



City of Taunton
MASSACHUSETTS
Established 1639

Historic District Commission

Charles Thayer
Robert Dickerman
Michele Monteiro
Joseph Norte
Steve Rogers
Bruce Thomas

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Samantha Mills, Secretary

MINUTES – JANUARY 12, 2022

A regular meeting of the Historic District Commission was held on Thursday, January 12, 2023. Present were, Robert Dickerman, Charles Thayer, Bruce Thomas, and Joseph Norte. Meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

Minutes – The Board members each reviewed the minutes of the July 14, 2022 meeting for accuracy. Motion made by Bruce Thomas, seconded by Robert Dickerman and unanimously passed to approve the minutes.

Old Business – No old business

New Business- 5 Albro Avenue – Demolition

Brianna Correia attorney for the petitioner Longhomes, LLC, and Venket Holi design architect for the 24X36DesignStudio, LLC. Brianna explains, this property is not listed within the district, however it is listed on the state’s inventory as having historic relevance. It is listed on the Inventory as “Hopewell Mills Worker Housing”. The Hopewell Mills area was one of Taunton’s first and longest-operating cotton mills. Brianna shared with the commission a brief history of the surrounding properties in the Hopewell Mills area as well. In 1904, the mill caught fire and only remains were left where it once stood.

More recent times, in 1996-2018 the owner at that time pulled a permit to strip and reroof the 5 Albro Ave duplex. The property was sold again in 2021. Longhomes LLC purchased the property in February 2022.

A permit was pulled shortly after to demolish and strip the building to the frame, and the exterior to the sheathing to inspect the structure. There was an inspection that was done, in April by a structural engineer. She presented his report highlighting the various structural concerns that were observed, such as an undermined foundation, unstable masonry piers at the rear porch, cracked brick cladding, temporary jacks, missing walls and footings. This inspection was done visually. Photos were presented to the commission. Based on this visual inspection it appeared the foundation could be salvaged. As a result they were granted the permit on 6/8/2022 with the assumption that they would be able to be within the law §440-503 (E) (e)(3): Any nonconforming building or structure destroyed voluntarily to the extent of 65% or more of such building at the time of such damage determined by the Building Commissioner shall not be rebuilt, repaired, reconstructed or altered. Any new construction on site shall comply with zoning requirements and shall be utilized for a purpose permitted in the zoning district in which such new building is located. Unfortunately, once the engineer was able to get into property and truly assess the damage, it was deemed unsalvageable.

Brianna shared some photos demonstrating the extent of the damage. She briefly mentioned how they contacted the state historic commission, and they stated that because they are using private funding it does not require state approval. She was unsure of the local historic jurisdiction over this property as well.

Brianna presented the site plan demonstrating the non-conforming lot that the property currently sit on. She explained that although she realizes that they will need a variance from zoning, they are hopeful that the plan they have developed will show their efforts to make it as conforming as possible. She also presented the area, with the allowed three family homes that have been approved for that area.

Charles Thayer commented that what they had been approved for originally for this site, without the total demolition is almost identical to what they are currently proposing, only difference being that it would be a total demolition with the new construction. Essentially because the foundation got involved, it becomes a historic issue.

Both Brianna and Venket, explain that this is correct. Although they had hoped to stay within the 65% and save the foundation that quickly because clear that that plan was impossible.

Bruce Thomas comments that regardless of historic relevance or location, the foundation is in disrepair and he agrees with the need to demolition. Charles Thayer mentions that the mills that this belongs to is long gone, so he moves to allow the demolition. Joseph Norte commended them on the effort to try to save the property. Charles Thayer moves to approve the demolition. Bruce Thomas seconds the motion. Unanimously approves at 7:22pm.

40 Dean Street

Dan Sweeney introduces himself as the owner of 40 Dean Street. He explains that he is there in regards to some repairs to the garage there. He explains he believes the garage was built roughly in 1960-1970 and hasn't been part of any renovation since that time. There is texture 111 siding and nothing underneath it. Went in to pull a permit to repair the leak in the roof, at which time he wanted to reframe it to make it more structurally sound. At the time he was unaware it was in the historic district, and later was informed he would need to come before the board before and exterior alterations. Taking off the old roof began prior to this knowledge, and now he would like approval to be able to make it weather tight. He does not plan to make any changes to the material of the roof. There will be no changes to the shape of the building, essentially just replacing the rafters. As far as the siding, he would like to change it in the future but right now he is just concerned with the roof and making it weather tight. Later, maybe in the spring he would like to add a stucco siding and make it more historically accurate. He would also like to replace two rectangle windows at the top peak of the building, to sort of mirror what is already there. He would also like to add a French style door to the garage. Joseph Norte asked if the windows are from the same time period as the others. Mr. Sweeney confirms yes those windows were left over from a 1996 renovation. Bruce Thomas added he believes Re-Max did that remodel in 1996. Charles Thayer gives a brief history of James C. Goff and Company, who used to sell plumbing and construction supplies from that building. Charles Thayer explains to Mr. Sweeney that he is in possession of one of the most important historic properties in the city, and the state would be very interested in any renovations of this property. He plans to use the building for office space, and the garage for storage.

Joe Norte clarifies that Mr. Sweeney is looking for approval for just the maintenance of the roof and windows and addition of the door for now, and will return in the spring to discuss any next steps in his renovation plan. Bruce Thomas makes a motion to approve, Charles Thayer seconds the motion. Unanimously passed. Robert Dickerman makes a motion to adjourn, unanimously passes.

Meeting adjourned at 7:37pm.