



Meeting Minutes of the Historic Preservation Commission (Subject to Commission Approval)

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY, June 10, 2009

Board Members Present

Lynn Ferrari
Alan Ambrose
David Ransom
Michael O'Connell
Catherine Connor

Staff Present

Roger J. O'Brien
Kim Holden

Alternates Present

Jonathan Clark
Greg Secord

Commissioner O'Connell called the special meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission to order. The special meeting was held take up a tabled item from the May 20th regular meeting regarding a demolition of a building at the Hartford Public Safety Complex located at 269-273 High Street. At that meeting the Commission asked the applicant to provide additional information regarding the environmental report that was discussed at the meeting.

Roger discussed the ordinance and rules of procedures with the commissioners. The ordinance indicates that an effort should be made to find a feasible alternative to saving a building rather than tearing it down.

Mr. Charlie Crocini, City of Hartford, Project Coordinator stated that last time a site plan was requested by the Commission. Mr. Crocini showed plans of the old board of education building and the new construction. The existing building is 19,000 square feet. The estimate to rehabilitate the building was 11 million dollars. Additionally, there is a significant portion of contaminated soil that must be removed. The interior of the building is rotted due to non maintenance. Mr. Crocini stated that the cost to renovate the building would be extensive. The demolition cost to remove the foundation would cost about \$140,000.

Commissioner O'Connell asked for a motion for discussion.

Commissioner Ferrari moved to accept the staff resolution and Commissioner Connor seconded.

Roger stated that the rules of procedures states that the Commission should evaluate each application on a case by case basis and that the applicant has to demonstrate that there is no feasible alternative to demolition. If there is an abandoned building, is there is a viable use for it and can it be rehabilitated in a reasonable way.

Commissioner Ambrose stated every abandoned building doesn't have a viable use or it would be used.

Commissioner Ambrose stated that 11 million dollars is \$550 per square foot and questioned what historic restoration in town costs \$550 per square foot.

Roger stated that if you go to the rules and procedure, it says that if you don't want the building to come down you have to provide the applicant with an alternative and the applicant can then come back and say its going to cost 20% more which would be an economic hardship. The obligation of the commission is to say what the alternative would be.

Mr. Crocini stated that there are two separate considerations here, one the environmental issue and the other issue is demolition of the building and what if any effort has been made to see if there is an alternative use for it.

A discussion took place over the environmental conditions of the site. A representative from GEI Consultants showed a contaminated area behind the building located at 269-273 High Street. He also showed what would need to be excavated and remediated. He stated that he would not be able to show the exact extent of the area where soil would need to be taken out until the exaction takes place, and further testing of the soil is conducted. The excavation is likely to cause instability of the foundation of the building at 269-273 High Street.

Commissioner O'Connell stated, as he understands, it is not critical to the design of the project to get rid of the building. The project could just go ahead and leave the building standing. The question is what the alternatives are; one is to tear it down and if there is some sort of public use or private use, given the economic conditions that could make feasible sense.

Commissioner Ambrose stated that they planned the project to isolate the building and make it untenable for any further use and that they didn't plan the project to make the building viable.

Roger stated that's just not the facts, the fact is a site plan came in, the commission looked at the entire plan, looked at the buildings that were going to come down and approved the buildings that were going to come

down. It went to the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Planning and Zoning Commission, held public hearing on it and people came out and spoke.

Commissioner Ransom stated that if you walk into this building from the south floor, you will enter a magnificent historic hall that extends up to the north hall and against the north wall is a two story stairway, it a momentous moment. Mr. Crocini stated that it doesn't exist anymore.

Commissioner Ransom stated that they did work on the building that the Commission didn't know about and Mr. Crocini stated that whoever owned it before the City bought it, apparently went in and restructured the interior.

Commissioner Ambrose stated that he is worried about setting precedence here by demolishing historic building because of no other viable alternative. Are we setting precedence here? How can they prevent a private developer from demolishing a historic building?

Roger stated that you look at every building with an individual set of facts, that's why there is the ordinance and rules of procedures. You vote on each one based upon what the set of facts are.

Commissioner Ferrari wanted to know whether HPA has taken a stand on this particular building.

Mr. Tomas Nenortas stated that they have in the past tried to work with a developer who has been interested in that site as well as vacant site across the street but for various reasons they were unable to work out a solution.

Mr. Crocini stated that Lauren Knott Twine of the Historic Alliance met with Mayor Perez and expressed her concerns about the Terry House on the corner, and the house on the other side of the street and the Flat Iron building but did not oppose taking this building down.

Commissioner moved to vote on the motion, the motion was for approval of the resolution as proposed by the staff

Kim stated that the last resolve clause should say the 10th day of June.

The motion is to approve the application. The motion to approve failed.

Commissioner Ambrose stated that the applicant needed to provide additional information to show that there are no feasible possible alternatives.

Commissioner Ambrose moved to deny the applicant the application on the basis that reasonable alternatives have not been sufficiently determined or analyzed. Commissioner Ferrari seconded the motion.

Four Commissioners voted in favor of the motion to deny the application, and one Commissioner obtained.

The meeting was adjourned

Respectfully Submitted,

Kim E. Holden
Chief Staff Planner