

The City Council met in special regular session on Thursday, May 24, 2018 in Council Chambers. A quorum being present, Mayor Victoria Jackson-Stanley called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Those Commissioners in attendance were Commissioners Rideout, Sydnor, Foster, Cannon, and Hanson.

Public Comment

Onnie Duvall thinks the City of Cambridge and Historic Cambridge, Inc. should be embarrassed and ashamed to let anything on the 400 and 500 blocks of Race Street get in such a dilapidated condition to pose the hazards that we have seen in the past several years. He sees no excuse as to why Historic Cambridge had to purchase the buildings and the original property owners should have been solely responsible for the maintenance and restoration of the buildings.

Floyd Elzey, Chesapeake Upholstery (518 Race Street), is directly across from the building. He has been looking at this building for at least six years. He is asking Council to try to get rid of it. This building has been a hindrance for a long time. They have done a lot of promises and a lot of people were going to do something but nothing has happened. The building is an eyesore and it is a problem. He votes and hopes that everyone will really consider trying to get this building down. It would make a nice parking lot or green space or something. For the sake of his business, he hopes that it is gone.

Kevin Hill, owner of Hill Kimmel Contracting, said a lot hinges on this project from a local economy standpoint. If the City were to tear it down, as it is certainly an option, that may keep a handful of people busy for a couple of weeks. If the project that is proposed moves forward, that could keep dozens of people employed on that construction site for a year or more than a year. That is something to strongly take into consideration. All of his employees live in Cambridge. Most of their subcontractors are out of Dorchester County. He thinks that is an important consideration.

Katie Clendaniel, representing Downtown Cambridge/Cambridge Main Street, said they are here to advocate for the project, as proposed, the preservation of the façade at 507 Race Street and also the redevelopment of 505 Race Street to move forward as planned and with a very advanced timeline. They are here to support Eastern Shore Land Conservancy and their effort to help piece together the 500 block of Race Street. They know that it has been very difficult for a number of people throughout the downtown, especially those on the 500 block and they know they ask for everyone's patience right now. They believe there is value present in 507 Race Street although at this point they are still trying to articulate what that economic value would be. It does have streetscape value and in the long term, it will have value to the neighboring properties as well if we move forward with the preservation by ESLC. They are here to answer any questions and be a resource for the community and be a resource for the project.

Jay Corvan, Architect, has worked in Cambridge for 20 years. He has been involved in this project since 2004 trying to save this building. This building represents a huge investment in downtown. He thinks that ultimately the bottom line is that historic tax credits can actually save this building. It will get 20 percent of State tax requirements plus 20 percent

of Federal tax requirements which will actually allow something to be built. If this building comes down, there is no economic way that a building will be replaced at this time.

Katie Parks, Director of Conservation at the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, said ESLC currently has an agreement of sale with Historic Cambridge, Inc. for the 505 and 507 Race Street structures. They have been working over the last few months on due diligence to determine whether there is a financially viable path forward for redevelopment and they have been working in partnership with Brett Summers and NOVO Properties. While she cannot make commitments on behalf of the Department of Housing and Community Development, she is authorized to say that they did reach out. She has been on-site for the last couple of days after the collapse and requested that the Department provide funding to allow for immediate stabilization and restoration of the façade as well as demolition of the balance of the back portion and site clearing. ESLC has indications that they will provide up to \$290,000 to allow for that and they will be able to put the last few pieces in place in the next couple of days and work with partners to start the stabilization. She thinks there have been a lot of events over that last years that have unfortunately lead to this structure and they are committed to their partnership with the City and with the community and hope that they will be able to work together to determine the appropriate conditions in which they could move forward.

Greg Dawson said we have had antique stores propped up on Race Street and the backs are starting to fall down on them. His concern is whether it is going to take the building falling into the street killing someone before we decide that demolition would be a better option. He thinks that for the safety of the citizens, we should take the building down.

Brett Summers met with HCI last fall because he was concerned about the condition of those buildings (505 and 507 Race Street) and their inability to move forward. At the same time, he was also aware that Eastern Shore Land Conservancy has a group called Center for Towns that tries to promote downtown vibrancy and revitalization of the Eastern Shore downtowns. He worked to connect those two groups because he saw a great potential in Eastern Shore Land Conservancy getting involved in downtown Cambridge and helping us restore those two building with their grant procurement capabilities. They entered into a contract to purchase those buildings in December. They have been working since then to implement a plan whereby they would restore the façade of 507 Race Street and redevelop 505 Race Street into office and apartments. Unfortunately, with all the heavy rain recently, the weight of the rain on those floors caused the building to collapse. To a certain extent that is good news if we are able to preserve the façade. It reduced some of the demolition costs and reduced some of the safety concerns of those floors. He is always an advocate that a preserved façade is better than a vacant lot no matter how long it takes to actually effect the redevelopment of that property as long as it is safe. Once you lose that façade, you lose what makes Cambridge unique. You cannot recreate that architecture. This building is not the most beautiful building in its current condition. Their intent, if they receive support, and they already have funding essentially from DHCD, is to restore the façade to an appearance similar to what it was originally. They would actually be putting in the windows, rebuilding the brick parapet wall top, and restoring the first floor façade. It would have a very nice appearance from the exterior and then they would stair-step down as best they could, given the current conditions, and brace from the inside. It would have a much better appearance. They say to restore the façade.

Victor MacSorley owns 315, 317, and 319 High Street. His buildings were like 507 Race Street, but not in quite as bad condition as this building is now. His façade was damaged over the years and in the 1930s and 1940s it was removed. The façade became a 1930s aluminum six-foot tall plate glass and was not very attractive. Over the years with the help of the Historic Area Commission and the State and Federal tax credits, he was able to restore 317 High Street to what you see now. That particular section of the block has become vibrant with a new tenant going in soon, Hair O' The Dog. Ava's is going across the street and the preservation of these historic facades is, from what he gets from tourists who come in, is that they appreciate what they see when they walk the streets of Cambridge. We have a special community with a special collection of two- and three-story building facades that is very much appreciated by the people who come here. He and Brett started out at one end, Stanley Keyser has started on the other end to try to bring historic preservation back to Cambridge to what he remembers when he grew up here in the 1960s. Hopefully they will meet one day in the middle. The preservation of this building will also help Stanley Keyser and his project because one lends credence to the other. If we have an ugly hole in the street next to Mr. Keyser's restoration next to the Hearn Building, that would detract from all the money he is putting in that building. He thinks the preservation of that middle strip of façade will more than pay for itself in the long run in a finished streetscape and the economic value it is to the City of Cambridge.

SUBJECT: 507 Race Street

Recommendation: That Council:

- A. Receive a report on the condition of 507 Race Street;
- B. Provide staff with direction

On Monday, May 21 and again on Tuesday May 22, 2018, the building at 507 Race Street has suffered collapses of walls. The building now presents a safety hazard as determined by Jeremy Walbert, structural engineer with Becker-Morgan Group, who is in the employ of Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC) and Stanley Keyser for the Hearn Building, and per the Oden Wheeler Public Works Director, who has closed Race Street between Cemetery Avenue and Muir Streets.

The building is owned by Historic Cambridge, Inc. (HCI) and is under a purchase contract between HCI and Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC). On Tuesday May 23, 2018 a representative of DHCD verbally agreed to an informal request from the City that for grant funding to just demolish the building in the interest of safety. Later in the day, the representative rescinded that informal agreement, stating funds are not available. Today May 24, 2018, Public Works Director met on site with representatives of HPC to review the situation in the event that Council agrees with demolition based on safety concerns. Staff will report their comments at the Council Meeting. HPC does not have an available quorum with which to take any formal action.

ESLC representatives wish the City to not demolish the building. Their preference is:

- City agree to not demolish the building;
- City maintain the street closed until the building can be braced from the street in a manner similar to the bracing of 509 Race Street (Hearn Building). This is

estimated to take at least two weeks from the time that ESLC secures permission from the owner and ESLC's board takes action to accept and official DHCD offer of funding.

- City and community accept a façade bracing structure similar to the concrete boxes and steel bracing structure at 509 Race Street (Hearn Building) until ESCL can remove the rubble behind the façade and brace it from the inside, if possible. That could be four (4) plus months.
- City and community accept that the façade with no building behind it, will be in place until a developer buys/develops the property using Historic Tax Credits – similar to the building on Race Street owned by Brent Summers.

The 500 Block of Race Street is the same block that was closed for about six months when the Hearn Building roof collapsed. Businesses along that block and further down Race Street were impacted for at least that six-month period and will be impacted again with this new collapse. A consideration for Council is impact on those businesses. Until demolished or braced, the building presents a risk to adjacent property owners as well as to the public.

Per the advice of structural engineer Jeremy Walbert, it is recommended that the City close the 500 block of Race Street until the building is either demolished or a structural engineer deems the building safe enough to open the street.

Based on the opinion of the structural engineer and the Director of Public Works, staff is recommending not only in the immediate term to keep the street closed until it is deemed safe to open, but to proceed with demolition of the building in its entirety.

Commissioner Foster made a motion to proceed with demolition and the following four recommendations:

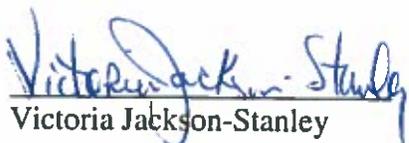
1. Concur with the Public Works Director/Building Official opinion that the building should be demolished, based on the statement of structural engineer Jeremy Walbert and pursuant to City Code Section 4-14, *Section 120.4 Emergency Repairs*, that the building is a present danger to the public and property;
2. Authorize the City Manager to make a formal request to DHCD for strategic demolition funds to pay for demolition;
3. Appropriate up to \$250,000 from General Fund Balance for demolition in the event that the State denies the funding request or does not approve it before the demolition is ready to proceed; and
4. Authorize the City Manager to execute sole source contracts with:
 - a. Becker-Morgan Group to do a demolition plan;
 - b. A firm qualified in demolition, in a form approved by the City Attorney to demolish the building.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sydnor and approved 5:0.

Adjourn

A motion by Commissioner Sydnor to adjourn the meeting was seconded and approved unanimously.

With no further business, Mayor Victoria Jackson-Stanley adjourned the meeting at 3:31 p.m. I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate account of the Council meeting Thursday, May 24, 2018, insofar as I personally am aware.


Victoria Jackson-Stanley
Mayor