

Westport Historical Commission
Jan. 8, 2024 Meeting
at Town Hall Annex

Present were Commission Chair Rud Lawrence (RL), members Caroline Bolter (CB), Bill Kendall (BK), Beverly Schuch (BS), and Deborah Ciolfi (DC).

1. The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 6 p.m. with the above members present.

2. Minutes: The Dec. 4, 2023 meeting minutes were reviewed.

MOTION by BK to approve the 11/6/23 minutes as amended, seconded by BS. The motion passed on a 4-0-1 roll call vote, with CB abstaining as she was not present at that meeting.

3. Treasurer's Report: None.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Monitor's Reports: It was reported that roofing work had commenced at 1954 Main Road, and work was in progress at the Valentine Lane property.

2. Applications for Certificates of Non-Applicability: It was noted that a Certificate of Non-Applicability application for 2015 Main Road had been denied.

6:05 p.m. – 46 Cape Bial Lane – Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the addition of a sunroom on the South side of the house, with a new deck and railing on top of it, and new windows and a door on the existing South wall of the second story. Tim Gillespie presented a review of plans for the former summer cottage, indicating that the most visible change would be the addition of four windows and a door on the second floor providing access to the rooftop deck. DC noted that the building can't be seen from the road, and was visible at great distance from the river. Mr. Gillespie said the project materials would reflect the architectural history of the house.

MOTION by CB to approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness based on the submitted plans. Second by BS. The motion passed on a 5-0 roll call vote.

6:15 p.m. – 2015 Main Road – Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of a raised platform structure and other elements of a proposed pool complex. The Chair read the WHC letter to ANC Nominee Realty Trust principal Robert Branca citing the reasons for the denial of the Trust's application for a Certificate of Appropriateness under historic district guidelines. The Chair called for a ratification of the denial decision. Atty. Kelly Jordan Price restated her client's contention that the Commission does not have jurisdiction over walls or in-ground pools. The Chair responded by citing the "at grade" specification in the pool section language as the only exemption from jurisdictional review. Mr. Branca indicated that the wall structure would be visible from a public way, but should not be considered a building. He stressed that walls, fences, and pools are not subject to Commission review; the Chair countered that any "structure" above grade is within Commission jurisdiction.

MOTION by CB to ratify the denial of the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for 2015 Main Road. Second by BK. The motion passed on a 5-0 roll call vote.

Mr. Branca reviewed the plans for the project showing ground elevations and wall heights at various points of the site. BK suggested that the Commission had insufficient information to evaluate the project, and that plans were difficult to read because of the small size; he asked that the property owner

submit larger versions of the plans with stated dimensions for the structures and distances shown. He suggested that discussions with Mr. Branca about the project continue at a future meeting. The Chair allowed Westport Point resident Jim Collins, an architect and former WHC member, to make a video presentation on the proposed project. He argued that with 4,500 square feet of land to be impacted, and high walls on three sides, the project was a structure that fell under Commission jurisdiction. Mr. Collins provided several alternate design options that would have less physical and visual impact on the site landscape. Discussion continued with audience input. BS appealed to Mr. Branca to compromise on the original plans to reduce the visual impact, and he agreed to modify the design in an effort to avoid any litigation. He agreed to submit new plans for consideration at the next meeting, and asked for a continuation of the hearing.

MOTION by CB to continue the hearing on 2015 Main Road to the Feb. 5 Commission meeting. Second by BS. The motion passed on a 5-0 roll call vote.

GENERAL BUSINESS

3. Demolition Request, 212 Howland Road. Jonathan Mongie explained plans to demolish the circa 1890 farmhouse and existing barn and build a new house at the same location. BK noted the site is near the historic Howland House, and suggested the new structure should be compatible with other homes in the historic neighborhood. A few design options and possible architectural features were briefly discussed.

MOTION by BK to approve the demolition request for 212 Howland Road. There was no second. The Chair indicated the matter would be continued to the Feb. 5 meeting.

4. New Business: The Chair announced that Michael Walden had submitted his resignation from the Commission due to work demands on his time. The 2024 WHC Meeting Calendar was distributed to members. There was brief discussion of possible candidates for the advisory committee. The Chair read his letter to the Building Commissioner, clarifying the commissioner's responsibilities for reviewing permit applications in the historic district, and making suggestions for adding Historical Commission reviews on the check off list for permit approvals in the district.

MOTION by BK to adjourn the meeting came at 8:25 p.m. Second by CB. The motion passed on a 5-0 roll call vote.

Approval Date: 2/5/24

Attachments to Minutes 1-8-24

46 Cape Bial Lane

Certificate of Applicability
Plans

2015 Main Road

Denial of Certificate of Non-applicability 12/23/23-Incomplete Application Letter
Denial Certificate of Non-applicability 12/26/23
Response letter from ANC Nom Tr. 12/29/23
Plans for discussion Presentation 2 for 1/8/24 hearing

212 Howland Road

Demolition approval