

Braintree Historical Commission
Minutes
Wednesday, June 26, 2019
Johnson Chambers – Braintree Town Hall

Present: Elizabeth Mees (Chair) Ronald F. Frazier Rayna Rubin

Also Present: Ron Marshall, General Counsel, Hollingsworth Pond, LLC,
Rob St. John, Planning Director, Hollingsworth Pond, LLC
Karl Youkstetter, Earth Exchange Inc. (Demo contractor)
Christine Stickney, Director of Planning and Community Development

7PM Meeting convened

**Public Hearing – Demolition Delay Request – Hollingsworth Pond LLC – 0 Hancock Street
Former Hollingsworth/Stedman/Armstrong facility**

Scope of Project: Proposed of demolition of approximately 173,000 SF of buildings constructed between the years of 1882 and 1956 of various sizes, materials and for different functions located on the west side of the complex.

Members introduced themselves and Chair Elizabeth Mees read the legal notice published in the Patriot Ledger and mailed to abutters to the site. Rob St. John, Planning Director for Hollingsworth Pond, LLC presented the project to the Commission referring to the “Cultural Resources Survey – Monaquot River Restoration Armstrong and Ames Pond Dam Removals” dated October 2018, Revised March 2019 prepared by The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. of Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Rob St. John noted this process commenced as a result of the new Ordinance and that they sought a demolition permit on June 6, 2019 and realized they were subject to the new Ordinance.

Rob St. John explained that Hollingsworth Pond LLC has been working with the MA Division of Fisheries, NOAA and the Town of Braintree on a joint project that proposes to remove the existing dam to restore the fish run up to Great pond. Currently the buildings on the west side of the site have been vacant for a number of years and have become a public safety issue requiring the structures to be taken down. The building housing the Bayshore Health Club and the Registry of Motor Vehicles are not scheduled at this time for demolition. Using aerial photography, Rob St. John pointed out the buildings to be demolished and explained the restoration work to be performed within and adjacent to the river. Currently plans associated with the project are at the 40% design phase moving towards 100% with assistance from grant funds the proponents had been awarded. A sewer line that services the property is need of relocation to connect to the remaining buildings. Ron Marshall, General Counsel of Hollingsworth Pond LLC, noted that a few years back the site experienced a fire and substantial vandalism and at that time the Town instructed the owners to take the buildings down. Issues with hazardous materials within the buildings have taken a lot time to address before they could be demolished. The Public Archaeology Laboratory (PAL) was brought on board as a requirement of the grant funding to document and categorize the structures involved in the project, including extensive photography before demolition. A copy of the PAL survey still underway was provided to the BHC as part of the documentation for the demolition permit. Ron Marshall noted that all of the photography will be digitized and available to the Town. Chair Mees questioned if the hazardous material remediation work has been completed and Ron responded it is about 90% done there still remains some issues with the large smoke stack which can't

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be addressed until down. Chair Mees asked for further clarification of the 40% design and Rob St. John responded the plans and specifications for the fish passage, removal of hazardous materials in the millpond bottom and limited work on the banks that will be encapsulated all to support the re-creation of the original river bed and ecological system in the area.

Chair Mees asked if a structural engineer had performed any assessment of the buildings to see if they could be saved or portions of them. Rob St. John said the buildings couldn't be saved because they do not meet today's seismic regulations and they have wooden roofs limiting their potential re-use. Rob St. John did note that when they took ownership of the property they were given a number of the original building plans and they would be happy to donate them to the Town or Braintree Historical Society. Chair Mees asked if there were any portions, perhaps a wall or feature that could be preserved and become part of the future development plans to preserve some of the site's history. Ron Marshall noted that the project includes the development of public access via a trail that will have interpretative signage and perhaps in addition to the ecological features the Historical Commission could work to include some of the historical significance of the site. Chair Mees agreed this is a good idea but she stressed that it is always concerning to lose a portion of history and in the re-use of the property can incorporate any of the masonry wall would be a good thing. She cited another project at Elm and Adams Street where this was successful done. Rob St. John commented that to leave walls standing with no structural support could be problematic however he was willing to meet members on site to look and see if at all possible. Chair Mees agreed that would be a good thing to do because a wholesale demolition without looking at first means it is gone forever.

Rayna Rubin asked about the dam and the removal of it from the river, she wondered if there was any way to keep a portion – perhaps the sides. Rob St. John commented that there is not much historical features to the dam it is more just a large chunk of concrete and the photography could be worked into the interpretative signage and the public access. Ron Marshall hears the BHC concerns and they will put more thought into seeing if they can preserve anything. Chair Mees told of her experience visiting the Washington Navy Yard and some of the things they were able to accomplish as ideas. Rob St John felt confident the BHC will be pleased with PAL's works documenting the entire project. She asked if they would be doing a preservation plan for the buildings and Rob commented that they have also been doing the buildings and will have another survey on the actual buildings and he will make sure the BHC is included with a copy. Chair Mees noted that would be one of the conditions if they were to approve that the BHC would obtain a copy.

Ron Frazier commented that he had walked the site and taken pictures and has no objection to the demolition. Rayna Rubin feels we need good documentation and if any relics we could incorporate would be great. Ron Marshall suggests a member of the BHC work with the other Town folks as to the interpretative displays – Rayna Rubin volunteered. Chair Mees asked if they know the actual activity that went on each building and Rob St. John commented no but they found building plans dating back to 1938 it may be a case of an oral history from older residents that may have worked at the facility. Ron Frazier noted a few folks he knew. The Chair arranged to visit the site on 6/27/19 at 2pm to walk with Hollingsworth Pond LLC.

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Ron Frazier **MOTION** to recommend approval for the issuance of the demolition permit conditional on the following:

- 1) A site visit by members with Hollingsworth Pond LLC representatives to investigate any possible preservation of structure or any element of the historic fabric;
- 2) A copy when completed by PAL of the full report that is a compilation of all buildings and structures and land development with digital photos both interior and exterior and including any architectural plans
- 3) To participate with the public access design and interpretative displays along the public access.

Seconded by Rayna Rubin, unanimously voted (3:0)

Ron Frazier **MOTION** to close the public hearing, seconded by Rayna Rubin – unanimously voted

Other Matters:

The minutes were tabled until the September meeting.

Christine informed the members the Braintree Historical Society obtained funding for the replacement roof on the G.S Thayer birthplace and a donation from a private party. Discussion ensued on the need for a Certificate of Appropriateness and they will be notified of the need to submit for one.

Christine mentioned she has had the All Souls Church in and they are seeking CPA funding for some restoration work and would like to meet with the BHC to get support for their CPA application – she will invite them to the September meeting.

Ron Frazier had prepared a handout showing the current conditions of the remaining stones at the Elm Street cemetery and he also noted that shingles have been dumped at the cemetery and he feels they came from the building under construction adjacent to the cemetery – Christine said they would look into to it and he also commented on the condition of the grassed areas within the cemetery and their lack of attention.

Rayna Rubin **MOTION** to adjourn, seconded by Ron Frazier – unanimously voted.
Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Stickney, Director
Planning and Community Development