



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

Meeting Minutes

Date: August 14, 2023

Mystic Valley Room, Winchester Town Hall

Members Present: Jack LeMenager, Chair
Bruce Hickey, Vice-Chair (via teleconference)
Janet Boswell
Julie Broderick
Michelle McCarthy

Members Absent: Emily Dowling
Jon Carlisle

Also Present: Nicholas Rossettos, Planning Board Liaison to the Commission
Aaron Weinert, 345 Harrison Avenue
Patrick Campbell, 3 Crescent Road
Terence Tirella, 30 Florence Street
Alyssa Loring Tirella, 30 Florence Street
Mary Ellen Mahoney, 188 Washington Street
Linda Tirella, 10 Collamore Street
Ronald Tirella, 10 Collamore Road
Leonard DiFranco 17 Kenwin Road
Pat DiFranco, 17 Kenwin Road

A quorum being in attendance, the meeting was called to order at 7:33 p.m.

Public Hearing: Demolition Permit Application

30 Florence Street

Chair LeMenager invited the applicants to present the information they has gathered about the property and commended their research. Mr. Tirella said he is a native of Winchester and grew up walking past the property on the way to school. He thanked the Commissioners who toured the property to assess its current condition and noted that Claire Dempsey has conducted a lot of useful research about the North End, including the subject property. Her survey gave them a good grasp of the history of the neighborhood and their property's connection to it. Consequently, they do not believe the house possesses "any natural beauty or important history." He noted that when they were considering purchasing the property, their real estate agent had indicated strong interest in it from developers.

He reports that at present, the property is not in “living condition,” particularly not for a family with young children. None of the Commissioners who toured the property disagreed with the assessment. The family intends to build a new, energy-efficient home that complies with zoning requirements and reduces their overall carbon footprint. They currently live in Woburn and have renovated their present home with care for the history and aesthetics of the neighborhood.

Mr. Tirella said plans for the new home have not been finalized. He showed the Commission three potential versions of the proposed home. In one, the house would face Olive Street in order to make the most of the back yard. There are two mature maple trees on the property and Commissioners asked whether they would be preserved in each of the potential scenarios. The Commission expressed a strong desire for that outcome – regardless of which plan they pick.

The applicant’s mother, Linda Tirella spoke in support of the demolition permit, citing the couple’s potential contributions to the town should they be allowed to build their desired home. Attendees Pat DiFranco and Mary Ellen Mahoney, long-time town residents, voiced the same sentiments.

Commissioner McCarthy said she approved of the potential designs for the new house. Chair LeMenager asked about the finishes and the homeowners said they haven’t decided on those yet.

Chair LeMenager commented that lot is large for the neighborhood and opined that most developers would try to build the largest house permitted by law. In so doing, they would likely also remove the mature maple trees. LeMenager said he appreciates the fact that the homeowners weren’t proposing to do that. He also applauded their connection to the community, and the fact that the potential designs are in keeping with the scale of the neighborhood’s existing homes.

Commissioner Broderick echoed much of what LeMenager said. Seeing the state of disrepair evident on her inspection of the property, she does not consider its demolition a “huge disrupter” to the neighborhood. However, she would like the garage placement to be less impactful than it is on some of the potential plans. On the whole, she likes the design. She also said she wants to see the mature trees preserved.

Commissioner Boswell commented that in her opinion this is not a historically significant house and agreed with the foregoing discussion. Commissioner McCarthy commented that this demolition would not be a loss to the town and that the proposed replacement designs would improve the neighborhood. Vice Chair Hickey concurred but felt there is some history captured in the Form B that is worth noting. The home sits in the area referred to as the Upper Plains by Claire Dempsey in the survey she conducted.

MOTION: To find that the property located at 30 Florence Street is not historically significant.

VOTE: Unanimously Approved

The public hearing closed at 8:09.

Board of Appeals Petitions

75 Bacon Street – Special Permit

The petitioners, Jon and Emily O'Donnell, seek a Special Permit from Section 5.1.10(1) of the Winchester Zoning By-Law in accordance with Chapter 40A, Section 9 of the Massachusetts General Laws so as to be permitted to have the width of the driveway entrances greater than 10 feet. The property is located in the RDB (Single Residence) zoning district and contains 18,210 +/- square feet.

Chair LeMenager reminded the Commission that the applicants previously came before them on January 24th, 2022 seeking a demolition permit for their detached garage and approval of their plan for new attached garage. That work has been completed and they are returning for a special permit to widen the driveway entrance. Their goal is to improve access to the garage.

Commissioner Broderick questioned whether the plan involves creation of significantly more impervious surface. Chair LeMenager said the petitioners just want to shift an existing apron by 10.5 feet. According to Planning Board liaison Nick Rossettos, the Planning Board wanted to keep the driveway's width to its original 15 feet (it was widened to 18 feet during construction).

It was Moved, Seconded and unanimously voted: That the proposed project at 75 Bacon Street presents no adverse impact on a historic resource of the town.

3 Crescent Road – Special Permit

The applicants, Patrick and Amanda Campbell seek a Special Permit under Section 3.5.5 of the Winchester Zoning By-Law in accordance with Chapter 40A, Section 9 of the Massachusetts General Laws so as to be permitted to construct an addition that will be located closer to side property line than permitted as of right. The property is in the RDB (Single Residence) zoning district and contains 6,122 +/- square feet.

Architect Aaron Weinert described the proposed project as the addition of a covered deck on the back of the property. He said the plan will not make the property's existing non-conformity any worse. Planning and Design Review did not object to the proposal. Ongoing renovation work is all interior.

Commissioner Boswell commented that the property had previously been derelict for decades but has recently been beautifully and sensitively restored.

It was moved, seconded and unanimously voted that the proposed project at 3 Crescent presents no adverse impact on a historic resource of the town.

Lynch Elementary School – Special Permit

According to an email read to the Commission by Chair LeMenager, Town Counsel Jay Talerman recommended that the Commission take no action on this special permit, indicating that Special Permits were applied for by the contractor in error. According to Mr. Talerman, "The Dover Amendment precludes and/or abbreviates most review of educational uses under zoning. It also makes it virtually impossible to either deny an educational project or condition it in a way that frustrates its proposed utility.

Consequently, the Commission agreed to take no action.

Other Business

Rangely Road Heritage District

Christine Schmidt informed the Chair that Michelle McCarthy's term ran out last month and the Commission needs to fill the position.

It was moved, seconded and unanimously voted:

That Michelle McCarthy be reappointed as one of the Commission's two Rangely Road Heritage District Commission members.

Waterfield Lot Project

Chair LeMenager stated that the Planning Board is going to have three public meetings on the project and, as the Permit Granting Authority, is seeking comments from the Commission. General appreciation was expressed about the proposed bracketed cornice and red brick frontage. Chair LeMenager voiced approval of the overall design, particularly the third floor view facing the street. Although, he commented that any building with four floors is going to be dominant downtown. Commissioner McCarthy stated that she objects to the plan on the grounds that it is too large. After further discussion, it was:

Moved, seconded, and voted 4 to 1:

That the Historical Commission endorses the Waterfield lot plan to the extent that it conforms to the plan reviewed today in terms of historic details especially the cornices, and how it presents to the common and Waterfield Street.

New MBTA-Related Zoning

Commissioner McCarthy asked whether the units created by the Waterfield development plan would count toward the 1,500 new units that must be zoned for by-right apartments in the Center Business District (CBD). Chair LeMenager said he believed they would, since they would be rental units. He added that the complex includes a total of 60 rental units. Commissioner McCarthy said, in the interest of preserving the historical character of the town center, that there should be a joint meeting between the Commission and the Planning Board to discuss the implications of this new zoning.

Planning Board Liaison Nick Rossettos said he is concerned that some historic Church Street properties may now be vulnerable, particularly wood framed homes at the gateway to the CBD. After discussion it was agreed that Chair LeMenager would reach out to Diab Jerius to schedule a joint meeting and:

It was moved, seconded and unanimously voted to

Request that the Planning Board meet with the Commission to discuss the new zoning changes for the downtown.

Study Committees

Commissioner McCarthy suggested that the Commission consider reviving the CBD Local Historic District Study Committee that had been considering a local historic district for the town center. Chair LeMenager noted that we also need to keep the Symmes Corner Study Committee moving forward, although it has been stalled by the lack of Town Planner staffing. He voiced the hope that once the new Town Planner would be appointed by the Select Board to both Study Committees to ensure that the two efforts move forward.

Draft Guidance Document for Real Estate Agents

Chair LeMenager advised Commission that he and Nick Rossettos are preparing a document that might be converted into a pamphlet for use in alerting real estate agents and new homeowners about the implications of Chapter 14 and zoning bylaws for those who might be considering demolition or significant addition and renovation of historic homes. The two will continue to work on it and present early drafts to the Commission as they are finished.

Approval of Minutes From the July 10, 2023 Meeting

It was moved, seconded, and unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the Commission's July 10th meeting as amended.

Respectfully Submitted,

Janet Boswell, Recording Secretary



Jack LeMenager, Chair

9/12/23