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HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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STAFF COMMENTS

NEW BEDFORD HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING

Date: December 31, 2015

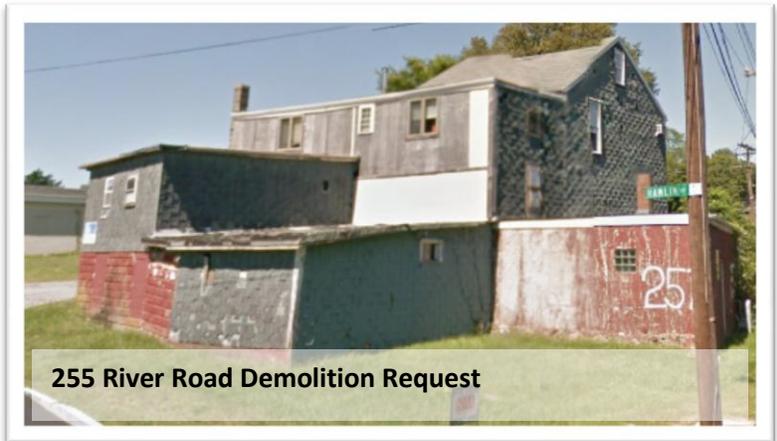
APPLICATION FOR DEMOLITION

255 River Road (Map 119 Lot 94)
Request to demolish a circa pre-1800 wood framed structure

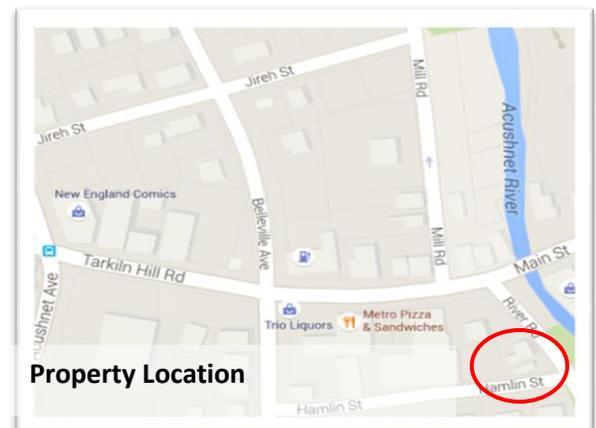
APPLICANT/ OWNER: Abilio Fernandes
7 N Pleasant Street
S. Dartmouth, MA 02748

OVERVIEW OF REQUEST: The applicant is seeking demolition of the entire compilation of structures due to their vacant and deteriorated state, as well as lack of use and value. The applicant plans to build a one story metal manufactured storage facility, consisting of 32 units with a total size of 40' X 140'.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: The structure is a combination of buildings that have been erected and attached to each other at different time periods. The oldest part of the subject structure is a gable roofed barn, once associated, but now separated, with the abutting property at 14 Tarkiln Hill Road. A site visit to the property provided insight as to how the original barn structure and additions were attached. The two story addition attached to the barn in 1923 ties directly into the original barn; with the barn's exterior south wall removed to provide an open floor plan between the two structures. The barn's joist supports were also altered in the location where the addition is attached. The 20th century additions have concrete foundations, flat roofs and asphalt siding. The original barn has a rubble stone foundation with post and beam construction, hand hewn timber rafters, and a log joist support system. A cement floor has been poured and additional support posts have been added. The exterior is sheathed with cedar shingles, which have been covered with asphalt. The structure has been vacant for over a decade, has experienced deferred maintenance, and has had been cited for several building code violations.



255 River Road Demolition Request



Property Location

STATEMENT OF APPLICABLE GUIDELINES: The provisions of the Demolition Delay Ordinance shall apply only to any building or structure that, in whole or in part, was built seventy-five (75) or more years prior to the date of the application for the demolition permit, and is:

- A building or structure listed or eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or within an area listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or on the State Register of Historic Places;
- A building or structure importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, economic, political or social history of the city, or;
- A building or structure which is historically or architecturally significant in terms of period style, method of building construction or association with a significant architect or builder either by itself or as a part of a group of buildings, or;
- A building or structure located within one hundred fifty (150) feet of a federal, state or local historic district boundary

FOR BOARD MEMBER CONSIDERATION:

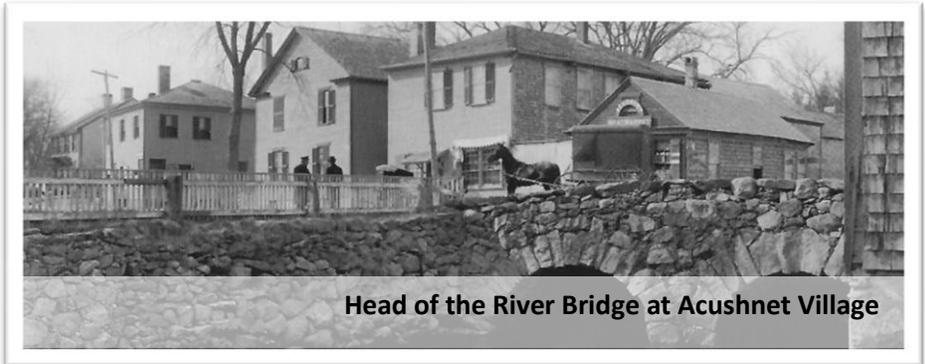
Historical Context: Location

Acushnet Village is located where the Acushnet River meets the upper harbor of New Bedford.

This area has historically been referred to as the “Head of the River,” and its history predates Bedford Village by over a century.

Acushnet gets its name from the Native American inhabitants of this area, the Cushneas, who were part of the Wampanoag tribe and had seasonal settlements on both sides of the Acushnet River. The native foot

trail between Plymouth and Newport, known as the “Rhode Island Way”, crossed the Acushnet River at the Head of the River.

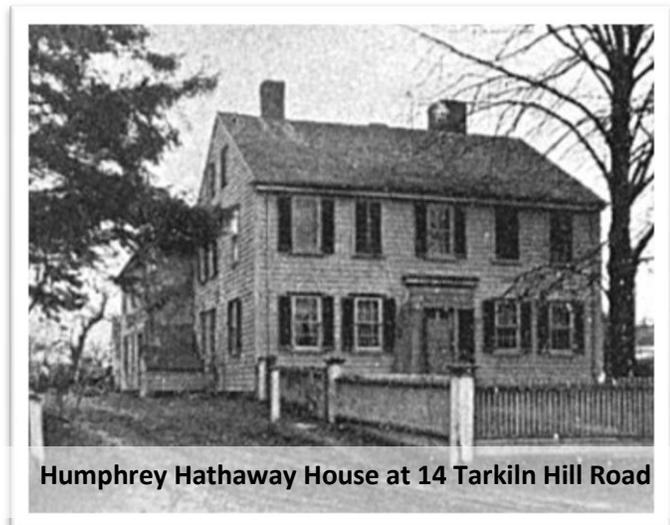


Acushnet Village was one of the initial settlements from the tract of land, known as Old Dartmouth, bequeathed to the Plymouth colonists from the Wampanoag Tribe in 1652. Old Dartmouth was sparsely settled in its early years, and the Head of the River was the only waterway crossing point, with the first wooden bridge constructed in 1664; in contrast to the New Bedford Fairhaven Bridge in 1796. The first Congregational Meetinghouse (1696) for Old Dartmouth was located at Acushnet Village, and by 1700, Acushnet Village developed to a greater degree than any other area and was the seat of government for Old Dartmouth. The early settlers were farmers who built homesteads and tilled and cleared the lands on either side of the River. During the first half of the 18th century, several grist and saw mills located near the head of the Acushnet River, taking advantage of the river as a power source. In contrast, the first century of settlement and growth was slow elsewhere in Old Dartmouth, with scattered farms and dwellings along both the east and west shores of New Bedford Harbor.

Acushnet Village was the foundation of New Bedford’s early establishment as a maritime port with shipbuilding located at the head of the river pre-1775. For much of the 18th century the village grew with iron forges, blacksmithing and shops centered at the bridge, even as Bedford Village began to flourish after 1750 with the advent of the whaling industry. By the 19th century, development in Acushnet remained relatively small-scaled as compared to New Bedford’s growth. When Acushnet was incorporated as a town in 1860, it was chiefly an agricultural community, with a good market in New Bedford.

Hathaway Family

The Hathaways were extensive landowners of Old Dartmouth, who had land on both sides of the Acushnet River. Humphrey Hathaway (1765-1821) was a ship builder who also managed a whale-oil refining factory. His sons Thomas Schuyler (1796-1878), Nathaniel (1798-1836), and Francis S. (1803-1869) became partners of their father and expanded the business to include trade with China and the Philippines with their own fleet of ships. The Hathaway heirs were heavily engaged in New Bedford’s 19th century institutions and government leadership and transferred their wealth from the whaling to textile industry during that time period. Humphrey Hathaway’s only daughter, Alice Hathaway (1806-1880), married Elisha Haskell (1798-1880) in 1827 and inherited the property from her father. Alice Hathaway Haskell and Elisha Haskell were grandparents to President Theodore Roosevelt’s first wife, Alice Hathaway Lee.



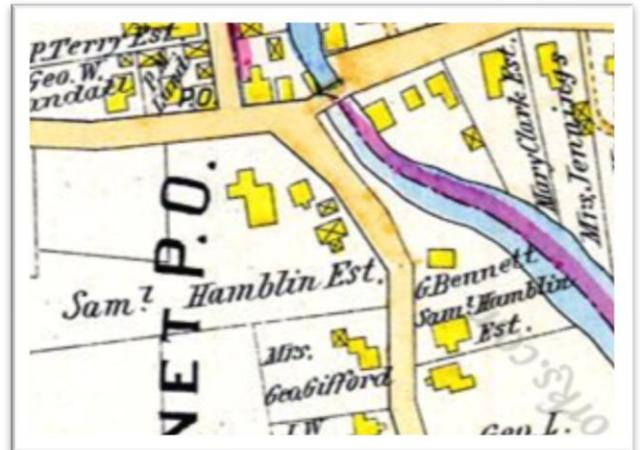
Property History

The subject building was once part of the property acquired in 1794 by Captain Humphrey Hathaway, who built his residence on the northwest corner at 14 Tarkiln Hill Road in 1795. The 2-1/2 story federal style structure (MHC #2030) was built by Hathaway as his country house, as he also had a town house at Elm and Purchase Streets. Hathaway willed the property to his daughter Alice Hathaway Haskell, who resided there until her and husband's passing in 1880. The homestead passed through several hands until it was subdivided in 1921 when Everett C. Morse purchased the lot on the west side of River Road from Sarah Burke, who retained the right to maintain the barn on the premises. In 1927 Morse purchased the land and original homestead at 14 Tarkiln Hill Road. In 1958, the land was once again split into its current configuration, separating the outbuildings from the original Hathaway homestead. This property abuts the boundary of the Head of the River National Register District, which includes the Hathaway homestead at 14 Tarkiln Hill Road.

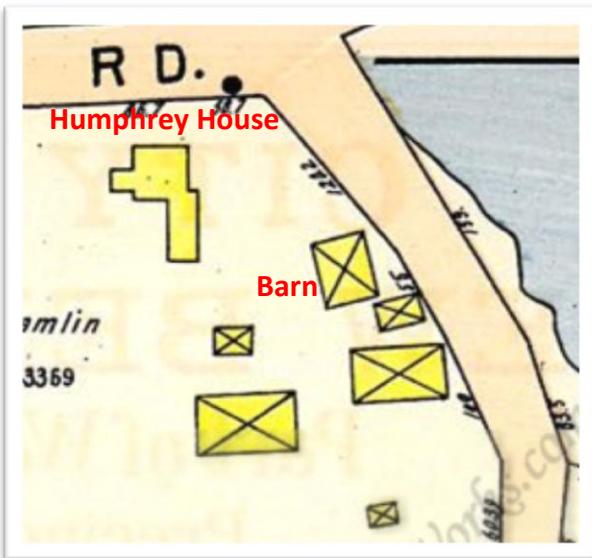
Maps indicate that there were several outbuildings on the property throughout the late 19th and early 20th century. The largest structure was a barn. In 1921 Morse purchased the lot on River Road to operate his hay, grain and wood retail business. In 1923 he constructed a two story, 26' x 14' addition to the south side of the barn for storage. In 1926 Morse made two more flat roofed additions to accommodate his growing business.

The subject property came before the Commission for demolition review in 2006, under different ownership. At that time the Commission made the following recommendation to the City Council:

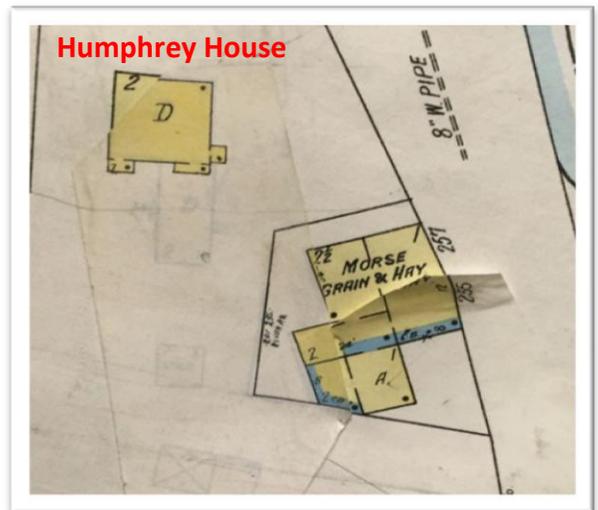
The NBHC has determined that 255 River Road is a Historically Significant structure, however due to its existing altered and poor condition; the structure is NOT Preferably Preserved. Therefore the NBHC finds that it is NOT in the public interest to require preserving the existing structure.



1895 Map showing outbuildings



1911 Map showing outbuildings



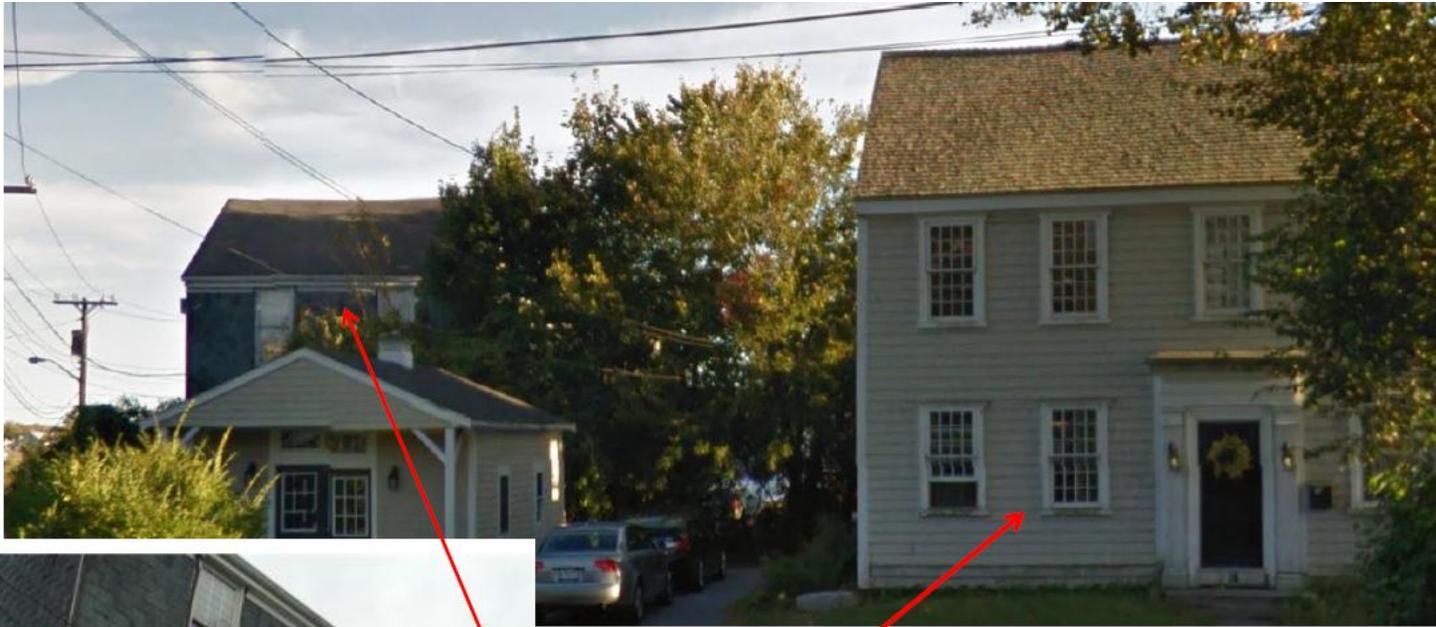
Circa 1950 with current building configuration

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Part of the subject structure(s) was the original barn to the Captain Humphrey Hathaway House (circa 1795) located at 14 Tarkiln Hill Road. The subject property was separated from the Hathaway House in 1958. Its association with the Hathaway family, Acushnet Village, as well as the social and economic development of early New Bedford provides vast historical significance to the property. The original barn portion of the structure provides insight to the building materials and construction methods of late 18th century New England.

The original gable roof barn retains its original form and massing, but has been acutely altered. Exterior windows and garage door openings have penetrated exterior walls. The original exterior south wall of the barn was removed when the two story, 1923 addition was attached. The barn's original support joists were also altered to accommodate and tie into this addition. The 20th century additions have no architectural value.

The subject property has been on the real estate market several times in the last decade, and there has been no interest in rehabilitating this property; as the level of rehabilitation required to meet current building code standards far exceeds the value of the property.

The property has historical significance, however due to its altered state, extent of deferred maintenance, and inability to meet current building codes, Staff recommends that the structure(s) not be preferably preserved.



Hathaway House-14 Tarkiln Hill Rd. Circa 1794



255 River Rd-circa pre-1800



Southeast Elevation

Original
Structure



Southwest Elevation



North Façade with original stairs



Barn Foundation



Log Joists in Barn



Post and beam construction

Additional barn supports on poured concrete floor

