



HISTORICAL COMMISSION

150 CONCORD STREET, ROOM B2
FRAMINGHAM, MA 01702
(508) 532-5455

PAUL F. SILVA, CHAIR | FREDERIC WALLACE, VICE CHAIR

LYNNE DAMIANOS, CLERK | LEW COLTEN

SUSAN KENNEDY | THOMAS SCHUETZ | KEVIN SWOPE

MINUTES: APRIL 8, 2020
REMOTE PARTICIPATION VIA WEBEX
7:00 PM

Members Present: Paul Silva, Chair; Fred Wallace, Vice Chair; Lew Colten, Lynne Damianos, Susan Kennedy, Thomas Schuetz, Kevin Swope

Staff Present: Jennifer Doherty, Historic Preservation Planner

Guests: none

Documents:

- Agenda
- Draft minutes of March 11, 2020
- 780 Water Street (Nobscot Chapel) proposed plans

Meeting called to order at 7:02 pm

1. Chair's Report

Chair Silva noted that he watched the Conservation Commission's hearing on 703 Central Street. He believed that the Conservation Commission did a very good job of breaking the project down into the key pieces and issues. He noted that they have asked the applicant for a new plan that more clearly details some of the wetlands boundaries and other issues. There was also a lot of discussion of the size of the project. The meeting was well-run, and he would like to send a letter to the Conservation Commission thanking them for their thorough work that they do for the City. Vice Chair Wallace agreed with Chair Silva's assessment of the meeting and the Conservation Commission.

Damianos made a motion that the Commission send a letter to the Conservation Commission thanking them for their thorough, professional work on behalf of the City; Swope second.

Roll call vote, 6-0-0 in favor (Kennedy arrived after the vote)

Chair Silva – yes

Vice Chair Wallace – yes

Colten – yes

Damianos – yes

Schuetz – yes

Swope – yes

2. **Vice Chair Wallace made a motion to approve the minutes of March 11, 2020; Swope second.**

Roll call vote, 5-0-1 in favor (Vice Chair Wallace not present at the subject meeting; Kennedy arrived after the vote)

- Chair Silva – yes**
- Vice Chair Wallace – abstain**
- Colten – yes**
- Damianos – yes**
- Schuetz – yes**
- Swope – yes**

3. Letter of Support Request – Nobscot Chapel, 780 Water Street (Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits)

Doherty presented a request from Epsilon Associates, Inc. for a letter of support. They are applying for historic rehabilitation tax credits on behalf of the new owner of the Nobscot Chapel at 780 Water Street. Doherty noted that aside from moving the building, they will largely be maintaining it. The chimney will be taken down and a window will be added to one elevation, and the Chapel will get a full basement at its new site. Chair Silva noted that some changes will be made to the front door for accessibility, and a ramp will be installed. Vice Chair Wallace noted that a kitchen will be installed in the building. Doherty stated that the owner plans to convert the building to a restaurant or café, but does not currently have a tenant.

Vice Chair Wallace observed a lot of work at the site in recent weeks. A new foundation hole has been dug and steel beams have been placed underneath the Chapel. Chair Silva expected it would be a few more weeks before the building is moved, as the new foundation has not yet been poured.

Vice Chair Wallace made a motion to support Epsilon Associates, Inc. historic rehabilitation tax credit application for the Nobscot Chapel at 780 Water Street; Swope second.

- Roll call vote, 6-0-0 in favor (Kennedy arrived after the vote)**
- Chair Silva – yes**
- Vice Chair Wallace – yes**
- Colten – yes**
- Damianos – yes**
- Schuetz – yes**
- Swope – yes**

4. Historic Re-Use Bylaw

Chair Silva stated that the City Council repealed the Historic Re-Use Bylaw and requested the Planning Board draft a new version. He stated that the City Council did not intend this to be a complete overhaul, but rather that more “bite” would be added to the Historical Commission’s role as well as other protections to prevent another project similar to 703 Central Street. He personally would like to see language included that would require the replication of the existing historic architecture on any new construction.

Vice Chair Wallace stated that he would like the new bylaw to limit new construction to a footprint no greater than the existing historic structure.

Damianos stated that as the bylaw is reworked, she would like to have liaisons from the Commission, Historic District Commission, and others involved in the process.

Chair Silva requested that any Commission members with ideas about the bylaw send them to him or Doherty in the next week, so the Commission is prepared for any future discussions on the bylaw.

Colten noted that the repeal was very reactionary to the 703 Central Street project; there had been no previous issues with the bylaw. He does not want to completely scrap the bylaw.

There was general discussion about the timing and process of the repeal and adopting a new bylaw.

Schuetz agreed with Damianos' suggestion that historic preservation boards be involved in drafting the new bylaw. Chair Silva stated that the City Council did say they would involve the Commission and others.

5. Historic House Markers

Chair Silva stated that a new group of signs was delivered and some property owners have already installed them. The new sign maker stated that many other Historical Commissions do not pay for the signs themselves. Instead, a homeowner requests a sign, the commission provides the appropriate name and date to the sign maker, and the homeowner pays the sign maker directly. Chair Silva suggested that in light of potential budget shortfalls in the coming year, the Commission switch to this process. Swope agreed but suggested that the Commission might deliver the signs themselves, or request a photo of the completed signs from the sign maker, to ensure that they are correct; Vice Chair Wallace agreed.

Colten expressed concern about requiring homeowners to pay for signs. He stated that he would rather get signs out than have homeowners object to paying and not install a sign. He was concerned about the loss of the benefit the signs provide to the community.

Vice Chair Wallace provided some background on the program. He noted that when it first began 25 years or so ago, the signs were paid for by homeowners. However, after a number of the signs began to show significant wear, the Commission started replacing them free of cost. He was in agreement that any new signs going forward should be paid for by homeowners.

Chair Silva stated that many homeowners ask how much the signs will cost when they inquire about them, as they expect to pay. He noted that the Commission could also provide signs for free in certain exceptions, if the situation warranted.

Kennedy made a motion that the Commission no longer pay for new historic house markers; Swope second.

Roll call vote, 6-0-1 in favor (Colten abstaining)

Chair Silva – yes

Vice Chair Wallace – yes

Colten – abstain

Damianos – yes

Kennedy – yes

Schuetz – yes

Swope – yes

6. New Business

Vice Chair Wallace stated that the Community Preservation Act Study Group intends to meet their initial planned deadline of presenting a report to the City Council in late April

7. Watch List

Dennison Boiler Building – nothing new.

Nobscot Chapel – discussed earlier in the meeting.

74 Concord Street/15 Park Street – nothing new.

Vice Chair Wallace raised the issue of the Danforth Building in downtown. He noted that it was the first high school in that part of town, after the center of local government and

commerce shifted there from the Centre Common. He was concerned about its vacancy, and would like to see it preserved and rehabilitated.

Colten made a motion to add the Danforth Building to the watch list; Kennedy second.

Roll call vote, 7-0-0 in favor

Chair Silva – yes

Vice Chair Wallace – yes

Colten – yes

Damianos – yes

Kennedy – yes

Schuetz – yes

Swope – yes

Damianos made a motion to adjourn; Vice Chair Wallace second.

Roll call vote, 7-0-0 in favor

Chair Silva – yes

Vice Chair Wallace – yes

Colten – yes

Damianos – yes

Kennedy – yes

Schuetz – yes

Swope – yes

Meeting adjourned at 7:47 pm.

Minutes submitted by Jennifer Doherty, Historic Preservation Planner