

Town of Stockbridge Historic Preservation Commission
Minutes of Meeting
July 30, 2018

The Town of Stockbridge Historic Preservation Commission held a public meeting at the Town Offices on Monday, July, 2018, beginning at 4:30 PM. Present from the Commission were Gary Johnston, Jorja Marsden, Jay Rhind, Pam Sandler, Carl Sprague, and Peter Williams. Mr. Sprague presided over the meeting. The meeting's agenda, date, time and place were duly posted by the Town Clerk at the Town Offices at least two business days in advance of the meeting.

29 East Street

The primary matter on the agenda was an Application for Demolition with respect to the house at 29 East Street (“the Crosby House”). The application was submitted by owner High Lawn Realty, LLC (“HLR”). No one from HLR attended the meeting. Mr. Williams, Secretary of the Commission, advised that he had left two voice messages on the voice mail of Roberto Laurens, principal of HLR, whose name and telephone number are listed on the application, advising him of the date, time and place of the meeting.

The Commission reviewed HLR’s application, which listed “Conditions requiring demolition” and appended a 2-page summary of the Crosby House, prepared by O’Connor Real Estate Associates, Inc., a Westfield, Massachusetts realtor. The summary identifies the house as the “Field Mouse House Caretaker” house and notes that “Dwelling was originally the caretaker’s residence for the abutting dwelling known as the Field Mouse House.” (As described below, the Commission heard public comment to this effect later during the meeting.) The summary further states:

Dwelling overall judged to be in fair to poor condition. Porch on the outside is falling down on one side of the house and is in need of repair. Soffit boards are rotted in some areas. Exterior also in need of paint. Domestic water provided by a spring which also serves the abutting “Field Mouse House.”

The Commission then heard from Richard Jackson, a Stockbridge historian. Mr. Jackson confirmed and elaborated on the statements in the application that the Crosby House is the former house of the caretaker of the abutting Frederick Field House. Mr. Jackson described that Lila Sloane, who had been given High Lawn Farm by her parents (and had married William Field) had given each of their two sons a house on the farm – the Field Mouse House having been the house given to son Frederick Field. Mr. Jackson confirmed that the Crosby House was the house of the caretaker of the Field Mouse House.

The Commission next reviewed the records of the Massachusetts Historical Commission (“MHC”) with regard to the Crosby House. The Crosby House is MHC Inventory No. STO.498. The inventory form (Exhibit A hereto) identifies the historic name for the House as the Crosby House and it lists the House as having been constructed circa 1900 and having architectural significance. The form references STO.I, the MHC area form for East Street (South), for more information.

MHC Area Form STO.I (Exhibit B hereto) makes several references to the Crosby House. In describing the architecture of the East Street South area, the Form states:

[T]hree small houses on the north end of the street are turn of century or early 20th

century buildings. The oldest is a small, deeply set front-gabled story and a half house with hip-roofed porch (29 East St, #498).

Under “Historical Narrative” STO.I states:

The owners of the High Lawn Farm estate in Lee acquired the houses at 29 and 31 East Street (#s 498, 441) and many acres of fields and woods to their north in the turn of century years. The Crosby family (29 East St., #498) may have been their employees; members of the Crosby family had lived in two houses on a northern parcel acquired by the estate...

STO.I also lists the Crosby House on its “Area Data Sheet” and includes a photograph of the House. On its National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form, STO.I states that the East Street (South) area is a Potential Historic District, stating in part:

The East Street (South) neighborhood is significant as it reflects the evolution of a rural Stockbridge neighborhood from the Federal period to the early 20th century. Houses and outbuildings from a period of agricultural prosperity early in the century remain....

The Commission then reviewed Town Bylaw Article XXII, Historic Preservation and Demolition Delay. The Commission noted that the bylaw in Section 2.6.1 defines “Significant Historic Building” as one “listed on, or is a contributing Building within an area listed on the National Register of Historic Places or is the subject of a pending application for such listing, or is eligible for such listing.”

Ms. Marsden stated that the House is of historic significance. Mr. Williams noted that the House falls clearly within the Bylaw’s definition of a Significant Historic Building, having been found by the MHC to be contributing to the East Street (South) potential historic district. Ms. Sandler and Mr. Rhind noted that, according to the applicant’s own application, the House is not in irreparable condition.

Mr. Sprague made a motion that the Crosby House is a Significant Historic Building as defined in Section 2.6 of Article XXII of the Town Bylaws in that it contributes to the potential historic district defined in STO.I. The motion passed 5-0 with one member, Mr. Johnston, abstaining.

Minutes

The Commission unanimously approved the draft minutes of its meeting of June 12, 2018.

Adjournment

The Commission adjourned the meeting at 5:05 PM.

Dated: Stockbridge, Massachusetts
August 12, 2018

Peter C. Williams
Peter C. Williams, Secretary

