

Ipswich Historical Commission Minutes

Meeting February 22, 2021

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

IHC Members Present: Bill Effner, Lee Hathaway, Gordon Harris, Tess Schutte and Tom Schutte; Steve Miles and Laura Gresh joined late.

Others: Town Planner Kristen Grubbs; Guests as described below.

1. Citizen Queries – There were no citizen queries.
2. Review Minutes, January 12, 2021 – adopted as drafted
3. Demolition Review for 128 High St. – Per the Town's Demolition Review bylaw, the Historic Commission reviewed a permit request by property owner Louis Rubino to demolish the house at 128 High St. to make room for a multi-unit residential project currently under review by the Planning Board. Rubino and his general contractor were in attendance to describe the project and answer questions. Several members of the IHC had done a site visit of the property.

Rubino (MMC Realty Holding LLC) purchased the property in July of 2020, with the house in its current dilapidated condition. The house had been abandoned and seriously water damaged.

The house, dated 1888 in the Assessor's records has an estimated date of 1850-60 in the "List of Historic Buildings in Ipswich, MA, For Use in Implementing the Demolition Review Bylaw". According to Town Historian Gordon Harris, the first owner of the house was Andrew Woodbury, a wool broker whose office was in Boston, who died in 1914, survived by his wife Matilda who died in 1929. The house was at one time a nice vernacular Italianate-Victorian "gable with ell" house, similar to many seen throughout town, especially in the Central St. neighborhood. It's not particularly the design or the balloon frame that gives this house style its historic value, but rather the ornate architectural elements. Unfortunately because of the condition and location, Harris advised that it is highly doubtful that anyone would make the effort to restore or move the house.

IHC members advised the owner to make an effort to find a party or parties that can use or sell the interior doors and the curved interior baluster, which is in surprisingly good shape. On the outside, the round top attic windows, the window hoods, and the highly decorated frieze below the roofline may be salvageable. This style of house often had standardized proportions, and decorative exterior features were ordered by mail and shipped by train. There are probably many owners of similar houses who are searching for salvaged components. Rubino and his contractor stated they would make an effort to do so. The demolished material goes to Atkinson, NH.

Lee Hathaway made a motion and Gordon seconded, all voted to allow the demolition to proceed.

4. Request to Alter 18 East St. per preservation agreement
18 East St. homeowners George and Alison Haskins were in attendance to describe their request to replace windows on their property. The 18 East St house has a preservation restriction on it that requires written permission of the Historic Commission to make alterations to the front and side façade of the house. (See Book 7038, Page 313 in Salem Deeds records.) The Haskins contractor from NewPro window company was also in attendance to answer questions.

The Haskins explained that the existing windows date from the 1980s and are not historic. They are single pane, wood and uninsulated-making them drafty and deficient. There are several windows that do not open-they were previously painted shut. Currently, the storms are in rough shape due to age and lack of durability. The storm windows that cover these are unsightly and provide no additional defense against the cold. Trying to change the glass and screens has proven impossible in some instances. Consequently, the house has storms at differing positions which takes away from the overall look of the house. The homeowners feel that it would be a better look to have windows with removable screens and no storms. The ones chosen have mullions on the outside, not just between the glass. In addition, the new windows would be an energy saver.

The windows on the front facade are currently 6 over 6 on top and 6 over 9 on the bottom. Tom and Tess Schutte asked several questions about the heights, proportions, layout and mullion sizes. The new windows will be 6 over 6 but will be replaced in the same envelope so will maintain a consistent appearance. Gordon moved and Lee Hathaway (?) seconded that the Haskins be allowed to replace the windows as described. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

5. General discussion: Waldingfield estate, re Great Estates Bylaw. Gordon reported on his site visit with the realtor and prospective buyers, and stated his approval of modifying the Great Estates Bylaw so that this purchase may fall under it

6. General discussion: historic preservation of downtown buildings. Gordon reported on correspondence he received regarding proposed installation of vinyl siding on a Market St. building. Members expressed concern that the Commission does not have authority regarding Market St. other than the demolition review bylaw.

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8. New or old business

Gordon reported to the Commission that the Mary Conley Award plaque has been installed on the Captain Richard Rogers House at 58 North Main Street, owned by Ingrid and Stephen Miles.

9. Adjourn: Gordon moved to adjourn meeting at 8:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen Grubbs, Gordon Harris

Minutes were approved by the Commission on March 8, 2021.