

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
1 JUNKINS AVENUE
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

7:00 p.m.

June 21, 2006

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman John Rice, Vice-Chairman David Adams; Members; Ellen Fineberg, John Golumb, Alternates, John Wyckoff and Sandra Dika

MEMBERS ABSENT: Richard Katz, City Council Representative Edward Raynolds

ALSO PRESENT: Roger W. Clum, Building Inspector

I. OLD BUSINESS

A) Petition of **Market Wharf Condominiums, owner** and **Thomas Magruder, applicant** for property located at **59 Deer Street** wherein permission was requested to allow renovations to an existing structure (replace siding, decks, and railings with new composite materials) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 119 as Lot 1B and lies within the Central Business B, Historic District A and Downtown Overlay Districts. *This item was tabled at the June 14, 2006 meeting.*

Mr. Thomas Magruder stated that he has returned to submit new plans and samples. He was at a previous meeting. They have moved the border of the shingle area to an existing trim board from its prior position on the east elevation. On the south side elevation, they have moved the new trim board between the windows, which is to the left of where it was previously.

Mr. Adams stated that the east elevation is an improvement due to the change in materials. This is a distinctive façade.

Mr. Magruder stated that he brought samples of the materials. He has a shingle, which comes in three sizes – he chose the large. He also had samples of the clapboards and how they are installed for a beveled look.

Chairman Rice asked what kind of reveal there would be.

Mr. Magruder stated that it would be about a 5” reveal on the clapboards and shingles, and they will match the clapboard. It may be 4” to 6”.

Chairman Rice stated that they would be looking for a 4”.

Mr. Magruder stated that it was to match the existing, so if the existing is 4” then that is what it will be.

The PVC railing was a request, and he has a sample. The PVC covering is fastened on corner posts with extruded aluminum.

Mr. Golumb asked how long the existing clapboard has been on there.

Mr. Magruder stated that he did not know.

Mr. Golumb asked why he was not using wood.

Mr. Magruder stated that he had no idea that it was a request of the association.

Mr. Golumb stated that if he proposed to use wood, then he wouldn't have had to come before them. He also stated that Mr. Magruder was going to have a hard time with the proposed clapboards.

Mr. Magruder stated that the composite materials under most circumstances are more durable than wood. He has had some problems where the durability is questionable. This seems to be a good application for composite materials. He does not expect to have problems.

Mr. Golumb wanted to know the age of the wood because it looked like it was in good shape, and he was just concerned about the change in material.

Mr. Magruder stated that he cannot comment on the age of the wood because he wasn't involved in the exploratory phase of the redesign. He is not sure what the motivation is.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that his observations have shown him that cedar clapboards near water do not seem to hold a finish for very long. Does he think that there will be a noticeable difference?

Mr. Golumb described an instance where a product looked a lot like clapboards. This product does not. He has many concerns about this material.

Mr. Wyckoff asked if it was a smooth material.

Mr. Golumb stated that there could be a smooth side and a grain side.

Mr. Magruder stated that when the hearty plank is applied it looks very much like wood.

Mr. Golumb is concerned that they will do one side of the building, and that would open up a possibility for that whole block looking differently.

Mr. Magruder stated that he cannot speak for the owners on that.

Mr. Golumb stated that he would not even address the vinyl fence.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that he had a comment. He stated that it was 7" to the window.

Mr. Magruder stated that they would match the existing to the specifications.

SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR AGAINST THE PETITION

Mr. John Grossman, of Portsmouth Advocates, does not like the vinyl fence because he does not think it is an appropriate material to use in downtown Portsmouth. He can't think of another project where they have allowed it. He believes that it sets a bad precedent.

With no one further rising, the public hearing was closed.

DECISION OF THE BOARD

Mr. Adams made a motion to approve the application for purposes of discussion, which was seconded by Mr. Golumb.

Ms. Dika stated that she was not fond of the vinyl. If they were using clapboard, they wouldn't have to deal with using these other materials.

Mr. Golumb stated that he remembers approving vinyl fencing before, in the VFW. The fence was abutting the Telephone Company property in the back. They have not approved vinyl fencing in a visible area.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that it didn't bother him that much. The profiles are correct and the vinyl doesn't look that bad.

Ms. Dika asked how vinyl wore.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that it usually breaks, not wears. It may yellow over after a long period of time, but could be painted.

Ms. Fineberg stated that she was troubled by the fencing material. It is too shiny and looks plastic. This is not a general approvable material for fencing. This looks too plastic.

Mr. Adams stated that he wonders how much impact on the historic district this will have. This is not in a historic part of town, and is a modern building that is surrounded by other modern looking buildings. There is just something about the vinyl, and he is not convinced that it is better or worse than a wooden fence in terms of longevity. They are used to wooden fences. They are more comfortable with beveled siding than plank because of how the plank looks. The beveled, smoother bottom looks very much like modern clapboard. He has objections against deeply weathered surface that is portrayed by the siding that has been chosen. The pieces are too deeply scored, and 7" to the weather. This will affect the undulation of the surface. The change in materials, at least on the side toward Deer Street, has a certain sense to it, but stumbles on the other side. There is a peculiar effect of the siding material chosen. He is not in favor of this; there are too many issues throughout. The clapboards bent around the building have been a problem. They want to address this but he does not think that this is a useful set of materials with which to approach the problem of decay.

Chairman Rice stated that he has the same discomfort with the railings. He thinks that maybe a more traditional approach would be more appropriate. Maybe metal or wood would look better, or even an iron railing.

Mr. Adams stated that this was a commercial project and that the wood was there to give it a more domestic sense. This is a highly appropriate thing in a commercial area such as this.

Chairman Rice stated that in the historic district, the board holds applicants to a higher standard. There is a lot of new construction that is happening across the street, which was built in designed in compliance with all the traditional materials that have been approved in the district. He doesn't know where that leaves the applicant; they could table this until next month.

Mr. Magruder asked what they would have approved on the building.

Chairman Rice stated that they would have approved clapboard over clapboard as well as steel or metal railings. Anything traditional such as this would be acceptable. The problem with the application is that they've mixed materials and used untraditional materials that are not approvable. They also included a PVC railing, which is not likely to pass. They are not trying to stand in the way of their repairs, but would ask that they keep it simpler and take a more traditional approach.

Mr. Magruder stated that he would like to table the petition.

Chairman Rice stated that it would be tabled until the July meeting.

Mr. Adams made a motion to change this to a work session, which was seconded by Mr. Golumb who withdrew his tabling motion. Ms. Dika seconded this.

All were in favor, none were opposed.

The petition was tabled until July.

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10. Petition of **Melissa Bicchieri, owner** for property located at **206 Northwest Street** wherein permission was requested to allow renovations and demolition of two existing structures (remodeling existing garage and removal of two existing sheds) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 122 as Lot 6 and lies within the General Residence A and Historic A Districts. *This item was tabled at the June 14, 2006 meeting.*

**SPEAKING IN FAVOR OF THE PETITION**

Ms. Wendy Welton stated that she was taking down one building, not two as advertised. They are metal sheds that are dreadfully ugly, and from the genuine tin shed area (the 1960s).

Mr. Clum stated that the application stated the removal of two sheds.

Ms. Welton stated that they are only looking to remove one. This has always been requested to be removed.

Chairman Rice asked if the shed was being used as a garage.

Ms. Welton just realized that she did not have a picture of the shed. It is a metal corrugated, 1960's, tin shed.

Ms. Fineberg stated that they did have some photos.

Ms. Welton stated that they did have some outbuilding that is part of the application to change the windows and doors. The main part of this from the shed is the outbuilding that is currently a garage. Her client wishes to use this as a private place or a home office. The windows would be the same specifications as the main house, and they would match everything up. He will be taking off the existing siding and matching it with the new that fits the profile. The only thing worth discussion is on the side facing the water; he would like to do french doors. He wants to be able to open doors with a railing directly in front. The railing that they have chosen has metal for the verticals and wood as the horizontal, because they wanted to introduce some industrial material. Her client has empowered her to make any decisions that need to be made.

Ms. Dika stated that the metal shed is not attractive.

Mr. Wyckoff asked if the wood door was going to be built as shown as a 4-panel door. It says 'new wood door'.

Ms. Welton stated that there was a door selected as part of the main house, but she can't remember what it looks like. They would match it to the main house door. It is a panel door of some kind.

Chairman Rice stated that they approved the door on the house, so if it matches that then they are all set.

With no one further rising, the public hearing was closed.

Mr. Adams moved to approve the petition as presented, which was seconded by Mr. Golumb.

A motion to grant the petition passed by a unanimous vote.

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II. PUBLIC HEARINGS

11. Petition of **Jane Mcilvaine, owner** for property located at **93 High Street** wherein permission was requested to allow exterior renovations to an existing structure (change window sizes and locations, repair structure damage to sill, and replace siding on damaged wall) as per plans on file with the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 118, Lot 23 and lies within the Central Business B, Historic A and Downtown Overlay Districts.

SPEAKING IN FAVOR OF THE PETITION

Ms. Welton, architect, stated that she is withdrawing the request to take out the two small windows in one of the photos. All the changes on HDC 3 should be disregarded. In this condominium, the left hand wall was not redone during prior work. Somebody put asphalt shingles over things, drilled holes and filled them with cellulose insulation. They left the plug sticking out, which drew in moisture to the building. The reason they chose to come directly to a public meeting rather than a work session is the amount of urgency needed. Since the owners were planning on replacing the windows, they figured they would correct the crucial repairs. The main components are the work on the left wall, where they will be moving windows. On HDC 3 shows a courtyard in back, and the part that is seen obliquely from the front. The front entry porch is narrow. The client would like to put a chair on the porch, which is why they are requesting a larger front entry platform. One slight change to the drawings would be the curve. They want to make that a 45 degree flat segment. The other change is the railing she selected is the same railing with metal verticals. Her client wishes to change that to simple wood verticals because there's a railing on the other part of the same building that she would like to match closely. She would like to use a composite material on the decking itself. She passed around a cut sheet. The decking is going to be made of a Trex-like product. There are two flood lights flanking the door, and would like to only keep one. She has brought a window, and will use marvin if the board feels it is important. The window she brought is a Harvey board, and she has the cut sheets for them.

Mr. Wyckoff asked if it was wood on the outside.

Ms. Welton stated it was a mixture of aluminum or vinyl, with an aluminum clad exterior. This particular one is for the side that faces an area to get at.

Chairman Rice asked if the scheme was going to be the same as portrayed in HDC-3.

Ms. Welton stated that those were the plans she was working off of.

Chairman Rice asked if this was facing another wall.

Ms. Welton stated that it did face another wall, as well as a rear tenant courtyard. The only window on this plan that anyone will see is existing to remain. They will not replace that.

Mr. Adams asked if it was her intention to trim the exterior of the selected window in a manner that the existing windows remain.

Mr. Adams asked about the placement and the centering of the windows, as well as the size of the sills and the projection and positions of the trim and casings. He asked if they would be made of wood clapboard.

Ms. Welton stated the width, the standout and the profile would all match the existing windows. This would all duplicate what is on the front. They would be using wood clapboard.

Mr. Adams asked if the clapboards lined up with the tops and bottoms.

Ms. Welton stated that the front of the building was visible and they started to line up. If they have to cut it to make it fit, they will cut it.

Mr. Wyckoff asked how they were handling the railing situation. It just says 'wood verticals'. This is not what she is specifying. How should they handle that?

Ms. Welton stated that if the board was uncomfortable with that, then she would ask that the other work could begin and they could come back for the deck at a later time. She would come back with the exact spacing and details.

Mr. Wyckoff asked if the railings were approved or renovated in the past.

Ms. Welton stated that it was renovated in the mid 80's.

Ms. Welton stated that it was probably 2x2 balusters with pressure treated wood.

Mr. Golumb stated that the window on the diagram shows it as 2 over 2, but the schedule shows it as 1 over 1.

Ms. Welton stated that the graphics are correct. It would be 2 over 2.

Chairman Rice asked if the mahogany was out. He also inquired about whether or not they would be voting on the railing. What is the Commission's pleasure on the railing – should they take that out and come back to it?

Mr. Wyckoff stated that that makes sense, so the owner could order the new windows.

Chairman Rice stated that they would just take the railings out of the application.

Ms. Welton asked that they include the deck structure so when the contractor is on site they do not have to lose that service.

SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR AGAINST THE PETITION

Mr. Joseph Almeda, who lives in the adjacent property, spoke on the façade. The façade looks onto his property, which can only be seen by himself. He is there to support Jane, and appreciates that she called him to introduce her to the plans. He is in support of the project.

With no one further rising, the public hearing was closed.

DECISION OF THE BOARD

Mr. Wyckoff made a motion to approve the project without the railing, which was seconded by Ms. Dika.

The motion to grant the petition, as amended, passed by a unanimous vote.

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12. Petition of **Barbara L. and Jason N. Theodore, owners** for property located at **449 Court Street** wherein permission was requested to allow an amendment to a previously approved renovation to change the garage door style as per plans on file with the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 105, Lot 6 (Inclusion of Lot 12 advertised incorrectly) and lies within the Central Business B and Historic A Districts.

This petition was withdrawn at the request of the applicant.

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13. Petition of **Kevin McDevitt, owner** for property located at **117 Bow Street** wherein permission was requested to allow new construction to an existing structure and renovations to an existing structure (infill gap between two buildings, change front door, infill exit door with brick, and place HVAC equipment on roof) as per plans on file with the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 106, Lot 57A and lies within the Central Business A, Downtown Overlay, and Historic A Districts.

SPEAKING IN FAVOR OF THE PETITION

Mr. Steven McHenry, architect, represented the minor changes to the approved plan. He refers to the booklets that he provided. The first two pages are existing photographs, and the top page shows an open door off of an emergency regress stair. The door has been a point of contention in regards to its interior function. The owner has requested that they eliminate the door and create a new window and bricked up path. The Commission has ruled on this before. The second page shows an entry to the unit. To the far left is a commercial entry and then a set of doors under the awning. The door on the right goes to commercial real estate space. They are seeking to change that, because this place is going to be a residence and they want to set a different tone with the construction. The third page shows a closer view of the entry detail. The upper right hand photo shows the existing piece of mechanical equipment, which is going to be removed by the approved structure. Another one, of the same size will be placed on the roof. Since it is larger than 3x3x3, they must obtain approval from the Board. Page four is the existing view of the top floor from the waterside, page five is north elevation approved. Page 7 shows the approved design, and page 8 shows the relative locations of the mechanical equipment. Page 8 shows the location of the entry door and also points out the components already approved. They aren't putting the door on the outside brick face. Lining up with the commercial door is not a good idea, so they propose an inner door vestibule. They propose a custom wood door, with 3 panels. Page 9 shows the east elevation on the left hand side which was already approved. They seek permission to construct a firewall, which wouldn't create a pocket to trap snow. They are proposing to continue the structure over the sidewalk. Page 10 shows the location of the mechanical equipment and a recessed doorway in plain view.

Mr. Adams asked if they were going to run the cornice of the penthouse over the brick wall to provide a cap for it.

Mr. McHenry stated that that was their intention, but they didn't have clear permission to do that yet.

Mr. Adams referred to the masonry panel taking place of the recessed doors. He is happy with the 1" shadow line but has no issue with the 2.5" line. When infilling the door, the recess does not need to be as deep as 2.5". He then asked what happened in front of the building. There are two openings that look much like each other. He is calling to repair the brick work and masonry jams.

Mr. McHenry stated that right now, the extruded aluminum frames butt up against the frame. When these are removed, the brick will have to be repaired.

Mr. Adams noted that the drawings show an arched top opening. His drawings show that he will leave some sort transom there.

Mr. McHenry stated that the intent is that the arched opening be a bare brick opening throughout.

Mr. Adams asked what he proposed to use for flooring in that area.

Mr. McHenry stated that that is not specified as yet, but it is very likely to be a ceramic tile or a granite tile. This is because it will be exposed to weather, and they did not want to use wood. There is actually brick in the landing, but there is no depth to continue in the brick, so it will most likely be a material such as tile.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that he disagreed with Mr. Adams on the door opening. He stated that there was a lot of patching going on in the building which had been approved. His feeling was that they are replacing the door with a window which is in like kind with the two existing windows on the right hand side. This is on the north elevation proposed. It would make more sense to him to not have the infill patch. It makes sense to have the bricks flush, because that is what takes place throughout the building. The rough opening for the door could be an obvious patch.

Mr. Adams referred Mr. Wyckoff to sheet 3 that showed a photo in the lower right hand corner. He showed the abandoned 4th floor window opening. He stated that abandoned window and door openings have a history of being laid up in a recessed fashion.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that it looks terrible.

Mr. McHenry stated that it looked worse sometimes when you try to bring it in flush, and get it to match. By doing it this way, they are not obliterating the history of the house.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that they were changing windows throughout the building, and changing rough openings on the river side, so patching is happening. Bricks are being retooled and regouted. This is the reason he is suggesting it; there is too much patching.

Mr. McHenry stated that he would follow the will of the Board.

Mr. Golumb asked if the HVAC system proposed had a setback on the west elevation. Where is it in relation to the window?

Mr. McHenry stated that it shows, on page 11 in plan view, that there is plenty of clearance for service. Also the windows are high.

Chairman Rice asked if the mechanicals would be hidden by a parapet wall.

Mr. McHenry stated that the fire escape stair railing that runs across it, between the units and the exterior wall. The parapet wall is forward on Bow Street.

Mr. Adams asked if he was going to be blocking one of the windows from a previously approved application. Does their owner mind that they are placing that HVAC unit there?

Mr. McHenry referred them to page 11 in plan view.

Mr. Golumb stated that he saw the plans, but cannot get a clear picture of how far back it sits.

Mr. McHenry stated that there is a one foot railing, a 3' wide catwalk, so altogether it is about 4'4" approximately.

With no one further rising, the public hearing was closed.

DECISION OF THE BOARD

Mr. Adams moved to grant the petition as presented and advertised, which was seconded by Ms. Fineberg.

Mr. Adams stated that it was a lot to take in, but made sense when taken piece by piece. He is comfortable with this petition.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that he is not comfortable with the opening, and is hoping that others will jump in if they are bothered as well.

The motion to grant the petition passed by a unanimous vote.

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14. Petition of **Amber M. Reimer and Keith Reimer, owners** for property located at **38 South Street** wherein permission was requested to allow renovations to a free standing structure (replace old cedar fence with new fence) as per plans on file with the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 102, Lot 44 and lies within the General Residence B and Historic A Districts.

The petition was withdrawn at the request of the applicant.

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III. WORK SESSIONS

A) Petition of **Michael J. Lacroix, owner** for property located at **lot behind 151 High Street** wherein permission was requested to allow demolition of existing structure and new free standing structure. (remove garage and construct a three story structure with deck) as per plans on file with the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 118, Lot 19 and lies within the Central Business B, Historic A and Downtown Overlay Districts. *This item was tabled to a work session at the June 14, 2006 meeting.*

Michael Lacroix stated that he was tired of living in an apartment with tenants, and wished to construct a single one family house in the back of the lot. There is presently a small garage that is falling apart. The back of it is all tin, and the side wall is collapsing. Rather than reconstructing it, it should be taken out and could be used for increase parking for the tenants. The building will be 28' across the front and 24' deep. There would be parking for two under the entry and up to the first level. He would like clapboard below and shingle above, but he would prefer all shingle if the Commission would approve that.

Chairman Rice stated that he was normally uncomfortable with small shingles in the middle of a historic district, but in this case it is in an area where a garage was. The garage could have been all shingle.

Mr. Lacroix stated that the garage was mostly metal and tin.

Chairman Rice stated that they could find a structure of that material.

Ms. Dika stated that this is very much like the Moffat House, with the garden and the structure. Whatever they do would certainly be an improvement from the garage that is there now. However, she would like to see a more formal exterior on the building.

Mr. Lacroix said that he did not care, and that the only concern to him was painting. Shingles would look better longer versus the painted buildings that require maintenance every 5 years. When he first came in with the proposal, he was going to remove the garage from the front and put the building in front. In talking to the Planning Department, they suggested he place it behind as to have a better view of the Moffatt Gardens. That would be a better place to have a house. Consequently, they laid this house plan out so that the kitchen windows looked out over the gardens. He is taking advantage of the space.

Ms. Dika stated that because he is being so conscious of the space, that he should also present something equally as conscious to them.

Mr. Lacroix stated that he definitely would do anything to please the Commission and the Planning Department.

Ms. Dika stated that she is looking for a more formal structure; what is presented in the packet is more contemporary. She would like to see something like a carriage house.

The contractor for the project stated that he could nix the slanted windows if it would please the board. He drew these structurally, so they could be changed. He has his originals that the Commission can look at.

Mr. Wyckoff asked about the sidelights. There is a door with lights on it, then side lights then a transom window? He has never seen that before and that makes him a little uncomfortable. They would need details on brackets.

Mr. Lacroix stated that he pulled the skylight from a similar building. He added that because most of the property is covered by trees, so the light would filter into the house. The roof detail over the front door would be the historic welcome center.

Mr. Wyckoff asked if this was meant to look like a barn. It looks like a barn. The height of the structure as well as the top makes it look like a country barn rather than a house in an urban area.

Mr. Lacroix stated that it was meant to look like a carriage house.

Ms. Fineberg stated that the Rundlett May House is a good example of the carriage house. She doesn't know if that's the exact name, but she tried to suggest a more modern example of a traditional carriage house.

The contractor asked if it was the use of transoms that make it look too modern or are there other issues.

Chairman Rice stated that this was a very untraditional design for the district.

The contractor just wanted to know exactly what features made it look like a barn. What features can they change that would be pleasing to the Board? They could change the transoms and the cupola.

Ms. Fineberg stated that the scale of the structure was very high, and that the carriage house wouldn't be as tall. Also, the garage doors at the bottom would have a rounded top, as to look as though a horse could pass through them. The type of railing makes it look like a much larger structure whereas a carriage house is smaller. They need to revisit and think about scale issues. They can have a cupola on top, but they need to think of the design. Look towards the 1890's carriage houses for examples, there are many around town. This would give you better sense of the correct scale of the houses.

Mr. Adams stated that there was a tension, because what make it inappropriate is the garage doors underneath. Carriage houses are built on foundations, not with garage doors underneath. The theme is not for parking underneath. They are just looking at a shingled thing on top of a garage. He doesn't see how this could become a carriage house. He has a problem with the oversized windows, and cannot find a comfortable rhythm in the house. Having a cupola or belvedere doesn't work into the theme. It is large and the street would get the full view. He feels tension in the rustic nature of the shingle siding, and there are too many superfluous lines. It would be more fun to see more dimensions than to see every shingle. He is bothered by the lack of a genuine theme, the mass of the roof and the casual nature of the window.

Mr. Lacroix asked what he meant by that.

Mr. Adams said that even ignoring the Vermont windows, the glazed doors and transom lights are just inappropriate. In the barn like setting, this does not fit.

Ms. Fineberg stated that the picture of the house shows its symmetry. Mr. Adams is worried that the windows will make this structure look asymmetrical. Their job is to help them fit into the structure. The idea is to take something from the structure.

George stated that he could pull the transoms down and line it up in order to make it more symmetrical.

Mr. Lacroix stated that he needs to look more at issues of scale, something simpler.

Ms. Fineberg stated that he should drive around and see what types of outbuildings other people have. She doesn't know about the garage door.

Mr. Adams asked if there was any way to make the entry for the garage on the side.

Mr. Lacroix stated that that would give up parking for a 6 family home. It really doesn't work unless he lets them park in front of the house.

Ms. Fineberg asked about removing the garage there. Would that produce any additional parking spaces?

Mr. Lacroix stated that he could not.

Ms. Fineberg asked if he could accommodate two cars parked one behind the other. Perhaps the carriage house need not to be situated on the lot where it is. Maybe he needs to rethink that to take parking into consideration.

Mr. Adams stated that the doors could not remain like that.

Mr. Lacroix stated that he thought most carriage houses had drive in doors like that.

Mr. Adams stated that they aren't parking in the basement. This is a steeply angled yard. Elevation is one of their tools, and the building looks unnaturally tall. The second floor is built down to accommodate this.

The contractor stated that the knee wall was about 4 to 5'.

Mr. Lacroix stated that they tried to keep it low, but there is only so much they can do with a 24x28 footprint.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that if they covered up the garage doors so that the second floor becomes the first, the proportions become an urban, in-town carriage house. This does not solve his parking problem. If this roof had gables on all sides, then a square cupola may look better. They could put in round windows, and drop it down a story and somehow get parking, they would be all set. That would look much better.

Mr. Lacroix stated that from the street it would look squat because of the slope of the yard. It goes down so much.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that that indicates to him that they should bring the structure forward.

Mr. Adams stated that regardless of the garage doors, they can diminish the impact of the building. The entry door between the garage doors is a huge conflict, and they need to find a better place for them. It is too fluffed up for where his car goes.

George stated that they could make the door go in.

Ms. Fineberg stated that they could make the door go out, and have parking on the opposite side. The doors just do not work.

Chairman Rice stated that they have given them enough data for a redesign.

Mr. Lacroix stated that he really did not want to change the overall height that much. They need to have parking.

Chairman Rice stated that the Commission does believe it is an issue, so they should try to bring it down.

Ms. Dika asked what the height of the building was.

Mr. Lacroix stated that it was 35' or so to the top of the cupola.

The contractor stated that the cupola could be greatly diminished, but it was the structure itself that had the liability issue. They can pull several feet from it.

Chairman Rice stated that he would see them at another session.

Mr. Adams added that no one is questioning whether or not this is viable.

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B) Petition of **7 Islington Street, LLC, owner**, for property located at **7 Islington Street** wherein permission was requested to allow exterior renovations to an existing structure and a new free standing structure (renovate existing building and add new building on adjacent site). Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 126, Lot 51 and lies within the Central Business B, Downtown Overlay and Historic A Districts. *This work session was tabled from the May 10, 2006 meeting.*

Mr. Steve McHenry gave the Commission copies of his last presentation as a reference. He gave a quick review of the overall scope of the work and the major issues, along with three new versions in sketch form. Because of the complex nature of the project, they need to define the context. It was an important aspect that they looked at before removing one of the buildings in back. With their feedback, they could go forward with demolishing one of the two buildings. They show existing conditions and options E, F and G. They have an option E streetscape rendering and it looks like 3 masses close to the house on the corner. In overall mass, these most closely reflect the scale. This led to the conclusion that they must remove the second wing. One page 10, the objections to scheme F was that it was too massive and out of scale with adjoining buildings. Option G is a little more uniform and tucked back, which is helpful, but still seems to be a large and imposing structure. There are a series of three options.

1. This has the second wing removed. They were trying to break up the building by building up in height and placing large skylight structures on the roof. In each option, the parking will be on the left and lead to Bridge Street. On the last page of this option, it shows a more modern building with more modern materials.
2. Option 2 shows 3 views with a different set of vocabulary and materials. They are exploring the possibility of different materials for building up on the right. The flat roofs evoke a different period than the 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings.
3. Option 3 is a more straightforward modern building in vocabulary and materials. This sets up a rhythm with the building facades in plan. This makes it playful, interesting, asymmetrical and more fitting. This is a 1, 1, 2, 1 rhythm. This has canopies and planters.

He hopes to get some direction from the Commission tonight. The building does not overwhelm its neighbors. It is modern in its approach, and sits on the fringe of the historic district and an appropriate opportunity to go forward with something adventurous.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that this looks like the gun control house in Fort Stark in Newcastle, because it is concrete and rustic. He does not like option 3, and it is too bad that they chose to put the modern building on the right in option 1. That looks like a historic building that someone had worked over and ruined, but had the proper shape of a building that was covered in a metal siding, as was done in the 1950's.

Chairman Rice suggested that they talk about each option one at a time. Are there any strong feelings about option one?

Ms. Dika did not like the skylights.

Mr. McHenry stated that he would like to reopen the discussion about skylights at some point. They seem to be a point of contention. When they are out of site and view, they are acceptable. In their place, there could be a series of dormers. In many places in Europe want skylights so that they don't break the roof plane, yet allow light in.

Mr. Adams stated that Europe did not matter.

Mr. Golumb stated that option E was closer than any of the options presented tonight. When he previously presented option E with the streetscape, Mr. Golumb thought they were close to finding an acceptable building plan. Option 1 looks like something that would be built on Congress Street. He

does not like any of these plans. Option E on the original plan was more like it; none of the ones presented tonight are appropriate. They are too modern and they don't fit in.

Mr. McHenry stated that he tried to take option E and reformulate it to make option 2.

Mr. Golumb stated that it just doesn't work like the other.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that it doesn't even look like a rooming house.

Mr. Golumb stated that at least option E was moving in the right direction. These plans are not close to that option, and they do not work.

Mr. McHenry stated that option E has 3 buildings almost identical in width and height. Option 2 shows a gabled edge roof with dormers on the left. They have two flat roof structures on the roof top and a pass through garage door opening. He does not see the big difference in detail.

Mr. Golumb stated that the skylights and other things are not in the options. He does not see them.

Ms. Fineberg is concerned about the garage in all three, and she doesn't like the roof design. There isn't enough street level activity that is engaging.

Chairman Rice stated that in terms of roof planes, it seems that the vernacular for the area seems to be a gabled roof, and these buildings represent a stark departure from that. This looks almost Italian. This doesn't relate to the other buildings, and he agrees with Ms. Fineberg about the garage.

Ms. Dika stated that the third section of option 1 to the right of the upper windows shows more contemporary windows. She doesn't care for them.

Chairman Rice stated that they would be moving on to option 2.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that the left hand building, which was formerly in option E, he likes. The only problem is the massing of the windows that need to be separated a bit. He likes the opening instead of a garage door, because a garage door isn't appropriate on the street. He doesn't like the fourth floor; it emulates the Bow Street project. It looks worse from the second view. It may be a start.

Ms. Dika stated that her concern with the top level because she doesn't care for it. He could potentially end up with a taller building. She likes the entry way instead of the garage door. She noticed on the original option E that there is more demarcation between the segments of the building.

Ms. Fineberg asked if there was any reason why the top level was so large.

Mr. McHenry stated that they hadn't developed a floor plan so there was plenty of flexibility.

Ms. Fineberg stated that she was just reacting to the scale. The windows might change the scale, and could be set back.



Chairman Rice stated that they have moved on to option 3.

Ms. Fineberg stated that she was interested in this idea. She wasn't sure about all of it, but it harkens back to Europe. This enlivens the streetscape. Many modern structures next to older structures can be interesting. She is not sure it will be successful yet. She is concerned about the amount of glazing, especially on the ground floor, but this could be something to work with. She is intrigued by the idea of something different. The community needs to start thinking about something besides brick.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that it does not work there.

Ms. Fineberg stated that there's never going to be a right place with that attitude.

Mr. Wyckoff asked if they would think of a glass building in Tucson, a reflective glass building that looks like a gas station gone crazy.

Mr. McHenry stated that this architecture style is nearly 100 years old. It is 1920 Carpuzio and is in every modern American city. If they were asked to design buildings that were only 19<sup>th</sup> century, historic New England, they can do that. It is simply an honest expression of who they are to have a building that reflects their age. This is the forum for expression – they stuck their necks out and ask only for feedback for growth.

Chairman Rice stated that he appreciates their necks sticking out, but is not sure that he appreciates the building. Maybe part of the problem is that they don't have a lot of experience with contemporary architecture.

Mr. McHenry stated that the examples that they have locally are not great.

Mr. Golumb stated that he and David saw several buildings in Pease that have the appropriate scaling and European style. He can understand what Mr. McHenry is trying to do, but maybe it's the scale of the building and trying to fit into the area that makes it not work.

Chairman Rice asked if they had enough feedback from them. He admired their efforts but still have a problem. Sometimes repetition in a historic district can be a good thing because it promotes consistency and a sense of place. Contemporary buildings change the sense of place.

Ms. Fineberg noted that Max constructed historic buildings to look as though they were all the same.

Mr. Wyckoff explains that cities should be preserved.

Mr. McHenry stated that they should, but not with such fervor as to have only historic looking buildings. They need to be a reflection of who they are, and they all aren't the same age or type. This will happen, if not now, then down the road.

Chairman Rice stated that if they were to approve a contemporary building, they would have to be convinced that it would not affect the character of the surrounding area.

Ms. Dika stated she would be more supportive of something contemporary if it were not so large in size. If they attempted a more modest proposal, it would be more acceptable.

Chairman Rice stated that if they come back with a contemporary building, they have to convince the Commission that it will improve the character of the surroundings.

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IV. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:20 p.m., the motion was made, seconded and approved unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Danielle Auger
Acting HDC Secretary

These minutes were approved at the Historic District meeting on September 13, 2006.