

Somersworth Historic District Commission Meeting Minutes
February 1, 2023

Members Present: Mrs. Barry, Mr. Brooks, Mr. Gerding, Mr. Metivier, Mr. Poulin, Mr. Young.

City Staff Present: Mrs. Mears.

Members Absent: Mr. Monahan, Ms. Shoen.

Mrs. Barry called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

APPROVAL OF PAST MINUTES

MOTION: Mr. Metivier made the motion to accept the minutes as presented.

Mr. Young seconded the motion.

Motion passed 6-0.

PROJECTS OF MINIMAL IMPACT

Mrs. Mears reported 8 Beacon St was approved for a re-roof in kind.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were none.

OLD BUSINESS

There were none.

NEW BUSINESS

A) High Street Apartments LLC, 138 High St. HDC #2-2023

Mrs. Mears noted the proposal is for demolition of a 5-bay garage.

Kaygan Robertson provided a brief description of the proposed demolition.

Mr. Metivier mentioned that he was familiar with the garage and its poor overall condition and noted that the garage itself has no real historical features worth saving and as such, sees no reason to oppose the demolition.

Mr. Brooks noted that he recalled the property receiving approval to repair the garage a few years ago and at that time was surprised that the previous owner did not ask to demolish the garage.

Mr. Young asked if there was any plan other than paving over the site.

Mr. Robertson noted there are no plans other than paving the area for more parking.

MOTION: Mr. Poulin made a motion to accept as presented.

Mr. Metivier seconded the motion.

The motion passed 6-0.

B) Justin Gargiulo of Breitling Holdings LLC, 67 Elm St. HDC #3-2023

Mrs. Mears noted the applicant is proposing to demolish the 4-story building and level the lot.

Mrs. Barry asked if the HDC would consider this application as complete, noting that she sees no plans for reuse of the property.

Mr. Brooks noted that the ordinance requires a reuse plan when a demolition proposal is presented.

Justin Gargiulo stated there are no immediate plans for the reuse of the property. He explained that the property is in poor condition and has had violations related to code compliance and it is a hazard as it sits.

Mr. Gerding agreed that the building should be demolished considering the overall condition and asked for clarification concerning the flattening of the site.

Mr. Gargiulo noted that the lot would be leveled to fill the depression that is now the basement area of the building.

Mr. Gerding indicated that removing the building would eliminate some of the blight that the building is creating in our downtown.

Mr. Brooks recalled seeing plans that were presented in 2017 by Mr. Gargiulo. That proposal was well done and was one of the best proposals presented to the HDC and looks forward to those plans moving forward in the future.

Mr. Poulin asked if the property would be maintained such as mowing the grass and trimming of trees in the future if the demolition is approved.

Mr. Gargiulo indicated he would maintain it.

Mr. Metivier inquired about the 2017 proposal and whether that proposal provides documentation concerning the structural integrity of the existing building and what had been proposed for reuse. He sought clarification on what had been presented and discussed at that meeting and inquired about whether that previous presentation possibly provides sufficient information to make a decision regarding the demolition. He also stated he believes the building having been left open to the elements in various degrees over the past several years has only allowed it to deteriorate further since being condemned by the city in 2007.

Mr. Brooks asked if the HDC had approved the earlier proposed plans.

Mrs. Mears retrieved the file concerning the property and discussion revolved around the 2017 proposed plans and their conditions of approval concerning other land use boards and ordinances such as parking requirements and sewer service needs.

Mr. Young asked if the application was possibly incomplete simply because there is no current reuse plan.

Mr. Brooks noted a reuse plan is required to prevent property owners from tearing down buildings in good condition, whereas this situation is a bit different as we're discussing a clearly dilapidated building.

Mrs. Barry noted that she doesn't have a concern with the demo, but does have a concern about not having a future plan and the possibility of the city having to remind the owner to maintain the vacant lot with mowing or other basic property maintenance.

Mr. Gerding asked that the applicant would provide simple maintenance of mowing and grounds care of the property.

Mr. Gargiulo agreed that he would be willing to maintain the property moving forward.

Mr. Metivier provided a summary concerning the past approval of the property from 2017. He noted that at that time demolishing the building was approved pending the review of other land use boards.

MOTION: Mr. Metivier made a motion to accept the application as complete.

Mr. Poulin seconded the motion.

Motion passed 5-1 with Mrs. Barry voting in opposition.

MOTION: Mr. Gerding made a motion to approve the demolition with the amendment that the property be maintained as green space until a replacement structure is built.

Mr. Brooks seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously 6-0.

WORKSHOP BUSINESS

Mr. Brooks noted that he will schedule a meeting to finish work on the rules of procedure.

Mr. Gerding noted he had reached out to the City Manager about the street signs for the Historic District.

COMMUNICATIONS AND MISC

Mr. Poulin asked about the ordinance requirement on tree removal.

Mr. Brooks clarified that any tree over 12 inches in diameter would need approval for removal unless it was in an unhealthy or dangerous condition.

Mr. Metivier asked about the various properties on Prospect St that had deck or porch repair projects ongoing.

Mr. Brooks noted that a house on Maple St. still has temporary supports for a roof structure over the front door and replacement brick steps which have been in place for several years and should be looked at to ensure code compliance.

MOTION: Mr. Metivier made the motion to adjourn.

Mr. Brooks seconded the motion.

Motion passed 6-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm.

Submitted by
Richard Brooks, HDC Secretary