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Brookline Preservation Commission
MINUTES OF THE July 1, 2021 MEETING
Held Virtually using Zoom Online Software

Commissioners Present:

David Jack
David King
Wendy Ecker
Elton Elperin, Chair
John Spiers
Peter Kleiner
Elizabeth Armstrong, Alternate

Commissioners Absent:

Richard Panciera, Vice Chair

Staff: Valerie Birmingham, Tina McCarthy

Mr. Elperin called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

PUBLIC HEARING – LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Hart’s Content Local Historic District – Petition from the neighborhood requesting that the Preservation Commission form a study committee to explore establishing a local historic district on Hart Street. The following addresses are proposed to be included in the district:
Hart Street #4,6,7,8,9,10,11,14,16,17,18,19,20,21

Ms. McCarthy introduced the study report and applicants.

Meighan Rock explained reasons for preserving the neighborhood.

Anne Lusk introduced the study report.

Public Comment

Alex Neary – not developers, house is not livable. One request – leave us out of the LHD. Process is unfair, you need 100% support. The only thing this preserves is a dispute. Claims that there was improper noticing of meeting, due to the additional Cypress St address for one of the Hart St. buildings.

Virginia Smith – charming street. This is affordable housing, historically. For HHR & this.

Yanping Li – 19 Hart Street. So lovely, love community.

David Hansel – address is 264 Cypress Street. Resident at 4 Hart Street side, moved to 4 Hart from across the street.

47
48 Wendy Machmuller, TMM 5 – appreciate Alex’s passion but is misguided. Looked at plans.
49 Treasure of a street. History is interesting like White Place. Like to see integrity preserved.

50
51 Judy Burnim – live at 21 Hart Street, 30 years. We have maintained social history as well as
52 homes, socializing in street. Shocked by plans, don’t belong on this street. This proposal has
53 caused social disruption on street.

54
55 Xi Neary– we have not called anyone a racist. Some neighbors were great. After we said we
56 cannot renovate people made comments about Chinese people. People said they would fight our
57 design. People called us developers. We are a protected class. Should have 80%. Divisive
58 issue. The landlords count. People were pressured into supporting. People threatened our
59 family.

60
61 Claire Wolf – cannot respond to Xi’s comments. These have been called affordable homes. That
62 is how we got our house. Preserving this kind of house is really important, to keep affordable
63 homes.

64
65 Jiantao Ma, resident 19 Hart – my family is Chinese, never felt uncomfortable here. Never said
66 we were pressured.

67
68 Meighan Rock – initial interactions with Nearys were good. Progress is good. Feedback was
69 that plans were oversized. Alex said nothing would be changed. Additions are common in
70 neighborhood. Immigrants from 4 different countries on the street. Upset by Xi’s experience,
71 apologize if anything she said contributes.

72
73 Anne Lusk – 1900 is a standard “old house” date. Alex & Xi were great at first. We welcome
74 them. Alex bought it because it was cheapest lot.

75
76 Judith Burnim – want to refute what Xi said about racism. Very sorry they feel discriminated
77 against.

78
79 Charles Tynan – grew up on bottom of Hart Street. District is too small and should be enlarged
80 to include Cypress Street. I own affordable housing in Boston and Maine.

81
82 Commission

83 Mr. Elperin – been thinking about this. Really a shame if we didn’t try. Workers’ housing
84 should be preserved, the form of the street and houses.

85
86 Ms. Ecker – concerned with controversy, cites the neighborhood’s disastrous zoom meeting. We
87 should study it. Try to keep peace.

88
89 Ms. Armstrong – enjoyed the Study Report. No reservations except percentage. Respect but not
90 swayed by numbers analysis. Controversial and below 80%.

91

92 Mr. Spiers – concerned about support, does not seem to be overwhelming. This is about bad
93 plans. Architectural features have changed and LHD may change community. This may not be
94 the right time.
95
96 Mr. King – report was excellent. Unusual elements in neighborhood that are unique. Merits
97 study. More historic than many of our historic districts. Lawrence failed with higher percentage
98 in favor. In favor of Study Committee.
99
100 Mr. Jack – want to try to save this street. Want the 80%. Should form the study committee.
101
102 Mr. Kleiner – fascinating neighborhood, tells a great story. LHD would be perfect. Interested
103 in making this appropriate to street. Want to keep this affordable.
104
105 Mr. Batchelor – look at history of White Place. Satisfactory discussions on White Place.
106
107 Mr. Kleiner – all kinds of additions allowed.
108
109 Mr. King – antipathy toward preservation because we want more districts. But the districts come
110 from the residents. That is why we look for 80%. Motion form study committee to develop
111 study report and assess neighborhood support.
112
113 Mr. Elperin – appoints Ms. Armstrong to vote for Mr. Panciera.
114
115 Ms. Armstrong – the study committee will require time.
116
117 Mr. Batchelor – the importance of simple workers housing.
118
119 Mr. Kleiner – is O/R LHD at 80%?
120 Staff reply- No.
121
122 John Spiers – it is not the right tool.
123
124 Ms. Armstrong – both projects are unusual. Town Meeting is not friendly to preservation.
125
126 Mr. Elperin – seconds the motion
127
128 Mr. King – yes, Mr. Jack – yes, Ms. Ecker – yes, Mr. Kleiner – yes, Ms. Armstrong – yes. Mr.
129 Batchelor – no, Mr. Elperin – yes.
130
131 Ms. Ecker on subcommittee; Mr. Elperin on subcommittee. Mr. King as well.
132
133
134
135 Meeting adjourned at 8:43 PM.