



## **TOWN OF TRURO Truro Historical Commission**

### **Truro Historical Commission Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Location:** Cobb Conference Room, Truro Public Library, 7 Standish Way; Adjourned to 157 Slough Pond Road

**Date & Time:** September 28, 2019, 10:00 am

**Members Present:** Matthew Kiefer, Chair  
Chuck Steinman, Vice Chair  
Fred Todd, Secretary  
Richard Larkin  
Jim Summers

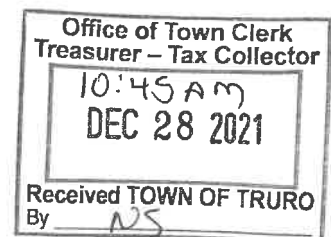
**Members Not Present:** David Kirchner  
David Perry

**Attending:** Ben Zehnder, attorney for Applicant  
Laura French, abutter

1. **Approval of Minutes:** Members (Chuck Steinman recused himself) voted to approve the minutes of the August 17, 2019 meeting with the following correction: Item 5 regarding proposed gutter replacement to the Meeting House, add "but aluminum gutters are acceptable" to the third from last sentence in the paragraph.

2. **Public Hearing, 157 Slough Pond Road:** Chairman Kiefer opened the hearing. He reviewed the status of the project: two structures on the property are proposed to be demolished and replaced with a new dwelling unit and habitable studio. The request for a demolition permit was referred to the THC by the Building Commissioner. Per the applicable bylaw, the Chair, after consulting with the Vice Chair, determined that the existing buildings were significant according to the provisions of the Historic Preservation Bylaw and scheduled a hearing to determine whether the buildings would be preferably preserved and therefore subject to a demolition delay of up to one year while alternatives to demolition are explored.

Chairman Kiefer outlined why the initial determination of significance was made, noting that the house in question is not listed on the National or State Register of Historic Places, and may not be more than 75 years old. The house was built in 1975, although it incorporated a smaller structure moved to the site in 1959. The determination was made based on the third set of criteria listed in the By-law (6-2-1-3), "(a) that it is historically or architecturally significant in terms of period style, method of building construction, or association with a famous architect; or (b) that is importantly associated with one or more



historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the Town or Commonwealth.”

In support of these criteria, he said that the house represents a notable and sensitively-sited example of Mid-Century Modern design, part of a group of notable houses of this style associated with the lower Cape. A number of these houses are located within the Cape Cod National Seashore, as is the subject property, and have been or are being preserved by the Mid-Century Modern House Trust and others. The original architect, Gregory Hunt, FAIA, was both an accomplished practicing architect and an educator, serving as founding dean of the Marywood School of Architecture, among other posts. His CV was cited as part of the record. The existing studio on the property was used by the artist Peter Watts; the previous owners of the house were Anseil and Stella Chasteen, all prominent lower Cape artists whose works are included in the permanent collection of the Provincetown Art Association and Museum. Reference to these artists in a series of books was cited and their titles are included in the record.

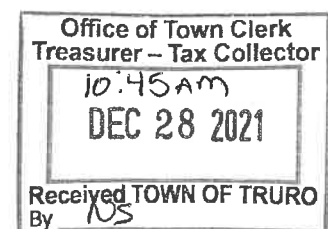
Atty. Zehnder challenged the determination of significance, repeating the objections listed in his letter to the Building Commissioner dated September 25, 2019. He denied the Commission permission for a site visit to view the property.

Speaking for the Commission, the Chair indicated we were following the provisions of Chapter VI, *Preserving Historic Properties*, and said we would continue with the discussion of whether the house and studio were of enough importance to the Town to warrant a demolition delay under the By-Law. Atty. Zehnder agreed the house was representative of the Mid-Century Modern style, but noted that it was not included in Truro's *Community-Wide Survey of Historic Properties* nor in the list of properties noted by the Mid-Century Modern House Trust; he also said he could not determine whether the architect was associated with other important houses on the Cape; its association with the above-named artists was not sufficient to make it historic; and that, if the house were so significant, it should have been included in a historic district.

We noted that the Survey is an on-going reference document and requires periodic up-dating, but is not definitive, and agreed with Atty. Zehnder that updating the Survey is warranted.

Mr. Kiefer asked about the homeowner's reasons for opting to demolish the existing complex and re-build. Atty. Zehnder asserted that the proposed plans were not part of the Historical Commission's purview. Mr. Kiefer said that consideration of the appropriateness of replacement design was often a factor in the Commission's deliberation; members referred to previous examples of Mid-Century Modern applications where this was an important consideration. At this point Atty. Zehnder agreed to show the plans for the replacement structures. He said the original house was not well preserved and not modernized; the new house plan was similar in style to the existing and reflected the same Mid-Century Modern aesthetic but would be larger and better constructed, would have a basement area for mechanical equipment and would be built to current energy standards. He noted that the site plan and house plans had been approved by the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals and that the Cape Cod National Seashore had not raised any objection to the new construction other than to question whether the original house was historically significant.

Members discussed next steps. We looked at aerial photos of the house and interior pictures Vice Chair Steinman had assembled from real estate sales material found on-line. Jim Summers stated, and others generally agreed, that in the absence of a site visit we could not make an informed decision about either the condition of the existing buildings nor about the pre-1959 portion of the house. We discussed whether a demolition delay subject to viewing the property would be appropriate. Atty. Zehnder then suggested a site visit and, after discussion, the Commission agreed to adjourn the meeting in order to reconvene at the site.



The house is not visible from the public way, Slough Pond Road, an unpaved road; a long driveway leads through scrub pine woods to the house's remote location on a low dunescape with a view of the ocean. At the site, members looked at the two structures, noting the physical condition of the studio and house. It appears that the 1959 portion of the house was completely integrated into the overall construction and no distinct elements were visible. The house was boarded up, so views of the interior were not possible.

Members then deliberated whether the house and studio merited a designation of preferably preserved. We noted that it did not meet the MHC "greater than 50 years old" criteria, thus requiring a higher level of significance to be protected; that the original architect was not sufficiently well known nor as prominent in the Mid-Century Modern context as others who worked in the area; that the studio was not notable in terms of design; and that the artists' reputations did not rise to the level of 'famous' as referenced in the bylaw language.

After discussion, Vice Chair Steinman made a motion to vote that the buildings did not warrant preferably preserved designation; the motion was seconded by Richard Larkin and all members present voted in favor. The Chair will inform the Building Commissioner of the decision.

3. Truro Historic Documents: We continued discussion of conservation of historic documents, both bound and loose, kept in the Town vault. Richard Larkin reported that the Town Administrator had approved \$1,300 to hire a consultant to inventory and assess the condition and conservation needs of documents in question as a first step. Richard agreed to have the consultant contact Peter Burgess for his opinion on which documents were most important for conservation.

4. Self-Guided Tour Map: Chuck Steinman reported that he has been working on a second draft of the guide we discussed at the previous meeting. He is adding updated maps and including photographs in addition to text revisions. He has a quote for \$1,200 for printing 1,000 copies for which he will apply to the Truro Cultural Council under the Massachusetts Cultural Council's LCC Grant program. We commended Chuck for his efforts.

5. Response to MHC regarding National Register Districts: Following up on discussion at the August meeting, Chuck Steinman has been working to revise district application for Higgins Hollow/Longnook Road and the Pamets. He has assembled data sheets for every property in the proposed districts, attaching updated assessors' photos or updated photos and survey data, including all non-contributing properties (defined as those less than 50 years old,) and has revised the document format. He anticipates that MHC will want Form B documentation updated, including properties that have aged into the 50 year category since the Survey. This will require putting together a consultant RFP and applying to the Community Preservation Committee for funding.

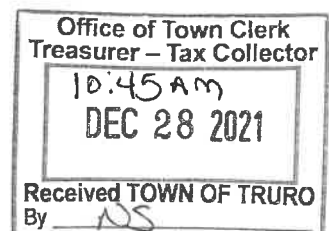
6. Survey of Historic Resources: We discussed the need to update the Survey and in particular the mid-century modern grouping. Chuck Steinman estimated that there would be 50 or more properties that qualified for Form B and estimated about \$300 each for the work required by a consultant to do this. We discussed a multiyear project, possibly over three years; this will also involve a request to the CPC for funding.

7. Motion to adjourn by Fred Todd, seconded by Richard Larkin and approved by all members.

Signed,



Frederick Todd



Included by Reference:

Correspondence from Town Manager re referral of demolition permit requests to the Historic Commission

Letter from Benjamin Zehnder, Attorney to Truro Building Commissioner re 157 Slough Pond Road dated September 25, 2019

Gregory Hunt CV

Bibliography of art books for Chasteen, Watts

