

The Longmeadow Demolition Committee
October 17, 2018
Minutes

DRAFT

A public hearing was held at the Police Department meeting room for the purpose of discussing the request to demolish a barn on Ely Road owned by Peter Cooney. Present were members, Craig Carr, Elizabeth Hoff, Sandra Krein, Daniel O'Malley, Michelle Steeger and Steve Weiss. Present also: The buyers of the property Susan and Greg Valania, Peter Cooney, seller, Sandra Reilly, realtors, Jennifer Burritt and Suzanne White. Several neighbors and community members were also in attendance.

Michelle Steger opened the meeting at 7:01

Introductions were made.

Mrs Elizabeth Allatt spoke as a neighbor expressing that it would be unfortunate to lose the barn ; that it would be good to keep the neighborhood intact as it is.

The buyer, Greg Valania read a letter stating that when they signed a purchase and sale that they were unaware that there was an ordinance possibly allowing for a nine month delay to tear the barn down. He spoke of the need to demolish the barn in order to properly situate the house on the property due to existing elevation problems . The letter also addressed the fact that the buyers are residents in Longmeadow and are sensitive to the historic leaning to the town. The letter stated that they had hired an architect and had spent fifteen thousand dollars on plans. It also spoke to the poor condition of the barn.

Suzanne White, realtor for the buyers spoke to the fact that this would be a hardship for her buyers to delay the removal of the barn and added that she does not foresee anyone coming forward to buy the barn. As to removing it and placing it elsewhere she pointed out that barns are not supposed to exceed one story in Longmeadow and this is three stories. She went on to read a letter addressed to Paul Healy. The property went on the market in June of 2017. There were two separate properties. Mr Cooney's house was purchased but the buyers of the home had no interest in purchasing the parcel with the barn. There were a few interested potential buyers who considered it but they all had the same concerns. There was a limited easement and too much expense to move or rehab it.

She said that the materials in this type of barn are not the materials that a builder looks for in refurbishing barns. She feels that there is no reasonable expectation that this barn will sell if kept on the market for another 9 months. She also said that the buyers would probably have to redo their financing as there would be higher interest rates and construction costs after such a delay. They would like permission to demolish the barn.

Jennifer Burritt, realtor for the seller, Peter Cooney read a letter. It stated that the property had been on the market for 14 months. The barn was offered initially to the potential buyers of 87 Ely Road .None of those potential buyers had any interest in buying the parcel with the barn along with the house as had been done by the previous two owners.

The lot and barn were offered to the new owners at 87 Ely Road with very favorable terms to the buyer of the house in an attempt to keep the two parcels together with the barn as it had been with the last two owners, but there was no interest in buying the barn and the lot.

The barn was viewed by many people. Three parties brought in contractors but each effort resulted in the same conclusion. It was going to be too costly for them to convert the barn to a home and there was uncertainty as to receiving special permits and easements from the abutter which would be necessary if the barn was renovated into a home. They also felt that an easement was necessary in order to make the parcel work.

She went on to say that she had researched various concerns to see if barn reconstruction people would be interested or wedding venue people. Those contacts said that it would be 15 to 25 thousand dollars to dismantle it. To rebuild it would be an additional 100 to 150 thousand dollars in their estimation. She said that she spoke to a couple of companies that repurpose barns into homes etc, like Heritage Barns and that they were not interested in the barn because it was a "light barn" and did not have the desirable heavy wood like hewn oak or chestnut and the girth of the beams were small. She said that she spoke with several concerns that deal in barns and none were interested. She also reached out to a few people in town who had large lots but they also were not interested.

She said that they have made an earnest effort and believe that a nine month delay will not change the facts. One party who she contacted and who visited the barn still has a barn in storage that was taken down ten years ago. He still has not found a buyer and the wood is now starting to rot. During his visit a sink hole was discovered under the barn.

Jen Burritt then read a letter from Ken Coelho who is a preservation minded individual and a designer/contractor who has worked with old barns and has tagged them for moving and has rebuilt them and re-incorporated them into home designs. He inspected the barn and reported that the barn post and beam framing appear to be in good condition for its age. There is termite damage and some wood rot decay in the beams and there are foundation issues on the north and south sides. The siding and the roof are not original. The condition of the bead board interior is in good condition and the cupola is salvageable. As it is a light weight pine barn it is not as desirable or as marketable as a heavier oak or chestnut. His estimate was 18 to 25 thousand to take it down and \$100 to \$180 thousand to reassemble it. She said that the seller has made an earnest effort and believes that a nine month delay will not change the facts.

Suzanne White said that when she reached out to potential buyers she felt that someone who wants a barn finds it less expensive to build one.

Diane Doherty a neighbor said that she had looked at the barn but due to the uncertainty of costs was unable to purchase. She spoke to Mark Sirulnik, a neighbor who has a paper that speaks to the age of the barn.

Mrs Valania, the buyer, feels that the purpose of the demolition by-law is to allow the committee to look for someone or an opportunity to repurpose the structure. She feels that both the buyer and sellers have done so already.

Michelle Steger closed the meeting to public comments.

Beth Hoff reported that a concerned citizen pointed out that a committee cannot make its own voting regulations. The voting has to be in accordance with the by-laws and therefore any vote taken by this committee will be passed by the majority of those present.

It was suggested that a sixty to ninety day delay could give time to create more publicity for the barn. Discussion ensued. It was suggested that finances should not be considered that only the historic merit and how much of an effort had been extended to find a buyer who would preserve the structure. Further discussion took place with comments showing concern that many are still unaware of the demolition by-law and hence, plans were drawn and paid for and that financially the buyers will be negatively impacted.

Sandra Krein moved that the property not receive a demolition permit for a period of 90 days. Beth Hoff seconded the motion.

Daniel O'Malley moved that the property not receive a demolition permit for a period of 60 days. Steve Weiss seconded the motion.

It was questioned who would be responsible for ensuring that the required publicity is undertaken. The historic commission would write some articles.

Sandra Krein said that upon checking the by-law , it only allows a nine month delay. There is no language that speaks to "up to a nine month delay".

There was new discussion with this in mind and did it warrant delaying the sale for a full nine months.

Dan O'Malley withdrew his motion.

Steve Weiss proposed a motion to delay the demolition for nine months. Beth Hoff seconded the motion and the motion was denied with five nays and one vote in favor.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted.

Craig T Carr
Secretary