

Hon. Kenneth J. Hopkins
Mayor

Stephen A. Torregrossa
Chair

Jason M. Pezzullo, MCP, MPA, AICP
City Planning Director



Eric Army
Vice-Chair

Jillian S. Finkle
Laura J. Kline
Michael A. Landry
Amy Ricci
Brent Wiegand

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

City Hall – 3rd Floor, Room 309
869 Park Avenue, Cranston, Rhode Island 02910

MINUTES

CITY HALL – 3RD FLOOR, CONFERENCE ROOM-CHANGED TO COUNCIL CHAMBERS

6:00PM – TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

The Historic District Commission Chair Stephen Torregrossa called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m. in the Council Chamber.

The following Commissioners were in attendance for the meeting: Commission Chair Stephen Torregrossa, Brent Wiegand, Jillian Finkle, Amy Ricci, and Michael Landry were present. Eric Army was absent.

The following members of the City Planning Department were in attendance: Beth Ashman, ACIP, Asst. Planning Director; Brianna Valcourt, Senior Planner; and Grace Brownell, Planner Technician.

REVIEW OF CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

- *Historic District:* Evangeliste Turgeon House
Location: 5 Turner Avenue | AP 18, Lot 451
Owner/Applicant: Pamela & John Laswon
Proposal: To remove the stack on top of the detached garage; to remove wooden siding and install new vinyl siding to the detached garaged which is designated as a priority historic structure.

Senior Planner, Briana Valcourt provided an overview of the project. It was noted that the stack structure on top of the detached garage is a priority structure. The original application was for the house and the garage. However, the final siding to the garage will be administratively approved.

Ms. Valcourt stated in 2022, there was an informal discussion with the Historic District Commission in regard to this application and no decision was made. It was stated in 2021 by Logan Engineering, LLC that the tower structure is deemed unsafe. However, there is a financial burden to restoring the garage. She asserted is reason to believe the Commission can make the decision to demolish part of the tower, if needed.

The applicants, John and Pamela Lawson, 5 Turner Avenue, Cranston RI, 02920 were present and stated the identified issues with the structure. First, the issue of weight on top of the existing garage was raised. They was further noted that the door entering the garage is getting tighter. If the tower were to be reduced in size, the sinking issue would likely be minimized. It was further noted that due to code issues identified by the city inspector, the existing garage cannot be replaced with a new one due to the location within the front yard. It was noted when the garage was originally built without a proper foundation, which contributes to the structural problems.

Individuals requesting interpreter services for the hearing impaired must contact the Dept. of City Planning at (401) 780-3136 seventy-two (72) hours prior to the meeting.

Chairman Stephen Torregrossa provided comment that final siding is not permitted in a historical district. Mr. Torregrossa invited the remainder of the Commission to engage in comment:

- Jillian Finkle inquired how the structure is deemed historically significant. Per a condition, Ms. Finkle proposed for the city to document the structure as such prior to demolition of the tower.

Ms. Valcourt stated the structure is deemed as a Priority one Structure.

Mr. Torregrossa invited the public to engage in comment:

- Tom Worthington, 126 Turner Avenue, Cranston RI 02920 stated to be opposed to the demolition of the priority structure and discussed the maintenance required when purchasing a historic home. Mr. Worthington then spoke to the historical significance of the structure. It was recommended that the historic structure be reviewed for other potential opportunities for the homeowner.
- Sandra Moyer, 120 Deerfield Road, Cranston RI 02920 stated to be opposed to the demolition of the priority structure due to the importance for the State and the City of Cranston to preserve this structure.
- Jan Ragans, 1439 Hope Road Cranston, RI 02820 stated to be opposed to the demolition of the structure for the reason provided that maintaining historic structures in the city is important.
- Drake Pattens, 684 Natick Avenue, RI 02921 stated to be opposed to the demolition of the structure and provided recommendation for a historic survey to be conducted.
- Michael Klitzner, 1410 Hope Road, RI 02831 stated to be opposed to the demolition of the structure and discussed and spoke to the expensive costs he has paid to maintain his historic property.

Ms. Finkle requested clarification as to how the structure was deemed unsafe. It was further stated that the state is currently prioritizing wind energy and there are many wind energy focus groups which could be a potential source of funding.

Ms. Valcourt read excerpts from the Engineering Report. She stated the one-story garage walls are weak and there is no foundation resisting gravity. This structure was deemed as a public threat. Confirmation was provided that the State Historic office was contacted. If this was rented, there would be applicable tax incentives. Ms. Ashman concluded in stating the Planning Department would be willing to keep this matter open to navigate options.

Mr. Lawson noted the turbine blades were removed in the 30s due to a hurricane. The turbine is not on ground level.

Conversation ensued about the potential of soliciting public outreach for funding resources.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Ms. Ashman provided an update for the Comprehensive Plan in stating the Department would like to coordinate with the Commission in determining goals, policies, and actions for the historic section. Ms. Ashman to send the goals to the Commission to solicit comments.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Finkle and seconded by Commissioner Richi, the Historic District Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to continue the public hearing until March 13, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Finkle and seconded by Commissioner Richi, the Historic District Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 7:43 p.m.

Next Meeting | Wednesday, March 13, 2025, 6:30 PM – **Regular Meeting**

Senior Center – Meeting Room – 1070 Cranston Street