

**Bolton Historical Commission
Minutes of Public Hearing
April 6, 2022**

Attendees:

Co-Chairmen: Martha Remington, Robert Busch (Hearing Chair)

Members Present: Jeannemarie Padovano, Alice Coggeshall, and Nate Smith

Members absent : Robert Tattersall

Guests: Stan Wysocki, Robert Czekanski, Ed Sterling, Rona Balco

Zoom hearing was called to order at 7:00 pm.

Chairman Bob Busch opened the meeting noting that this is a duly noticed public hearing on demolition permit #XP-22-1 to determine if the historically significant cottage at Persons Park is to be preserved.

He explained that the Commission will first decide whether to make a final decision at this hearing or delay the decision for up to a week as provided in the bylaw.. Should the Commission elect to go ahead with the decision at this hearing, it would:

1. determine if the cottage is to be preserved.
2. If it is determined to be preserved, the Commission will vote on whether or not to impose a 6 month by-law delay under the bylaw.

R. Czekanski noted that there is a lot of history that hasn't been discussed. The deed that transfers the property to the town has been discussed with the BHC and the Parks & Rec Committee, and stipulates several conditions: 1) that the TOB erect and maintain a memorial; 2) the cottage be preserved and used consistent with the property being a public park (no one has shown that the cottage has enabled or encouraged use of the waterfront) 3) (the most important condition) that the land be used as a park. That is the primary goal of the property and the gift. The cottage preservation is not the primary goal. The Town spent thousands to upgrade the septic system to meet Title 5. After the Town took possession, many groups utilized the property. P&R met for a time, but found it wasn't suitable for their needs. The cottage was offered to the Council on Aging, however they declined. There have been multiple efforts for fundraising, and the Friends Of Persons Park was formed to address the various issues. These efforts, Czekanski noted, have not been successful. His thoughts are that if the BHC impedes the demo, they will be impeding the wishes of the majority of the citizens of Bolton and will not be in accordance with the wishes of the deed.

Ed Sterling agreed with R. Czekanski and noted that the P&R request for a demo was due to the lack of public interest. The locked-up cottage serves no public needs. This is the first building the Town has ever been gifted and at the time of the gift Bolton didn't have a P&R Department. As such, the building was not able to be properly utilized. He suggested that an open pavilion would be a usable and appropriate structure.

S. Wysocki presented some of the history leading up to a meeting in August of 2011. P&R met and discussed plans to develop the property in 1997. In 2009, plans again were discussed but nothing came to fruition. Additionally, there was a demo application for the garage at the time, but nothing happened. There were multiple inspections in 2011, suggesting hundreds of thousands in rehab would be required to make the cottage usable. He believes the building is too small for public use. P&R recommended that the cottage and garage be demolished, while BHC wanted to develop a 5 year plan, 15 years had transpired between the gift and the 2011

meeting and the BHC had done nothing with regard to this cottage. The Board of Selectman had asked for the BHC and M. Remington to submit a 5 year plan for the property, and in 2022 he still sees no plan. At their March 9 meeting, a BHC member read a statement of what determines a historically significant property. However, Wysocki said that the Commissioners never discussed any points but still agreed that it was historically significant. Wysocki believes there is nothing to validate whether Mr. Persons (the donor) was himself historically important or whether the building was historically significant.

The Chairman replied that the definition of Historically Significant is inherently subjective and in any event that decision has already been made in a public meeting and was no longer up for debate. In 1996 when the gift was accepted the Town agreed to the conditions, which included maintaining the cottage as a memorial to Persons family. The BHC agrees that the building would be expensive to maintain and has not taken the position that it be retained. The Site Preservation Plan that has been developed includes replacement of the cottage with an alternate memorial structure that will still honor the conditions of the accepted gift.

A contentious back-and-forth discussion followed, at the conclusion of which the Chairman called for two votes:

- 1) The first vote was whether the cottage should be *preferably preserved* as defined in the related bylaw. The vote was unanimous in favor.
- 2) The second vote was whether to allow demolition to proceed without imposing a delay, relying on the Site Preservation Plan (SPP) previously approved by P&R and the BHC. The vote was unanimous in favor and formally adopted the SPP as a permit condition.

There was a brief discussion of historical interest about Bolton-born Wilburt Robinson who played in the major leagues in late 1800's early 1900's and managed the Brooklyn Dodgers. He is honored in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

The meeting was adjourned shortly after 8pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jeannemarie Padovano