

**VILLAGE REVIEW BOARD
APRIL 8, 2013**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Emily Swan, Vice Chair Brooks Stoddard, Jane Crichton, and Betsy Marr

STAFF PRESENT: Anna Breinich

A meeting of the Village Review Board was held on Monday April 8, 2013 at the Municipal Meeting Facility at Brunswick Station, 16 Station Ave. Chair Emily Swan called the meeting to order at 7:15 P.M.

Case #VRB 13-004 – 22 Cleaveland Street – The Board will review and make a recommendation to the Planning Board regarding a Certificate of Appropriateness for Demolition application submitted by Bowdoin College to demolish a combined structure at 2 Cleaveland Street/78 Federal Street (Map U8, Lot 095). A Site Walk was previously held by the Board on March 22, 2013.

Anna Breinich introduced the application which Bowdoin College submitted for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of 22 Cleaveland Street/78 Federal Street in the Village Review Overlay Zone and the National Register Federal Street Historic District. Anna stated that the buildings are a 1-1/2 story Cape that fronts on Cleveland Street and a Greek Revival style dwelling that fronts on Federal Street. Anna reminded that Board that their role at this meeting is to provide a recommendation based on the demolition criteria of the zoning ordinance that will be forwarded to the Planning Board for demolition approval.

Don Berkowski, Director of Capital Projects for Bowdoin College, reiterated that the property consisted of two separate structures originally and at some time after the designation of the Federal Historic District, the structures were joined with the addition of some outbuildings. Don stated that Bowdoin College took ownership of the building in 2007 and noted that it was in disrepair; Bowdoin tried to stabilize the building and prevent further damage. Don stated that at this time they conducted hazardous materials abatement and removed a few of the collapsing chimneys. Don stated that the current plan is to remove the structures and stated that roughly a year ago the College met with Kurt Mohney of the Maine Historic Preservation Society and conducted a walkthrough of the buildings. Kurt agreed with the level of disrepair and asked Bowdoin to pay homage to the buildings in their future plans; Bowdoin believes that their current plan reflects this request. Don stated that once the buildings are removed, they plan to retain the granite perimeter foundation wall around the two structures and possibly etch in stone the address and dates. Bowdoin plans to landscape the area with a gravel courtyard, some low level native plantings and several trees to create a buffer to Rhodes Hall. Don stated that the plan is to keep the area a lawn area that looks as though it belongs with 80 Federal Street; they would replace the existing driveway with a five foot path and reorient the parking lot so that vehicles park in the easterly direction with the entrance to the driveway off of Cleveland Street. Don stated that the area will be similarly landscaped as the area of 75 Federal Street.

Emily Swan, referring to the engineering study that was conducted when Bowdoin purchased the house, asked Don Berkowski what Bowdoin's original intention was. Don Berkowski replied that in the beginning they were unsure of exactly what they were going to do with the structure but noted that it was a strategic location. However, once they saw the level of disrepair it was clear that the structure was not viable. Emily noted that in reviewing the engineers report, it appears that buildings C, D & E are in the worst condition with the original structure in fair condition; Emily asked if there was any possibility of saving the oldest building. Don replied that the primary problem with the buildings is the way they were framed and undersized, he noted that the foundation wall has caved in on the Federal Street side and there was no regard to structure when electrical additions or plumbing additions were made. Jane Crichton noted that she was unable to attend the site visit but noticed that there were no pictures of what the structure looked like on the first or second floor included in the application; Don replied that he believed that there were photos in the original application. Jane asked if there were any important pieces such as mantels; Don replied that interior photos were included in the original application and stated that there were not significant fabrics of the original structure. Emily replied that she did not remember any significant pieces. Betsy Marr replied that the house was divided up and there was no semblance of the original structure. Emily asked if the park would be open to the public; Don replied that it will be.

Chair Emily Swan opened the meeting to public hearing.

Claudia Knox stated that what she had to say does not directly apply to this project but rather to the process and referred to her statement as attached.

Andrew Rudalevige, resident of 76 Federal Street, stated the he does not vehemently oppose the demolition request but does not fully support demolition either. Andrew stated that his concern is in regards to future oversight of maintenance and hopes that it will be maintained as nice as the College President's house at 75 Federal Street.

Tricia Welsh, resident of 15 Cleaveland Street, stated that she does not vehemently oppose the demolition but that she is not excited about it either. Tricia stated that she would really like Bowdoin College to not acquire any more buildings than it plans to use as it dramatically changes the character of the neighborhood. Tricia stated that they lost a house at one end of Cleveland Street to a parking lot and now they will be losing these two houses to a park. Tricia stated that there are only a few houses left where neighbors live as many of the remaining houses are student housing.

Chair Emily Swan closed the public hearing.

Betsy Marr stated that she hopes that Bowdoin intends to landscape per the illustrations provided and noted that other approvals have resulted in less landscaping than originally planned. Don Berkowski replied that they plan to landscape as designed as it is already funded for this project and they have already put out bids.

Emily Swan asked what the outcome was with the neighborhood meetings that Bowdoin had. Katie Longley replied that the meeting was sparsely attended and the main concern was that the

park not have a place for kids to skateboard or that it be a place to just hang out; Katie stated that she has spoken to some of the neighbors about the number of benches and they plan to move slowly and phase them in.

Emily Swan referred to Anna Breinich's letter to the Board dated April 4, 2013 and noted the Basis for demolition criteria to be considered in the Demolition Standards:

1. The significance of the structure proposed for demolition as evidenced by the status as listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Board members agreed that these two buildings were contributing structures. This recommendation carried unanimously 4-0

2. The condition of the structure provided that the applicant has not contributed significantly to the deterioration of the structure.

Board members agreed that the buildings are in poor condition. Emily Swan pointed out that in the application it noted that there was no real maintenance by the previous owner. Emily noted that Bowdoin attempted to revitalize the building by doing hazmat abatement, removing the collapsing chimneys and etc. Betsy Marr replied that in reviewing the engineers report she was surprised they are still standing. This recommendation carried unanimously 4-0

3. The availability of permitted alternative uses of the structure that would maintain its economic viability

Emily Swan noted that the engineers recommendation is demolition and to renovate it would cost would be too excessive. Anna Breinich noted that MHPC also concluded that the cost to renovate would be excessive. This recommendation carried unanimously that the Board concurs with the finding of MHPC 4-0

MOTION BY BETSY MARR TO RECOMMEND TO THE PLANNING BOARD THAT THEY APPROVE THE DEMOLITION OF 22 CLEVELAND STREET. SECONDED BY BROOKS STODDARD, APPROVE UNANIMOUSLY.

Jane Crichton stated that demolition comes with extreme regret and she feels that they need to be proactive in preventing deterioration of contributing structures. Brooks Stoddard replied that it is going to create a big hole to the area and feels that changes could have been made earlier to prevent the deterioration; Brooks asked that Bowdoin do a good photographic record the structure.

Historic Preservation Month Event Planning

Emily Swan stated that they are set for the May 18th tour; Emily will get publication materials to Jennifer Blanchard of the Pejepscot Historical Society. Emily stated that the photo contest will be at the Visitors Center and stated that she has been working with Jennifer about pulling together before and after photographs of Maine Street businesses. Discussion on businesses

placing photographs of original storefronts in their buildings; Brooks Stoddard to research location of old photographs.

Staff Approvals Update

- 8 Gilman Avenue: Removal of outer staircase and incorporating staircase inside the building; no exterior work other than to replace doors with windows.
- 80 Maine Street: Anna Breinich noted that the windows on the top floor will look the same across; two double hung and one solid.

Minutes

No minutes were reviewed at this meeting.

Other Business

No other business.

Adjourned

This meeting was adjourned at 7:44 P.M.

Attest



Tonya D. Jenusaitis
Recording Secretary

Claudia Knox - Attachment

Village Review Board and Planning Board meetings April 2013

You are working on a new ordinance an important part of which will clarify the standards for ruling on demolition applications. That will be better for applicants. And better for the Village Review Board and the Planning Board. But will it be better for the community?

We can often see these things coming a mile away. The building is empty. It's being neglected. The owner - perchance the college or the church or the Town - wants the land and not the building. But by the time the owner comes forward with a demolition request, it's too late to find an alternative solution. The owner by then is in a hurry.

The owner may offer to salvage, post a 'take it away for free' sign on the building and a notice in the paper. There will be a park, or parking, and maybe we'll like it if we're lucky. All of that is too late and many thousands of dollars too short. And the public interest, the public's irrevocable loss, is not addressed. This problem is NOT going away. The college has 4-5 other buildings it considers a burden - excess inventory that don't earn their keep. The historic fire station at Town Hall Place is at risk from the Town and the Fire Department.

Some of these buildings, those that are still sound, could have a fighting chance if we built in time to put together alternative solutions, a package that might draw a new owner into a transaction that makes financial sense. **How might we use our ordinance to marry the interests of demolition-minded owners with the interests of the preservation-minded public??**

1. We can require owners to file a non-binding notice of intent to apply for demolition a minimum of 18 months prior to the actual application. That would get the public conversation going so that serious people could test real options.
2. We can require owners to escrow the cost of demolition and removal as part of a relocation package to help with moving, or, if all else fails to act as surety for the completion of promised landscaping, parking, or other site improvements.
3. We can offer a two-year tax holiday on the structure in its new location if it is moved to allow time for renovation. We could offer a tax holiday to offset added costs for reusing the building in its original place as part of a renovation and repurposing project. This incentive would defray costs while the building is out of service and make it easier for an owner to acquire funding.

None of this would apply, of course, when fire or calamity motivates the demo application – but those aren't the ones we agonize over anyway. Saving unwanted, neglected, but historically contributing buildings will always be a long shot, and we will fail more often than succeed. But we must build into our ordinance a better chance for success.

Let me be very clear: owners have the right, the obligation for that matter, to pursue their interests. The public has interests too. And they are different. The loss of such buildings is rarely, perhaps never, in the public interest. **The challenge is to marry the interests of owners that want to rid themselves of buildings they don't want, with the public's interest in preserving those buildings.** Time is an enemy – we must build in time. Cost is a factor – we must try to balance the economic equation, to build in incentives. Our new ordinance must reflect the public interest because that, in the past, has not had a place at the table.