

Community Preservation Panel April 10, 2023, Special Meeting Minutes

The meeting was held at the Aurora Firehouse meeting room at 5:00 pm

Present: Chairperson Jim Burkett, Jeff Blum, Chris MacCormick, Claire Morehouse, and Julia Rossmann

Others Present

Village Officials: Clerk Ann Balloni, Planning Board Chairperson Pat Bianconi, and Trustees John Miller & Frank Zimdahl

Members of the Public: Jodi Baldwin, Grace Bates, Kay Burkett, Robin Driskel, Kevin Fitzgerald, Alyssa Gunderson, Kris LaGreca, Tracy Leffingwell, Michael Miller, and Matt Richards

Call to Order: Mr. Burkett called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

New Business

#23-04 from Wells College/Kevin Fitzgerald for a demolition at 110 Main St, McGordon House (Tax Map #193.05-1-4)

Mr. Burkett asked the panel if they had any questions for Mr. Fitzgerald and there were no questions.

Mr. Burkett welcomed CPP Alternate, Erin Weber, to join the discussion if she wished, but reminded her that because the full CPP was present that she cannot vote. Ms. Weber read a statement (attached) focused on concern for future development of the south end of Wells College campus and wildlife habitat. Ms. Weber referenced an ecology report she wrote in 2017 which includes "Site and Community Survey.....of a Secondary Successional Forest South of Wells College Campus" and left a copy with the village clerk for anyone's interest.

Mr. Burkett thanked Ms. Weber and noted that Ms. Weber's statement does not fall under the purview of the panel's review for the demolition of McGordon House.

Mr. Burkett addressed the CPP considerations regarding demolition applications, per section 704.D of the Village Zoning Law.

1. Historical Significance – The building is not located within the Village of Aurora/Wells College Historic District and the building is not a designated Local, State, or Federal landmark.
2. Present Condition – The building was condemned by the Village Code Enforcement Officer and deemed "unfit for human habitation" per Bergmann Engineering
3. Economic Viability of Use Alternate to Demolition – Wells College received previous offers from buyers wishing to renovate. Wells College noted a 2-million-dollar cost to renovate the building for student housing. Bergmann Engineers projected a 75% increase in cost for renovation vs demolition.
4. Future Plans – two new houses are proposed
5. Relationship to Surrounding Parcels – All surrounding property is owned by Wells College.
6. Public Comment – mixed, approximately 1/3 for the demolition and 2/3 against.

The panel discussed the inaction of several responsible parties not doing more and sooner to address the disrepair, including Wells College, the Village of Aurora, and the Community Preservation Panel. All agreed that moving forward, the panel should anticipate and curtail future demolition applications, rather than react and lament. Mr. MacCormick noted a proposed revision to the Village Zoning Law which addresses "Affirmative Maintenance".

The panel additionally discussed that the historic development of the village is not limited to the wealthy landowners but includes those who worked for them such as the Irish immigrants. McGordon House is a prime example.

VILLAGE OF AURORA COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PANEL RESOLUTION REGARDING THE APPLICATION BY KEVIN FITZGERALD, AURORA ROUTE 90 GROUP, LLC, FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR A DEMOLITION AT 110 MAIN STREET, AURORA NEW YORK

Introduced by: Jim Burkett

Seconded by: Claire Morehouse

Dated: April 10, 2023

WHEREAS, on February 15, 2023, an application was received in the village office for a demolition permit (collectively “Application”) submitted by Kevin Fitzgerald (“Applicant”) regarding the demolition of a building located at 110 Main Street, Aurora, New York, commonly known as McGordon House (“Building” or “McGordon House”); and

WHEREAS, the Application was deemed complete by the Community Preservation Panel (CPP) on March 1, 2023; and

WHEREAS, the CPP has jurisdiction to review demolition of any structure within the bounds of the Village of Aurora, NY; and

WHEREAS, the Application requires a Certificate of Appropriateness from the CPP, per Village Zoning Law section 704.D.; and

WHEREAS, a signboard providing notice of a April 5, 2023 joint CPP/Planning Board public hearing was placed on the property for the public to view for at least 20 days, per section 704.D.1. of the Village Zoning Law; and

WHEREAS, proper notice was published in the Citizen newspaper for the requisite period of time prior to said meeting and public hearing; and

WHEREAS, documentation of the property by the Village Historian was received on March 6, 2023; and

WHEREAS, letters dated February 8, 2023, February 27, 2023, and March 7, 2023 from Wells College President, Jonathan Gibraltar, owner of the property, give authorization to the Applicant to speak on behalf of Wells College and “strong support” for the demolition application; and

WHEREAS, on April 5, 2023, the Community Preservation Panel held a joint public hearing with the Village Planning Board, per section 704.D.3. during which the Community Preservation Panel elicited input and evidence from members of the public and the Applicant, with a focus on “present condition, pertinent historical significance of the structure, the relationship of the affected parcel to its surrounding parcels, economic viability of use alternate to demolition, future plans for the property, public comment and other local factors”, per section 704.D.4; and

WHEREAS, written comments for the public hearing were received from Wells College President Jonathan Gibraltar dated March 31, 2023, Theon Parseghian dated April 4, 2023, Jim & Kim Kirkwood dated April 5, 2023, Bonnie Bennett dated April 5, 2023, Jodi Baldwin dated April 5, 2023, and Linda Schwab dated April 5, 2023; and

WHEREAS, the Application is not in the Village of Aurora/Wells College Historic District; and

WHEREAS, the Application is not a designated Local, State or Federal landmark; and

WHEREAS, the property was condemned by the Village Code Enforcement Officer; and

WHEREAS, a report submitted by Bergmann Architects, Engineers, and Planners dated January 10, 2023 outlines “many deficiencies and unsafe conditions throughout the building” concluding “the restoration of the building cost prohibitive.”; and

WHEREAS, a letter submitted from Harmony Homes dated November 19, 2022 and revised on March 30, 2023 states “the costs incurred with remodeling this home could easily exceed seventy-five percent more of the cost of new construction of a home of similar size and footprint.”;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Community Preservation Panel hereby approves Application #23-04. This Resolution shall be filed in the office of the village clerk immediately.

| | Yea | Nay | Abstain | Absent |
|--------------------|-----|-----|---------|--------|
| Jeff Blum | | | X | |
| Chris MacCormick | | X | | |
| Claire Morehouse | X | | | |
| Julia Rossmann | X | | | |
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| Jim Burkett, Chair | X | | | |

Mr. MacCormick read a statement (attached) echoing Ms. Weber’s remarks on protecting wildlife at the south end of Wells College campus, questioning why previous buyers willing to restore the building were turned away, and chastising Wells College for denying the CPP access to the building that they are charged with determining if demolition is appropriate.

Adjournment: On motion by Mr. MacCormick, seconded by Ms. Morehouse, the CPP voted to adjourn the meeting at 5:35 p.m.

AYES: Blum, Burkett, MacCormick, Morehouse, and Rossmann

NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Balloni
Village Clerk