

**CITY OF BEVERLY
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

COMMISSION:	Historic District Commission
DATE:	January 26, 2023
LOCATION:	Beverly City Hall, 191 Cabot Street, City Council Chambers
MEMBERS PRESENT:	William Finch (Chair), Suzanne LaMont (Vice Chair), Caroline Mason, John Leahy, Wendy Pearl
MEMBERS ABSENT:	Gregory Howard
STAFF PRESENT:	Victoria Healey, Associate Planner
OTHERS PRESENT:	Joan Vaughan Ingraham, Timothy Ingraham, Thomas Larson (T.J. Larson, Jr. Carpenter & Builder, Inc.), Fay Salt
RECORDER:	Danielle Spang

Call to Order

Vice Chair LaMont calls the meeting to order at 7:09 pm.

Finch arrives and recesses for Public Hearing: 7:10 pm.

- **Demolition Delay Review #284 – Thomas Larson/Joan Vaughan Ingraham**
 - **Demolition delay review #284 – Demolition of a building located at 44R Thissell Street (Assessor’s Map 35 – Lot 2)**

Joan Vaughan Ingraham provided a copy of the property’s homeowners insurance cancellation in 2014, citing the unfavorable condition of the property. Finch explained as an historically significant building over 50 years old, the Historic Districts Commission (HDC) is required to hold a public hearing to determine whether the property is significant or not to Beverly’s history, and then, if it is determined historically significant, whether it should be determined preferably preserved. If so, then the building inspector is notified not to issue a permit for demolition for 12 months from the date of the HDC finding. If they determine the building does not meet the preferably preserved criteria, then they notify the building inspector and a permit can be issued without delay. Purpose for tonight’s hearing is to hear evidence about whether the building is historically significant (Finch notes it was determined significant in 2018); J.Ingraham shared her reading that the 2018 report focused on the gentleman’s farm and not the building in question. Finch also invites comments and evidence about whether the property should be determined preferably preserved or not. All HDC members present toured the property in question, owner was invited to make a presentation and Finch confirmed conditions were apparent to the Commissioners. J. Ingraham feels the building is a public hazard and should be taken down. The owners never thought of it as a historic house because it was altered many times and the real core of the building was gone in 1934 when it was rebuilt for use as a year-round residence. Finch invited any members of the public who wished to speak: Fay Salt (66 Haskell Street) noted the house is in deplorable condition, and asked whether the demolition request includes the barn and other small structures. J. Ingraham noted the garage and stables are original to 1890 and Thomas Larson is going to rebuild those for the owners. She also noted the Essex County Greenbelt Association (ECGA) has a conservation easement over the land, and stands to inherit the property. The small yellow cottage would require about one million dollars of investment, and neither the owners nor ECGA intend to do so. Ingraham anticipates beginning the demolition request for that building soon, and shared that it was originally a pigsty, renovated for her grandfather’s recovery after a stroke.

Larson asked about the criteria for determining a property historically significant, and Finch confirmed it is at the HDC's discretion whether to look at each building separately or in greater context, noting the inventory of the property looked to a degree at all structures as well as the landscape and focused in part on the landscape.

Finch closes the public hearing: 7:20 pm.

Finch reconvenes regular meeting.

Pearl and LaMont confirmed this property was not recommended to be listed in the National Register in 2018, but determined significant within the inventory. Leahy noted the building's alterations, which do not of themselves preclude a determination of historical significance, in light of how the property came to exist, owned by the Loring family – a major contributor to the City's history, and leans toward finding it significant. Pearl noted it is a unique piece of architecture, despite it being odd. Finch echoed it is emblematic of the buildings that were built by gentlemen farmers with summer homes. The additions are part of its development and use over time by the family, and do not detract from its significance. Mason agreed and noted the grandeur of its great room.

Motion: Mason moves to find the property is historically significant for reasons of local significance because of the Loring family and architectural significance, notwithstanding its condition. Leahy seconds. Motion carries 5-0.

Determination: Determined to be historically significant.

In turning to whether the building should be preferably preserved, Leahy noted its terrible condition and that it is not recently decayed but showing decades of disrepair. While part of Beverly's history, a lot of people do not know it exists and it cannot be seen from a public way – except maybe from the train in winter. Members asked about whether the owners or ECGA will preserve some landscaping as part of the public access plans. Ingraham noted they cleaned up the terraces and forsythia. Finch noted the property will eventually have public access through ECGA, and Ingraham confirmed the garage and stables will be preserved. Finch noted the building is beyond reasonable rehabilitation, and would need to be reconstructed to save.

Motion: Leahy moves to determine the building is preferably preserved. LaMont seconds. Motion fails 0-5.

Determination: The building is not determined to be found preferably preserved.

1. Beverly Farms Cemetery Fence

Finch welcomed an update from HDC's Community Preservation Committee (CPC) Rep. LaMont. LaMont noted the City applied to extend the original Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) because the project has not yet gone out to bid. The applicant was granted CPA funds for Phase I, and has now submitted a second application for Phase II of the fence restoration. In the Phase II application, the restoration plan anticipates changes the High Street gate opening to match the curvature from Phase 0 (photographs attached). Phase 0 was funded solely through private means, and included reshaping the gate from a straight to a curved edge to match the primary entrance. The Phase II application also

anticipates widening the entrance to allow trucks and emergency vehicles to enter the cemetery. Pearl noted reconfiguring the curve may require casting additional materials and wondered whether they fabricated more fence during Phase 0 to accommodate the curve. Finch noted to qualify for CPA funding, the CPC has asked the HDC to determine whether the project meets the Secretary of the Interior Standards. Pearl agreed with the widening request, noting the Standards allow changes to make property easier to maintain and fit modern standards, but felt the curvature would be outside the standards. Leahy agreed, noting trucks will ding it and the fence can be damaged if it is not widened. Leahy was pained not to allow the applicants to curve the fence, but agreed he's read the standards many times and it would not comply. Finch noted they could deviate from the standard, but would need a justification beyond aesthetics. LaMont noted the application does not mention the exact width for widening the opening, and will follow-up for that. Pearl noted there may be historical photographs or other documentation to support the curvature – whether the Beverly Farms Improvement Society has minutes that may describe prior work or history to show it used to be curved, etc. Pearl and Leahy noted the adornment and post at the end of the gate should remain after the widening. Finch summarized that it would not conform to the Secretary of the Interior Standards to curve the gate, but does conform to widen the entrance by several feet to allow ingress and egress for trucks, as long as they maintain the adornments on the entrance.

Pearl noted the City must return to HDC for approval before the project goes out to bid, so that HDC can review the specifications to ensure it will not be reconfigured. Finch noted the bid request should also contemplate the complete project, so it does not fall short of finishing the gate. LaMont asked for clarification on when in the process HDC reviews ongoing CPA Historic Preservation projects. Members asked Healey to draft a letter sharing the Secretary of Interior Standards with the City and applicant, explaining HDC is amenable to the widening request but not the curvature request. LaMont stressed ensuring the project will remain eligible for reimbursement after completion. HDC members are excited about the project, and glad to see it moving forward.

2. Gruppe Mural

Williamstown Conversation (nationally renowned conservators) shared concerns about moving the preserved mural into the library from their facility, because it is a 20+ foot long mural on joined-together sheetrock, and quite fragile. Initial correspondence suggested cutting it into 2-3 pieces, and after Finch spoke with the lead conservator today, they believe it may help to cut it into 4 sections. Finch read from an email, "It was great to talk to you about the mural. Please review attached mockup with panel sizes cut and frame made of small u-channel frame metal to protect the edges and provide additional support around the sheetrock and honeycomb panels (metallic honeycomb behind it). Reviewed several choices, and for the mockup used a light neutral color u-channel that would cover 1.25 inches of surface." Finch suggested avoiding a cut in the Beverly land section of the mural. Pearl expressed dismay the suggested left cut goes through the bridge, and members discuss placement and display options. Members review whether sharp, precise cuts would allow the mural's reassembly in display, and Pearl suggested black frame with light verticals. Finch shared photos of the display space in the library (taken before this meeting) and LaMont loved the idea of having it on the second floor for greater public access, while recognizing the installation challenges. Mason suggested moving the line cutting Beverly out farther, leaving approximately 6-7 feet per panel and agrees the frame should be a different color.

Members concur the goal is to minimize cuts, hopefully just 3 while avoiding a cut through either the bridge or Beverly or the sailboat, and minimizing the vertical edges between panels in the framing. Pearl suggested a metal L-Channel or T-Channel instead of a C-Channel to box the plaster without covering the art, preferably with a black color. Finch mentioned securing panels to the wall which may include structural elements – originally Gianfranco Pocobene, nationally renowned mural conservator, suggested backing the mural with aircraft honeycomb material for strength, and Finch is glad to see the plan incorporates a version of that plan. Members suggest a conference call to follow-up with Williamstown Conservation on the specifics.

3. Approval of minutes (as available)

To be reviewed at the February 23, 2023 meeting.

4. New/Other Business

a. Other discussion or action items related to Commission business, if any

Mason suggested Finch or someone from HDC follows up with the Solicitor's Office and Councilor Rand regarding the draft Neighborhood Conservation District Ordinance. Members agree they would like to better understand the objections to the draft language, and explain it was drafted as enabling legislation. Pearl volunteered to draft a letter from HDC to the Solicitor's Office, outlining the benefits behind the enabling legislation so the city has another preservation tool in the zoning.

Mason suggested reviewing the Beverly City Preservation Plan, and identifying the next priority for HDC to continue assisting the City from the list. LaMont confirmed with Healey that Beverly is still working to become a Certified Local Government with the National Park Service. Members shared views and perspectives, and discussed the Planning Board votes on draft zoning ordinance amendments.

Pearl requested an update on the status for the CPA Historical Preservation projects: Dodge's Row Cemetery Project; National Register Nomination for Lynch Park (under contract, meeting about Phase 1 in March); and Cabot/Rantoul Neighborhood Study (went out to bid twice without responses, Healey is following up with MHC directly). Pearl suggested a few changes that may help the project receive bids, and Healey forwarded to those verbatim to the state MHC, stressing the grant expires June 30, 2023 (CPC could extend deadline for local CPA funds, but unclear whether MHC can extend its deadline depending on its funding source). For Gillis Park Stairs, there is no update yet from Bruce Doig.

Members asked about the City Hall Renovation Project, and Healey confirmed an Organizational Project Management firm and an architecture firm have been hired. There is no statutory requirement for HDC to review the plans, unless required for local, state, or federal funding. Members express great interest in the historic value of the building to the City, and note part of HDC's mandate is to look out for historic buildings. Finch shared that Commissioner Collins invited him to meet with the architects and advise on aspects of the plans the last time the City did major work on City Hall.

b. Schedule

Healey requested meetings be scheduled on a different week night for February, March, and April to accommodate her schedule. Members discuss availability and schedules, and proposed Wed. Feb. 22nd,

Wed. March 22nd, and Wed. April 26th for the next three monthly meetings. Then in May the meetings will return to Thursdays.

Pearl will share an email for Healey to forward to all members with a training by the Eastern Massachusetts Historic Districts Coalition scheduled for Tuesday, January 31st from 11am to 2pm. Leahy plans to attend virtually, and other interested members can register online for details.

5. **Adjournment**

Motion: Mason moves to adjourn. Leahy seconds. The motion carries 5-0.

Meeting adjourned 8:49 pm. Next meeting scheduled for February 22, 2023 at Beverly City Hall, 191 Cabot Street.