

Marshfield Historical Commission Minutes

Hearing of 9-5-17 on Pratt Property, 172 South River Street

Demolition permit

Meeting called to order at 7PM in Hearing Room 3 at the Town Hall. Attending were Otis Carney, Alfred Almeida, Jim O’Gara, Cindy Castro, Michelle Campion and Norma Haskins.

Otis announced that the Historical Commission has already voted that this building and barn are historically significant to the Town. The Town has requested a demolition permit. Attending for the Town is Mr. Rocco Longo, Town Administrator. Mr. Longo explained that there are no funds available to restore historical properties. All available funds have diminished. The Demo Delay Bylaw is available online for anyone who would like to see it. The building is in disrepair and significant vandalism has occurred. The building is an attractive nuisance and a fire hazard. This is a 37 acre parcel and 35 acres are open space. They open to demolish the buildings to make all 37 acres open space. The Town has no staff to maintain the building and no public use for the building. He encouraged demolition for both buildings.

John Valiant spoke in favor of saving this historical property. He encouraged putting it up for auction so someone could restore it.

Samantha Crowley spoke at length in favor of preserving the buildings. She suggested Habitat for Humanity or housing for family of addicts in rehab or a half-way house.

Susan Caron, past chair of Open Space, spoke in favor for demolition. She explained that this property has deed restrictions which would prohibit any of MS Crowley’s suggestions. Pratt family does not want any other building built on this property. She discussed the reasons for demolition. Goal for this property is to have a few changes as possible to be used for passive recreation only.

Tom Aylesworth, 85 Willow Street spoke. He lives right across the street. He commented on improvements already done to the property including the walking trails and the picnic area. He’s concerned about security in the neighborhood. The resources needed to preserve the buildings is immense. He feels the building should be demolished unless the Town can spend money on security. He will support whatever the Town decides.

Robin Mitchell- He asked if the building was determined to be historic at the time of the purchase. Otis said it was not. He asked if Massachusetts Historical Commission had been notified of this building. Otis explained we only came into this whole debate a month ago and have not notified them. Otis explained that the original owner of this property donated the ground to the Town that is now the Training Green and Town hall property. He also stated that the Marshfield Fair has expressed an interest in the barn. They would like to use it to display

historical tools and vehicles at the Fairgrounds. Rocco said they would like to sell the timbers in the barn to pay for the demolition of the house.

John Feeney asked if the Fair is interested in buying the barn. He then discussed why the Town had purchased the property and then not secured it. He was concerned that the Town has purchased several properties with houses on them and just left them.

Otis explained that the Pratt family has sent a letter waiving their rights so the building could be sold.

Bert O'Donnell spoke to the historical significance of the property. It used to be a salt hay farm. To use the house as a single family home would cause the loss of the historical significance.

Tom Whelan stated that Conservation report 1.6 acres could be sub-divided and he feels the best solution would be to subdivide and sell the house to be restored.

Robin Mitchell suggested house could be saved. Could be restored by men trained as conservators.

Otis suggested a subcommittee meet with the Board of Selectmen to discuss the outcome and ideas for the building.

Karen O'Donnell- Chair of Open Space Committee- Supports demolition. She explained open space views on Open Space and what it is used for.

Otis said if the 2 buildings are demolished the property will no longer be historical. Bert O'Donnell disagreed and said the 37 acre parcel would still be historical without the buildings. He suggested leaving a foundation so people could see where the building was.

Norma made a motion, seconded by Jim that the hearing be adjourned. It was voted and passed, unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Norma Haskins, Secretary