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City of Newton, Massachusetts

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Department of Planning and Development

Barney S. Heath

Ruthanne Fuller
 Mayor

1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Director

Date: March 28, 2024

Place/Time: Zoom, at 7:00 PM

Attending:

Doug Cornelius, Chair	John Rice, Vice Chair
Harvey Schorr, Member	Anne Marie Stein, Member
Katie Kubie, Member	Scott Friedman, Alternate
David Lewis, Staff	

The meeting was called to order via Zoom at 7:00 p.m. with Doug Cornelius serving as Chair. Voting permanent members were John Rice, Harvey Schorr, Anne Marie Stein, and Katie Kubie. Alternate member Scott Friedman was designated to vote as not all voting members were present. David Lewis acted as Zoom host and the meeting was digitally recorded on the Zoom device.

1. 145 Auburndale Avenue – Demolition Delay Violation

Approval of Demolition Delay Violation Settlement

Mr. Cornelius explained the process relating to the commission’s vote regarding the violation.

Kristen Annunziato, of the City’s Law Department, was present to explain the settlement agreement and explain the process.

Ms. Stein made a motion to authorize the chair to sign the agreement on behalf of the commission. Mr. Friedman seconded the motion.

At a scheduled meeting and public hearing on March 28, 2024, the Newton Historical Commission, by vote of 6-0:

RESOLVED to authorize the commission chair to sign the agreement on behalf of the commission.

Voting in the Affirmative	Voting in the Negative	Recusal/Abstain
JR		
AMS		
KK		
SF		
DC		
HS		

2. 145 Auburndale Avenue – Demolition Delay Violation

Review of Design after Violation

David Boronkay and Adam Goldberg were present to represent the application. Mr. Cornelius explained the process of the vote. The applicants displayed their plans using the share screen function and described the proposed building materials.

Ms. Stein asked why a window was proposed to be removed. The applicants responded, and staff clarified that the window removal and the demolition of a small addition was administratively approved during the building permit process. Ms. Stein asked how many square feet the house was. The applicant responded that the house was approximately 3800 square feet.

There was no public comment.

Commission Comment

Ms. Stein made a motion to approve the plans as proposed subject to the execution of the settlement agreement. Mr. Rice seconded.

At a scheduled meeting and public hearing on March 28, 2024, the Newton Historical Commission, by vote of 6-0:

RESOLVED to approve the plans as proposed subject to the execution of the settlement agreement.

Voting in the Affirmative	Voting in the Negative	Recusal/Abstain
AMS		
KK		
JR		
SF		
HS		
DC		

3. 84 Eldredge Street – Preservation Restriction Review

Request for Certificate of Appropriateness.

Staff Reported that 84 Eldredge Street is a ca. 1898 Georgian Revival style home. This application is for the replacement of a rubber roof and a roof deck.

David Wilson was present to represent the application. Mr. Wilson described the project, explaining the plans for roof replacement and replacement of the deck. Mr. Wilson confirmed that the deck was present prior to the conversion to condominiums.

Mr. Cornelius commented that it appeared to be a pretty straightforward replacement.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Rice made a motion to issue a certificate of appropriateness for the replacement of the roof section and roof deck. Mr. Friedman seconded the motion.

At a scheduled meeting and public hearing on March 28, 2024, the Newton Historical Commission, by vote of 6-0:

RESOLVED to issue a certificate of appropriateness for the replacement of the roof section and roof deck.

Voting in the Affirmative	Voting in the Negative	Recusal/Abstain
JR		
AMS		
KK		
HS		
SF		
DC		

4. 286 Waverly Avenue (Durant-Kenrick House) – Local Landmark Review

Request for certificate of appropriateness.

Staff Reported that the Durant-Kenrick House is a landmarked ca. 1734 Georgian style house. This application is for the replacement of a side entry door.

Annelise Perry was present to represent the application. Ms. Perry explained that the museum is looking to replace the door and surrounding casing, as the wood is rotting. She explained that the replacement would be a fiberglass door, but would be painted to match the original. Ms. Perry also explained that the door that would be replaced was originally installed in 2013. Staff showed a picture of the proposed replacement door using share screen.

Mr. Rice asked if the work would be done by the City or a contractor. Ms. Perry confirmed that the work would be carried out by a contractor.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Friedman made a motion to issue a certificate of appropriateness for the replacement entry door. Ms. Kubie seconded the motion.

At a scheduled meeting and public hearing on March 28, 2024, the Newton Historical Commission, by vote of 5-0:

RESOLVED to issue a certificate of appropriateness for the replacement of the side entry door.

Voting in the Affirmative	Voting in the Negative	Recusal/Abstain
JR		
AMS		
KK		
HS		

SF		
DC		

5. 11 Parsons Street – Request for Demolition

Request to demolish house.

Staff Reported that This is a ca. 1875 Italianate house in a well-preserved neighborhood. Staff recommends finding the property preferably preserved.

Tom Zou was present to represent the application. Mr. Zou commented that the house was old and he sought to build a new house.

Mr. Cornelius commented that he believed the property should clearly be preferably preserved. Ms. Stein commented that the house was a beautiful example of American vernacular architecture and encouraged the owner to try to renovate the property instead of demolition.

There was no public comment.

Commission Comment

Ms. Stein made a motion to find the property preferably preserved. Mr. Friedman seconded.

At a scheduled meeting and public hearing on March 28, 2024, the Newton Historical Commission, by vote of 6-0:

RESOLVED to find the property preferably preserved.

Voting in the Affirmative	Voting in the Negative	Recusal/Abstain
JR		
AMS		
KK		
HS		
SF		
DC		

6. 1193 Walnut Street – Request for Demolition

Request to demolish house.

Staff Reported that this is a ca. 1870 Queen Anne style house on a predominantly commercial street. Due to the age and condition of the house, staff recommends finding the property preferably preserved.

Jared Jamal was present to represent the application.

Mr. Jamal experienced technical difficulties when this property was initially scheduled to be heard. The commission moved to the next item, 640 Watertown street, before returning to this item when Mr. Jamal’s microphone was working properly.

Mr. Jamal explained the condition and current use of the home and commented that he did not believe the house fits in with the use of the other buildings on the street. Mr. Cornelius shared photos of the home using the share screen function.

Mr. Schorr commented that the neighborhood has already changed enough, and this building is the only non-commercial structure left. He continued to say he would not be in favor of preferably preserving the property. Ms. Stein agreed with Mr. Schorr. Mr. Cornelius commented that the building took away from the context of the rest of the street scape.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Friedman made a motion to find the property preferably preserved. Mr. Rice seconded the motion.

At a scheduled meeting and public hearing on March 28, 2024, the Newton Historical Commission, by vote of 0-6:

RESOLVED to find the property preferably preserved.

Voting in the Affirmative	Voting in the Negative	Recusal/Abstain
	JR	
	AMS	
	KK	
	HS	
	SF	
	DC	

The motion did not pass, and the property was not found preferably preserved.

7. 640 Watertown Street – Request for Demolition

Request to demolish house.

Staff Reported that this 1936 Garrison Colonial is well-preserved. Staff recommends finding the property preferably preserved.

Laurance Lee was present to represent the application. Mr. Lee gave a presentation using the share screen function, showing photos of the neighborhood and the house.

Mr. Cornelius commented that there is a mix of styles along this stretch of Watertown Street. Mr. Schorr commented that he was unsure if this home and the one next door are of similar ages. Mr. Cornelius confirmed that the house at 634 Watertown was built in 1920. Ms. Kubie asked why the property was to be demolished and commented that the house does not necessarily need to be individually unique to be preferably preserved. Mr. Lee commented that there is no architectural cohesiveness to the neighborhood. Ms. Stein commented that she thinks teardowns can be wasteful, but that it would be good if more housing units were put in. Mr. Cornelius clarified the scope of the commission. Mr. Friedman asked how many housing units would be built. Mr. Lee confirmed it would be multi-family housing.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Rice made a motion to find the property preferably preserved. Mr. Friedman seconded the motion.

At a scheduled meeting and public hearing on March 28, 2024, the Newton Historical Commission, by vote of 2-4:

RESOLVED to find the property preferably preserved.

Voting in the Affirmative	Voting in the Negative	Recusal/Abstain
KK	JR	
DC	AMS	
	HS	
	SF	

The motion did not pass, and the property was not found preferably preserved.

8. 14 Dorcar Road – Request for Demolition

Request to demolish house.

Staff Reported that this is a 1953 split-level ranch on a street with many similar houses. Staff recommends finding the property preferably preserved.

Alec Polnarev was present to represent the application. Mr. Polnarev gave a presentation using the share screen function, beginning by showing photos of the house and neighborhood, before describing his reasons for wanting to demolish the property.

Ms. Stein commented that there were several homes on the same side of the street that looked similar to this one and encouraged renovation instead of demolition.

Ben Ginsberg, a resident of Spiers Road, commented that he lives in a similar house, and believes the property should be preferably preserved. J.H., a resident of Dorcar Road, expressed concern about what would replace the house if demolished, and how it would impact the character of the neighborhood. Chris Gant, who is a student at Boston Architectural College, commented that his house is in a subdivision of similar homes, and that one was torn down and replaced with a house out of character, and that it is a pity to see the city lose historic character one home at a time. Mr. Polnarev commented that he understands the concerns of the neighbors and appreciates their feedback.

Ms. Stein made a motion to find the property preferably preserved. Mr. Friedman seconded the motion.

At a scheduled meeting and public hearing on March 28, 2024, the Newton Historical Commission, by vote of 5-1:

RESOLVED to find the property preferably preserved.

Voting in the Affirmative	Voting in the Negative	Recusal/Abstain
JR	DC	
AMS		
KK		

HS		
SF		

9. 97 Bound Brook Road – Request for Demolition

Request to demolish house.

Staff Reported that this 1957 split-level ranch is on a street with many similar existing original homes. Staff recommends finding the property preferably preserved.

Yuri Kraysberg was present to represent the application. Mr. Kraysberg began by explaining that the commission did not find a home next door historically significant in 2018. He continued by explaining that demolition is the only financially viable option for development, and that he does not believe demolition delay would be beneficial.

Mr. Cornelius commented that he believed the subdivision still retains context.

Bary Fisch, a resident of Bound Brook Road, commented that he has seen many properties torn down in the neighborhood and that much larger and more expensive homes are built in their place, making the neighborhood less affordable. Mr. Fisch continued by saying he was curious what would be built in its place. Matt Border, homeowner of the house next door to 97 Bound Brook, commented that he is in favor of demolition. Ben Ginsberg, resident of 250 Spiers Road, commented that he updated and renovated his own home, and that it is possible to do so.

Mr. Friedman made a motion to find the property preferably preserved. Ms. Stein seconded the motion.

At a scheduled meeting and public hearing on March 28, 2024, the Newton Historical Commission, by vote of 6-0:

RESOLVED to find the property preferably preserved.

Voting in the Affirmative	Voting in the Negative	Recusal/Abstain
JR		
AMS		
KK		
HS		
SF		
DC		

10. 21-23 Francis Street – Request for Demolition

Request to demolish house.

Staff Reported that this is an altered ca. 1905 Queen Anne style house on a well-preserved street. Staff recommends finding the property preferably preserved.

David Geffen was present to represent the application.

Mr. Geffen experienced technical difficulties with his microphone, so the commission elected to move to the next item on the agenda, 56 Chapel Street, and return to this item after.

David Murphy, Mr. Geffen’s attorney, read Mr. Geffen’s comments due to a technical difficulty with Mr. Geffen’s microphone. Mr. Murphy read Mr. Geffen’s reasoning for wanting to demolish the property. Jeffrey Yates, Mr. Geffen’s architect, also spoke, describing the house and Mr. Geffen’s plans.

Mr. Cornelius commented that the house does have a similar house next door, but across the street are just garages, leading to an incomplete context.

Mr. Murphy commented that he thinks Mr. Geffen does quality work, and it would add significant quality to the neighborhood.

Ms. Stein asked if there were any interested neighbors. Mr. Yates said that one neighbor came up to him and asked if a two-family could be built.

Ms. Stein made a motion to find the property preferably preserved. Mr. Friedman seconded.

At a scheduled meeting and public hearing on March 28, 2024, the Newton Historical Commission, by vote of 3-1:

RESOLVED to find the property preferably preserved.

Voting in the Affirmative	Voting in the Negative	Recusal/Abstain
HS	JR	Ams abs
SF		Kk abs
DC		

11. 56 Chapel Street – Request for Demolition

Request to demolish house.

Staff Reported that this is a 1919 home that was built in connection with the well-preserved mill complex located across the street. Staff recommends finding the property preferably preserved.

Laurance Lee was present to represent the application. Mr. Lee gave a presentation using the share screen function. He first showed a map of the neighborhood, before showing photographs of the home and the one next to it.

Mr. Cornelius commented that the house had some architectural significance, but that he felt it lacked neighborhood context.

There was no public comment.

Ms. Stein made a motion to find the property preferably preserved. Mr. Schorr seconded the motion.

At a scheduled meeting and public hearing on March 28, 2024, the Newton Historical Commission, by vote of 1-5:

RESOLVED to find the property preferably preserved.

Voting in the Affirmative	Voting in the Negative	Recusal/Abstain
DC	JR	
	AMS	
	KK	

	HS	
	SF	

The motion did not pass, and the property was not found preferably preserved.

12. 32 Hickory Cliff Road – Request for Demolition

Request to partially demolish house.

Staff Reported that this is a 1938 Cape in a well-preserved neighborhood. Staff welcomes discussion of the proposed addition.

Janet Qin was present to represent the application. Mr. Cornelius explained the process of the partial demolition vote. Ms. Qin allowed for a preferably preserved vote.

At a scheduled meeting and public hearing on March 28, 2024, the Newton Historical Commission, by vote of 6-0:

RESOLVED to find the property preferably preserved.

Voting in the Affirmative	Voting in the Negative	Recusal/Abstain
JR		
AMS		
KK		
HS		
SF		
DC		

Mr. Cornelius shared the plans using the share screen function. Ms. Qin explained the design while Mr. Cornelius showed the renderings and plans. Ms. Qin explained that her design is similar to other recently renovated homes in the neighborhood.

Ms. Stein commented that it is nice to see people adding onto small Cape style homes instead of tearing them down. Mr. Schorr commented that he wished the informal quality of the existing building could be better retained in the addition. Ms. Kubie commented that she feels that the design would remove the Cape stylings, and asked why there would be different siding materials for the first and second floors. Mr. Cornelius commented that he likes the different materials. Mr. Friedman commented that he agreed it was nice to preserve the existing house, but also agreed with the sentiment of other commissioners that he did not love the proposed design. Mr. Cornelius commented that he would suggest removing the peak over the main entryway. Ms. Qin expressed a desire to have a porch. Ms. Stein commented that she did not like the garage door. Ms. Qin responded that a final choice on the garage door had not yet been made. Mr. Schorr commented that the existing house is not fully symmetrical, and he would suggest rethinking the symmetry of the proposed design. Ms. Qin commented that the symmetry of the proposed design was in part due to a desire for more natural light in the home.

There was no public comment.

The commission elected not to vote on these plans at this time, and suggested that the applicant return to the next meeting with updated plans based on the guidance offered by the commission.

13. 154 Langley Road – Request for Demolition Waiver

Request for waiver of demolition delay.

Staff Reported that this 1845, 2.5-story home was constructed with elements of both the Greek Revival and Italianate Styles.

No one was present to represent this application, so the commission elected to move forward to the next item on the agenda, and hear this item at the next meeting.

~~14. 23 Sylvester Road – Request for Demolition Waiver~~

~~Request for a waiver of Demolition Delay~~

~~Applicant chose to postpone this application to a later meeting.~~

15. 93 Sevlund Road – Request for Demolition Waiver

Request for waiver of demolition delay.

Staff Reported that this 1961 home was constructed in a midcentury, split level style, as are many of the properties on this street.

Laurance Lee was present to represent the application, as was architect Kevin Remillard. Mr. Remillard gave a presentation using the share screen function. Mr. Remillard outlined the goals of the design before showing a site plan followed by renderings of the proposed design.

Mr. Cornelius asked for clarification of the setback of the garage door. Mr. Remillard showed a 3D rendering that showed the garage projected out in front of the front door. Mr. Cornelius also asked why stucco was chosen as the siding material, as it seemed out of character for the neighborhood. Ms. Stein commented that she did not like the black framing of the windows, but she did appreciate that the footprint of the home is not increased. Mr. Schorr commented that the garage and front entryway could be combined to eliminate the presently setback main entrance, which he believed would be more consistent with other houses in the neighborhood. Mr. Friedman commented that he did not like the prominence of the garage. Ms. Kubie asked if the original garage was set forward or back from the garage. Mr. Remillard showed the existing site plan, showing the garage is set ahead of the entrance. Mr. Lee asked what would be preferred for a siding material. Commissioners commented that Hardie board would fit into the neighborhood better. Mr. Lee also asked for clarification about the location of the garage. Ms. Stein commented that the house looks to be in good shape and that it should be renovated, not demolished. Ms. Kubie agreed. Mr. Lee commented that the accessibility of a split-level home was too challenging.

There was no public comment.

Commission Comment

The commission elected not to vote on these plans at this time, and suggested that the applicant return to the next meeting with updated plans based on the guidance offered by the commission.

16. 276 Lexington Road – Request for Demolition Waiver

Request for waiver of demolition delay.

Staff Reported that 276 Lexington Street is a c. 1870, Colonial Revival with enclosed front porch and front gabled roof.

Mariana Dagatti was present to represent the application. Ms. Dagatti presented using the share screen function, beginning by showing photos of the neighborhood before showing the proposed design for new construction. Laurance Lee also used share screen to present plans after Ms. Dagatti had a technical difficulty.

Mr. Cornelius commented that he struggled with whether or not this mitigated the loss of the existing house. Ms. Stein commented that the existing home is similar to 11 Parsons, but that she thinks the proposed design does mitigate the loss. Ms. Kubie agreed with Ms. Stein, commenting that the proposed design was an interesting addition to the street scape. Mr. Schorr commented that he also liked the design and would support approval. Mr. Friedman agreed that he approved of the design as well.

Jon Melick commented that he liked the design and thought that it paid homage to the original design.

Ms. Stein made a motion to approve the plans as proposed and waive the demolition delay. Mr. Friedman second.

At a scheduled meeting and public hearing on March 28, 2024, the Newton Historical Commission, by vote of 6-0:

RESOLVED to approve the plans as proposed and waive the demolition delay.

Voting in the Affirmative	Voting in the Negative	Recusal/Abstain
JR		
AMS		
KK		
HS		
SF		
DC		

17. 9 Applegarth Street – Request for Demolition Waiver

Request for waiver of demolition delay.

Staff Reported that this home was constructed in 1912 in an eclectic style and has been altered many times.

Yvonne Chen was present to represent the application. Ms. Chen gave a presentation showing the share screen function, showing the rendering of the proposed design, and pictures of similar homes in Newton.

Mr. Cornelius asked if the house had foliage in front. Ms. Chen and Ms. Stein confirmed that the house did previously have foliage out front, which has since been removed. Ms. Stein commented that people are building homes like this in town, but that a house like this would change the historic fabric of the neighborhood. Mr. Friedman commented that he agreed with Ms. Stein, and gave an

example of a home in Waban that was a good example of new construction that is less obtrusive in the neighborhood. Mr. Schorr commented that he did not like the proposed design, especially the large windows. Mr. Cornelius commented that he does not feel like the design mitigates the loss of the existing house and does not fit in the context of the neighborhood. Ms. Kubie commented that she did not feel like the proposed design mitigated the loss, and that they may need to start over with a new design.

Mr. Cornelius commented that the commission received a letter signed by many members of the neighborhood that they did not approve of the design. Ken Gould and Judy Sklare, resident of 12 Applegarth, clarified that 16 property owners signed the letter Mr. Cornelius mentioned, and commented that the proposed design would be more than twice the size of any of the houses on the street. Mr. Gould added that he did not believe the proposed design adheres to the City's design guidelines for new construction. Larry Klein commented that he thought the existing home was one of the more interesting houses on the street. Jon Melick commented that the proposed design is hostile. David Geffen commented that he also does not like the design, and feels it does not fit the lot or neighborhood.

The commission elected not to vote on these plans at this time, and suggested that the applicant return to the next meeting with updated plans based on the guidance offered by the commission.

Administrative Discussion:

a) Oak Hill Park Discussion

The commission discussed efforts and options to preserve the historical significance of the Oak Hill Park neighborhood.

Councilor Lipof commented that he thinks it seems pragmatic to look at the neighborhood as a whole. Councilor Lipof explained that he likes the idea of focusing on what we can maintain, especially the path system. He also liked the idea of preserving one or more homes. He wants to preserve what we can of the neighborhood, but understands the limits of the delay. Councilor Kalis commented that this is a frustrating situation, as the preservation of the neighborhood has been discussed for years. He commented that the delay obviously is not working, but that we need to take action to do what we can to preserve one or more homes. Councilor Malakie suggested that the commission should require proof that a house has been marketed publicly. She also commented that zoning allows for large houses to be built. Jennifer Cairra spoke on behalf of the planning department, explaining that the department is interested in putting up interpretive signage and also potentially landmarking one or more homes in the neighborhood.

Jon Melick commented that he is a native of Oak Hill Park, and that the neighborhood he knew no longer exists, however he would like to see a stretch of houses preserved. Mr. Melick also mentioned the original Oak Hill Park street signs, which all had gold stars honoring the veterans the streets are named after.

Anne Marie Stein commented that she is in favor of having properties continue to come before the NHC for demolition delay votes. She explained that there are opportunities to put additions on homes and ways to preserve them. She also mentioned that the NHC is the forum where feelings about the neighborhood changing are heard, and that we should continue to hear them.

Ben Ginsberg, of 250 Spiers, commented that he often gets offers from developers trying to buy his house. He also noted that a home that was previously given a historic preservation award (184 Spiers), but since has been torn down. Jon Melick commented that the houses were designed to be added on to. Councilor Malakie inquired about the ability to move one of the existing houses.

b) Approval of minutes from the February 22, 2024, meeting

Minutes from the February 22, 2024 hearing were unanimously approved by those in attendance at the hearing.

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote.

Respectfully,

 , NHC