, stated the current house is charming on a beautiful lot but not conducive for a large family.

Maureen Meister noted that during the original formation of the National Register District ended at Niles Lane because the houses on Niles Lane were not surveyed for the project. We've now learned more about the contributions of Foster since this District was founded and the surveys were conducted. As a Planning Board member, she has seen many attempts to try to mitigate the water issues that this site has – which may be worse if the current house is demolished and a new one is constructed. Previous owners attempted to divide into multiple lots, which ended up in court and the court sided with the Planning Board.

The Meeting was closed to public comment and Commissioners deliberated the building's historic value.

Commission member Janet Boswell commented that this is a highly significant historical building in a historically significant neighborhood. Additionally, the importance of the architect on this house and its current condition it should be preserved.

Mr. Ringwall raised the issue that there is little site visibility of the house from both Niles Lane and Mystic Valley Parkway and that visibility to the public is a criteria for historical importance.

Commission member Carlisle asked to clarify what role visibility plays in the consideration of historical importance in demolition hearings. Vice Chair Bruce Hickey responded that he had reviewed the bylaw and the Code of Federal Regulations which are cited in the bylaw for references to visibility as a factor or criteria in determining historical significance and said that visibility is not included as such a factor or criteria in either the bylaw or the Regulations.

Commissioner John Clemson added that the view is not hindered by typography but by landscaping and it is clearly visible from the pond.

Commissioner Janet Boswell reiterated that in the past we have used what is visible and not visible from a public way in terms of renovations and changes to structures. We have not discussed this in terms of the demolition of an entire structure.

Vice Chair Bruce Hickey stated his view that he thought the property is historically significant but struggled with the low visibility of the house from a public view.

Commissioners John Clemson and Emily Dowling emphasized the historical value and significance of the house and hoped the owners could consider a renovation that would keep much of the character of the main house and still met the needs for their family.

MOTION: The Historical Commission finds the property located at 16 Niles Lane historically significant. The motion was made and seconded.

VOTED: 5 in favor, 0 opposed (LeMenager, Adams absent)

On the question of imposing a delay, further deliberations occurred with regard to the visibility of the structure and how it pertains to the bylaw. Two Commissioners noted that while the current owners state they want to preserve the current landscaping and screening, future owners may not do the same. Brian Szekely clarified that there is no language in the bylaw that specifies that the structure must be able to be visible as a criteria for the demolition delay. In response to

further questions on the requirement for the building to be visible from a public way or view, Commissioner Hickey reiterated his prior analysis of the bylaws and Regulations and said that rightly or wrongly the Commission had in the past considered visibility of properties as part of their deliberations. However, there was no support therefor in such bylaws or Regulations.

MOTION: The Historical Commission voted to impose a 12-month delay on issuance of a demolition permit for the property located at 16 Niles Lane. The motion was made and seconded.

VOTED: 5 in favor, 0 opposed (LeMenager, Adams absent)

Update from Planning Board – Maureen Meister

Planning Board is interested in presenting a zoning bylaw change to Town Meeting to protect sites with historical houses that are at high risk to be subdivided. This is raised by the recent plans for 88 Harvard Street. The Planning Board will propose that building a small house on the lot is the preferable solution for these situations. Brian Szekely is aiming to have a proposed bylaw for the Planning Board to review and react.

Board of Appeals Petitions

32 Winthrop St.: Special permit to renovate and add an addition a split-level ranch that was built in the 1950s on a site that a previous Victorian had burned in the 1920s.

MOTION: The Historical Commission finds no adverse effect on a historical or cultural resource.

VOTED: 5 in favor, 0 opposed (LeMenager, Adams absent)

6 Crescent Rd: Special Permit to add an addition to fill-in space under current 2nd story bump-out and adding a family room the length of the house. Project will add a family room, mudroom and powder room to the house.

MOTION: The Historical Commission finds no adverse effect on a historical or cultural resource and recommends favorable action with no conditions. Addition preserves the streetscape and façade of the house.

VOTED: 5 in favor, 0 opposed (LeMenager, Adams absent)

18 Sheffield Rd.: Special permit to construct a two-car garage and a mudroom to the existing house. All detailing to match current house. Will eliminate a lot of hardscape of the long driveway to the current garage in the back of the house. This will be replaced with landscaping. Looking to repurpose the current detached garage as a storage/garden shed.

Commissioners Clemson, Boswell and Dowling expressed concern that the garage protrudes beyond the front of the house and changes the streetscape of the house significantly. Would like to have the garage set back from the façade of the house or completely behind the house to preserve the massing of the house. Commissioners Hickey and Carlisle acknowledged that, while the location of the garage was not ideal, they thought that the design, materials to be used and design accentuated the main building and on balance did not view there to be an adverse effect on the Town's historical resources.

MOTION: The Historical Commission finds no adverse effect on a historical or cultural resource.

VOTED: 2 in favor, 3 opposed (LeMenager, Adams absent)

MOTION: The Historical Commission finds no adverse effect with the condition to move the front plane of the garage behind the front plane of the façade of the house as far to the rear as may be possible given property lines and setbacks to minimize the adverse effect on the streetscape.

VOTED: 3 in favor, 2 opposed (LeMenager, Adams absent)

6 Country Lane: The applicants seek demolish existing house and build a new house in keeping the footprint of the current house. The proposed 2nd story porch exceeds current setbacks. Neighbors are supportive about the proposed plans.

MOTION: The Historical Commission finds no adverse effect on a historical or cultural resource.

VOTED: 5 in favor, 0 opposed (LeMenager, Adams absent)

Other matters

Minutes of Jun 29, 2020 meeting.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the June 29, 2020 Historical Commission Meeting Minutes as amended to remove duplicate participant name.

VOTED: 5 in favor, 0 opposed (LeMenager, Adams absent)

RPF Waterfield Lot Update:

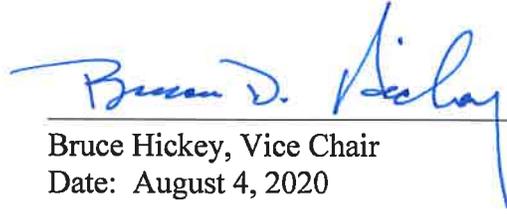
Developer has asked what is the Historical Commission's perspective of demolishing the Chamber of Commerce building? Developers don't want to propose a plan for the project that will be opposed by the town. Based on the Commission's prior study of the Central Business District, the consensus of the Commission is that such building was not of historical significance and could be demolished. Commissioner Clemson proposed documented the history of the building before it is demolished. The rest of the Commissioners agreed and requested prior notice from the Developers of any demolition and request for payment of a historical survey of the building by the Commission's consultant. Brian will relay the Commission's perspective and requests at their open meeting tomorrow, Tuesday August 4th.

Clock in Steeple in the First Congregational Church

We had initially sent a letter encouraging renovation of the clock tower with in-kind materials. John Clemson received email from member of the church that they are planning to use synthetic shingles at this time and wanted to notify the Commission. The Commission had no concerns noted.

The meeting adjourned at 9:42 p.m. Next meeting: Monday, September 7, 2020, via Zoom.

Respectfully Submitted
Emily Dowling, Recording Secretary



Bruce Hickey, Vice Chair
Date: August 4, 2020

