

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

EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

7:00 p.m.

**December 9, 2009
reconvened from December 2, 2009**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Sandra Dika; Vice Chairman Richard Katz; Members John Wyckoff, Tracy Kozak, Alternate Joseph Almeida

MEMBERS EXCUSED: City Council Representative Eric Spear, Planning Board Representative Paige Roberts; Elena Maltese; Alternate George Melchior

ALSO PRESENT: Roger Clum, Assistant Building Inspector

I. OLD BUSINESS

A. Petition of **Unitarian Universalist Church, owner**, for property located at **292 State Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow removal of a free standing structure (remove one section of fencing and one granite post to allow for parking space) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 116 as Lot 8 and lies within the Central Business B, Historic A, and Downtown Overlay Districts. *(This item was postponed at the December 2, 2009 meeting to the December 9, 2009 meeting.)*

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

Ms. Martha Petersen, representing the applicant, was present to speak to the application. She explained that she was returning to show the Commission how the rod iron fence would end on the southeast corner of the property. She passed out drawings showing proposed designs of which option number one was the preferred design. She said that some of the old pickets would be removed to make the end piece. She pointed out the bottom of the fence and explained that the front of the plate at the bottom would be flush with the lower rail on the fence. Ms. Petersen said that the end piece would be raised a bit from the curb because it would be better for the rod iron and it would last longer.

Vice Chairman Katz asked if the pickets, including the first two of the four pickets would be at the same plane. Ms. Petersen replied yes.

Chairman Dika asked if there were any more questions for the applicant. Hearing none, she asked if anyone from the public wished to speak to, for, or against the application.

SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR AGAINST THE PETITION

Mr. Ted Gray of 808 Sagamore Avenue, a member of the Traffic and Safety Committee, explained that this application came before his committee in either August or September. He

said that they approved it with certain stipulations: parking for one vehicle only, that the fence be aligned, and that the granite curbing be altered.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

Ms. Kozak made a motion to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the application as presented. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Katz. Chairman Dika asked for discussion.

Ms. Kozak stated that this was a modest request that kept the spirit of the original design of the fence alive. She felt that the relocation of the granite post and the removal of the section of fence was appropriate and would not affect the value of the Historic District. Vice Chairman Katz agreed.

Chairman Dika said that the Sustainability Committee has been talking about reducing the amount of parked cars in the Central Business District. She thought it was sad to take out this historic, antique fence to make way for a parking lot when the committee was taking about cutting down on the number of vehicles in town. She thanked the applicant for her patience and her cooperation and said she would vote in favor of it.

Hearing no other discussion, Chairman Dika called for the vote. The motion to grant Certificate of Appropriateness for the application as presented passed by a unanimous (5-0) vote. Permission was also granted to relocate the granite post to the west entrance on Court Place.

Ms. Petersen added that the church employees park at 206 Court Street and often their cars protrude over the sidewalk.

Chairman Dika announced that the 166 New Castle Avenue application on the agenda would be postponed to the January 6, 2010 meeting.

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS (CONTINUED)

1. Petition of **Iain and Katherine Moodie, owners**, for property located at **14 Mt. Vernon Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow demolition of an existing structure (demolish existing house) and allow a new free standing structure (construct new 2 ½ story house) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 111 as Lot 26 and lies within General Residence B and Historic A Districts.

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

Mr. Iain Moodie of 563 Broad Street and owner of the property at 14 Mt. Vernon Street was present to speak to the application. He stated that he was seeking to demolish the structure for a number of reasons. The foundation was a mix of materials that was failing. Also, a couple of trees were causing partial collapse of the walls on the interior of the basement which meant a new foundation was needed. He also said that the interior of the property had been neglected over the years and converted into a two family. There was evidence that the south side of the structure was bowing outwards and the north side was bowing inwards. He stressed that it was structurally unsound and that there was nothing original to salvage. He, along with a couple other contractors felt that it would be a 95% total rebuild of the existing structure.

Chairman Dika asked if there were any questions regarding the demolition. Hearing none, she stated that the Commission has been to the site to view the conditions.

Mr. Moodie explained that what he was proposing for the site was a modest, two and a half story New Englander style home. He said that he tried to address a lot of the issues that came up during work sessions and with abutters. He explained that he tried to design the house similarly to what is there currently. He pointed out that there were several different architectural styles of houses on the street which did not help to set precedence for the street.

Ms. Kozak noted the restrained eave and rake overhangs which were common features on some of the other structures in the neighborhood. She also pointed out that the choices of window and door styles were of a slightly later historic period. She wondered if he was specifically trying to target a historic era or trying to combine different time periods. Mr. Moodie said that he was trying to keep it similar to how it was currently. He explained that the front entry way would be custom built.

Mr. Wyckoff noted that the projecting gables, as drawn, were difficult to construct. Mr. Moodie explained that the corner board would be underneath the rake board. Underneath the rake board would be $\frac{3}{4}$ inch strapping to hold it out so that the clapboard could be run underneath. Mr. Wyckoff thought that was a good idea for weatherproofing.

Mr. Wyckoff had questions about the front entryway. Mr. Moodie explained in detail how it would be constructed. Mr. Almeida suggested the use of plinth block at the base of the pilasters. Mr. Moodie said that he would be willing to do that.

Ms. Kozak stated that she was still struggling with the flush rakes and eaves and the windows and doors. She also said that she would like to see a shadow line under the gable. Mr. Wyckoff said it could be achieved by applying a shadow board to the rake board. Mr. Moodie replied that it would be easy to do. Mr. Moodie explained that any protrusion or overhangs would count as ground cover and they would be extending over the lot line.

Ms. Kozak suggested using an earlier style window such as a six over six or a nine over six window pattern. Mr. Moodie said he would really like to keep the two over two pattern.

Chairman Dika pointed out that they were getting into a lot of design work.

Mr. Almeida asked what dimensional questions. He asked what the overall height of the proposed structure was. Mr. Moodie said it would 27'6" to the top of the ridge. Mr. Wyckoff said that he did not see any dimensions on the casings. Mr. Almeida pointed out that they could be found in the narrative that was submitted.

Hearing no other questions, Chairman Dika asked if anyone from the public wished to speak to, for, or against the application. Seeing no one rise she declared the public hearing closed and awaited a motion.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

Mr. Almeida made a motion to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the application as presented with the following stipulations:

- 1) That plinth blocks at the base and molding at the top of the pilasters are added to the front entry.

- 2) That a shadow board is added to the gable ends of the structure.

The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Katz. Chairman Dika asked for discussion.

Mr. Almeida stated that the Commission has had ample opportunity to review the project. He felt that the reasons for demolition were justified and to ask the applicant to save the building would be a hardship. He said the blame should be placed on the previous owners who neglected it. He was comfortable with the demolition and the rebuild. Mr. Almeida also said the application was thorough. He pointed out that the Commission was very familiar with the applicant's work as he does a huge amount of work in these neighborhoods and he has a resume proving that he was familiar with the details.

Ms. Kozak commended the applicant on the massing. She said it was a successful solution to the site. It fit well in the location and will only enhance the historic value of the street.

Chairman Dika commented that she appreciated the applicant's willingness to work with all of the various elements and came to a conclusion where he satisfied almost everybody.

Hearing no other discussion, Chairman Dika called for the vote. The motion to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the application as presented with the following stipulations passed by a unanimous (5-0) vote:

- 1) That plinth blocks at the base and molding at the top of the pilasters are added to the front entry.
- 2) That a shadow board is added to the gable ends of the structure.

2. Petition of **David J. and Vasilia Tooley, owners**, for property located at **166 New Castle Avenue**, wherein permission was requested to allow demolition of an existing structure (demolish existing garage) and allow new construction to an existing structure (construct new garage with connector to house) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 101 as Lot 24 and lies within the Single Residence B and Historic A Districts.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

Mr. Wyckoff made a motion to postpone the application to the January 6, 2010 meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Almeida. The motion passed by a unanimous (5-0) vote.

3. Petition of **Irving and Victoria D. Canner, owners**, for property located at **229 Pleasant Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow exterior renovations to an existing structure (expand and reconfigure deck) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 108 as Lot 6 and lies within the Mixed Residential Office and Historic A Districts.

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

Mr. Irving Canner, owner of the property was present to speak to the application. He stated that the house was originally built in the early 1800's. He said that he has worked very closely with

the other members of the association and neighbors concerning the proposal. He explained that they would like to increase the usage of the deck, from 97 square feet to about 153 square feet. By doing so, they have improved the rear setback. The deck would be replicating the original deck. He pointed out that the plans were drawn by Michelle Shields.

Mr. Wyckoff wondered if the half round shape of the deck was taken from the half round design on the back of the carriage house. Mr. Canner said that it was. Mr. Wyckoff asked if that was an original design. Mr. Canner replied that he thought it was. Chairman Dika agreed. Mr. Wyckoff said that the deck was very cleverly designed to match that element.

Mr. Almeida asked what the choice of materials was. Mr. Canner said that he preferred pine over a composite material. Mr. Almeida thought a composite material would be appropriate as well.

Chairman Dika asked if there were any more questions for the applicant. Hearing none, she asked if anyone from the public wished to speak to, for, or against the application. Seeing no one rise she declared the public hearing closed and awaited a motion.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

Mr. Wyckoff made a motion to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the application as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Kozak. Chairman Dika asked for discussion.

Mr. Wyckoff thought that the design of the deck was appropriate and it fit in well with the rest of the historical structures in the neighborhood.

Chairman Dika stated that it was a thoughtful design and was appropriate in the inner courtyard area.

Hearing no other discussion, Chairman Dika called for the vote. The motion to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the application as presented passed by a unanimous (5-0) vote.

4. Petition of **Charles N. and Deborah S. Pesik, owners**, for property located at **699 Middle Street, Unit #1**, wherein permission was requested to allow exterior renovations to an existing structure (add transom window) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 148 as Lot 35 and lies within the General Residence A and Historic A Districts.

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

Ms. Jeanne Dorbleson, representing the applicant, was present to speak to the application. She stated that the applicant would like to install an awning window in the dining room area of the house. She pointed out that a neighboring garage butts up to that area and they simply wanted the window to allow more light into the interior space. The trim would match the existing trim on the side wall.

Chairman Dika asked if the new window would be seen from the house next door. Ms. Dorbleson said it could be seen when standing in the driving and looking down in between the two structures.

Chairman Dika asked if there were any questions for the applicant. Hearing none, she asked if anyone from the public wished to speak to, for, or against the application. Seeing no one rise, she declared the public hearing closed and awaited a motion.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

Vice Chairman Katz made a motion to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the application as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Almeida. Chairman Dika asked for discussion.

Vice Chairman Katz stated that he could not think of an application that would have less impact on the neighborhood. He did not think it would be a detriment to the Historic District.

Mr. Almeida asked if the new window would have a sill that matched the existing sills. Ms. Dorbleson said it would have the same sill.

Hearing no other discussion, Chairman Dika called for the vote. The motion to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the application as presented passed by a unanimous (5-0) vote.

III. WORK SESSIONS

A. Work Session requested by **337 Pleasant Street, LLC, owner**, for property located at **337 Pleasant Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow exterior renovations to an existing structure (additions and renovations) and allow a new free standing structure (construct garage). Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 103 as Lot 62 and lies within General Residence B and Historic A Districts.

- Ms. Anne Whitney, representing the owner, was present to speak to the application. She explained that they were eliminating the garage from the application. She said that they were going to be doing an extensive renovation to the structure with two additions. They would like to remove a one story addition on the Pleasant Street side and build a larger two story addition with a roof deck. The second addition would be a one story on the south and east side of the structure. Ms. Whitney explained that they would need to go to the Board of Adjustment because both additions were very close to the property line.
- On the front elevation, the existing stairs are in disrepair. She said that they were proposing to rebuild them with granite and a railing. The entry was built in the 1930's and would be restored in kind. The windows would be replaced in total. Ms. Whitney pointed out the brick molding around the windows that they would like to replace along with marble sills. She pointed out that the frieze with dentils was in fairly good shape but the soffit was not. The gutters have rotted and the downspouts are gone so she thought they might use copper gutters throughout. Mr. Almeida thought that the existing gutter was so integral to the detail. Mr. Wyckoff pointed out that it was a cornice in a way. Ms. Whitney said that the way it was applied was like a traditional gutter. At this point, there was detailed discussion concerning the gutters.
- Mr. Wyckoff asked if the addition would be clapboarded. Ms. Whitney replied yes. Mr. Wyckoff said that he did not think that the windows worked with the rest of the structure.
- Ms. Whitney explained that it was always difficult to add onto a brick structure. She said it would be a wood frame addition but the foundation would be a full brick veneer. She also said she would match it with some heavy molding. The windows would match the head heights but the trim would be scaled down a bit. Mr. Wyckoff pointed out that the sills were not lining up. Ms. Whitney said that what was making it difficult was that the windows in the existing structure were very close to the floor. She said that on the first floor, they were a little over 20 inches off of the floor and on the second floor, they were

18-19 inches from the floor. Mr. Wyckoff said that both were legal and could be duplicated. Ms. Whitney said that if that was a deal breaker, she would duplicate them but she felt that since this was an addition, stepped back with different materials, she felt it would work. She explained that she was going to match the cornice. The roof deck would be inset with either a balustrade or iron railing.

- Mr. Wyckoff asked if this was a single family house. Ms. Whitney replied yes.
- Chairman Dika stated that it did not look like they were adding much square footage. Ms. Whitney said it would add about 400 square feet.
- Ms. Whitney explained in more detail how the drainage would work for the roof deck.
- Ms. Whitney talked about the open bulkhead that runs along the back edge of the building. She said that it was leaking into the basement. She was proposing to remove it entirely and create a new opening to the basement. Mr. Almeida stated that the basement entry was a unique feature to Portsmouth. Ms. Whitney said that it was not in great shape but she thought it could be taken out and redone when they do the foundation. Mr. Wyckoff asked if it was original. Ms. Whitney replied that she thought it was original but might have been redone at some point. Chairman Dika pointed out that it could be a useful feature if it could be repaired. She said she would like to see them work to keep it.
- There was discussion on bricking in some windows that were not going to be of use but still maintaining the opening. Ms. Kozak said that she would like to see the windows stay and put something behind it so that they would still have the effect of the windows. Ms. Whitney pointed out that there were a lot of windows in the building and this particular elevation was a minor one.
- Mr. Wyckoff stated that he did not have any problem with the massing. He did want to see the new windows match the existing windows in size. He stressed the importance of this structure. He also wondered if vertical board siding would work better than the horizontal siding on the two story addition. Mr. Almeida thought that was a good suggestion. Ms. Whitney said that she could look at other possibilities but she thought vertical made the most sense.
- Vice Chairman Katz said that he would not want the vertical boards to look like board and batten.
- Ms. Kozak and Chairman Dika agreed that the massing was right on.
- Mr. Almeida liked the two over two windows on the existing house better than the four over four on the addition. Ms. Whitney asked about the size of the windows. Ms. Kozak stated that she did not think they needed to match exactly.
- Chairman Dika asked if anyone from the public wished to speak about the project.
- Mr. Ted Gray stated that he owned property at 303 Pleasant Street. He pointed out that the same architect, William Fraser, designed both structures. He said that he was in favor of the two over two windows because most of the houses in the neighborhood had that pattern. He also liked the idea of using vertical board on the addition. Mr. Gray asked if the property would become one lot. Ms. Whitney explained that it was sold as two parcels. There used to be three lots but now there are two. Mr. Gray asked if the same person owned them. Ms. Whitney said that they are two separate entities but the same person has controlling interest on both lots. She added that they may do a lot line adjustment to make more room on one lot in the future.

B. Work Session requested by **Maria Elena Koopman, owner**, and **James Petersen, applicant**, for property located at **335 Maplewood Avenue**, wherein permission was requested to allow exterior renovations to an existing structure (replace roof, siding, and windows). Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 141 as Lot 26 and lies within the Mixed Residential Office and Historic A Districts.

Ms. Kozak recused herself from the discussion.

- Mr. James Petersen, owner of the property, Mr. Brian Lacey, an employee, and Mr. Michael Bruss of Bruss Construction were present to speak to the application.
- Mr. Petersen explained that he purchased the building in October to house his engineering firm. He said that the structure needed a lot of work and would be a challenge. He gave the Commission a brief overview of Petersen Engineering and the services it provides. He explained that their project goal was preservation and sustainability.
- He explained that Mr. Bruss has been involved in many preservation and LEED projects over the years.
- Mr. Petersen stated that the reason they were before the Commission was that the roof, the siding, and the windows were beyond repair.
- Mr. Petersen showed a graph that measured the air leakage of the building. He said they were proposing measures that would reduce the requirement for heat in the building by 85%. He added that the sustainable aspect of it was that it would be accomplished at no cost to the appearance of the building.
- In 1978, a major renovation took place and that was the last major work done on the building. For the past 30 years, it has been a bed and breakfast.
- Mr. Petersen pointed out that there was a mix of conditions on the building.
- Page six of the submitted plans showed a home that they would like to serve as a sample of what they would like to achieve with their project. Their plan was to duplicate the look. Mr. Almeida said that he considered it to be a very good example.
- Mr. Petersen said that the building would be getting 1.65 % wider and 2% taller and that was the reason they were before the Commission. There would be no outward appearance change to the building. Mr. Wyckoff pointed out that the changes might show around the foundation. Mr. Petersen explained that they would be adding four inches to the walls and five inches to the roof.
- There was detailed discussion as to the process of accomplishing the repairs.
- Mr. Almeida was concerned that there would be a shadow caused by a six inch overhang at the foundation. He added that what made the building so beautiful was its granite base. Mr. Wyckoff stated that plantings in front and around the building would help to mask it.
- Mr. Almeida asked Mr. Bruss if he has had that problem in the past. Mr. Bruss explained that they have applied granite facing to take up some of that space. He said that in the Maplewood Avenue area, the granite bases are not that prominent and this building sits quite low on its foundation. Mr. Almeida asked if they planned to do any work on the foundation. Mr. Bruss said that it was a rubble foundation and not in bad shape.
- Mr. Petersen stated that it was not his plan to replant against the building. He felt they would pull plantings toward the street.
- Mr. Petersen also said that the existing fence was in poor condition. He would like to possibly replace it with a solid wood fence. He pointed out that it was a busy street with a decent amount of foot traffic. He felt the fence might help mask the shadow line created by the increase in the dimensions of the building.
- Mr. Wyckoff thought a fence gate would be reasonable with possibly some prominent granite or wood/composite posts. He also suggested an arbor. Mr. Petersen said that they would like to add granite steps as well.
- Mr. Bruss told the Commission that the existing windows were not salvageable. They would like to replace the windows with Marvin aluminum clad windows. They would also like to mimic the same detailing on the Washington Street sample home.
- Mr. Wyckoff asked if the windows could be set back so that they were flush with the face of the clapboard. Mr. Bruss said he was familiar with that detail and it would not be an issue.
- Vice Chairman Katz stated that the timing of this work session was unfortunate because four Commissioners were absent. He thought it would be premature to plan for a public

hearing at the next meeting because this was a new experience for the Commission. He suggested another work session.

- Mr. Almeida said that the only difference between the exterior surface of his building and the existing building was the overhang at the bottom and at the roof line. Mr. Almeida pointed out that a work session/public hearing could be requested.
- Mr. Petersen also pointed out that they were proposing to add two windows on the north elevation. Mr. Wyckoff commented that the fenestration was typical for this structure.
- Mr. Almeida asked the reason for the realignment of the window on the front elevation. Mr. Petersen said there was no particular reason and they would be happy to leave it as is.
- Mr. Petersen explained that the roof was in need of immediate repair. He said they were willing to phase the siding and windows.
- The discussion moved to fences and Mr. Almeida suggested a solid wood fence with a cap.
- Vice Chairman Katz wanted the applicant to know that there was nothing in the proposal that he objected to. He just wanted him to understand that four members were absent and their opinions were not known. He said that he did understand their urgency to move forward with a public hearing.
- Mr. Almeida pointed out that on the north and east elevation, a very boxy overhang was shown. The sample house showed a different look. He wondered if they could achieve that look. Mr. Petersen replied yes. Mr. Bruss gave additional information about how that work would be done.
- Mr. Almeida asked if chimney work would need to be done. Mr. Petersen explained that it had already been done. Mr. Almeida pointed out that when the roof was built up, they would need to re-flash. Mr. Petersen agreed.
- Mr. Petersen stated that they were looking at windows with an aluminum clad sash.

In additional business, Mr. Almeida informed the Commission that he recently attended an event where he was able to view window replacement samples. He wondered if it might be advantageous to schedule a night where a few window manufacturers could show the Commission some historically sensitive windows products. Chairman Dika thought it would be very interesting. Mr. Almeida said he would contact about three or four representatives to discuss it.

Chairman Dika commented that the Portsmouth Advocates were becoming very active. She informed them that John Grossman asked if any of the Commissioners would be interested in being on their email list. She told the Commissioners to be in touch with her if they wished to be on the list.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:45 p.m., it was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Good
HDC Recording Secretary

These minutes were approved at the Historic District Commission meeting on February 3, 2010.