

CITY OF LACONIA HERITAGE COMMISSION

5:00 PM City Hall - Armand A. Bolduc City Council Chamber
Draft Minutes

1/11/2023 - Minutes

1. Call to order

Chair Jane Whitehead called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM.

2. Salute to the flag

Chair J. Whitehead led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Roll call

Members present: Mark Haynes, Lois Kessin, Scott Ringer, Jane Whitehead, Marjory Wilkinson, Dean Trefethen Planning & Development Director and Code Secretary Yanis Banks.

Late show: Catherine Tokarz.

4. Recording secretary

Yanis Banks Code Secretary.

4.I. Yanis Banks, Code Enforcement Secretary

5. Staff in attendance

Dean Trefethen Planning & Development Director.

5.I. Yanis Banks, Code Secretary

6. Acceptance of Minutes from previous meeting

Acceptance of October 12 Minutes. Scott Ringer made a motion to accept October 12th Minutes, Lois Kessin second the motion. All voted in favor.

6.I. 5:00 P.M. October 12th, 2022 Minutes

7. City Council Liaison Report

Mark Haynes brought up parking issues of the current project at Elm St which City Council is currently in discussions with Scott Everett. Downtown parking garage, the City is getting ready to initiate a response in the community as well as other sources to gather interest in the property. The city and the council are open to exploring different ideas.

Saint Joseph church is open for discussion; it will be up to the diocese to decide on what will be done with the property. There has been no activity for the last 3 years. The property demo application permit was placed on hold at their request so there is no statute of limitation regarding a re-application of the demo permit.

Dean Trefethen responded to J. Whitehead regarding the matter that the building is being neglected on purpose and whether there are repercussions towards the owner. Dean said that typically it can be resolved simply by reaching out however in this specific case it seems like going to court may be the route to go if the Heritage Commission decides to pursue this matter further. Dean has reached out to their attorneys on multiple occasions and the response is always the same. They will consult with their client and the demo application stays on hold at this time.

J. Whitehead brought up a breakfast that the Historical Society is planning for next month. If anyone would like to attend this would be a perfect setting to discuss joining forces in order to preserve this beautiful building which is Saint Joseph's Church.

8. Planning Board update

Nothing to Report.

9. New business

9.I. 5:00 P.M. 112 Prescott Ave

112 Prescott Ave demo application was approved soon after the contractor David Page addressed the board. The property currently is in rough shape, there is mold, foundation is worthless, very poorly ventilated etc. It would be impossible to create a forever home for his clients with what is currently there. J. Whitehead asked if there would be any blasting and if it requires permits to do so. David said from his own experiences he doesn't believe state will allow it as the property is so close to the shoreline.

Marjory started the motion, Scott Ringer second the motion. All voted in favor.

9.I.I. 119 Leighton Ave

119 Leighton Ave South demo application was approved after the owner spoke to the board. Owner also brought copies of pictures to provide for the board to see the condition of the property. She stated it wasn't her intention to demolish the property. However, it was deemed necessary due to the rot damage, mold damage and many other issues brought up to her attention by her contractor. Owner mentioned this home will be her retirement home and they have decided to make it into a single-family home and stay within the same footprint plus the two-car garage addition.

Scott Ringer made a motion to approve the demolition permit application. Marjory Wilkinson second the motion. All voted in favor.

9.I.I.I. State School Sale

State School sale update. Dean Trefethen informed the board that him, the City Manager and the Mayor met with the Developer and their team a couple of weeks ago. As of right now the timelines for the demo application permits are around late Spring early Summer. The Developer plans to preserve certain buildings as well as demolish the rest.

Catherine Tokarz asked if each of these buildings need their own individual demolition application permits. Dean responded yes, each building they are looking to demolish will need one.

Scott Ringer asked if it would be safe to request a tour for him and the rest of the board members to walk through and he said no. There is asbestos, lead paint, mold, animal droppings etc. Out of the 39 buildings the developer is looking to keep 8 or 9 currently.

J. Whitehead asked if there will be any more public meetings of the overall design. Dean responded

yes; however, I don't exactly know when. We are set to meet next month and hopefully there is more information revealed. September 2nd is the projected timeline on when they would own the property.

Catherine Tokarz asked if the board needs to have these demolition applications approved before September 2nd for them to start demolition as planned. Dean said that their plans are to start demolition on or after September 2nd. Therefore, the permits would need to be approved and signed by Heritage Commission prior.

Scott Ringer asked Dean about steps for planning the handling of these 38-39 permits. Would they all need to be signed at one meeting or separated into 2 meetings. Dean assured the board that there is no indication of doubts for this project. They have hired an extensive and thorough Team as well as the huge amount of money they are spending and will spend for this project. Concerns of traffic arose, and Dean said he personally advocated for a roundabout at the corner of North Main/Parade plus the new road they will need to add, in order to keep the flow of traffic running smoothly. However, State has the final say as it is a state highway.

9.I.I.I.I. NH Preservation Alliance Seven to Save

J. Whitehead attended NH Preservation Seven to Save ceremony two months ago. Take-way that was exciting to her was the Flying Yankee train which they are looking to put it into service. It is a beautiful machine.

9.I.I.I.II. Archaeological Survey at Weirs

Jane stated that the Archaeological Survey completed at The Weirs, there was an article I read in the newspaper. There haven't been any new articles at this time after the survey was completed however, we will just have to keep an eye out in regards to its findings.

10. Old business

Catherine Tokarz asked Dean if there were any updates on the closing of the Goss Reading Room. Yes, it was a decision by the library of the board of trustees. Catherine updated the board that the Water Street Café will remain where it's currently and will no longer pursue a demolition application. Catherine Tokarz asked Dean if there have been any updates on Gold Street which was demolished without a permit or Heritage Commission approval. Dean had stated in a previous meeting that he can reach out to our Legal Team and see if we can strengthen the City Ordinance to prevent this in the future. Dean responded there has been no response from Legal at this time.

10.I. 5:00 P.M. Letter from Andrew Cushing

In response to the letter of Andrew Cushing to Jane. Scott Ringer was receptive to the idea of taking a portion of the Demo Permit Fees to support the Heritage Commission Funding. He asked how the fee compares to other towns in the area and if it is too low can the fee be raised.

Dean said that he could do a quick study to see what the results are. Dean also informed the Board that the City Council would have to create a new line item for this to happen. J. Whitehead asked about integrating the Heritage Commission and the Historic District Commission. Dean said he brought it up to Legal Counsel and it can certainly be done, however it will need to go in front of the City Council as it is an ordinance change.

Catherine Tokarz asked Dean if there were any updates on the closing of the Goss Reading Room. Yes, it was a decision by the library of the board of trustees. Catherine updated the board that the Water Street Café will remain where it's currently and will no longer pursue a demolition application.

Catherine Tokarz asked Dean if there have been any updates on The Batchelder House which was demolished without a permit or Heritage Commission approval. Dean had stated in a previous meeting that he can reach out to our Legal Team and see if we can strengthen the City Ordinance to prevent this in the future. Dean responded there has been no response from Legal at this time.

Jane Whitehead asked Dean about the possibility of integrating the Heritage Commission and the Historic District Society. Dean responded that if the interest is there that it can be brought up to the council for it to be voted on. Dean also added that a meeting can be set up with members of both parties to discuss the possible integration.

11. Public comment

12. Other business

Lois Kessin asked if there were openings for new members. Dean responded that there is one alternate position available. Lois stated she knows a person who might be interested and would ask her if she might like to apply for the position. Marjory agreed to meet with Lois and her at a later date.

12.I. Election of Officers

Scott Ringer made a motion to nominate Marjory Wilkinson as new Chair of the Heritage Commission. Catherine Tokarz seconded. All voted in favor.

13. Adjournment

Marjory Wilkinson started the motion. Lois Kessin second the motion. All voted in favor.