

City of Pawtucket
Historic District Commission
Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 10, 2024 at 6 p.m.
Pawtucket Public Library

A. Opening:

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 by Chairman Bacon.

B. Roll Call:

Present (6): Jason Bacon, Thomas P. Perry, David Sisson, Bruce Tillinghast, Adam Beauregard, and Brian Greene.

Staff (3): Camerin Bennett (Assistant Director of Planning & Redevelopment), Jason Pettinato (Senior Planner), and Nate Bailey (Senior Planner).

Members of the Public (9): Melissa Fleming (Zoom), Michael Pompili, Holly Demus, Jonathan Levi, Megan Havrilla, Robert Perria, Michael DeMatteo, Zachary Russell, Kate McCoy

C. Approval of minutes:

A motion was entertained by Chairman Bacon to approve the minutes from the July 9, 2024, meeting. Mr. Tillinghast made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Perry, and approved by a vote of 6-0.

D. Public Input:

There was no public input during this meeting.

E. Correspondence:

There was no correspondence from City Staff during this meeting.

F. New Business:

Public Meeting

Certificate of Appropriateness

4 Blaisdell Avenue (AP 660784)

Bump out to expand kitchen layout

Mr. Michael DeMatteo, the owner of the home, provided context for the project to his home. He described the proposed addition as a “bump-out” to expand the existing kitchen at the rear of the home. The intent is to provide increased space and prep area to the kitchen. There will be one window that is to be replaced, which is not an original window to the property. Mr. DeMatteo explained that the replacement window is meant to match the style and character of the house.

Mr. Tillinghast asked for clarification that the “bump-out” will be in the rear of the house and will not be visible from the street; Mr. DeMatteo confirmed that is the case. At this time

Mr. Tillinghast made a motion to approve the project as shown on the plans provided. The motion was seconded by Mr. Beaugard, and was passed by a vote of 6-0.

Certificate of Appropriateness
726 Weeden Street (AP 470515)
Solar panel installation

Ms. Melissa Fleming, who joined the meeting via Zoom, a representative of the contractor who is seeking to install solar panels on the property, presented the project. Ms. Fleming described the panels as “black-on-black” with the intent to run the conduit through the roof and attic to avoid as much visibility to the infrastructure needed. Mr. Tillinghast had questions regarding why the property is at this committee, as he didn’t believe it to be a historical property or in a historic district. Ms. Bennett provided clarification on why it is appropriate to be in front of this committee. Chairman Bacon observed that the panels are close to the street side of the property, he recommended that those panels should be removed or relocated away from the street side as much as possible. Mr. Beaugard agreed with that and added that the meters and other hardware are also on the front corner of the house, recommending that those should be either moved or hidden as well.

Mr. Beaugard asked if the roof was asphalt or slate. Ms. Fleming said that it should be asphalt shingles. Mr. Beaugard asked if it was possible to relocate the inverters away from the front of the house. Ms. Fleming explained that the usual practice is to connect where the existing utility meters are on the house, and that to put them elsewhere might be infeasible. Mr. Beaugard followed up if it was possible to stack them vertically, Ms. Fleming said that she would ask the electrical inspector and home owner, but if they approved, she didn’t foresee an issue.

At this time Mr. Beaugard made a motion to approve the project with the conditions that, if possible, the inverters would be stacked, two (2) of the panels from the left side of the house would be relocated to the rear, and the conduit cover would match the existing siding. The motion was seconded by Mr. Perry, and was passed by a vote of 6-0.

Demolition Review
McCoy Stadium, 2 Columbus Avenue (AP 260630)

Before beginning discussion about this project, two members of the Historic District Commission recused themselves due to their outside involvement with the project. Both left the room before discussion was heard, and Vice Chairman Adam Beaugard led the rest of meeting.

Vice Chairman Beaugard first opened the meeting to allow for public comment regarding the project. Mr. Michael Pompili, Mr. Zach Russell of the Heritage Alliance of Pawtucket, and Ms. Kate McCoy all gave public comment and spoke in favor of the HDC making a determination that the structure had historic value and demolition should be delayed.
Ms.

Mr. Jonathan Levi then presented the project, stating that the intent of the project was to construct a new unified high school at the location of McCoy Stadium. The Stadium was in

poor condition and restoring it would not be feasible. Mr. Levi also indicated that a new high school would greatly benefit the City of Pawtucket.

, Mr. Tillinghast asked for clarification from Ms. Bennett on what was being voting on. Ms. Bennett read the regulations:

The PHDC shall first determine whether the structure proposed for demolition is: 1) contributing to the significance of the district, and valuable to the City, State or Nation; 2) contributing to the significance of the district, and valuable for the period of architecture it represents, or to the district; 3) non-contributing to the significance of the district.

The PHDC will use its own judgment in making determinations of architectural and historical significance, and may call upon expert witnesses. Applicants may also present testimony as to the significance of the structure.

Next, the PHDC shall determine whether sufficient information has been submitted with the application to allow thorough review, and whether all alternatives to demolition have been considered. If the PHDC finds that the documentation is complete and all alternatives to demolition have been considered, it will vote to accept the application and schedule the application for review at the next regular meeting. If the application cannot be accepted because additional information is needed, then the preliminary meeting will be continued until the next regular PHDC meeting or such time as the additional information can be submitted. The application is considered formally accepted as of the date of the vote to accept.

The second public meeting is held at the next regular meeting following the vote to accept the application, to review the application in light of the Review Criteria listed below. The criteria vary depending on whether the structure was determined to be a contributing or non-contributing structure in the district. The applicant and/or property owner shall attend, and public comment will be taken. If the structure is contributing, the PHDC votes whether the proposal meets the primary review criteria outlined below. If so, then the application will be reviewed in light of the secondary review criteria. If the application is consistent with both the primary and the secondary review criteria, then it may be approved, either as submitted or with conditions. If not, the application may be denied. If the structure is non-contributing, the PHDC votes whether to approve, approve with conditions, or to deny the application for demolition, using the secondary review criteria outlined below. At the second meeting the PHDC will also review any claim of economic hardship

Additionally,

If a structure is deemed contributing, then the PHDC shall consider whether the application meets the following primary criteria:

1. If the structure is deemed valuable to the City, State or Nation, such that its loss will be a great loss to the City, State or Nation, then in order for the PHDC to approve demolition, the structure must constitute a hazard to public safety, which hazard cannot be eliminated by economic means available to the owner, including sale of the structure to any purchaser willing to preserve the structure.
2. If the structure is deemed valuable for the period of architecture which it represents, or to the district as a whole, then at least one of the following requirements must be met in order for the PHDC to approve demolition: a) Retention of the structure constitutes a hazard to public safety, which hazard cannot be eliminated by economic means available to the owner, including the sale of the structure on its present site to any purchaser willing to preserve the structure. b) Preservation of the structure is a deterrent to a major improvement program that will be of substantial benefit to the community. c) Preservation of the structure would cause an undue and unreasonable financial hardship to the owner, taking into account the financial resources available to the owner including the sale of the structure to any purchaser willing to preserve the structure. d) Preservation of the structure would not be in the interest of the majority of the community.

Mr. Tillinghast shared his opinion that though McCoy Stadium had historical events happen there, there was nothing architecturally significant about the stadium that gave it unique historic features. Ms. Bennett reminded the Commission, that this vote is to determine whether McCoy Stadium is historically significant and the second vote, to occur at the following meeting would be to determine whether to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for a demolition permit or place a six-month demolition delay on the project.

At this time, Mr. Green made a motion to consider McCoy stadium to be historically significant. The motion was seconded by Mr. Perry, and was passed by a vote of 3-1, with Mr. Tillinghast voting his dissent. Ms. Bennett then informed the Commission that the next meeting will include a vote on the issuance a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition or a delay.

G. Adjournment:

A motion to adjourn the meeting was entertained by Vice Chairman Beauregard from Mr. Tillinghast. The motion was seconded by Mr. Perry and was approved by a vote of 4-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:18.