

**MINUTES OF THE  
THE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
PORTSMOUTH, NH**

**Remote Meeting Via Zoom Conference Call**

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Per NH RSA 91-A:2, III (b) the Chair has declared COVID-19 outbreak an emergency and has waived the requirement that a quorum be physically present at the meeting pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order 2020-04, Section 8, as extended by Executive Order 2020-18, and Emergency Order #12, Section 3. Members will be participating remotely and will identify their location and any person present with them at that location. All votes will be by roll call.

**6:30 p.m.**

**October 07, 2020**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Vincent Lombardi; Vice-Chairman Jon Wyckoff; Members Reagan Ruedig, Margot Doering and Martin Ryan; City Council Representative Paige Trace; Alternates Heinz Sauk-Schubert

**ALSO PRESENT:** Nick Cracknell, Principal Planner, Planning Department

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**I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

1. September 02, 2020
2. September 09, 2020

*It was moved, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote (6-0) to **approve** both sets of minutes as presented.*

At this point, City Council Representative Trace joined the meeting.

**II. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS**

**1. 846 Middle Street**

The request was to install a 4-ft black metal fence along the front of the property.

**2. 249 Pleasant Street**

Mr. Cracknell explained that the applicant was previously before the Commission with a petition in two parts. He said that Part 1 for the windows, doors, and HVAC equipment would be continued to the November meeting. He said Part 2 was to request a change to the approved design for the barn-style doors on the carriage house and that the applicant wanted to mount the doors on the inside of the mainframe instead of the outside. The applicant Ken Hayes was present. In response to Vice-Chair Wyckoff's questions, he said the doors would open and close, that the original framing and siding would remain, that there was no evidence of an eternal track-mounted mechanism to open the doors, and that he would weatherstrip the doors.

**3. 3 Pleasant Street**

The request was for approval to add wall-mounted light fixtures on the front of the building and to add a few poles for a cable light system. The applicant Mark McNabb was present and said the poles would be smooth and that he had approval from all the building owners except for one to attach the catenary lights to their buildings. He said the poles would not be noticed and that the lights on the front and back entrances were natural gas.

**4. 700 Middle Street**

Mr. Cracknell said that the previously-approved two small windows on the back of the structure were not installed because they weren't grandfathered in and the owner needed an easement for either five feet or fire-rated glass, so he chose not to install the windows.

**5. 58 Manning Street**

The request was to replace a 4-ft fence with a 6-ft fence due to a hot tub installation.

**6. 355 Pleasant Street**

Mr. Cracknell said the request was to move the wall a few feet onto Pleasant Street to make more room on Howard Street. He said the owners of the two homes were working together to come up with a design. City Council Representative Trace said the X and O design wasn't appropriate on the imposing building that didn't sit back from the street and also thought the railing's overall design looked disjointed. The applicant Katherine Kane was present and said that craftsman Peter Happny designed the upper half of the railing to meet her request that the design be a geometric Greek revival one, but that she would accept a plain design. It was further discussed. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said he agreed that just keeping a vertical baluster on the front rail was more appropriate. Mr. Ryan said Mr. Happny's design should be allowed and didn't think it would detract from the other historic homes. Mr. Sauk-Schubert said he found the design incongruous and preferred a simpler design, with the vertical raised to the top rail. Ms. Ruedig said Mr. Happny created the design for a reason, which was perhaps to make the railing more stable, and that he could either simplify it or create a different design that might fit better. Ms.

Kane said she didn't think the design was due to a structural issue. Vice-Chair Wyckoff asked that the item be pulled and voted on separately.

*It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously (7-0) to **pull** the item from the group.*

*Vice-Chair Wyckoff moved to **approve** Administrative Approval Items 1 through 5, and Mr. Ryan seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

*Vice-Chair Wyckoff moved to **approve** Item 5, with the following **stipulation**:*

- 1. The balusters on the side railings along Pleasant Street shall go to a single top rail and there shall be no "XOXO" design.*

*City Council Representative Trace seconded.*

*The motion **passed** by a vote of 5-2, with Mr. Ryan and Chairman Lombardi voting in opposition.*

### **III. CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - EXTENSION REQUEST**

1. Request by **Alan W. and Wendy G. Wong, owners**, for property located at **179 Pleasant Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow a 1-year extension of the Certificate of Approval originally granted on October 02, 2019 and set to expire on October 02, 2020 for the construction of a new free-standing structure (garden pergola) and new construction to an existing structure (replace roof and structures of existing ells and expand middle ell) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 108 as Lot 15 and lies within the Mixed Research Office (MRO) and Historic Districts.

### **DECISION OF THE COMMISSION**

*Ms. Ruedig moved to **grant** the one-year extension request, and Ms. Doering seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

### **IV. REHEARING REQUESTS**

1. Petition for rehearing requested by **3A Trust, Guy D. and Elizabeth R. Spiers Trustees, owners**, for property located at **241 South Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow renovations to an existing structure (replacement of the granite steps on the front façade) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 111 as Lot 36 and lies within the General Residence B (GRB and Historic Districts)

### **SPEAKING TO THE PETITION**

The applicants Guy and Elizabeth Spiers were present to review the petition. Mr. Spiers said the steps were a safety issue because a person had to step down to the middle step to open the door. He noted that several older friends and relatives had commented that they didn't feel safe using the steps. He said he wanted a deeper landing with the full width and also a darker granite.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff said the new steps would not be grandfathered like the existing ones and that a larger 3-ft landing was required. He said the applicant's only option would be to bring the steps down sideways, which would require railings around the landing. He said the proposed stairs wouldn't work and that a vital part of the building's original fabric would be lost. He asked how often the front door was used, and Mr. Spiers said it was every day. Mr. Ryan noted that the Commission told the applicant previously that he could level the steps out and keep what was there. He said the steps were three different pieces of granite and did not work together, nor fit the door's width, and that the concern with the landing being only 30 inches could be worked out with the Building Department. He said he would support the petition because the existing steps didn't look like they should be there, and he thought the applicant should have safe and accessible steps to his front door. Ms. Ruedig agreed. She said if the steps were a better designed artifact that was clearly designed for the house, she'd be hesitant to see them removed, but since they looked like old pieces cobbled together, she was happy to allow the applicant to build a safer entrance. City Council Representative Trace said the storm door on the house could be made into a year-round side entrance that elderly guests could use and that would also permit the applicant to avoid going before the Board of Adjustment (BOA) for easements to utilize City property. Chairman Lombardi was concerned that the requested landing size and the proposed short second step would also be dangerous. Ms. Spiers said the steps were each twelve inches. Chairman Lombardi said they would still have to meet code and that some granite steps were more appropriate for older houses than others. Mr. Cracknell said it was important for the applicants to decide whether they really wanted a split face or rock face step because a rock face wouldn't be consistent with other steps on the street that had smooth faces and sides. It was further discussed. Mr. Ryan said the proposed steps and treads were wide enough, didn't go on the street, and were similar in color and style to other homes on the street, so he thought they should be approved and that the applicants should not be told that they should use the side door.

Chairman Lombardi opened the public hearing.

### **SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR AGAINST THE PETITION**

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

### **DECISION OF THE COMMISSION**

*Mr. Ryan moved to **grant** the Certificate of Approval for the petition as presented, with the following stipulation:*

- 1. That the finish be coarse to match those within the neighborhood.*

*Ms. Ruedig seconded.*

Mr. Cracknell said the steps across the road were not coarse and that the motion should address having the proposed steps match the examples shown in the meeting. Mr. Ryan agreed to **amend** his motion. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said he would not support the motion because the steps were the only historical element on the house. Ms. Trace agreed. Ms. Doering said it was a shame to lose the steps and that there were other ways to make the entry safer yet retain the materials.

The motion was amended as follows:

*Mr. Ryan moved to **grant** the Certificate of Approval for the petition as presented, with the following stipulation:*

- 1. The granite steps shall be smooth-faced on all sides to match the examples shown at the October 07, 2020 Historic District Commission meeting.*

*Ms. Ruedig seconded.*

Mr. Ryan said the project would preserve the integrity of the District and was compatible with the design of the surrounding properties.

*The motion **passed** by a vote of 4-3, with Vice-Chair Wyckoff, City Council Representative Trace, and Ms. Doering voting in opposition.*

**Note:** Mr. Sauk-Schubert originally abstained from the vote because he was conflicted about the historic and safety issues, but due to the 3-3 tie, he cast his vote.

## **V. PUBLIC HEARINGS (NEW BUSINESS)**

1. Petition of **553-559 Islington Street, LLC, owner**, for property located at **553-559 Islington Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow new construction to an existing structure (construct a new rear 2 ½ - story addition) and exterior renovations to an existing structure (replace siding, repair and replace trim as needed) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 157 as Lot 3 and lies within the Character District 4-L2 (CD4-L2) and Historic District.

### **SPEAKING TO THE PETITION**

Project architect Tim Brochu and owner Ed Zimmerman were present to speak to the petition. Vice-Chair Wyckoff noted that the small one-story building with a casement window was being replaced with a window of the same design instead of a 6/6 sash window that could work with the building. Mr. Brochu said they went before the BOA and discovered that the façade glazing percentage was nonconforming, so they got approval by stating that they would not change the façade glazing. He said he did not intend to replace that small front window. Mr. Cracknell said the applicant had the right to remove the window and put in two double-hung windows, which would increase the façade glazing and be more conforming so that it wouldn't be necessary to go before the BOA again. Mr. Zimmerman said he was comfortable changing the design so that they could keep the window the same size, and it was further discussed. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said indoor shutters or wooden blinds could be used as window treatments that would work. He suggested removing that part of the proposal for consideration. Mr. Ryan said if the applicant didn't touch that façade or wanted to phase it in later on, then it wasn't part of the application. Mr. Cracknell said the small building element could be bifurcated from the application and could return as an administrative item. Mr. Sauk-Schubert asked about the 6'6" ceiling height on the

third floor, noting that the minimum height was 7'6". Mr. Brochu said the ceiling could be raised. It was further discussed.

Mr. Brochu reviewed the proposal in full. Ms. Ruedig said she was disappointed that the front windows wouldn't be replaced. She agreed that the 2/2 window was appropriate for the building and suggested using that size when the façade windows were replaced, which would make the building look much better. She was glad the wood siding was going back up but wondered if the 8" corner board was wide enough. She said the addition's massing was fine but preferred to see real wood railings by the façade's front door and a wooden front door. She said the dormer details were fine. Mr. Brochu agreed that wider corner boards would look better and asked if the other two doors should be wood as well. Ms. Ruedig said that all three façade doors should be wood. Vice-Chair Wyckoff agreed and said the existing front door was terrible. Mr. Brochu said they would replace it. Vice-Chair Wyckoff again suggested that the small building be pulled out for an administrative approval, noting that he didn't think what was proposed for it was successful. He said the applicant did a good job with the window trim and recognizing that there were some arches over the casings, but he thought the wraparound molding shouldn't be replicated because it was there only to give the cement siding something to go up against.

Mr. Ryan said he agreed with all the comments. He said the corner boards should be wider and thought that some of the details of the side porch could reflect more of an Italianate style of architecture. He said the 1/1 windows didn't seem appropriate for the dormer and suggested more of a feature window. Mr. Brochu said they did not intend to replace the third-floor windows but could make them more consistent with the other windows if they did. Mr. Zimmerman said he had no problem doing larger corner boards. City Council Representative Trace asked if the secondary railing was for people with disabilities. Mr. Brochu said it wasn't but that the building code required it for stair egress, and he explained what it would look like. Ms. Trace said the metal railing looked terrible, and Mr. Brochu said he could move the post down to the end. It was further discussed. Chairman Lombardi said he was glad that the applicant was picking up on the window trim details because those small features made it beautiful. He said he agreed with all the comments.

Chairman Lombardi opened the public hearing.

### **SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR AGAINST THE PETITION**

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

### **DECISION OF THE COMMISSION**

Vice-Chair Wyckoff indicated that he could make a motion to remove bifurcate the smaller building item from the project and bring it back as an administrative approval. Mr. Cracknell suggested that the applicant instead return at the November meeting with a new drawing incorporating all the suggestions made by the Commission so that the entire project could be approved at once. Mr. Brochu and Mr. Zimmerman agreed.

*Ms. Ruedig moved to **continue** the public hearing to the November 4 meeting. Vice-Chair Wyckoff seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

2. Petition of **COLACO, LLC, owner**, for property located at **45 Market Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow exterior renovations to an existing structure (upgrade façade wood materials, install new windows, repair the ground level entry, repair copper gutters and sign board) and new construction to an existing structure (add new rear roof deck) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 106 as lot 28 and lies within the Character District 5 (CD5) and Historic Districts.

### **SPEAKING TO THE PETITION**

Project architect Shannon Alther was present to review the petition. He reviewed the options for the storefront, which included having it wood at the ground level or painting it black to align with the buildings to the right of it. He said they wanted to replicate the Market Street dormer and that the window would be a 6/1 one but that the doors would remain a standard piece of glass. He discussed the rear elevation's railing system, the proposed overhang where the deck would be, and the metal and wood stairway that would serve as an emergency access. He further discussed the signage options for the storefront.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff said he was much happier with the simplified symmetry of the 4<sup>th</sup>-floor windows. He said the basic black pipe railing system was fine at that location and he thought the storefront could be either painted black or left a natural wood. Mr. Ryan agreed and thought there were great improvements and that the stair now had credibility. He said he preferred Option 3 for the storefront but thought they were all acceptable. Ms. Ruedig said the back of the building would look much better. She agreed that all three storefront options were acceptable and that the owner had the freedom to paint them whatever color he chose. City Council Representative Trace said the back of the building was a great improvement and thought the windows were much better symmetrical. She said she preferred Option 3 for the storefront because it worked better with the smaller clapboard building and wasn't quite as heavy.

Chairman Lombardi said it was nice to see the project get wrapped up and thanked the applicant for accommodating all the Commission's comments. He opened the public hearing.

### **SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR AGAINST THE PETITION**

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

### **DECISION OF THE COMMISSION**

*Vice-Chair Wyckoff moved to **grant** the Certificate of Approval for the application as presented, including approval for any of the three storefront painting and signboard options. Mr. Ryan seconded.*



Vice-Chair Wyckoff said the project would preserve the integrity of the District by restoring the front of the building and adding the other door to make it easier to use the upper floors. He said it would also preserve the special and defining characters of surrounding properties.

*The motion **passed** by a vote of 6-1, with Ms. Doering voting in opposition.*

## **VI. WORK SESSIONS (OLD BUSINESS)**

A. Work Session requested by **Timothy M. and Alexandra Lieto, owners**, for property located at **50 New Castle Avenue**, wherein permission was requested to allow new construction to an existing structure (construct rear addition with deck and patio space) and renovations to an existing structure (new siding, windows, and roofing) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 101 as Lot 33 and lies within the Single Residence B (SRB) and Historic Districts. *(This item was continued at the September 09, 2020 meeting to the October, 2020 meeting.)*

### **WORK SESSION**

Project architect Amy Dutton and owner Tim Lieto were present to speak to the petition. Ms. Dutton addressed the massing and said the ridge was now stepped down and lower than the original one and that the grade at the back would be kept at the existing height so that the elevation was as small as possible. She said the covered porch wouldn't look as heavy as it previously did. She said the owners wanted to keep the deck at its present location to take advantage of the water views. She said they were repeating the gable roof to the right and repeating the porch to be respective to the grade as much as possible. She said they were working with a civil engineer to do a lot line adjustment so that they wouldn't need variances.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff said the massing was improved and hoped that the details would be kept simple. Ms. Ruedig agreed and said she was glad the ridge line was stepped down because it brought down the massing and was a huge improvement. Mr. Sauk-Schubert said the east elevations were actually the west elevations. He said the slope would not permit a car to find parking in the proposed parking area. Ms. Dutton said they planned to build a retaining wall by the parking area, and it was further discussed. Mr. Ryan said the project was on the right track. City Council Representative Trace said it was a vast improvement from the previous work session. She noted that the drawings might be incorrect if the applicant wasn't changing the driveway pitch and cars could currently get to the parking area.

There was no public comment.

### **DECISION OF THE COMMISSION**

*Vice-Chair Wyckoff moved to **close** the work session, noting that the applicant would return for a work session/public hearing in the future. City Council Representative Trace seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**



The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault  
HDC Recording Secretary