



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD HISTORICAL COMMISSION

133 William Street, New Bedford, Massachusetts 02740
Telephone: (508) 979.1488

MEMORANDUM

TO: New Bedford City Council
FROM: New Bedford Historical Commission
DATE: June 10, 2019
RE: **BUILDING DEMOLITION REVIEW**
2405 Acushnet Avenue (Map 127E Lot 179)
Circa 1860 wood-framed residence

CITY CLERKS OFFICE
NEW BEDFORD, MA
2019 JUN 10 P 3:39
CITY CLERK

In accordance with the requirements of the New Bedford City Code, Article XI, Section 2-157 Demolition of Buildings, the New Bedford Historical Commission [NBHC] has examined the structure located at the above-captioned site in order to determine its historical significance and whether it is in the public interest to preserve such structure.

The NBHC reviewed the application for demolition at its June 3, 2019 meeting, and hereby forwards its findings and recommendation in this matter to the New Bedford City Council:

- The structure has historic significance due to its relationship with the Spooner and Hawes families, the region's agricultural past, and the development of the northern section of the City near the Head of the River as a historic farming settlement. Due to recent demolitions, there exist fewer of these property types in this area of the city.
- The applicant, through his agent, has stated that rehabilitation of the existing structure would have challenges and be more costly than demolition and the subsequent new construction. The applicant has not stated or demonstrated that the structure is in poor condition or structurally unsound and has stated that the demolition is primarily for financial purposes.

In light of these findings, the New Bedford Historical Commission has determined that the structure at 2405 Acushnet Avenue is a historically significant and a preferably preserved structure.

cc: Jonathan Hawes Ritter, Applicant
Lockwood Architects, Applicant's Agent
Cynthia Hawes Ritter; Jonathan Hawes Ritter; Anne E. Ritter, Property Owners
Department of Inspectional Services
Mayor's Office



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD
Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development
133 William St, New Bedford, Massachusetts 02740
Telephone: (508) 979.1488

STAFF REPORT

NEW BEDFORD HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING

June 3, 2019

CASE # 2019.11: DEMOLITION REQUEST

2405 Acushnet Avenue (Map 127E Lot 179)

APPLICANT:

Jonathan Hawes Ritter
31 Wadsworth Lane
Dartmouth, MA 02748

OWNER:

Cynthia Hawes Ritter
Jonathan Hawes Ritter and Anne E. Ritter
31 Wadsworth Lane
Dartmouth, MA 02748

APPLICANT'S

Lockwood Architects

AGENT:

219 Onset Ave.
Onset, MA 02558



2405 Acushnet Avenue looking northwest

OVERVIEW: The applicant is seeking the demolition of this structure in order to erect a new single-family residence to sell for financial gain.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: The property is located on the west side of Acushnet Avenue, just north of Lund's and Ball's Corners in the northern section of the city. This neighborhood is zoned for residential use and consists primarily of single-family homes which were originally constructed over the last century as the rural farmsteads have been subdivided into house parcels.

The parcel of land on which this building is situated, along with one adjacent parcel to the north and two adjacent parcels to the south of the subject parcel, have been in the ownership of the Hawes family since 1927. In August 2017 the four (4) parcels were subdivided into thirteen (13) lots through an Approval Not Required (ANR) Plan under the State's Subdivision Control Law. The subdivision plan was prepared for Peter Hawes/Acushnet Saw Mills and is recorded at the Registry of Deeds in Plan Book 176, p.39. New houses are currently under construction on these new lots. ***Refer to following City Parcel Maps on p.5 to see lot subdivision.***

In 2018, the property owners sought demolition of a circa 1935 garage on the subject parcel as well as a circa 1911 shed on the adjacent north parcel. Both structures were determined to be neither "Historically Significant nor Preferably Preserved Structures" and have since been demolished.



The existing residential structure is a two-story wood framed building which has several ell additions typical of the 19th century, with the earliest section of the structure dating perhaps as early as 1828. The structure has a granite and rubble stone foundation with a partial dirt floor basement, the walls sheathed with cedar shingles and there is asphalt shingle roofing. All the original windows have been replaced, principally with two-over-two double hung sashes. The building is currently vacant and appears to be structurally sound.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: This portion of the city, adjacent to Acushnet Village and the "Head of The River", was a 19th century farming community with early settlers who established homesteads along with churches, schools, grist mills, forges, and blacksmith shops along the Acushnet River. This location and its history pre-dates Bedford Village by over a century, as it was one of the initial settlements of Old Dartmouth. Tarkiln Hill Road was originally the Native American footpath from Newport to Plymouth and this portion of Acushnet Avenue was originally named County Road and was often referred to the road to Freetown Forge. This area retained its rural character throughout the early twentieth century, until land was subdivided for housing. Uncharacteristically, the subject parcel and adjacent parcels which were under the common ownership of the Hawes family, retained their rural character with large lots and mature vegetation until their recent land subdivision.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission Inventory Form (NBE.571) attributes the initial builder on the property to Sargeant Booth, who constructed a building on this property in 1828. In 1829, Booth sold the home and land to Samuel Spooner (1806-1840) who resided there with his wife Harriet Cole Spooner (1794-1878) and daughter Mary O. Spooner (1830-1857). There is an assumption that the original Federal style building was added on to by Spooner. Samuel Spooner died in 1840, yet his wife retained ownership until the property was transferred to her sister-in-law Pamela Spooner Howard in 1860.

In 1853, Samuel and Harriet's daughter, Mary Spooner, married local farmer Seth Heard (1828-1890) and they resided in Acushnet. She died during childbirth in 1857 and Seth remarried in 1870, marrying Abbie H. Crocker Hoard (1826-1904). Two years prior to remarrying, Seth Hoard purchased the subject property in 1870 from his former mother-in-law's sister, Pamela Spooner Howard. Seth expanded his land by acquiring an adjacent parcel in 1871 from his neighbor Job Hathaway. It was most likely during this period time period in which the house was remodeled with Gothic style peaks and the south addition constructed.

Seth Howard died in 1890 and his wife Abbie died in 1904. The property remained in the Crocker/Hoard estate until it was purchased in 1927 by Frederick Blake Hawes and subsequently passed onto his descendants and current grandchildren.

Spooner Family

The Spooner family was an early settlement family in Old Dartmouth. William Spooner (1621-1684) came to Plymouth in 1637 as an indentured servant and moved to Acushnet, within the Old Dartmouth purchase, in 1660. The Spooner family became prolific in size, with William's descendants settling in Fairhaven, Acushnet and New Bedford. It is widely documented that William Spooner and his sons built the first mill in Dartmouth at Head of the River, in what is now Acushnet. The Spooners were a well respected farming family whose vast land holdings were primarily located north of Acushnet Village. In recent years several Spooner family residences along Acushnet Avenue have been demolished for the purposes of redevelopment. *Refer to following images on p.6 for reference.*

Hawes Family

The Hawes family migrated to New England in 1635 with Levi Hawes (1792-1880) settling on Tarkiln Hill in 1818. Levi amassed considerable property holdings through farming and land speculation. Levi's son, Captain Jonathan Capen Hawes (1826-1908) shipped out on whalers as a teenager, eventually becoming a Master Mariner until his retirement, at which time he became affiliated with the Acushnet Saw Mill, becoming a co-owner and its president.

Captain Hawes' son Frederick Blake Hawes (1863-1946) was born and raised at the family estate located at Lund's Coner (still extant) was also associated with the nearby Acushnet Saw Mill, first as an assistant and then as President in 1908, at which time the mill was cutting seven million feet of lumber annually. Frederick purchased the subject parcel of land in 1927, as he had ownership of the adjacent parcels on either side.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE: A portion of the building dates to 1828 and as typical of 19th century buildings, was added to with a rear kitchen ell. Prior to the 1860's Gothic style additions, the home was un-adorned and practical, constructed two rooms deep with shingle siding, simple trim work and a central chimney.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PLANS:

The applicant, Jonathan Hawes Ritter, has indicated within the application that rehabilitation of the residence is not financially feasible and would like permission to demolish the home and construct another single- family home to sell. The applicant is in the midst of rehabilitating the adjacent historic Reuben Washburn House, constructed in the same era as the subject property. As noted previously, the four parcels of land owned by the Hawes family were recently subdivided into thirteen lots and new construction has or is taking place.

STATEMENT OF APPLICABLE GUIDELINES: Sec. 2-157. Demolition Delay of Buildings and Structures-Purpose: The purpose of Sections 2-157 through 2-157.9 is preserving and protecting significant buildings and structures within New Bedford, which constitute or reflect distinctive features of the architectural, cultural, economic, political or social history of the City and limiting the detrimental effect of demolition on the character of the City. Through Sections 2-157 through 2-157.9, owners of Preferably Preserved Historic Buildings and Structures are encouraged to seek out alternative options that will preserve, rehabilitate or restore such buildings, and residents of the City are alerted to impending demolitions of significant buildings.

By preserving and protecting significant buildings, structures, streetscapes and neighborhoods, this Ordinance promotes the public welfare by making the City a more attractive and desirable place in which to live and work. To achieve these purposes, the New Bedford Historical Commission is authorized to advise the City Council with respect to demolition permit applications. The issuance of demolition permits is regulated as provided by this Ordinance.

The provisions of the Demolition Delay Ordinance shall apply only to any building or structure that, in whole or in part, was built seventy-five (75) or more years prior to the date of the application for the demolition permit, and is:

- A building or structure listed or eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or within an area listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or on the State Register of Historic Places;
- A building or structure importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, economic, political or social history of the city, or;
- A building or structure which is historically or architecturally significant in terms of period style, method of building construction or association with a significant architect or builder either by itself or as a part of a group of buildings, or;
- A building or structure located within one hundred fifty (150) feet of a federal, state or local historic district boundary.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The structure has historic significance due to its relationship with the Spooner and Hawes families, the region's agricultural past, and the development of the northern section of the City near the Head of the River. Due to recent demolitions, there exist fewer of these property types in this area of the city.

The applicant, through his agent, has stated that rehabilitation of the existing structure would have challenges and be more costly than demolition and the subsequent new construction. The applicant has not stated or demonstrated that the structure is in poor condition or structurally unsound and has stated that the demolition is primarily for financial purposes.

Staff recommends that the Historical Commission find the structure at 2405 Acushnet Avenue to be a Historically Significant and a Preferably Preserved Historic Building.



East Facade



West Facade

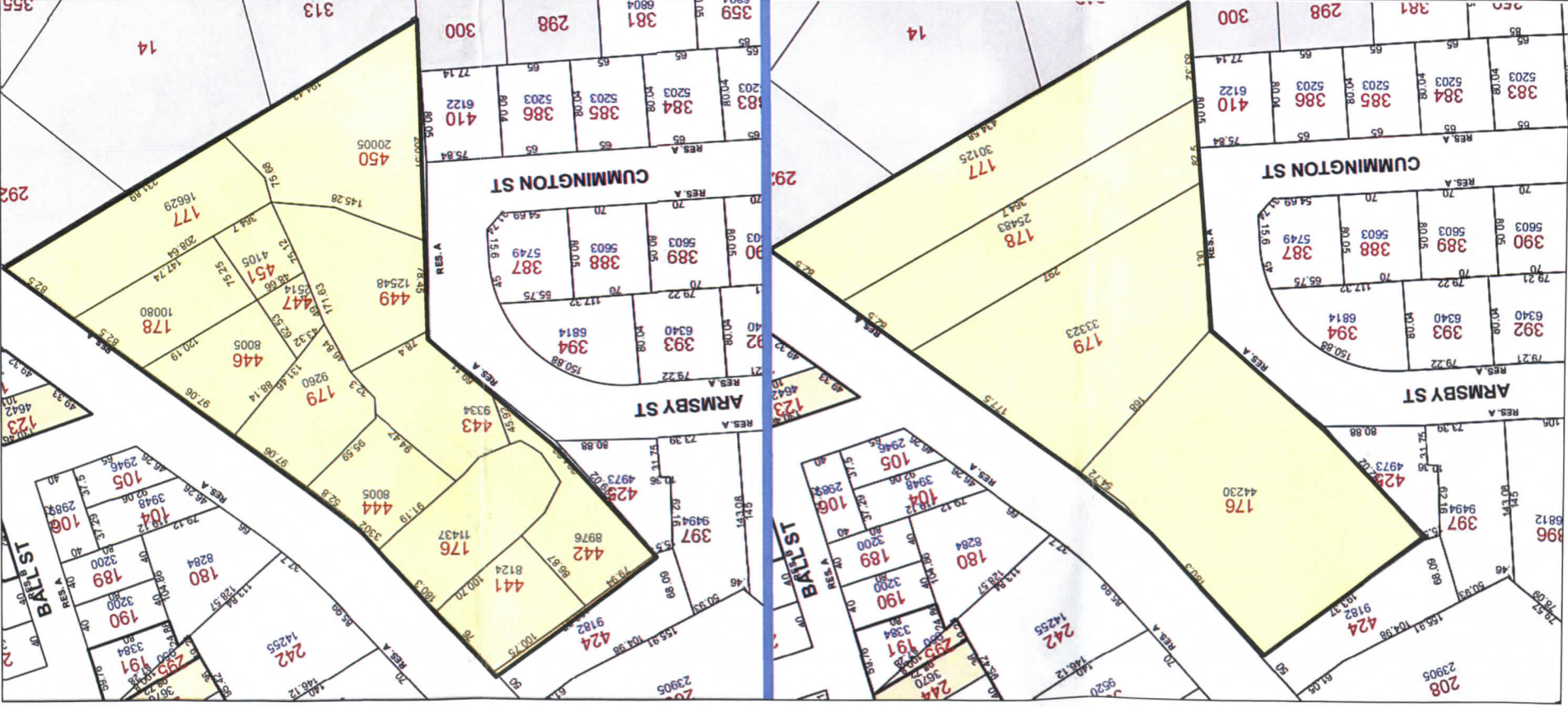


North Facade



South Facade

CITY PARCEL MAP 127E - 2017

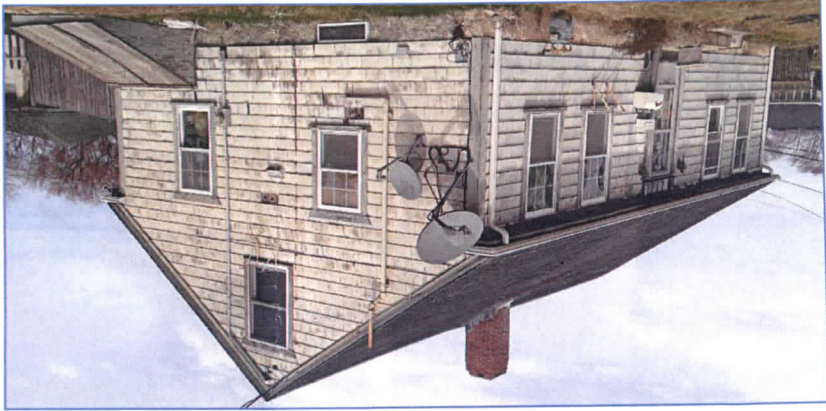


CITY PARCEL MAP 127E - 2019

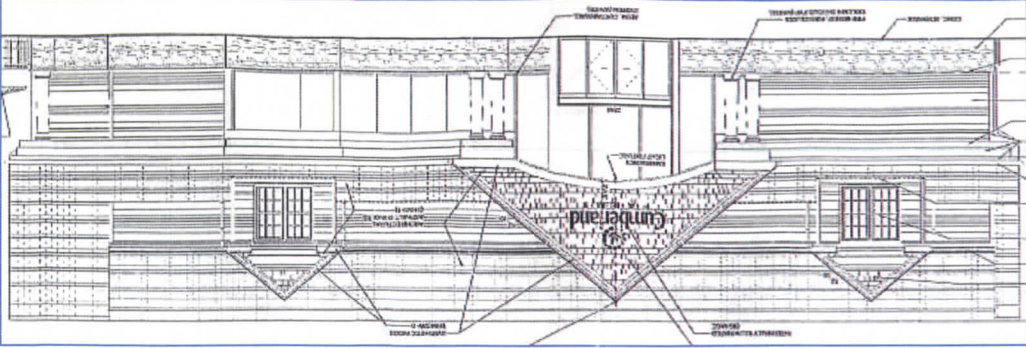
Recent Demolition & Redevelopment of Properties Associated with the Spooner Family



4026 Acushnet Avenue – 2014 Demolition Request



2992 Acushnet Avenue – 2014 Demolition Request



2904 & 2914 Acushnet Avenue – 2018 Demolition Request