

HERITAGE COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
March 7, 2019

The Heritage Commission held its regular monthly meeting at Council Chambers, 37 Green Street, Concord, New Hampshire, on Thursday, March 7, 2019.

1. Call to Order and Seating of Alternates

Chairman Jaques called the meeting to order at 4:40 p.m.

Present at the meeting were Chair Richard Jaques, Councilor Allan Herschlag, Members Carol Durgy Brooks, and Bryant Tolles. Staff present included City Planner Heather Shank, and Administrative Specialist Lisa Fellows-Weaver.

2. Approval of Minutes

Councilor Herschlag moved to approve the minutes of February 7, 2019, as written. Mr. Tolles seconded the motion. The motion passed; 4/0.

3. New Business

a. Sewall's Fall MoU Update – City Engineer David Cedarholm

This item was postponed to the April 4, 2019 meeting. Mr. Cedarholm and Ms. Hengen will be attending the April meeting.

b. Abbott Village

Jason Garland, representing the Abbott Farm, LLC, (the 'LLC') met with the Heritage Commission to discuss the conditions of the previously approved subdivision plan relative to the restoration of the Abbott House and the phasing plans of the project. Mr. Garland explained that the Planning Board granted approval of the original subdivision plan in 2005 with a condition that the Abbott House be restored prior to any construction of Phase 5. He noted that his company purchased the project out of bankruptcy in November 2009. They are requesting that Phase 5 be allowed to be built prior to any restoration of the Abbott House. A structural engineer was hired in the beginning of 2017 to assess the condition of the house and provided recommendations as to the restoration. It is the engineer's opinion that the house is almost beyond salvageable and should be demolished.

Mr. Garland explained that there are 13 family members of the original Abbott family. He has met with two family members who have expressed an interest in a monument being created as well as a sitting area at the site of the house to acknowledge the history of the Abbott family. He added that sales of the units have increased and the owner would like to pursue construction of the next building while there is an interest and the market is good.

Mr. Garland stated that he is asking the Heritage Commission to support the request to move forward with Phase 5. A monument is proposed to be placed at the site of the house along with a new parking area and the additional building. He added that the association is in favor of the demolition of the house as it would allow for additional area.

Ms. Brooks asked if the LLC knew of the Planning Board conditions for development when the property was purchased in 2005. Mr. Garland replied yes. Ms. Brooks asked if the LLC had repaired or restored anything to the house over the past nine years since the LLC was the owner of the project. Mr. Garland replied no, and explained that there have been financial challenges with the development. The immediate issue was the sales of the units so that they could move forward with the development. Mr. Garland stated that the requirement to restore the house was well out in the future.

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A discussion was held regarding the neglect of the house over the past nine years and the fact that there has been no effort to try to preserve or protect the house, which has led to the unsafe and unsalvageable condition of the house to where it needs to be torn down.

A discussion was held regarding the LLC's need for additional parking. Mr. Garland stated that additional parking for guests will be part of a future proposal and is shown to affect the Abbott House. It will be an added expense to the project; however, the community would like the benefit of additional parking as it is currently a challenge for residents and guests. He added that the additional parking area will use the existing driveway to the house.

Members expressed concern with the fact that the house has historical significance and should be preserved. There was discussion held where members recalled the LLC Condominium project included the Abbott House as a unit of the condominium and was to be used as a LLC community center as part of the 2005 Planning Board approval conditions and as recommended by the Heritage Commission to the Planning Board.

The Commission discussed the granite posts along the sidewalk, which lined the street in 2005 prior to the beginning of development. Ms. Brooks stated that she recalled the Heritage Commission requested the Planning Board require a conditional subdivision approval that the posts, connected by iron chains, were to be retained. Mr. Garland stated that his company has never been in possession of the posts and is unsure as to the location; however, he agreed to recreate and install similar granite posts and will meet the requirement.

Mr. Garland addressed the request of the family to place a monument and bench at the site. Ms. Brooks stated that a monument is a nice option and would be an interesting feature; however, a monument does not replace restoring and repairing the Abbott House and its existence along the historic streetscape of the surrounding area or the importance of the building. She asked if there is anything in the house that is salvageable that could be used to recreate a number of options: the house building structural outline, a replica of the house with a memorial and a bench. She also suggested an option to demolition might be to rebuild the house with salvaged materials and maintain the Abbott house unit as approved, and represent the house and preserve the overall effect of the structure. Mr. Garland offered to meet with the Commission to determine options for the site and offered to take members to the house for a walk through. Ms. Brooks recalled a report of the Abbott family and house of a former Heritage Commission intern, Colin Curley. She will follow up to obtain additional information.

Mr. Jaques thanked Mr. Garland for meeting with the Commission. He closed the public hearing at 5:28 p.m.

Ms. Shank stated that the applicant is asking for the approval to move forward to Phase 5 without having to first restore the Abbott house. Discussion continued as to the conditions of the subdivision approval. Mr. Jacques stated that the applicant is requesting that the Heritage Commission either recommend replacing or renovating the building. He added that there is already an approved subdivision plan with conditions and any changes proposed require the applicant to go back to the Planning Board. He noted that the process of demolishing the building would need to go through the Demo Review Committee. A discussion was held regarding the City's standings as to the requirements. Ms. Shank explained that the City has leverage through the building permit process and certificates of occupancy.

The consensus of the Commission was to recommend that the heritage Commission communicate to the Planning Board that the applicant be required to meet the original Planning Board conditions of the approved 2005 plan and restore the Abbott House.

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Councilor Herschlag moved to recommend approval of the issuance of building permits for Phase 5 with the condition that no Certificates of Occupancy are issued until the Abbott House is restored. Ms. Brooks seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Ms. Brooks amended the motion to include that the granite markers and connecting chains be included as a part of the original plan. Councilor Herschlag seconded the amendment. The amendment passed unanimously.

4. Demolition Review Committee Report

Mr. Tolles stated that there was nothing new to report.

5. Old Business

a. CLG Grant – Meeting with DHR

Ms. Shank stated that there is nothing new to update at this time.

b. Gas Holder Building

Ms. Shank mentioned that the NH Division of Historical Resources (DHR) sent a letter to Liberty Utilities regarding the importance of preserving the Gas Holder building. DHR offered to assist Liberty Utilities in working together towards preservation solutions. The letter was accessible through a link on the agenda.

c. Historic Photo Repository

There is nothing new to update as Mr. Woodfin was absent.

d. Demolition Delay Ordinance – Re-schedule Work Session

Dates were suggested and Staff will work to schedule the work session.

e. Heritage Sign Program – Carol Brooks

Ms. Brook stated that the new signs are installed at Summit Street. There were no new sign applications submitted in February. Mr. Tolles asked how many sign applications have been submitted to date. Ms. Brooks stated 17-18.

f. Monuments & Granite Markers

There is nothing new to update as Mr. Spain was absent.

6. Any other business to come before the Commission

a. Correspondence

There was no new correspondence.

b. Attendance

Mr. Jaques, Mr. Herschlag, and Ms. Brooks confirmed their attendance at the next meeting, April 4, 2019.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Ms. Brooks motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:55 p.m. Councilor Herschlag seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lisa Fellows-Weaver
Administrative Specialist