

Waltham Historical Commission

Zoom Meeting Minutes

December 11, 2023

1. Chair called the meeting to order at 7 PM

2. Secretary called the roll:

Commissioner Isaacson, present

Commissioner Daly, present

Commissioner Migdal, present

Commissioner Egrious, present

Commissioner Dufromont, present

Commissioner Russo, present

Commissioner Wilson, present

A moment of silence was held for fallen Waltham police officer Paul Tracey.

3. Reading and acceptance of the November 2023 meeting minutes

Amendment to #5. Public Hearings by Commissioner Daly:

Change all abbreviated "Mass. Historical" to the full name, "Massachusetts Historical Commission".

Motion to accept the minutes, as amended, moved by Commissioner Migdal.

Second: Commissioner Dufromont

In favor: ALL Abstained: Commissioner Wilson

4. Announcements

Welcomed Rachel Malley, the new office assistant, who was running the Zoom meeting for the first time.

Opportunities For Inclusion invited the Waltham Historical Commission to attend a groundbreaking ceremony at 46 Chestnut St. on Wednesday, December 13th at 11 AM. Commissioner Isaacson will attend.

5. Public Hearings

Demolition Delay Determination for 164 Willow Street

Commissioner Daly recused herself because she was a former classmate of the applicant and they have mutual friends.

Attorney Richard LeClair was representing the applicant.

Commissioner Isaacson explained the Demolition Delay Determination process.

He said that this house has historical significance because it is representative of late 1800s industrial worker housing, and that not many examples are left on Willow St.

Despite the house's historical interest, Commissioner Isaacson said he was not convinced that it warranted a demolition delay.

Commissioner Isaacson shared the historical report on the property. He also noted that the house frames the entry to Naviens Lane, which involves the interesting history of its early occupant,

Michael Naviens, who was an Irish sailor, captured by the Confederacy and forced to fight on the Confederate side in the Civil War, later able to escape to the Union side, and settled in Waltham after the war. The lane presents a unified streetscape of mid-late 19th Century workers housing. Counselor LeClair shared the street view image of the house and said that it is an old house with a brick façade, replacement windows and door, and vinyl siding.

He discussed other properties that were redeveloped around the house.

Mr. LeClair showed pictures of the interior renovations in the house.

He said that the house does not have any historical quality, and has many structural problems.

He said it could not be brought up to code, and Waltham needs housing.

Mr. LeClair showed the plans for the new construction.

Commissioner Isaacson and Mr. LeClair discussed the brick and vinyl siding on the house currently, and that they are not original to the house.

Commissioner Russo asked what the architectural style of the house is, and noted that the house has two chimneys.

Commissioner Isaacson said it is nondescript worker housing, and probably has two chimneys because it was originally heated by coal stoves.

Commissioner Migdal said it is vernacular architecture that is typical of the 1870s and is more functional than fashionable.

She thought it was a great example of worker housing, but did not feel that the building expressed that history to the public in a useful way.

She said that the architect's report tipped the scale against preserving the house.

Commissioner Migdal moved that they find the house NOT preferably preserved.

Commissioner Dufromont seconded the motion.

Commssioner Migdal took the roll call vote:

Commssioner Isaacson, yes

Commissioner Migdal, yes

Commissioner Russo, no

Commissioner Dufromont, yes

Commissioner Wilson, yes

Commissioner Egiros, yes

Commissioner Daly recused herself.

The house was found NOT preferably preserved.

Commissioner Daly rejoined the meeting after the vote.

6. Development Prospectus Hearings

None

7. Stonehurst:

Commissioner Isaacson shared and read the monthly report from the curator, Jamie Stevens. (See full report, which is available through the WHC)

The Commission discussed that the American Window Film company has been unresponsive.

Later in the meeting, Commissioner Daly added that she quickly researched the American Window Film Company and will pass on the information to the Purchasing Department and Jamie Stevens.

8. Wellington House

Commissioner Isaacson would like to move forward with long-term planning for Wellington House. Commissioner Egiros is not familiar with Wellington House, so Commissioner Isaacson told him about the issues with the house, such as the lack of parking and necessary internal renovations. Commissioners discussed possibilities for the house, and the need to invest in renovations so the house can be open to the public.

Commissioners Egiros and Dufromont volunteered to work as a subcommittee to create a long-term plan and vision for the house, and Commissioner Isaacson said he would arrange for Commissioner Egiros to tour the site.

9. Liaison & Subcommittee Reports

Fernald

Commissioner Daly recused herself from the conversation because she is an abutter.

Commissioners discussed that there were items having to do with Fernald on the docket for Waltham City Council.

There was a discussion on the history of the Fernald, how best to memorialize and honor the people who lived there, and what responsibilities they have as a Commission to help shape the future of the Fernald property.

Commissioners Russo and Migdal volunteered to research what projects have been proposed and what has already been approved.

Community Preservation Committee

Commissioner Wilson said he had nothing to report from the CPC.

Commissioner Isaacson brought up the need to digitize the local newspapers that are on microfilm at the Waltham Public Library, and that there are conflicting reports on whether CPA funds can be used for this project.

Commissioner Isaacson asked Commissioner Wilson to ask the Community Preservation Committee to investigate and consider this topic.

Historic Inventory

No report

Education & Outreach

Commissioner Isaacson said that the Historic House Plaque Program, now run by the Waltham Historical Society, received a new application for the Gale-Banks House at Banks Square.

10. Old Business

The Waltham Historical Commission received a letter from the Massachusetts Historical Commission about the Warren House at 225 Beaver Street.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission has given the state permission to demolish the house. Commissioner Daly said that the MWRA may be planning to use that area for an upcoming project.

She also said that there are historic resources on the property, including a colonial road called Pond Meadow Lane, and historic stone walls.

Commissioners discussed contacting the MWRA about their plans.

Commissioner Migdal moved that Commissioner Daly draft a letter to the MWRA about the historic resources on the property of 225 Beaver Street and Lawrence Meadow.

Commissioners Egirous and Russo seconded.

ALL voted in favor of the motion.

11. New Business

None

12. Voted by all to adjourn at 8:28 PM

The Commissioners wished everyone happy holidays!