

Montague Historical Commission  
Minutes/Summary of the Public Hearing on November 16, 2022  
(Conducted in hybrid mode)

RE: Input from proponents and interested public concerning the proposed demolition of the Farren buildings in the context of the Demolition Delay By-law.

**Montague Historic Commissioners present:**

David Brule, Chair  
Chris Clawson  
Ed Gregory  
Suzanne LoMonto  
Janel Nockleby  
Chris Sawyer-Lauçanno

**Trinity Health of New England representatives:**

Eric Dana  
Michael Tierney  
David Galbraith

Members of the public

**Proceedings:**

1. D. Brule established that according to the by-law the Commission is required to make a determination based on criteria for the historic significance of the structure proposed for demolition, including whether the structures fit the category of *a preferably preserved building* as described in Section B of the Demolition Delay By-law. He added that the burden of proof for demolition is the responsibility of the applicant who must provide:

- a. A history of the property and its significance
- b. Information on the condition and rationale for demolition
- c. Information concerning alternatives to demolition
- d. Disclosure of the structural engineer's report.

1. Eric Dana, regional operations director for Trinity Health presented the history of the Farren buildings, and explained in detail the reasons why the building is not viable. He requested that David Galbraith, the 43-year manager of the Farren's physical plant, share his assessment of the current conditions there.

Dana also included in his report that Trinity has determined there is no viable option to repurpose the building, that they have not found anyone who is interested in purchasing the buildings, and they have had unsuccessful efforts to find a purchaser.

Dana also asserts that it is Trinity's intention "to do what is right" to turn over a clean site to the town after hazardous materials have been removed and the buildings razed.

2. Galbraith, a local resident and Farren plant engineer, described multiple critical conditions he has observed, including:
  - a. Deterioration of the power panels
  - b. Five façades that are in poor state and need of repairs.
  - c. Obsolete and unreliable generators and heating plant
  - d. Crawl spaces that are unsafe
  - e. Crumbling plumbing, and dangerous asbestos contamination
  - f. Leaking and paper-thin roofs
  - g. Groundwater infiltration into the cellar and foundations, etc.
3. Michael Tierney, project manager, emphasized cost of rehabilitating the building at \$25 million. He cited the eroding foundation, the compromised and obsolete windows, doors, the deteriorated walls and flooring, the electrical and plumbing sectors are not up to code.
3. Commissioner Sawyer-Lauçanno comments that the MHC team was not allowed to view certain specific parts of the buildings, and questioned why the structural engineer's report was not shared with the Commission and the Town.
4. Commissioner Nockleby asks questions about the reasons for water infiltration, and specifics about the deterioration of the roofing. Nockleby noted that the commission was denied this information a year ago, and that if Trinity had been more forthcoming, this may have been dealt with sooner.
5. During the public comment period, numerous residents spoke of their personal experience with the poor state of the buildings including supporting D. Galbraith's assessment of the deteriorated conditions and obsolete systems within and without the buildings, that it is in the public interest to demolish the buildings, that it is required by law for sprinkler fire prevention systems be maintained and operational at all times, that this building has reached the end of its service, etc.
6. In addition, numerous residents expressed frustration that the structural evaluation has not been shared, that there should be documentation of the efforts to market the building, the lack of transparency forthcoming from Trinity, that in fact the demolition delay by-law should be invoked to provide more time to market the site.
7. At the near end of the 2-hour public hearing, Chairman Brule made a motion to extend the hearing for 6 weeks, given the new information that had been shared by Trinity, and the Trinity offer made by Eric Dana to provide a detailed summary (but not full disclosure) of the structural engineer's report, additional photos and evidence of the unsuccessful marketing efforts. Sawyer-Lauçanno seconded the motion, During the discussion portion of the motion for the extension, Trinity asked that the extension be shortened to two weeks, given that they could produce the information requested in that shortened amount of time.

8. The motion was amended to two weeks instead of 6, with the date set for Dec 6 at 6 PM, meeting to be held in the upstairs meeting room.
9. The motion as amended passed unanimously.
10. The public hearing meeting under extension adjourned at 7:55, to be continued on Dec 6.

Submitted by D. Brule, chairman