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STAFF REPORT

NEW BEDFORD HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING

December 5, 2016

APPLICATION FOR DEMOLITION

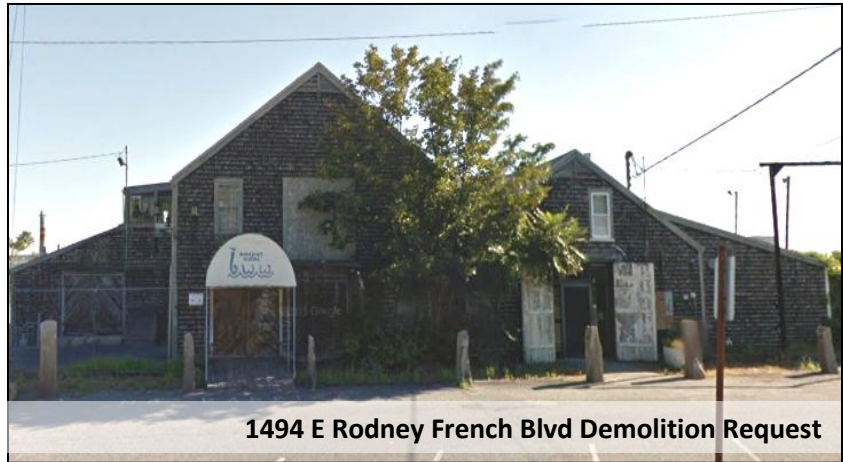
1494 E Rodney French Blvd (Map 12 Lot 77)
Request to demolish a circa 1900 wood-framed structure.

APPLICANT:

Kristie's Wrecking
700 Old Fall River Road
Dartmouth, MA 02747

OWNER:

WK Realty
1494 E Rodney French Blvd
New Bedford, MA 02744



1494 E Rodney French Blvd Demolition Request

OVERVIEW OF REQUEST: The applicant seeks the Commission's review of the proposal prior to their appearance before City Council for demolition of the subject property.

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 circa 1900 gable roofed 1-1/2 story shed-like structure. The adjacent two story additions, as well as the other attached additions, tie directly into the original structure. The buildings' sills appear to sit directly on the ground, floor joist supports have been added and roof rafters sistered. The exterior walls of the buildings are sheathed with cedar shingles, the roofs have asphalt shingles and there exists a late twentieth century wood deck and enclosed accessory structure in the rear of the property. The structure has been vacant for over a decade and has experienced deferred maintenance.



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.

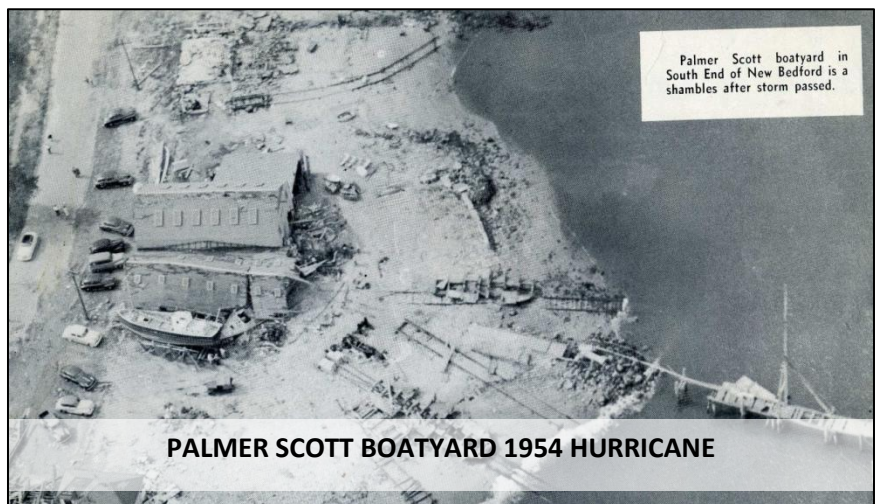
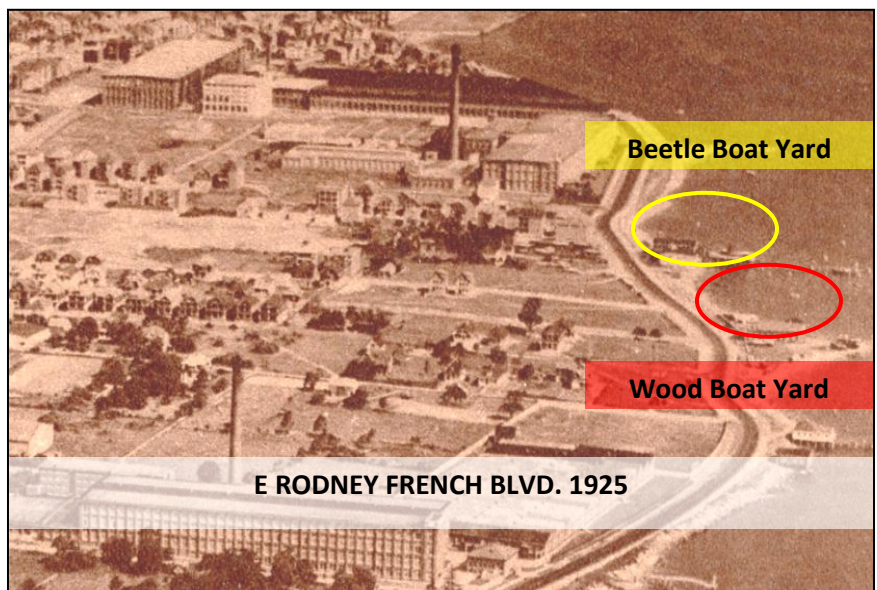
PROPOSAL: The applicant is seeking demolition of the entire compilation of structures due to their vacant and deteriorated state, as well as lack of use and value. The applicant plans to construct a parking lot to accommodate the abutting restaurant which is in common ownership.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

New Bedford's rich history of boatbuilding dates to the early 18th century when boats were initially constructed at the Head of the River. In the first half of the 19th century, the whaling trade spurred an industry that built substantial vessels, but by the latter half of that century, New Bedford's shipwrights turned more to repairs. By the 20th century, the City's ship building industry focused on small boats, pleasure crafts and government contracts. Twentieth century innovative boat design and manufacturing techniques made several City boat yards famous, such as the Beetle and Palmer Scott Boat Yards located adjacent to each other on the water's edge on E Rodney French Blvd.

Wood & Palmer Scott Boat Yards

William Wood Sr. and Ann Higgins Wood immigrated to New Bedford from England with six of their thirteen children in the late 19th century. In 1905 when William and Ann Wood purchased waterfront property along E. Rodney French Boulevard, the peninsula was sparsely populated and they began a boat repair business in a small wooden shed. The Beetle family boatyard was already established and located just north of the Wood property. William Sr. died in 1905, and in 1918, William Jr., better known as Billy, and his sister Carol purchased the estate, continued the



family boat repair business and expanded the footprint of buildings on the property. Billy died in 1940 and in 1942 his sister sold the property to Palmer Scott and Company, a boat building business that was located at the head of Logan Street.

Palmer Scott was born in 1898 and had a degree in Naval Architecture from MIT. By the time Scott purchased the Wood property, he was a well known wooden boat builder and in the late 1940's was a pioneer in the new fiberglass boat game, being the first to establish a method to build the first vacuum molded fiberglass hull. Besides this fiberglass boat business Palmer had over 20 years experience building large wooden yachts and military craft under government contracts.

In 1954 Hurricane Carol wiped out his boatyard and all that survived was his Marscot Plastics division. Palmer Scott partnered his plastics division with George O' Day Associates of Fall River and around 1958 moved Marscot Plastics from New Bedford to Fall River. Palmer Scott retired from the boat business in 1960 and died in 1970.

The buildings were rehabilitated in 1958 and adapted for the use as an entertainment lounge. At some point, the lounge was named "Billy Wood's Wharf", a nod to the original building owner.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The property's association with New Bedford's 20th century boat building industry and the widely recognized innovations of Palmer Scott provides vast historical significance to the property.

Photographic evidence shows that the boatyard buildings experienced extensive damage from Hurricane Carol in 1954 and were subsequently rehabilitated. The original gable sheds retain their original form and massing, although there have been window, door and siding alterations. The late 20th century additions have no architectural value.

Although the property has historical significance, it has been vacant for nearly a decade, has experienced a high level of deferred maintenance, and the level of rehabilitation required to meet current building code standards far exceeds the value of the property. For these reasons, staff recommends that the structure(s) not be preferably preserved.

