



Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor

Barney Heath  
Director  
Planning & Development

Cat Kemmett, Planning  
Associate

#### Members

Peter Doeringer, Chair  
Sonia Parisca, Vice Chair  
Kelley Brown, Member  
Sudha Maheshwari, Member  
Jennifer Molinsky, Member  
Chris Steele, Member  
Barney Heath, Planning  
Director *ex officio*  
Kevin McCormick, Alternate

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# PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

June 7, 2021

#### Members Present:

Peter Doeringer, Chair  
Jennifer Molinsky, Member  
Chris Steele, Member  
Kelley Brown, Member  
Barney Heath, *ex officio*  
James Robertson, Alternate  
Kevin McCormick, Alternate

#### Staff Present:

Barney Heath, Director of Planning and Development  
Katy Hax Holmes, Chief Preservation Planner  
Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler, Community Engagement Planner  
Cat Kemmett, Planning Associate

Meeting held virtually by Zoom Meeting

#### 1. Recommendation on Landmark Proposals before the Newton Historical Commission

Chair Doeringer opened the meeting at 7:00 pm. Ms. Holmes gave a presentation on the structure and historical significance of 145 Warren Street, also known as the Aloha House. The structure, which was built in 1916 as a residence and performance space, is a unique example of a Craftsman style bungalow. An enclosed front porch and bay window were added in 1951, but otherwise the appearance of this house from the outside has remained largely unchanged. Of historical significance is a former resident of the home, Dai Buell, an internationally acclaimed concert pianist. The house was designed for her and served as a soundproof performance and practice space.

Ms. Holmes said that the Aloha House meets criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Section 22-64 of Newton's Ordinance. The rationale for this is that the property is listed as a resource on the National Register of Historic Places, it is associated with the historic development of Newton Center as a suburban village, it is historically and architecturally significant for its intact representation of the Bungalow Style on a site that is in residential use since 1916 by an internationally known performance artist, it is compatible with future preservation and use because the historic location and setting has been retained, and it is representative of a distinct period, and it is representative of a distinct period in architectural design retaining its decorative fabric and features.

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It was asked whether the home retained the interior performance space. Ms. Holmes said that the historic interior has not been preserved, and the NHS does not have authority to regulate interior space.

Ms. Holmes then began the presentation for 148 Waverly Avenue, also known as James Ricker Farmstead. The structure was built in 1830 as a farmhouse residence in a Federal style. The historical appearance of the property was much as the house appears now, except for a kitchen addition at the rear of the building, construction of a new garage in 2016, and the removal of the barn.

The staff report indicated that based on the criteria in the local landmark ordinance, 148 Waverly does stand alone as an architectural type, style or design distinguished by rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detailing, materials or craftsmanship. It is an example of Newton's agricultural foundation and is the site of documented historical events or activities. Based on those ties and the unique architecture of the building, it meets criteria for landmark designation.

It was noted that there are not any clear elements to point to in the comprehensive plan or in other planning documents that would prevent either of these petitions from being designated as landmarks. Additionally, in supporting the preservation of unique and historic structures, landmarking these would support some elements of the comprehensive plan while adding a small amount of housing as well, which is a win-win.

Because there were changes made on the property that were reviewed several years ago, it was asked why the property was not nominated for landmark status then. Ms. Holmes said that as is the case with many properties, people often assume that a historic home is not in danger of demolition until a property owner submits a plan for a demo, and at that time the owners did not indicate a desire to demo the home. It can be a reactive rather than proactive process. It was asked if staff knew what kind of structure would replace 148 Waverly if it is demolished. Ms. Holmes explained that she is not aware of any concrete plans yet for the property. Though the plans for what might replace the home are not finalized, it is unlikely to result in an increase in housing units.

The Board endorsed the recommendation of the Local Landmark Report to the Newton Historical Commission of June 2021 that the Newton Historical Commission designate the Church-Buell house at 145 Warren Street as a landmark, which was approved by a vote of six in favor, none opposed, and Mr. Heath abstaining.

The Planning and Development Board endorsed the recommendation of the Local Landmark Report to the Newton Historical Commission of June 2021 that the Newton Historical Commission designate the Riker-Gay house at 148 Waverley Avenue as a landmark, which was approved by a vote of six in favor, none opposed, and Mr. Heath abstaining.

### **2. Discussion of July meeting(s)**

Mr. Heath explained that there will be an item before the Board in July, an affordable housing preservation proposal involving CDBG funds in Nonantum, that will be taken up in a joint meeting with the CPC on July 13. Rather than have Board members have their regular meeting on July 12<sup>th</sup> and meet with the CPC on the 13<sup>th</sup>, he proposed the Board cancel the meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> and instead meet to discuss their items on July 13<sup>th</sup> before the CPC meeting. There was general agreement that that proposal made sense and would work for the majority of Board members.

### **3. Reappointment of CPC representative**

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Ms. Molinsky confirmed that she is willing and able to continue on in her role as CPC representative, and indeed has been asked to step up as vice-chair of the committee. Chair Doeringer made a motion to reappoint Ms. Molinsky to represent the Board at the CPC for a term that will run through to 8/6/24, which carried 6-0-1.

### 4. Zoning Amendments/Zoning Redesign Update

- **Firearms Zoning Amendment:** Mr. Heath provided an update on the firearms zoning amendment. City Council held a special meeting last week to discuss the proposed zoning amendments, as well as several proposed edits to that zoning posed by Councilor Baker. City Council moved forward including 3 of the 5 edits he proposed. The proposed firearms zoning ordinance revisions were passed, as amended, by an overwhelming majority at City Council. City Council will next discuss the second zoning petition, which is a ban on the sale of firearms. If passed, the ban would supersede the first firearms zoning amendment.
- **Building Heights:** Ms. Kemmett said that the introductory meeting for this item was held in May, and the public hearing will likely be on June 28. She anticipates that the final language that will be shared in the memo will be very similar to what was proposed in May, as staff have received minimal feedback or edits most members of ZAP and the Board have seemed to be comfortable with the changes proposed.
- **Zoning Ordinance Cleanup:** Ms. Kemmett said that staff have created a final list of items that will be included in this cleanup. Most of the proposed amendments are minor, like clarifying vague language or correctly transcribing information missed in the 2015 recodification, but there will also be several more substantive zoning changes included. Staff anticipate that ZAP will discuss this item in July.
- **Zoning Redesign:** Mr. Heath explained that the whole Long Range team has been working on engagement efforts for Zoning Redesign. The Vision Kit, which is an accessible activity for all ages and groups and is available in 4 different languages online or in hard copy, is now available. People have been sending in pictures and comments from Vision Kits which the city will share later. Additionally, the online interactive forum, Polis, is also live now. Staff have been putting together and facilitating focus groups to discuss the Vision Kit to groups that have been underrepresented in past engagement efforts, while continuing to work with established community groups. Staff and several interns from Newton high schools will also be conducting on-site surveys later in the summer in village centers. The consultant Utile continues to look at qualitative data. Staff plan to come back in the fall with our findings from these efforts and come back with preliminary recommendations.

### 5. City Updates

Mr. Heath said that Land Use has been incredibly busy with a number of complex zoning petitions that have been keeping staff busy. The Armory RFP has been finalized and should be released in late June. It was asked what the relationship between the NHC and Mass Historic is in this process. Mr. Heath explained that the NHC provided edit and comments on the RFP, and in the RFP itself, there is a preference for proposals that seek to preserve significant portions of the building. Depending on who wins the RFP, they may seek a special permit in which case they would go through the NHC, or they may pursue 40b. Riverside conversations have continued at Land Use, and later this month there will be a discussion regarding site design. Dunstan East is back before the Zoning Board of Appeals seeking an amendment to add more housing units.

### 6. Minutes: Approve meeting minutes

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Upon a motion by Ms. Molinsky and unanimously approved, the minutes from April 27, May 3, May 10, and May were adopted.

Chair Doeringer remarked that this meeting will be the last with Mr. Robertson. He and the other Board members thanked Mr. Robertson for his years of service to the Board.

### **7. Adjournment**

Upon a motion by Mr. Robertson and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm.