

CITY OF LACONIA HERITAGE COMMISSION
5:00 PM City Hall - Armand A. Bolduc City Council Chamber
Draft Minutes as of 12/15/2020

12/9/2020 - Minutes

1. Call to order

Chair Michael Sweet called the meeting to order at 5:16PM and read aloud the electronic access information for the public.

2. Salute to the flag

Chair M. Sweet led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Roll call

Members physically present: Dorothy Duffy, Michael Sweet

Members remotely present via Zoom: Jane Whitehead, Lois Kessin, Catherine Tokarz

Members absent: Mark Haynes

4. Recording secretary

Ashley Ruprecht, Conservation Technician

5. Staff in attendance

Planning Director Dean Trefethen.

6. Acceptance of Minutes from previous meeting

Under Other Business, in regards to the State School property, C. Tokarz proposed to include the possible architectural artifacts from the test pits. C. Tokarz proposed adding the names of The Busiel House and the Former Holy Trinity School in reference to the Council meeting on the 23rd of November, 2020.

There is discussion about recounting the minutes regarding D. Trefethen signing the demolition permit for 98 Tower Street on behalf of the Heritage Commission. D. Trefethen explains that the board is a five member board and since three members approved of demolition permit, it was approved by majority. J. Whitehead would like clarification on whether D. Trefethen has the authority to sign demolition permits on behalf of the Heritage Commission, and states she thinks the signature should be from the Chair or the Chair's designee. D. Trefethen explained he signs demolition permits that do not come before the Heritage Commission and believes he has the authority but that he will get information to have this clarified.

D. Duffy motioned to accept the minutes with suggested corrections. L. Kessin seconded. All approved by roll call vote.

Before the meeting adjourned, A. Ruprecht mentioned that she noticed an issue with the formatting and information that was lost during several prior revisions of the minutes. A. Ruprecht will revise the 11/12/2020 minutes and provide them at the next meeting for review and final approval.

7. City Council Liaison Report

There were no updates at this time.

8. Planning Board update

D. Duffy spoke about the proposed redevelopment of 41-63 Elm St/9 Park St and provided a summary of the

overview Steve Smith presented at the last Planning Board meeting.

According to Mayor Hosmer, the owner of 41-63 Elm St/9 Park St property, Scott Everett, has denied access to these structures for the Heritage Commission to take photos of the inside of the buildings. S. Everett did provide photos of the interior to the Planning Department. D. Trefethen will share the photos with the Commission.

9. Old business

There was no old business to discuss at this time.

10. New business

D. Duffy would like to discuss the difference between the Heritage Commission and the Demolition Review Committee at a later meeting but wanted the commission to be made aware of the conflict - the Heritage Commission to preserve vs. the Demolition Review Committee to raze. Chair M. Sweet motioned to address the distinctions between to the two commissions at the next meeting. L. Kessin seconded. All voted in favor by roll call vote.

10.I. Public Hearing

Chair M. Sweet opened the public hearing for the demolition permit application of 76 Lakeside Ave at 5:46PM. D. Trefethen prompted any members of the public who wish to speak to use the "raise your hand" feature in Zoom.

Emily Ricard, representing the owners of 76 Lakeside Ave explained that they submitted a demolition permit for the building and that if anyone is interested in moving the building to another lot, the owners will contribute \$10,000 towards the moving cost. E. Ricard said that keeping the house is not the best use for the property as it does not contribute to the redevelopment of Weirs Beach. They want to see the property used year-round rather than as a seasonal rental.

Robert Ames, who owns an abutting property with his 2 brothers, said he is very concerned about the demolition of the building because it is one of the original houses on Lakeside Ave, and would be the first to be intentionally removed as others have only been removed due to fire damage. R. Ames said historic signage has been placed in the Weirs boardwalk and has been well received. R. Ames spoke to the challenges of redevelopment in the Weirs and is concerned the owners do not have a plan for the redevelopment once the building is demolished. He is concerned that the property will be come a vacant lot or parking lot for years to come. R. Ames said he spoke with another abutter, Audrey Cook, and that she does not want to see the house torn down either. R. Ames said he rents his property seasonally and for bike week and that it is profitable and he recommends the owners consider doing the same. R. Ames said that the Weirs Action Committee has not had a meeting since September due to Covid-19 so they have not taken a formal stance on the application.

Tara Shore, Chair of the Historic District Commission agreed with the comments R. Ames made and added it would be a travesty to demolish the building intentionally due to its character and history. There was discussion about RSA 79-E which allows for the deferment of taxes for property owners who put money into rehabbing existing historic structures. T. Shore wants the owners to be aware of this opportunity and said the savings is greater in reuse of a structure than demolition 90% of the time. J. Whitehead added there are other grant opportunities available online at NH.gov.

E. Ricard responded to the public comments. She does not believe that people only come to the Weirs to see historic homes and wants to support the area with a year-round use rather than seasonal. E. Ricard said the property will not become a parking lot or left empty. E. Ricard explained how the property does not meet the criteria to be historic according to the National Register of Historic Places. E. Ricard said that they need to test the soil and for a potential spring before they can proceed with redevelopment plans.

Charlie St. Clair entered the meeting via Zoom. He does not want to see the building demolished until there are redevelopment plans that are approved. He has been inside of the building and said he doesn't

think burst pipes would have destroyed the house. C. St. Clair said the building has historical value to Lakeside Ave and does not want to see it become a vacant lot or parking lot for the next several years.

R. Ames provided additional information about the property's historical significance related to the Weirs Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and burial of utilities on the Weirs boardwalk.

T. Shore added that even if the house does not qualify as historic under the National Registry, it is historically significant to the City of Laconia. T. Shore spoke about the reuse of the Opera House in Lakeport and its benefit to the community, and reiterated wanting the Lakeside Ave house to be reused.

There is discussion amongst the Commission and forementioned members from the public regarding the redevelopment of the site and whether it is tied to a larger redevelopment plan along with the lot with the previous Faro restaurant, or acquisition of the Cook property. E. Ricard said that the redevelopment of the property is not reliant on acquiring the Cook property, and they are marketing the Faro property and working on having it leased out.

C. Tokarz asked if E. Ricard contacted Habitat for Humanity because they may move the house. E. Ricard has not and will contact them.

C. St. Clair said that he would vote "No" if he was on the Heritage Commission due to a lack of development plans for the property.

Chair M. Sweet asked if any additional members of the public would like to speak. D. Trefethen said that there were no other members from the public on Zoom.

Chair M. Sweet closed the public hearing at 6:59PM. There were no additional comments from the Commission. L. Kessin motioned to take a vote on the application. D. Duffy seconded. All voted to deny the application via roll call vote. The demolition permit application was denied. E. Ricard will call D. Trefethen to discuss next steps.

10.II. 160 Belvidere Street

Dennis Galimberti, owner of 160 Belvidere St., said he just bought the property from his parents. He would like to demolish an old hay barn, called the carriage house, from 1906. It has no foundation, a wood floor, and is unstable. He was going to park his cars inside of it but it is too unstable. D. Galimberti wants to demolish the structure and build a garage in its place with a similar design and character. The new building will have electricity but no water. He is not tearing down the house.

J. Whitehead and C. Tokarz would like to see the carriage house before it is demolished and will coordinate a site visit with D. Galimberti. Chair M. Sweet asked if anything could be saved. D. Galimberti said he may try to salvage some of the pine boards.

L. Kessin motioned to approve the demolition permit. D. Duffy seconded. All approved by roll call vote.

11. Public comment

There were no other public comments.

12. Other business

The Commission would like to have the January meeting also be a hybrid meeting with in person and electronic/Zoom option for attendance, due to Covid-19.

13. Adjournment

D. Duffy motioned to adjourn the meeting. L. Kessin seconded. All voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 7:16PM

DRAFT