Brookline Preservation Commission
MINUTES OF THE May 27, 2020 MEETING
Held virtually via Webex Events

Commissioners Present: Commissioner Absent:

Elton Elperin, Chair
Richard Panciera, Vice Chair
David Jack
Elizabeth Armstrong, Alternate
Peter Kleiner
Wendy Ecker
Jim Batchelor
David King

Staff: Valerie Birmingham, Tina McCarthy

Mr. Elperin called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Public Comment (for items not on the agenda)

No public comment.

PUBLIC HEARINGS – Demolition

11 Chestnut Place – Application for the demolition of the carriage house. (Bryce Klempner & Julia Africa, applicants)

Ms. Birmingham presented the case report.

The Commissioners discussed the significance of the carriage house. Mr. Batchelor noted that there are many incompatible building elements indicating changes from the original design. Mr. Elperin raised the previous determination of significance for this structure and stated that he is inclined to follow this. Mr. Kleiner agreed that there have been changes made but pointed out that three bays are a characteristic of carriage house design. Mr. Jack stated that he thinks the structure is significant in spite of the changes. Mr. King agreed with Mr. Jack and added that not much has changed since the Commission last found the structure significant 10 years ago.

Mr. Jack motioned to find the carriage house significant. Mr. Kleiner seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

92 Sewall Avenue – Application for the full demolition of the building. (Bryan Austin, applicant)

Ms. Birmingham presented the case report.
Mr. Elperin opened the discussion to comments from the public.

Alex & Stephanie, neighbors of the Inn, spoke in favor of finding the building significant.

Lauren, neighbor across the street, also spoke in favor of significance.

Ms. Ecker stated that she had never seen a stucco house built in Brookline after 1910, this is rare example. Mr. Batchelor, Mr. Elperin & Mr. Jack agreed that the house is worth preserving.

Mr. King motioned to uphold the initial determination of significance and Mr. Elperin seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

106 Sargent Road - Application for the full demolition of the building. (Sargent Road 106 Realty LLC, applicant)

Ms. McCarthy presented the case report.

Ms. Gilbert introduced herself as the lawyer for the case and stated that she disagreed with the initial finding of significance.

Mr. Russ, architect for the project, stated that the building is abandoned and gutted and that the design does not have the signature features Anderson & Beckwith were known for.

The Commissioners discussed the significance of the building. Mr. Batchelor stated that the architects are significant and this is their work; he also noted that reserved is a design approach. Mr. Jack recalled similar buildings on Reservoir Road, modern architecture without mimicking colonial revival forms. He added that the building is very well sited and significant. Mr. King agreed and noted that the exterior condition of the building is good. Mr. Elperin stated that it is an intriguing building with graceful details and that he would uphold the determination of significance.

Mr. Elperin motioned to uphold the initial determination of significance. Mr. Panciera seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

16 Hawes Street- Application for the partial demolition of the house. (Platform 9 ¾ Trust, applicant)

Ms. Birmingham presented the case report.

Ms. Gilbert introduced herself as the lawyer for the case and stated that the applicant will be requesting a lift.

Mr. King inquired about the enclosed arches, asking if they use to be a porch. Ms. Birmingham replied that yes, they use to be open.

Mr. King motioned to uphold the initial determination of significance. Mr. Elperin seconded the motion. All voted in favor.
**40 Center Street** - Request to extend the time to obtain a demolition permit. (Robert Roth/40 Center St. LLC, applicant)

Ms. Birmingham presented the case and explained that the only item up for discussion is the extension of the time period, not the case itself.

Mr. Roth stated that he thought the demo process was a part of the Comp Permit and that he didn’t want to move forward with the demolition before the project had completed the appeal process. He explained that his expected time to move from planning to beginning construction is a year and a half at minimum.

Ms. Armstrong asked who the plaintiff in the case is. Mr. Roth stated that 19 Winchester St, the 9 story building to the rear of the property is the plaintiff. He added that the State protects defendants by using tolling.

Ms. Armstrong asked if the appeals are exhausted in this case. Mr. Roth stated that they are not, the case is presently in Land Court and could be appealed all the way up to the Supreme Court.

Mr. Elperin opened the discussion to comments from the public.

Ms. Baptista introduced herself as the lawyer for 19 Winchester St. She stated that Mr. Roth chose not to request a waiver from the demolition process and questioned the assumption that the ZBA would grant the waiver.

Ms. Morelli, Zoning Planner, stated that when the plans were approved the waiver was implied. She explained that the demolition permit was conditioned on documentation of the building. MHC was asked to comment on the ZBA case. They responded that the applicant must file a P & F once the Comp Permit is issued.

Ms. Baptista stated that the applicant should request the waiver from the ZBA.

Mr. Elperin explained that Jonathan Simpson, Town Council, indicated that the Preservation Commission could extend the demolition time. He stated his inclination to take this approach and not take advantage of the situation. Ms. Birmingham clarified that Mr. Simpson did not give a recommendation about what the Preservation Commission should do, only found that they could extend the time.

Mr. King stated that the building is beautiful and noted that the applicant had the right to demolish it, yet didn’t. He agreed with Mr. Elperin’s intention to avoid taking advantage of the situation. Ms. Ecker agreed and suggested a 2 year extension. Ms. Armstrong agreed with this suggestion.

Mr. Bachelor asked if documentation was required. Ms. Morelli read condition #65 in the ZBA decision requiring documentation. Mr. Batchelor stated that he was in favor of the extension, given that condition. He made a motion to extend the demolition period for two years conditioned on the applicant’s compliance with condition #65 of the ZBA decision. Ms. Birmingham asked for clarification on the start of the 2 year period. Mr. King offered an amendment that would begin the 2 year extension at the date of the court decision. Ms. Armstrong clarified that it should be the end
of litigation. Mr. Elperin & Mr. Batchelor agreed with the amendment. Mr. Elperin seconded the motion, all voted in favor.

**124 Holland Road & 117 Fisher Avenue-** Request to lift the stays of demolition on the properties (Welltower, Inc. applicant)

Ms. Ecker recused herself as she lives in the neighborhood.

Ms. McCarthy presented the case report.

Jennifer Gilbert introduced herself and the Project team. Mary McCarthy gave an overview of the project from the architectural team.

Mr. Elperin opened the discussion to comment from the audience.

Neil Wishinsky spoke about the negotiating process with Welltower and expressed the desire for the Preservation Commission to participate constructively in the process. Mr. Elperin asked if the project needs further work. Mr. Wishinsky replied that it does not.

Carlos Ridruejo introduced himself as a resident of Holland Road and a part of the Architectural Design Subcommittee. He mentioned reductions in the scale of the project through the process and stated that the elevator shaft (on Mitton House) had not yet been looked at yet. He hoped that Preservation Commission members would participate in the DAT.

Mr. Elperin asked if the design was intended to be shingle style. Ellen Ansilone, an architect on the project, said that this was the intention.

Kea van der Ziel, Town Meeting Member, expressed concern about the use of fossil fuel in the kitchens.

Nancy Heller stated that the neighborhood supports the project and the Neighborhood Association had voted to support the East Parcel development.

Mr. King stated that it is difficult for the Preservation Commission to step in at this point in the project development. He questioned the choice of Shingle Style and for the project as well as the scale along Fisher Avenue. He asked why the Preservation Commission had not been involved earlier in design development. Mr. Panciera and Mr. Elperin also asked for an answer to this question. Ms. Heller answered that the committee was formed in a rush due to Welltower’s deadline requests. She explained her understanding that the demo process was separate and did not know the Preservation Commission would be interested. She expressed regret at excluding the Preservation Commission. Ms. Gilbert stated that there was no intention to sideline the Commission.

Mr. Jack expressed frustration with the project, as the deal with the Town was essentially finalized. He pointed out that the oldest building in the neighborhood was being demolished under the plan.

Mr. Kleiner questioned whether the design was ready for a subcommittee, noting design inconsistencies.
Ms. Gilbert stated that the applicant had been expecting a subcommittee. Mr. Elperin explained that subcommittees usually deal with a design in its early stages and help shape it.

Mr. Elperin expressed disappointment that the Student Center was not incorporated into the project design. He noted that the size of the project is 20x the size of Mitton House and 40x the size of Seaver St, which the architects used as inspiration. He stated that the building will be one of the largest in Brookline, though the neighborhood context does have other large buildings. He stated that the project is oppressively close to abutters, just 80’ to 90 Holland Road and that the size at this side should be dealt with. He noted that the architects have employed clever device to disguise the size. Regarding the style of the building, he stated that the design is not shingle style; it evades the essence of the style, which is the continuity of surface. He classified the design a pastiche of styles; attractive parts on a big building presented with charming hand drawn renderings to disguise its nature. He added that the mechanical wells in the rooftops are unexpressed in the drawings and that the back side of the building needs further design attention.

Mr. Kleiner expressed concern with the basic materiality of the project. He asked if it would be possible to use real wood or slate at all. Ms. Gilbert answered that the design process is just beginning.

Mr. Panciera stated that he would like to see a subcommittee formed. Mr. Elperin agreed and asked Mr. Kleiner for his thoughts. Mr. Kleiner agreed with the idea but expressed doubts about the parameters for subcommittee review. Ms. Armstrong asked what the difference is between a subcommittee and the DAT. Ms. McCarthy responded that the subcommittee is a regulatory process while the DAT is advisory only.

Mr. Elperin motioned to continue the case to a subcommittee, unempowered, with the intention that it should work with the DAT. Mr. Panciera seconded the motion. Mr. Kleiner, Mr. Jack, Ms. Armstrong, Mr. Panciera, Mr. Batchelor, Mr. King & Mr. Elperin voted in favor. Ms. Eckert abstained as she had recused herself from the discussion.

Mr. Elperin, Mr. Panciera & Ms. Eckert volunteered to serve on the subcommittee. Ms. Birmingham asked the Commission to discuss Ms. Eckert’s ability to serve as she was recused from the discussion on the case. Ms. Armstrong explained that the recusal was by choice, not required. Ms. Eckert stated that she would unrecuse herself. Mr. Elperin supported her nomination to the subcommittee.

Mr. Jack stated that he would step down from the DAT (he was appointed in a previous hearing) in favor of an architect. Mr. Panciera & Ms. Ecker were nominated to serve on the DAT.

Mr. Elperin adjourned the meeting.