

Peterborough Heritage Commission
Thursday, November 14, 2019
MINUTES

Board members present: Debbie Kaiser (alternate); Jason Pellettieri; Tina Rapp; Peggy Van Valkenburgh; Doug Ward; Tyler Ward, *Select Board liaison*.

Board members absent: Peggy Shaughnessy; Karen Kambol; Matt Waitkins (member of Demolition Review Committee)

Also present: Karen and Caleb Niemela, *owners of 10 High Street*; Michael Gordon, *abutter to 10 High Street*, plus approximately one dozen citizens, many of whom live in the High Street neighborhood.

Overview

This meeting was dedicated to the business of the Demolition Review Committee, a subcommittee of the Peterborough Heritage Commission.

It was a public hearing for the demolition permit request from Karen and Caleb Niemela at 10 High Street. Alternate Debbie Kaiser was sworn in as a member of the Demolition Review Committee to create a quorum, along with Doug Ward and Jason Pellettieri.

Doug Ward opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Discussion about 10 High Street and the demolition permit request

Highlights of the discussion follow:

- Karen and Caleb Niemela gave background on the 10 High Street property. They explained that the original intent was to take down the garage only and remodel the rest of the home. After further assessment, it became clear that the main building must also be taken down due to significant water damage to the foundation through the years and other problems such as crumbling interior walls.
- Doug Ward explained that a demolition review is held when a building has either historical or architectural significance. He read into record the email from Michelle Stahl at the Monadnock Center for History and Culture detailing the known history of the schoolhouse, which was on this property.
- There was much discussion about the current state of the building by other attendees. Notably, abutter Michael Gordon gave a firsthand view of significant water destruction and damage to the 10 High Street building. In general, most attendees agreed that the building was in significant disrepair and that a demolition was warranted.
- The owners have been working with architect Katie Sutherland to design a same-size, woodframe New England-style house that will be built on the property. They intend for the new home to have many architectural elements common to other homes in the immediate neighborhood. For example, dormers facing the street are included in the building plans.

- The owners plan to salvage as many materials as possible for other building projects. There was a suggestion to incorporate some of the original exterior brick of the schoolhouse into the exterior of the new home to suggest the historical value of the site.
- When they purchased the property, the Niemelas had not been aware that a portion of this house had historical significance as a schoolhouse. When asked if they would consider erecting a plaque on the property to commemorate the historic value of the building, they agreed that would be a great idea and would be willing to do so and pay for the plaque. There was some discussion about placing the plaque on some of the original schoolhouse bricks that may be used on the new building's exterior. The owners are also willing to share some historical photos of the building with the town. They also agreed for a photographer to take photos of the building prior to demolition to record the building's historical value.
- Several attendees spoke about wanting to see new homes built with architectural details that match other homes in the neighborhood and urged the commission to consider creative ways to protect the town's historical buildings and encourage historic preservation. Ideas such as creating public/private grants for renovation of historic properties and establishment of a historic district were discussed. It was noted that limited funding/grants are available for private historic residences at the state or federal level.

Other comments made by the public for consideration in the future

- Raise funds that can be used for preservation of properties before it's too late for them to be rehabilitated. A public/private group could raise money. The Conservation commission was cited as an example.
- Intervene earlier to promote the preservation of historic properties.
- Provide resources on the Peterborough Town website for salvaging materials (bricks, timber, etc.)
- Encourage student education about the importance of historic preservation

Jason Pelletierri made a motion to endorse the 10 High Street demolition effective immediately. Doug Ward seconded. This motion passed unanimously with Debbie Kaiser being the third voting member of the Demolition Review Committee.

Move to adjourn at 7:00

Respectfully submitted,
Tina Rapp

The next meeting of the Peterborough Heritage Commission is Thursday, December 12, 2019, 6:00 p.m. at the Peterborough Town House.