

TOWN OF ASHLAND  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MEETING DATE: July 20, 2021

MEETING NOTES:

Members in attendance: Tom DeAlmeida  
(Voting Members only) Elizabeth Childress  
Joanna Sorensen  
James Neilsen  
Kelly Flannery  
Jennifer Paratore

Meeting called to order at 7:03pm  
Meeting held IN PERSON at Ashland Town Hall in Meeting Room B/C

Chairman DeAlmeida called the meeting to order and the minutes from the previous meeting, June 8, 2021, were unanimously accepted by the members in attendance

J. Paratore reviewed the week's agenda. First item was the demolition permit for 56 Fountain Street. There were seven members of the community that attended the meeting to express their opposition to the demolition. The Commission and the members of the public took time to introduce themselves to one another. All members of the public in attendance were abutters to the property in question with the exception of Mr. Steve Morgan. Mr. Morgan lives close to the property but said he attended this meeting due to his interest in the Historical Commission, the historical significance of the property in question and his desire to make sure that Town government is observing the law. The property owner was not in attendance.

J. Neilsen expressed some frustration that the Historical Commission was not notified about this demolition permit at the time it was pulled. He only learned about it when he read this month's agenda. J. Paratore confirmed with the Chairman that the notices were only being sent to him (Mr. DeAlmeida) and she suggested that they have the notices sent to the entire Commission. J. Neilsen noted that the town's public record has the property 56 Fountain St dated as 1935 but that he believed that was incorrect. Paratore confirmed that the property was listed on the town survey of historical properties conducted in 2010, available on the Town website. The Commission opened the floor up to the members of the community for input on subject matter. Michelle Carron, one of the abutting property owners, said that the actual age of the home is 1850. She discussed the property owner's previous appearance before the Ashland Zoning Board of Appeals and the inconsistency of what the property owner was looking to accomplish with the property. She described his initial plan to demo the existing house and build a single home on the property. She pointed out that the property owner's plans have evolved into a request to build 3 houses on the lot and establish a subdivision. Ms Carron believes the property owner has not been truthful in his application to the ZBA and several

other abutters agreed. Ms. Carron discredited the property owner's claim that he had tried to sell the property, citing that there was no evidence that he had actively try to sell the home. She provided examples of how the homeowner has failed to maintain the property and even destroyed historic aspects of the home by ripping off/burning the clapboard siding and felling trees in areas that were designated as conservation. She, and others, expressed their frustrations that there have been not any consequences for the property owner with these previous alterations to the property despite calls to the Ashland Police and Ashland Fire Dept. Ms Carron also expressed concern about the Historical Commission receiving notice of these demolition request and their ability to inform the public about when they are on the Commission's agenda. Chairman DeAlmeida pointed out that the Commission follows the bylaws and posts the agendas to the Town website within the 48 hour requirement and doesn't know what more we can do to notify the public. Ms Carron pointed out that the public wouldn't know that certain agenda items were being discussed unless they checked the town website. Mr. Morgan reminded the Commission that the 48 hour rule didn't mean that the Commission had to wait for the 48 hours, that the agendas could be posted earlier. J.Paratore stressed to the group that the agenda for tonight's meeting was posted to the Town website about a week prior to this evening's meeting and that the Commission doesn't wait to post their agenda. It is posted as soon as it is set. Ms Paratore further iterated that the Commission maintains all meeting posting and meeting minute recordings that are required by law.

The group discussion evolved into what power the Historical Commission has on the demolition of Historic Properties in the Town of Ashland. Chairman DeAlmeida outlined the general demo delay of 9 months and that after that, it would likely become a legal matter for the Town. Paratore pulled up the exact by-law on her computer and read them aloud for the meeting. Mr. Morgan suggested that, in addition to any recommendation to delay demolition that the Commission require the applicant to appear before the Commission to be accountable for any due diligence they may have been doing during the 9 month period. Chairman DeAlmeida suggested that, in the interim, the abutters apply for the property to be placed on the State Historical Property list to help protect the property and further delay demolition. Neilsen disagreed with DeAlmeida, saying that the State list does not have much power. That the power lies with the local historic district/designation that does not currently exist in Ashland and that would take some time to establish, as discussed in previous Historical Commission meetings. After some discussion back and forth, the group returned to the specific discussion of 56 Fountain St. One of the abutters, Lee Schortmann, described the small town charm of Ashland and the reason that many people choose to live here. She pointed out that Fountain St is a designated scenic road with historic homes and that the demolition of 56 Fountain and subsequent building of a subdivision would change the look of the street and change the feel of the town. The abutters seemed to unanimously agree that the property owner was not making a diligent effort to preserve the property and needs to be held accountable for their actions. There was discussion about how some of the clapboard siding was removed and burned while other parts of the home were covered in vinyl siding.

J.Neilsen made a motion to vote on whether the Historic Commission believes that 56 Fountain St is a property that is historically significant to the Town and should be preferentially

preserved. The motion was seconded by L. Childress. The Commission voted unanimously 6-0 that the property at 56 Fountian St IS historically significant to the Town of Ashland and that it should be preserved. J. Paratore told all in attendance that written notice would be given to the Building Department immediately to inform them of the Commission's decision and that a 9 month delay of demolition should be put into effect. After the conclusion of the vote, the abutters and Mr. Morgan left the meeting.

Next on the agenda was J. Sorensen updating the Commission on her first CPA meeting. Sorensen informed the Commission that the CPA will not be meeting again until September. Next Agenda item: Historical Commission at the Farmer's Market. Childress showed the Commission worksheets used by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Graders in Ashland school system that educated them on the historic landmarks around the Town. Childress suggested turning this school assignment into a poster board presentation for the Farmer's Market Table. K. Flannery offered to help Childress take pictures and write up descriptions of the historic sites.

J.Paratore informed the Commission that the Corner Spot meetup didn't get a lot of traction with other groups in Town for July/August and suggested maybe looking at a September date,. Paratore said she will work with Ashley Place with Town of Ashland to get a networking date set for this Fall at the Corner Spot.

Mill Building was listed as an on-going discussion. Nothing new to add from the Commission other than comments that members haven't heard a single person in Town discussing the project in a positive way.

Finally, it was brought up that the Flannery and Sorensen appointment to the Commission was due to expire next month as they were only 1 year posts. Childress and DeAlmeida both committed to contacting the Selectboard to determine next steps on appointing/re-appointing protocol. Neilsen said he would contact local Towns to determine best way to establish a local Historic District.

The HC quickly summarized today's meeting and came up with a list of items to add to the next agenda, mostly follow ups from today's discussion topics.

With no other matters to discuss, Chairman DeAlmeida made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Neilsen. Vote 6-0.

**Next meeting August 10, 2021 AT 7PM. Adjournment 8:19m**