



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

Meeting Minutes

Date: August 31, 2020

Virtual meeting via Zoom

Members Present: Jack LeMenager, Chair
Bruce Hickey, Vice-Chair
Jennifer Adams
Jon Carlisle
John Clemson
Emily Dowling

Members Absent: Janet Boswell

Also Present: Brian Szekely, Town Planner
Maureen Meister, Planning Board liaison
Rachael Edmonston, Recording Secretary
Ravi Mehta, 14 Cranston Road
Mary Hajen, 20 Cranston Road
Danielle Brick, 41 Franklin Road
Tom Wolfe, 28 Franklin Road
Kathryn Bough, address unknown
Chris Furlong, 31 Franklin Road
Steven & Kelly Cormey, 35 Franklin Road

A quorum being in attendance, the meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m.

Public Hearing: Demolition Permit Application – 14 Cranston Road

Chair LeMenager described the property at 14 Cranston Road, noting that the house was built in 1930. The house is located in an area of Winchester known as Symmes Park, which was planned out in the 1920s and contains many houses built during the 1930s, although many were

constructed during the post-war years. There is a consistency in the style of the houses in Symmes Park, and the lots are approximately the same size. The house is in very good condition.

Ravi Mehta, the demolition permit applicant and owner of 14 Cranston Road, detailed his intentions for the house. Mr. Mehta and his wife purchased the house in 2008 and lived there until approximately 2017. Mr. Mehta currently lives in Seattle and is renting 14 Cranston Road out to a tenant. He intends to move his family back to Winchester but believes that the house is too small for a four-person family. He noted that the house has undergone several poorly constructed renovations that diminish the appearance and character of the property. Mr. Mehta originally intended to renovate the house, and enlisted the assistance of an architect, but has decided instead to demolish and rework the property. The original house is approximately 2,000 square feet. The planned replacement would be between 3,200 and 3,500 square feet in size.

Chair LeMenager noted the size of the lot was approximately 12,000 square feet and inquired whether there were any plans or drawings for the new house. Mr. Mehta said no, he was intending to receive the demolition permit before creating plans for the new house.

Commissioner Clemson provided a brief overview of the property. It was built in 1930 and the early owners were the Monson's. The architects and builders were Edwin Lawson and George Swanson. It is located in a large planned residential subdivision built on the original Symmes property. The neighborhood is architecturally consistent. Based on the National Register guidelines, it is potentially part of a National Register district. It is a bungalow and contributes to the significance of Symmes Park as a whole. It meets criteria A for its relationship to broad patterns of our history, and Criteria C as a landscape type and includes dwelling types and styles that are illustrative of the period and region of their construction. Mr. Clemson noted that both the neighborhood and the house possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association necessary to be deemed historically significant.

Chair LeMenager opened the discussion to members of the public.

Mary Hajen, a neighbor of Mr. Mehta, requested that Mr. Mehta repeat his plans for the house. Mr. Mehta complied and noted that many of the recent renovations to the house do not stay true to the historic nature and style of the original house.

Danielle Brick, a neighbor, asked how far out the footprint of the proposed new house will go into the backyard and notes that she is concerned about how the tree in the backyard of the property will be affected. LeMenager said that the proposed house would be between 3,200 and 3,500 square feet. Mr. Mehta said that they would preserve the backyard and not touch the tree. Expressed desire to preserve the character of the neighborhood.

Tom Wolfe, a neighbor, commented on the significant change in the size of houses in the neighborhood, saying that new houses are overbuilt and not in character with the surrounding houses, despite developers' and owners' initially voiced intent to do so. Mr. Mehta stated his intention to construct the property in keeping with the historical character of the neighborhood.

In response to Mr. Wolfe's concerns over the size of the proposed house, LeMenager noted that once a blueprint for a proposed house reaches 3,500 square feet, a site plan review by the Planning Board, the Design Review Committee, the Historical Commission, and the Board of Appeals is necessitated.

Brian Szekely, Town Planner, noted that in order for a demolition delay to be lifted on a housing project, plans for the proposed building must first be approved. LeMenager stated that if the plans are acceptable, the twelve-month delay on issuance of the demolition permit may be lifted early.

Commissioner Bruce Hickey emphasized that neighbor satisfaction is important. LeMenager encouraged neighbors to reach out to him via email to remain involved in the demolition permit application process for 14 Cranston Road.

LeMenager closed the public discussion.

LeMenager stated that he believes that this house should be considered historically significant in light of its location in a neighborhood among houses of the same period and similar styles. He noted that houses in Symmes Park closer to Perkins road, such as 14 Cranston Road, are older while houses further south of Perkins road are newer.

Commissioner Jennifer Adams voiced her agreement with LeMenager that the house is historically significant within the context of the neighborhood. She emphasized the need for the house to fit in with the historical character of the neighborhood and expressed a desire to see the completed plans in order to gauge whether or not they are appropriate to the neighborhood. Commissioner Jon Carlisle agreed with Adams, wants the house to fit in with the neighborhood.

Commissioner Emily Dowling agreed with LeMenager, Adams, and Carlisle, emphasizing the need to preserve smaller houses and wants the house to maintain the character of the neighborhood.

Commissioner John Clemson believes the house is a good example of the bungalow form, which is rare in Winchester. He stated that he needs to see the actual designs of the house. Notes that preservation is key, would prefer another solution over demolition.

Commissioner Bruce Hickey noted his familiarity with Symmes Park and stated that it is a historical section of Winchester. He said that the house looks to be in good shape, is true to both its time and the fabric of the neighborhood, noting that an attempt to preserve it should be undertaken. If that fails, the plans should stay true to the historical nature of the neighborhood.

MOTION: The Historical Commission finds the property located at 14 Cranston Road historically significant. The motion was made and seconded.

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed (Boswell absent).

LeMenager noted that he believes that Mr. Mehta has the right idea about the neighborhood and that he believes Mr. Mehta and his family are looking to keep the house in the same style and feel as the rest of the neighborhood. LeMenager expressed a desire to speak further with Mr. Mehta and his wife over the next few months in order to discuss plans and the possibility of lifting the delay.

MOTION: The Historical Commission voted to impose a 12-month delay on issuance of a demolition permit for the property located at 14 Cranston Road. The motion was made and seconded.

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed (Boswell absent).

Other matters

Minutes of August 3, 2020 meeting.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the August 3, 2020 Historical Commission Meeting Minutes as amended to correct the spelling of a participant's name.

VOTED: 4 in favor, 0 opposed (Boswell absent, LeMenager and Adams abstain).

Update from Planning Board – Maureen Meister

Maureen Meister, Planning Board, suggested that the Historical Commission consult Brian Szekely, Town Planner, regarding any issues with permits, zoning, site plan reviews, or municipal laws before discussing a property. She noted that Planning Board meetings always open up by asking staff if there are any issues with the discussed topic that the Board should be made aware of. Planning Board is intending to present a zoning bylaw change to Fall Town Meeting to protect sites with historical houses that are at risk of demolition. This is raised by the recent plans for 88 Harvard Street. The Planning Board want to present a flexible zoning bylaw, which would encourage the preservation of a property and supports the use of an adjacent or adjoining property to improve or enlarge the current structure, even when there is insufficient frontage. She noted that this could also be used in the development of a property at 654 Main Street, adding that the developers of a property at 654 Main Street agreed to preserve the historic property in keeping with the proposed flexible zoning bylaw. She said that the Planning Board's intention to edit Section 4 of the zoning bylaw would include "natural and cultural" historic resources. This addition is drawn from the Town of Concord's bylaw, which has already been approved by the Attorney General. Finally, she noted her excitement about the likelihood that 63 Vine Street will be preserved and renovated.

Szekely expressed support for the flexible zoning bylaw and noted the use of the flexible zoning bylaw in the case of 7 Grove Street. LeMenager requested that Szekely compile information on the proposed flexible zoning law for the commission's next meeting. He agreed to do so.

Waterfield Street Bridge Railing Renovations

Commissioner Clemson described the Waterfield Bridge railings project, noting that the development company, Daedalus, wrote a good and thorough report of the proposed improvements to the bridge and that it uses good preservation practices, aiming to save the buttresses and the balusters of the bridge.

MOTION: To accept the approach outlined in the Daedalus condition assessment and treatment recommendations. The motion was made and seconded.

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed (Boswell absent).

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m. Next meeting: Monday, September 28, 2020, via Zoom.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rachael Edmonston, Recording Secretary



Jack LeMenager, Chair

9/28/20

Date