

**MINUTES
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
ONE JUNKINS AVENUE, PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

6:30 p.m.

MARCH 1, 2017

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Vincent Lombardi; Dan Rawling, John Mayer; City Council Representative Nancy Pearson; Alternates Molly Bolster and Martin Ryan

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Vice-Chairman Jon Wyckoff, Reagan Ruedig; Richard Shea

ALSO PRESENT: Nick Cracknell, Principal Planner

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Chairman Lombardi stated that site walks were held prior to the meeting at 73 Prospect and 437 Marcy Streets.

I. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS

1. 36 Market Street

Mr. Cracknell stated that the request was for a window installation on Ladd Street that was previously approved in July 2013, but the permit for it lapsed.

2. 414 State Street

Mr. Cracknell stated that the request was to remove the chimney and expand the room on the ground floor.

Mr. Mayer asked how old the chimney was. The contractor Paul Messier stated that the chimney was built in the 1990s.

3. 500 Market Street

Mr. Cracknell said the applicant wanted to remove the sliding doors and add a sleeper due to water infiltration problems, and also increase the roof slope on the shed dormer.

Mr. Rawling said it was a minor change that wouldn't be visible from the street.

4. 33 Howard Street

Mr. Cracknell stated that the applicant wanted to add a utilities screen to the west side of the house to hide the gas meters. He asked the Commission whether they wanted a vertical or diagonal lattice and recommended the vertical-hanging one.

5. 238 State Street

Mr. Cracknell said the applicant wanted to remove the storefront of the former pizza shop and replace the two pieces of miter glass with two pieces of glass and a divider.

Administrative Approval Item #4, 33 Howard Street, was separately voted on.

*Mr. Mayer made a motion to **grant** the Certificate of Approval for the application, with the following:*

That the lattice be horizontal instead of diagonal.

*Councilor Pearson seconded the motion. The motion **passed** by unanimous (6-0) vote.*

*Mr. Mayer made a motion to **grant** the Certificate of Approval for Administrative Approval Items #1, 2, 3, and 5. Councilor Pearson seconded the motion.*

*The motion **passed** by unanimous (6-0) vote.*

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. (Work Session/Public Hearing) Petition of **Stephen J. Boyle, owner**, for property located at **437 Marcy Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow demolition of an existing structure (remove shed, remove and replace fencing) and allow new construction to an existing structure (construct third floor dormer on rear façade) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 102 as Lot 36 and lies within the General Residence B and Historic Districts.

WORK SESSION

The architect Shannon Alther of TMS Architects representing the applicant was present to speak to the petition. He introduced the abutters to the east of the house, Art and Mary Anker.

Mr. Alther stated that the prior site walk went well. He referred to a previous issue of whether or not the shed had historic value, saying that he didn't think it did, based on some of the materials.

The Commission discussed the replacement of the triple-pane window on the second floor that was originally requested to be replaced with a door. Mr. Mayer said that the Commission previously felt that the window was an original and distinct feature of the house and that it should not be replaced.

Mr. Alther discussed the previously proposed new stairway and proposed that the existing square posts at the front of the house be mimicked onto the existing stairs and new stairs.

Councilor Pearson said she thought the historic newel post looked better with the new post next to it and felt that attaching a railing to the old one in the back would lose some of that. Mr. Ryan noted that the Commission had discussed moving the railing to the other side, which he thought was a good solution. Mr. Rawling and Mr. Mayer agreed. Mr. Rawling suggested replicating it on the new steps. Mr. Alther said he would discuss it with the owner.

Chairman Lombardi asked about the second stairway on the back of the house. Mr. Alther said he left it off the plan but wanted to add it. Chairman Lombardi asked whether the newel post would be reproduced on one side, and Mr. Alther agreed.

The massing was then discussed. Mr. Alther referred to Option A for the tower and Option B for the dormer. He reviewed the diagrams and the various scale versions and angles. He said the dormer option was similar to those of other houses in the neighborhood. He proposed a gable end, with the hip roof pulled up to the gable, and also proposed a French door and Juliet balcony. He said the dormers on each side would have casement windows with a 2/1 look. Mr. Alther also suggested that the tower be squeezed in so that it didn't line up with the second floor, which he felt would help with the scale.

Mr. Alther concluded that there were four options, two as originally proposed and two with modifications. The options were discussed. Mr. Mayer noted that the Option D tower had window sills that looked higher than the ones in the dormer end and asked whether the ceiling height was changed. Mr. Alther said he only changed the height of the windows. Mr. Rawling said he supported either tower Option A or D and would choose Option D if there were no issues with the neighbors. He said he didn't support Option B for the shed dormers. He discussed the landscaping. He said the windows should be double-hung ones. Ms. Bolster said she didn't feel that the tower design in Options A, C, and D added to the historic nature of the house but that she might pursue Option B. Mr. Mayer agreed. Mr. Ryan said he would support Option C because it seemed to be part of the original design.

Chairman Lombardi stated that he had a letter from the absent Mr. Shea concerning the petition, which he read into the public record. The letter included the comments that all the proposed third-floor addition options were too aggressive for the structure, including the proposed massing that overpowered it, and that he didn't support the French doors, the balcony or the new gable because they weren't in keeping with a Queen Anne home and wouldn't enhance the historic neighborhood. Chairman Lombardi said he agreed with Mr. Shea that the addition was overpowering and thought that perhaps one shed dormer might be acceptable but that the faux balcony didn't fit.

Public Comment

Ms. Anker said that the house was beautiful but wasn't grand, and that adding a tower on it wouldn't make it so. She said the addition wouldn't preserve the integrity of the historic district

or maintain its special character, and it wouldn't contribute to a sense of place. She asked that the house be kept the way it was.

No one else rose to speak, and Chairman Lombardi closed the public session.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

Mr. Cracknell suggested that the tower be bifurcated from the other requests, and Mr. Alther agreed.

Chairman Lombardi closed the work session. They then entered the public hearing.

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

Mr. Alther briefly reviewed his petition and said everything proposed during the work session would remain the same with the exception of the tower and dormer component, which would be removed from the petition.

Mr. Rawling clarified that the railings would be relocated from the locations as shown on the plans to the opposite side away from the newel posts, which would allow following the same design detail on the front porch in the future if so desired.

Chairman Lombardi also asked about the option to put the second stairway. Mr. Alther said it was on the plans.

SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR AGAINST THE PETITION

No one rose to speak, and Chairman Lombardi closed the public hearing.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

*Mr. Mayer made a motion to **grant** the Certificate of Approval for the application as presented, with the following stipulations:*

- 1) The front balcony window shall be retained as original triple hung window.*
- 2) The railings on the rear porch shall be relocated opposite the newel post. Additionally, the front porch may use the same design.*
- 3) The tower and dormer options shall be removed from the application at this time.*

Mr. Rawling seconded the motion.

Mr. Mayer stated that the application maintained the special character of the District and enhanced the historic district as well.

*The motion **passed** by unanimous (6-0) vote.*

2. (Work Session/Public Hearing) Petition of **Michael De La Cruz, owner**, for property located at **75 Congress Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow new construction to an existing structure (restore historic pediments, add dormers, decks, and windows) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 117 as Lot 5 and lies within the CD 5, Historic, and Downtown Overlay District.

WORK SESSION

The owner Michael De La Cruz was present to speak to the petition. He reviewed the petition, noting that the addendum addressed the Commission's previous requests for cut sheets for some materials as well as questions about the pediments. He gave a brief history of the building. He said he wanted to add simple dormers on the upper roof that would sit back from the front façade. He said the decks were positioned to minimize views from the street.

Mr. De La Cruz stated that he had revised his original request for a window to be added to the center of the building and further discussed it, as well as a location for a new railing. He said he chose Pella windows with bronze cladding on the outside that would match all the other windows and that the dormer material would be wood. He discussed the roof cresting's original railing and said he would hire someone to mimic the detail. He said he wanted to install a faux balcony in the back of the building.

The railing on the back was discussed. Mr. Mayer noted that it was the only railing on any of the windows on that façade and asked why. Mr. De La Cruz said the back of the building was very plain and that the railing would improve the code and make the window safer. Ms. Bolster asked if there was a stairwell, and Mr. De La Cruz said there was and that he thought that the rail might be a nice touch. It was further discussed.

Mr. Rawling said he felt that the windows as proposed were fine, and Mr. Ryan agreed. Councilor Pearson noted that Discover Portsmouth had an iron railing with a heart motif, and Mr. De La Cruz said he would look at it.

Mr. Rawling recommended that Mr. De La Cruz submit a shop drawing on the railing.

Chairman Lombardi noted that the decks were well hidden from the street and asked whether there was a different banding on the top. Mr. De La Cruz said he made four renderings of it, which he reviewed and further discussed.

Mr. Mayer said the building had an active façade but found that introducing copper banding would add a new element to the brick materials. The different patinas of the copper were discussed. Mr. Ryan asked whether the material was seen throughout the building. Mr. De La Cruz distributed brochures on a product that he said had dimensional stability and wouldn't allow paint to flake off as much. He also gave out samples of the product to the Commission, noting that it was a composite. They further discussed it. Mr. Ryan asked whether it would be a sheathing material. Mr. De La Cruz agreed and said it would be framed. Mr. Ryan suggested making the pediments out of copper completely, and it was further discussed.

Mr. De La Cruz said that he wanted to remove the cooling tower on the center of the building and place it out of sight, making that cornice larger. He said the cooling tower would either be placed behind the building and that the transformer could be relocated or buried underground. Mr. Rawling suggested that Mr. De La Cruz submit his new plans. Mr. Cracknell recommended that the garage door plan should be removed from the petition until Mr. De La Cruz met with the Planning Board.

There was no public comment.

It was moved, seconded and unanimously passed (6-0) to close the work session and move into the public hearing.

PUBLIC HEARING

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

Mr. De La Cruz reviewed his petition and said he would restore the pediments, add dormers and decks to the roof, and add windows per his plans. He said that Rendering #2 with the copper shown on the banding rather than the pediment was favored, but he asked that he have the option to mock up and choose which rendering looked best. He proposed that Page 23, Revision B, be included as an option for the windows on the back of the building. He said he would remove the garage door plan from the petition until he had approval from the other Boards.

Chairman Lombardi noted that there was discussion on the balcony and the copper banding on various designs and that it was preferred not to see a final decision on that. Mr. Rawling noted the stipulation on the mock-up and the copper bands.

Ms. Bolster asked how the runoff from the roof was handled. Mr. De La Cruz said the gutters were part of the architectural design and that the water would drain down to the parapet and the drains would catch the water runoff.

Mr. Cracknell summarized that the stipulations were the shop drawing submittal, the Rendering #2 as the alternate scheme, and the removal of the garage door from the petition.

SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR AGAINST THE PETITION

No one rose to speak, and Chairman Lombardi closed the public hearing.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

*Mr. Rawling made a motion to **grant** the Certificate of Approval for the application, with the following stipulations:*

- 1) A shop drawing for the proposed roof cresting and railings shall be submitted for review prior to construction.*
- 2) A revised drawing showing the copper cladding on the historic pediment shall be a Transposed version of Sheet R2 and such shall require administrative approval.*

- 3) *The garage door shall be removed from the application until such time as the Planning Board has approved a site plan.*

Mr. Mayer seconded the motion.

Mr. Rawling said the project was a tremendous enhancement of the building and would bring back much of its original character, preserve the integrity of the District, enhance property values, and be consistent with the special and defining character of surrounding properties.

*The motion **passed** by unanimous (6-0) vote.*

III. WORK SESSIONS

A. Work Session requested by **Ten Walker Street Realty, LLC, owner**, for property located at **73 Prospect Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow demolition of an existing structure (demolish porch and shed structures) and allow new construction to an existing structure (construct two additions, reconstruct exterior chimney) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 142 as Lot 28 and lies within the General Residence A and Historic Districts.

Steve McHenry and Jeremiah Johnson of McHenry Architects were present to speak to the petition on behalf of the owner.

Mr. McHenry said they had chosen a massing option for the various additions to the farmhouse. He reviewed the application, saying that all the windows would be replaced, the foundation would be repaired, new decks and railings would be added, wood siding with composite trim would be used, and the chimney would be repaired. He said they also wanted to add two more units. He discussed the views from the property and the extreme elevation changes and noted that the street context was original. He said that most of the porch on the east elevation had been replaced recently and only some portions of the bracket and posts were original. He discussed the floor plans, the door details, the window types, and materials.

Mr. Rawling said he was very comfortable with the project. He said he would like to see a weathered wood color for the roof and a window trim similar to the original. He asked whether the foundation was concrete. Mr. McHenry said it was a hand-laid exterior plastic foundation, similar to a sidewalk. The chimney was also discussed. Mr. Rawling asked whether the newer windows would be restored. Mr. McHenry said he would discuss it with the owner.

Ms. Bolster said the railings seemed to have a darker trim, and Mr. Johnson said they were all white. She also noted that the new patio doors didn't look like the others. Mr. McHenry said they were modern doors to let the light in but said they could have a mullion system.

Councilor Pearson asked whether the brackets that would be removed from the porch could be recycled, and Mr. McHenry agreed. Mr. Rawling said the porch detail of the post in the corner was awkward, and it was further discussed.

Chairman Lombardi said about the porch roof design, which he thought looked awkward. Mr. McHenry said that the previous design was narrower but that they felt it was too small. He said they would reconsider it.

Mr. Mayer asked whether the two dormers on the west side of the front elevation that dropped down were typical. Mr. McHenry said they were, due to the knee wall. Mr. Mayer said that the two abutting windows on the second elevation looked like a contemporary element and said they might feel older if they were separated a bit.

Mr. Rawling said the porch needed to be wider, and it was further discussed.

Mr. Ryan asked whether the handrails were the same on the back porch, and Mr. McHenry agreed, saying that they were a composite system.

Mr. Rawling asked whether the historic window sills would be matched, and Mr. McHenry said they would.

The composite material for the deck and railings was discussed. Chairman Lombardi said he preferred to see natural materials, even though the Board had approved them in the past. Mr. McHenry said he would bring a sample of the material to the next work session.

Mr. Mayer asked whether the trim detail for the windows was a molding pattern. Mr. McHenry said they hadn't made a decision. He said the attic window casing had the band molding and didn't think they could get that standard with any window system but agreed that the trim pattern should be on all the windows.

There was no public comment.

It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously (6-0) to close the work session.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

The applicant indicated that he would come back for a work session/public hearing.

B. Work Session requested by **Friends of the Music Hall, owner**, for property located at **28 Chestnut Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow new construction to an existing structure (remove existing marquee and four vertical banners, replace with new marquee and vertical blade sign) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 126 as Lot 7 and lies within the CD 4, Historic, and Downtown Overlay Districts.

Ben Auger, Music Hall Trustee, and Patricia Lynch, Executive Director of the Music Hall, were present to speak to the petition.

Mr. Auger reviewed the packet. He said they wanted to replace the existing plywood marquee with a new one, with a vertical blade above it. He said the new marquee would be the same width but would have a point that extended two feet further, and that the new blade would go up to the top of the center window and stop at the top of the cornice. He showed photos and further discussed the marquee and the blade.

Chairman Lombardi suggested that the letter from the State be read into the record. Ms. Lynch read the letter. It stated, among other things, that theater blades and marquees were important identifying symbols on a theater's façade and were often important historic landmarks within city streetscapes. It noted that the Music Hall once had brightly lit signage to help identify the name and location to the public and that the proposed design met the Secretary of Interior Standards for the rehabilitation of historic buildings. It also stated that the use of LED on the Music Hall followed the precedent of the Apollo Theater and was acceptable only if it was black and white, had no animation, and worked to replicate the visual aspects of traditional theater marquee lettering.

Mr. Mayer said the project was a great improvement that would activate the street. He said it was modern but referenced the historic element.

Mr. Rawling asked that the lamination definitions be clarified. Mr. Auger said one was internally illuminated and the other was direct illumination and that it was a mixture of LED and vintage neon. Mr. Rawling asked whether the letters were in relief or dimensional. Mr. Auger said the LED was on the straight sections and the neon was the curved element. It was further discussed. Mr. Ryan asked whether the titles were individual letters. Ms. Lynch said it was digital, as well as the checkerboard pattern behind it. She said it wouldn't flash.

Chairman Lombardi read the description of the lights, noting that the 'A' light was depicted as wired and the 'B' light was depicted as not wired but flashing. Mr. Auger said it was a standard script and that they had no plans to have the light flashed. They further discussed it.

In response to further questions from Chairman Lombardi, Mr. Auger said there were downlights and that other sign ordinances were in the works, noting that they had to meet with the Board of Adjustment for a variance for the blade size.

Ms. Bolster asked whether there was a disclaimer that the colors may not be exact. Mr. Auger said there was nothing scientific about the actual colors. Ms. Lynch said the colors shown were the ones they selected.

Public Comment

Rick Becksted of 1395 Islington Street noted that the petition also had to be approved by the City Council. He said he was concerned that a lot was going on with the Music Hall that the City had worked hard to control illuminating signs. He reminded the Commission that they had a say as far as defining the character of the District. He felt that the 226-ft sign would be more appropriate.

No one else rose to speak, and Chairman Lombardi closed the public comment session.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

Chairman Lombardi said he had heard from people who agreed with Mr. Becksted that the marquee and blade were a bit much and perhaps a little too grand. He said that comparing it to the Apollo didn't mean much because Portsmouth wasn't New York City, and he pointed out that a lot of the City's sign ordinances tried to keep Portsmouth from being New York City and that he was concerned about it.

Mr. Mayer said it was a restoration and was compatible with the District, and that it was supposed to be prominent and illuminated.

Councilor Pearson asked whether there were hours when the lights would be turned off. Mr. Auger said it would be noon to 11 p.m. or an hour after the performance ended. Ms. Bolster asked whether any apartments would be affected by the light, and Ms. Lynch said they would not. She briefly reviewed the history of electric light throughout the country.

Mr. Rawling said he thought that, if it was the kind of signage all over town, it would be too much, but he felt that it was the language of theater signage and should be a stand-out element at the Music Hall and seemed appropriate. Councilor Pearson noted that Chestnut Street would be more of a gathering space, and that the warmth and welcoming feel would draw people in.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

The applicant indicated that they would return for a public hearing.

C. Work Session requested by **Twenty Three Rue Du High Realty, owner, and Nelson Enterprises, LLC, applicant**, for property located at **9 Commercial Alley** wherein permission was requested to allow exterior renovations to an existing structure (remove and replace existing windows and door, install new door in back alley, install HVAC unit on roof) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 106 as Lot 32 and lies within the CD 4, Historic, and Downtown Overlay Districts.

The architect Carla Goodknight of CJ Architects on behalf of the owner was present to speak to the petition. She said the building had a previous retail use but would be changed into a restaurant. She said the building would need additional mechanicals on the roof but that the current exhaust system was already located in that area so the visibility would be low.

Ms. Goodknight discussed the feasibility of replacing the windows with operable ones, noting that operable windows would take in the alley atmosphere. She said they would not alter any openings on the commercial alley side. She discussed the elevation and noted one sill that appeared to be too small but was actually the header of a bricked-up basement window. She discussed the proposed window style and said they were considering Marvin and Pella windows.

She said they wanted to reactive a bricked-up opening on the alley as a door and reinstall the header higher in order to make a staircase.

Chairman Lombardi asked whether it would be a problem with pedestrians if the casement windows opened up into the alley. Ms. Goodknight said the windows would be installed on the inside and the projection would be minimal. They further discussed it. Mr. Cracknell suggested double-hung windows. Mr. Rawling asked whether there would be clad windows and said wood windows would be important to keep the character of the street. Chairman Lombardi asked whether the header of the lower window would be removed. Ms. Goodknight said it wouldn't and that they would just infill it.

Ms. Goodknight asked for comments about the door on the back of the building. Mr. Ryan noted that the façade had been much altered anyway.

*It was moved, seconded and **passed** unanimously (6-0) to close the work session.*

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

The applicant indicated that she would return for a future work session/public hearing.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

*At 10:15 p.m., it was moved, seconded, and **passed** by unanimous vote (6-0) to adjourn the meeting.*

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
HDC Recording Secretary

These minutes were approved at the Historic District Commission meeting on April 5, 2017.