

Meeting of the Wellesley Historical Commission
12 April 2018
Great Hall, Wellesley Town Hall
Wellesley, Massachusetts

Present: Members: Brown, Schaffler, McNally, Lilley, Loccisano (sitting as voting Member by designation of Chair as indicated below), Shepsle, Carley (sitting as voting Member by designation of Chair as indicated below)

Alternate Members: Fergusson, Maitin, Shlala (Alternate)

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 19:12

Chairman Brown Designated Carley as voting Member in Goins's stead; Locaisano as voting Member in Gleysteen's stead.

1. **DR 2018-20 (8 Old Farm)**

Waiver petition continued to next meeting May 14, 2018.

Moved by McNally, seconded Shepsle. Vote in favor was unanimous.

2. **DR 2018-16 (15 Alba Road)**

Owners Jennifer Voldins and Janis Voldins gave an overview of their project with an emphasis on the preservation of the existing home, and indicated that they chose their architect accordingly.

Catherine Johnson, on behalf of Josh Dorin (Advisory Member, absent this evening) read an email from Mr. Dorin into the record. His view was that if Applicants were proposing a complete demo of the home, he would vote for it to be preferably preserved.

Neighbor: Ms. Gail Fossa (19 Alba) voiced her support for the renovation.

Shepsle commended owners for selecting an architect interested in preservation and for their plan. Schaffler echoed Shepsle's comments.

Lilley also commended owners and discussed how the existing structure is important in the neighborhood and views the plan for renovation is appropriate in scale and massing.

Brown echoed the previous comments and said that this sort of renovation was precisely what was hoped for when the Commission was crafting the bylaw. Brown also suggested that the vote be that the Commission not vote to preferably preserve based on the drawings presented to the Commission with ultimate oversight being with the Planning Board.

Fergusson asked about the evergreen trees at the rear of the property. Owner indicated that they do not plan to remove any trees.

McNally moved that on the condition that prior to the permit being issued by the building department that the planning department approve the plans, that the building be deemed NOT preferably preserved; seconded by Lilley.

Unanimous vote to deem the structure NOT preferably preserved subject to the conditions and planned renovation.

3. **DR 2018-13 (28 River Ridge)**

Attorney Himmelberger appeared with the Owner, Mr. Olimpiu Dejeu.

Mr. Himmelberger gave an overview of the property. He alleged that the building is in some respects “uninhabitable” because of dangerous conditions inside. Zoning relief was sought for the property multiple times by previous owner. Each was unsuccessful, and as a result the owner “turned the home into an Airbnb”, which was very disruptive to the neighborhood. Himmelberger proceeded to give an explanation of the complicated zoning situation on the property and adjoining properties.

Himmelberger and Dejeu showed photos intended to show that the interior of the house was not up to modern codes with doorways opening onto the staircase, 47-degree staircase slopes, etc.

Himmelberger debated with the Planning Department staff report characterizing the relationship of Joseph Fiske (well known historical figure in Wellesley) to the house. He explained that he believes that there needs to be closer nexus between historical figures and the house than the house having merely been built on land that was once owned by a historic figure. Otherwise, he noted, “every house in Wellesley would preferably preserved because it was built on land once owned by King George, and Chief Nehoiden before him.”

Himmelberger also questioned the relevance of the proximity of the aqueduct and a decommissioned bridge over the Charles River.

Planner Claudia Zarazua replied to Mr. Himmelberger’s arguments.

Catherine Johnson conveyed Advisory Member Dorin’s comments written in an email. Dorin highlighted the importance of the millwork and the significance of the home as historic workforce housing for those who worked in the mills in the Lower Falls area.

Fred Klengmeyer (32 River Ridge) spoke in favor of demolition. Conveyed concerns about the inside of the house and the way that the house was used as an Airbnb.

A long discussion ensued about the condition of the house, cost of potential renovations and whether the existing structure was a “viable” structure for contemporary living.

McNally moved to deem preferably preserved; Schaufler seconded. Unanimous vote in favor of the building being preferably preserved.

4. **Update Concerning 16 Bay View Road.**

Petitioner provided an update with respect to his interactions with the Design Review Board. He expressed the intention to come back with a new design at the subsequent WHC meeting.

Chairman Brown reiterated the earlier advice of the Commission that he take into account the other structures in the neighborhood and find a way to get something that fits with the neighborhood.

The Petitioner expressed frustration with the process and with his need to appear before several boards and commissions.

The Planning Director Michael Zehner then provided an overview of the process to date and the deliberations of the several boards and commissions. Mr. Zehner wished to make clear to the Petitioner that the Town can only consider what the Petitioner presents to the town. Zehner contended that the growth of the design/structure is attributable to the design choices that the Petitioner has made.

Petitioner made it clear that he is not looking for an apology from anyone; he merely wants to provide an update on what he has been doing before other bodies and to tell the Commission that he is going to try to get back before the Commission with a plan that the Commission can approve.

5. Minutes

Minor amendments were made to the minutes of the March 2018 meeting.

McNally moved to accept the minutes as amended; seconded Loccisano. Unanimous vote in favor of approving the minutes as amended.

6. Plaques

Brown reviewed the current status of the plaque program and what will happen going forward.

Brown recommended approval of plaques for 39 River Ridge, 85 Glen Cross Road and 59 Cottage Street.

Motion to approve plaques for the above-listed properties Shepsle; seconded by McNally (who noted that 39 River Ridge appeared to have undergone a significant renovation since construction of the 1893 portion of the home). Unanimous in favor of issuing plaques to the owners of the three above-listed addresses.

Shlala opined that the cost of the plaques is very low for the amount of work and research that goes into them and thinks that an increase in price is warranted.

Catherine Johnson opined that the hiatus in the installation of plaques has threatened the program. Ms. Johnson further opined that this hiatus was particularly unfortunate as the plaque program it is the most visible aspect of what the Commission does. Ms. Johnson then provided a detailed history of the plaque program. She also expressed concern that the RFQ that was put out for the plaque program was incomplete and did not articulate the full scope of work. She further opined that it would be beneficial if the research, manufacture and installation were coordinated through the same person as they are all linked together. She articulated her belief that the fact that the RFQ did not prescribe this was an error and has negatively impacted the program. She noted that the selected contractor has not really produced anything in the 6 months to date. She called for the contract to be reviewed.

Carley commented on the constraints imposed on the Town/Commission under the applicable municipal procurement law, and how it does not allow for a "best value" determination for a contract in this price band.

Maitin asked whether the 6 plaque requests on the spreadsheet presented were the only ones outstanding. Brown answered no, and that he is working to complete out the whole list. Maitin asked whether the Commission could get an accounting form the Town as to how much is left in the plaque fabrication budget (and how much has been expended).

Fergusson commended Ms. Johnson for her presentation and for highlighting the importance of the plaque program.

7. **Fells Library Roof Update**

Town Meeting voted to approve the funds for the cedar shingle roof. Project will begin in FY19.

8. **Project Updates**

8 Lowell Road

Fergusson and McNally volunteered to approach the Petitioners or their attorney in an effort to see what the plans are for the building and how it might be preserved.

Wellesley Square Wayfinding

Program is proceeding, and the signage will feature Town Hall.

Beebe Plaque

Goins and McNally still working with developer on this.

Media Articles

Idea is to provide an update of the Commissions work to the citizenry via the Townsman. Commission members were asked to markup the draft article by April 20th.

A discussion of potential examples of how the Historic Preservation Demolition Review bylaw was working followed. 7 Wildon Road and 15 Alba Road were suggested as examples of “success stories”.

Historic Preservation Awards

Brown showed the nominees for awards and the poll results.

Schauffler moved to award the 2017 Historic Preservation Awards to the three houses 309 Walnut St., 51 Glen Rd., and 5 Carver Rd.; Loccisano seconded. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Schauffler moved; Locasio seconded that if the voting results for 22 Longfellow are roughly in line with the earlier awarded properties, that an award be given. Vote was unanimous in favor.

McNally moved to adjourn; Shepsle seconded. Vote was unanimous in favor. Meeting adjourned at 22:06.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/ Robert M. Carley

