

**SWAMPSCOTT HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES**

March 27, 2018

7:00 PM

Swampscott High, 200 Essex St, Room B208

<b><u>MEMBERS PRESENT:</u></b>	Justina Oliver, Richard Smith, Sylvia Belkin, Jean Reardon, Bill Travascio, Bill Joyce, Paula Pearce, Kim Barry, Jean Reardon
<b><u>MEMBERS ABSENT:</u></b>	None
<b><u>OTHERS PRESENT:</u></b>	Members of the Public, CC White Court LLC and Design Team (Nick Mennino, Andy Rose, Mark Klayman, Bruce Paradise, Tom Saltzman, Doug Jones)
<b><u>MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:</u></b>	7:01 PM
<b><u>HISTORICAL COMMISSION PRESENTATION:</u></b>	<p>Bill Travascio called hearing to order at 7:01pm.</p> <p>Justina Oliver opened the presentation. The Swampscott Historical Commission established by Town Meeting vote in 1982. The Historical Commission established in accordance with MA General Law Chapter 40, Section 8D, “Historical Commission, Establishment, Powers and Duties”. Some of the Commission’s duties under law were provided as well as a recap of the Swampscott Historical Commission’s work from 2017- present.</p> <p>Sylvia Belkin presented Swampscott’s historic sites beginning with the Elihu Thomson Administration Building, Town Hall. The property was purchased by the town and converted into the Town Hall, a successful adaptive reuse and preservation project. With grant funding, the building was restored and expanded. A recap of buildings that were not preserved, Capt’n Jack’s Inn torn down in 2011. Architects were brought in by the Commission whom concluded the buildings could be adapted and reused. Recent historical inventory completed by Historian Lisa Mausolf in 2016, Local Historic Districts established in 2014- Olmsted Area, Fish House,</p>

Andrews Chapel with Cemetery, and the Train Depot. In Dec 2017 when White Court was sold, Commission was told the developers intended to preserve, adapt, and reuse the original building. A White Court Task Force was put together last year whom hosted a Trails and Sails event with an open house at White Court. Hundreds of people attended, many Swampscott residents whom were not aware of its existence, positive feedback. The Committee was exploring options to purchase White Court from the Sisters of Mercy to preserve the building.

Bill Travascio served as Moderator of the hearing. A review of the Preservation of Historically Significant Buildings Bylaw, Article IX, Section 4 of Swampscott General Bylaws. A demolition permit is applied for at the Building Department. If the building is 75 years or older the Historical Commission reviews under the Preservation Bylaw and makes an initial determination of historical significance under the criteria set forth. A review of the timeline of activities starting with the purchase of the property, initial determination made by the Commission, to the public hearing. Next step will be a final determination meeting.

Lisa Mausolf, Architectural Historian and Preservation Consultant, presented the history of 35 Little's Point Rd 'White Court'. She has worked with many towns, private clients to obtain preservation tax credits, and National Register applications. She completed the most recent inventory of 100 properties in Swampscott on Humphrey St, Puritan Rd, and Little's Point Rd. Massachusetts Historical Commission determined White Court to be significant in 3 categories for National Register. White Court and Blythswood are survivors of the historic summer estates in Swampscott. Designed by Arthur Little for which Little's Point gets its name. In 1925 President Calvin Coolidge summered here, how it got its name 'White Court'. In 1928 the Smith family sold to the Falveys and some changes were made. Exterior stuccoed, murals painted on interior, and plasterwork painted in Italian Renaissance style. Famous painter known in Boston area (Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 2<sup>nd</sup> place award for peacock painting.)

Tim Falvey sold the estate to the Sisters of Mercy.

Despite the shoddy maintenance and replacements that the Sisters did to the property, WC remains a candidate for National Register listing as is. Lisa states that a replication does not substitute for original with restoration. Once an historic site is gone, there is no chance for regret or to reverse and retract a demolished historic property.

Richard Smith, of the Swampscott Historical Commission is an historic architect by trade. He commented on his review of the WC's original designs by Little, and of 1902 changes whereby the Falvey owners added to the original footprint, only for the conservatory, kitchen wing with gambrel roof. Little's design of the grand entrance borrows from the Mt Vernon columns, North Shore sea captain style homes, and broadens those designs to create his own version in the grand entrance.

Next, Nick Mennino of the CC WC LLC group, introduced his team, and their objective of recreating a WC to convey the original style, in spite of not planning on using any of the original frame, structure of the building. His team sees it as a middle ground, to saving the spirit of WC, even though not able to save the building.

Doug Jones, Landscape Architect to the project, presented Marian Court's additions and corruptions to the property and original structure. He reviewed the new site design, and footprint of the new building. Goal of the project is that within the 3 buildings of 18 condo units total, is also the plan to maintain the open space, preserving the grounds. This is demonstrated partially by the underground parking for 54 spaces, leaving the space above the ground less encumbered by parking spaces, although there would be an additional 25 parking spaces above the ground by the portico. (Not explained as to who/what these are for). Additionally, the landscape design allows for a mirrored, matching 10' easement on the WC property, abutting the equivalent on the Blythswood property, which already allows an easement to the public for a walkway down the length of the property to the water, with trail and introducing benches, stone wall for town residents. The majority of the open space of the property is for the residents of the condo units, with

only the easement on the property border being available to the town residents, public.

Tom Saltzman, the WC architect retained by the CC WC LLC team, discussed his plan of sensitive reconstruction. Whereby, proportions and style of the newly constructed building will be in replica format of WC's original intended style. This decision of replica vs. restoration followed from a review of the current issues of Marian Court's maintenance and additions.

Things planned to be retained include:

1) On the exterior, existing features such as round windows on the 2<sup>nd</sup> fl, metal gates from the front door, 4 windows/transoms on the exterior.

Bringing back original features, newly rebuilt, such as a cupola, recreated more in line with original Little design vs. current iteration; columns, bases, capitals, roof shingles back to slate roof; returning to clapboard from the current aluminum siding on top of stucco; returning shutters, recreating chimneys.

2) Interior, preserving, and 'possibly' reusing 43 lighting fixtures, 6 fireplace surrounds, interior doors/transoms (except for the single plan glass not up to code), paintings in the dining room with crack on canvas which is attached to wall. (Team is talking to the MFA on how to rescue and preserve these canvases). Marble floor may be reused or may be replicated; niches in the chapel and other areas may be replicated or reused.

Tom clarified a question from the audience that the building will be all new, fully torn down, nothing restored from the original structure, but a fully, all newly build structure, which had not been clear to some of the public audience, given the references to 'replica.'

At around 8:10, Bill Travascio opened up the hearing to questions or comments from the public in attendance.

Jessica Herbert, who is chair of the HC in Salem, who was attending as an individual in support of

preserving, reuse of the WC original building. Her family hails from Swampscott, and she is concerned about the plan of 'recreation' and 'replication' of such an historic building and part of Swampscott's history. She discussed and suggested the idea of 'peer review' of the designed plans, as something quite common in the realm of development for historic properties. She presumed a peer review of the plans would be done. She relays the success of adaptive reuse in Salem for their historic properties, which has been highly successful in maintaining historic integrity and reuse, and also, more profitable than a tear down, demo and replication. She can document the profitability of historic reuse and renovation of historic properties as a comparison to CC WC LLC's claim of needing a tear down for profitability of the 18 new condo units. Salvaging pieces she says, is a false narrative, and does not do anything to preserve the historic value of the building itself. Is the underground parking the reason to take away the foundation of the WC original building, and necessitate the tear down? She asked. In follow up, she offered her services pro bono to the WC developers to advise on architectural design that could accomplish restoration and accommodate their goal of condo units.

Walter Herbert, banker and brother of Jessica, spoke about funding real estate projects. And although had no comment re the aesthetics of the WC design, from a financial side, he was curious to know the costs of the demo/restructure vs. a restore and adapt. He felt that not enough info had been provided to justify to the public or make conclusive comment about the absoluteness of the tear down as the only viable option.

Sargent McCormick next asked a question to the town leaders in attendance (Don Hause, Angela Ippolitto) on why the town dropped the ball in acquiring the property from the sisters themselves. Don's reply was that the town determined it was not financially feasible for the town to purchase the WC property, and could not pursue the option.

Angela Ippolitto, member of the planning board, but at the hearing as an individual, said that as a resident of the town, she had much familiarity with the property.

She became a trustee of WC in 2013 with the goal from the town for her as trustee to try to influence the Sister's property maintenance, which they were not interested in pursuing with care re historic preservation. They were just about the school and maintenance of the building, in whatever fashion they chose to maintain the school needs, without any care or concern toward preservation of the historic aspects or value of the building. Angela seemed to be critical of the Sisters neglect, and supportive of the CC WC team's plans for the replica, without consideration of reuse.

Sandy Kritz (sp?), a resident on Little's Point, was supportive of the design of the WC replica, and was most concerned about maintaining the footprint of the current building and the integrity of the landscape.

Jer of the Historic District Commission, speaking as an individual, raised the perspective that the WC property is a national preservation goal, not just a Swampscott treasure. Given President Coolidge's use of WC as a summer White House, WC is not just a Swampscott 'cause' it is a national cause, and this also takes into account the style and relevance of Little as architect. Jer commented that in similar projects, material preservation is typical. He doesn't fully understand why the 'frame' has to be torn down and then built back up or recreated as a replica. Why not adapt and reuse the existing frame?

Ken Shutzer, a local lawyer who had represented the Capt'n Jack's and Greenwood School preservation projects, and the failure to garner support for the preservation of those buildings...he spoke of the typical pressure and use of fear by developers to convince people that historic buildings 'have to be torn down,' as the only way for a project to move forward. Indicating that things could be worse than the proposal at hand is part of the fear tactics often used by developers. He uses Old Ironsides as an example, where replacing and restoring, still maintains the original Old Ironsides. Words like adaptive preservation vs. words like replica, recreation. You cannot replicate history with a recreation; you can't rebuild history, that is what the SHC is charter with,

	<p>protecting and preserving history in Swampscott.</p> <p>Andrew Steingeiser (sp?) an architect, and member of historic district commission, at the hearing as an individual, was concerned about the lack of documentation from the developers and designer and could not see in anything presented, why the frame can't be reused. He says that the HC should be able to review the plan documentation and see why the building cannot be reused.</p> <p>Lastly, Jonathan, Leeman (?) advocated for a restoration vs. a recreation. He is from the National Society for Historic Preservation, and a member for many years. He felt it was originally presented in the Fall/Dec 2017 news article, that preservation and restoration had been the stated goal of the WC developer team. He felt that the deviation from that goal affected many residents' perception of the projects. Replica's are for Disneyland.</p> <p>A question was asked of the SHC re the demo delay. Bill Travascio replied that the 9-month demo delay beings with the Apr 3, 2018 SHC team determination. Jessica Herbert took this opportunity to again offer her services, skills pro bono to the WC developer/design team for a peer review, siting her 30 yrs experience in historic development and preservation in Salem.</p>
<u>ADJOURNMENT:</u>	8:50 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Barry  
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