

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

EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

6:30 p.m.

March 04, 2020

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

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Cyrus Beer

ALSO PRESENT: Nick Cracknell, Principal Planner, Planning Department

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Chairman Lombardi stated that Alternate Margot Doering would vote on all petitions in Mr. Beer's absence.

*It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously (7-0) to **postpone** Petition #6, 11 Meeting House Hill Road, and to **withdraw** Administrative Approval Item #1, 50 Austin Street.*

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. February 05, 2020

*The February 5, 2020 minutes were **approved** as amended.*

II. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS

Note: Items 2, 3, 5, and 7 were reviewed as a group.

1. 50 Austin Street

The request was withdrawn.

2. 121 Mechanic Street

Mr. Cracknell said the applicant previously removed the deck behind the main structure and now wanted to redo one of the two outbuildings by restoring it in kind and re-using as many of the original doors and windows as possible. The applicant Jason Brewster was present and stated that the two windows in the front elevation would be replaced. He said the exterior siding would be wood shingles and that he could install a double-hung window if the Commission preferred.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff said he wouldn't insist that all the windows be the same due to the building's historic character.

3. 39 Pray Street

The request was to replace four skylights in the same location. Mr. Cracknell noted that the asphalt roof would match on both sides.

4. 46 Maplewood Avenue

The applicant's representative architect Jennifer Ramsey was present. She reviewed the vent locations and said the Deer Street elevation had fenestration changes on the first floor that caused two doors to become windows and the storefront assembly to be revised. Mr. Cracknell recommended stipulating that the vents be painted to match the siding material.

*Ms. Ruedig moved to **approve** the item, with the following stipulation:*

- 1. The mechanical vents shall be painted to match the background color.*

*Vice-Chair Wyckoff seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

(The Commission then addressed Item #6).

2. 355 Pleasant Street

The request was to install two ground-mounted condensers near the rear of the building and screen them with a wood screen on one side. Mr. Cracknell said the condensers would be seen by the neighbors but not the public. It was discussed whether all three sides of the condensers should be screened identically, noting that a third side already had a fence to screen it.

The applicant Kathy Williams Kane was present and said she would screen all three sides of the condenser system using the same design.

(The Commission then addressed Item #7).

3. 25 Maplewood Avenue

The contractor Steve Wilson was present on behalf of the applicant. He reviewed the request and stated that the balcony door and window system were changed to a French door and sidelights due to the configuration of the interior and balcony spaces.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff asked why the balcony door and window system was deleted. Mr. Wilson explained that there was an emergency egress stair beyond the windows that left no room for the door, and that some of the changes resulted from structural and architectural issues, like steel beams. The Commission noted that those issues were typically resolved in the planning stage. Many were disappointed about the removal of the sidelights because they affected the building's esthetics, and several suggestions were made.

*Ms. Ruedig moved to **approve** the item with the exception of the three doorways, and with the following stipulation:*

- 1. The corner boards shall be continuous on the second story.*

*Vice-Chair Wyckoff seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

4. 56 Middle Street

Mr. Cracknell stated that the applicant's fence was previously approved and that the applicant now wanted to replace it with another because mechanicals were added to the abutting property.

*Vice-Chair Wyckoff moved to **approve** Items 2, 3, 5, and 7, with the following stipulation on Item #5:*

- 1. That identical screening shall surround all three sides of each condensers.*

*Ms. Ruedig seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS (NEW BUSINESS)

1. Petition of **Kristy R. Ellmer and Matthew L. Carwell, owners**, for property located at **18 Pickering Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow new construction to an existing structure (the removal of an existing side porch and replace with mudroom addition and new side porch) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 102 as Lot 23 and lies within the General Residence B (GRB) and Historic Districts.

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

Architect Anne Whitney was present on behalf of the applicant and reviewed the petition.

Ms. Ruedig asked whether the small awning window could be bigger to mimic the previous window's size. Ms. Whitney said the smaller size window was more appropriate and more in keeping with the addition than the main structure but said she could do a narrow 1/1 window.

SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR AGAINST THE PETITION

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

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

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

- 1. A 1/1 window matching the height of the first floor window and the width of the window above shall be used on the façade.*

Vice-Chair Wyckoff seconded.

Ms. Ruedig said the project would preserve the integrity of the District, complement and enhance its architectural character, and would be compatible with surrounding properties.

*The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

2. Petition of **Christopher Hudson Morrow, owner**, for property located at **36 Richmond Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow new construction to an existing structure (add 2-story bay addition, add third floor dormer, remove and replace windows, modify lower roof material, and add new heat pump) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 108 as Lot 5 and lies within the Mixed Research Office (MRO) and Historic Districts.

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

Architect Anne Whitney was present on behalf of the applicant. She reviewed the petition.

Several Commissioners were concerned with by the large blank wall and suggested installing an additional window. Vice-Chair Wyckoff asked what would be used under the picture windows. Ms. Whitney said it would be clapboard like the rest of the house and that the corner boards would also be clapboarded. Mr. Rawling noted that the areas with siding had narrower corner boards and suggested matching them all the way down. Vice-Chair Wyckoff agreed.

SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR AGAINST THE PETITION

No one rose 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 petition as presented, with the following stipulations:*

- 1. A matching window with the historic dimensions shall be added on the second floor of the "street elevation".*
- 2. The corner boards shall be continuous on the second story.*

Ms. Ruedig seconded the motion.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff said the project would preserve the integrity of the District and its special character, would be compatible with the design of surrounding properties, and would relate to the historic and architectural values of surrounding properties.

*The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

3. (Work Session/Public Hearing) requested by **Eric A. and Jean C. M. Spear, owners**, for property located at **49 Mt. Vernon Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow new construction to an existing structure (add new front entry way, porch, and rear deck) and add

solar panel arrays as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 111 as Lot 31 and lies within the General Residence B (GRB) and Historic Districts.

WORK SESSION

The applicants Eric and Jean Spear were present. Ms. Spear reviewed the petition. She said they would do solar panels but not do the skylights due to possible leakage. She reviewed the hardscaping and landscaping plans.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff asked what the railing for the six rises off the driveway would be and how high the retaining wall would be. Ms. Spear said a cable railing system would be used on the front. Vice-Chair Wyckoff suggested using a continuous railing that turned and then went up. Mr. Ryan recommended that the solar panels be moved to the east side of the roof away from the street in a sawtooth configuration. Most of the other Commissioners said they liked the panels as presented. Mr. Rawling explained why he was concerned about the pseudo-light casements or awnings on the second floor as well as the proportions. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said the proportions of the second-floor windows were on the right track but wasn't sure if the muntins fit the house. Mr. Ryan agreed. He said he wasn't crazy about the horizontal windows on the garage because they made the garage door look standard. Ms. Ruedig agreed and said she didn't want to see fake muntin bars applied to casement windows. Ms. Doering suggested a third alternative of doing a bigger grill. The Boral siding was discussed. Chairman Lombardi said he liked the project and thought the house's location was the right place for solar panels.

There was no public comment. Chairman Lombardi closed the work session and opened the public hearing.

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

The applicant Jean Spear stated that the exterior of the house would be updated with new windows and siding, a back deck, a front porch, a small in interior space, solar panels, and landscaping and hardscaping changes. In response to Ms. Ruedig's question, Ms. Spear said there would be no other changes except for the railing that was previously discussed.

SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR AGAINST THE PETITION

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

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

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

- 1. The front railing detail shall be submitted for Administrative Approval.
Ms. Doering seconded.*

Ms. Ruedig said the project would conserve and enhance surrounding property values, noting that the house was seen as a non-contributing one and was out of character in terms of its age and design, but that the creative renovation would help its standing in the District. She said it would also have compatibility of innovative technologies with surrounding properties.

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

4. Petition of **John J. Roese Revocable Trust of 2016, John J. Roese Trustee, owner**, for property located at **14 Mechanic Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow the relocation of an existing structure (replace siding, windows, and trim) and new construction to an existing structure (add connector and 2-story addition) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 103 as Lot 10 and lies within the General Residence B (GRB) and Historic Districts.

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

Architect Lisa DeStefano was present on behalf of the applicant and said the owners wanted to restore the structure and do the additions in a newer style. She said the property included a 25-ft setback toward the cemetery and that the existing home was within that setback. She said the applicant received the necessary variances to lift and move the building forward on the property and that the only change since the previous work session was that the second-floor deck on the south elevation was reduced. She reviewed the window specifications and said the new windows would be wood with divided lights.

City Councilor Representative Trace asked whether the applicant had considered using ground penetrating radar for all the moving and digging. Ms. DeStefano said they had analyzed and determined where the building would go vertically on the site. Ms. Trace also noted that the front door wasn't age-appropriate for the house's design. Ms. Ruedig suggested that an archaeologist be present during the digging. She said everything looked appropriate and fit well, noting that the addition was diminutive to the main house, and that bringing the main structure toward the street would be a bit improvement for the site. Vice-Chair Wyckoff agreed that the entry front door should be redesigned to better fit a Colonial home and suggested putting a small transom light over the door with small panes of glass. He also thought the proportions of the door entryway didn't look right. Ms. Ruedig said the original door surround could be replicated if its outline was found when the house was stripped. Mr. Rawling said the project was very compatible with the neighborhood. He suggested that the door infill on the east elevation include a darker color and that the window trim elements on the addition be in a darker shade of wood to set the main structure off more and to be more characteristic in pattern, and that the wide columns on the south and front elevations be simpler, narrow ones to make the house more dominant.

SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR AGAINST THE PETITION

Susan Menell of 187 Marcy Street said she was the immediate abutter and that the project would cut off several of her views. She said the deck would look into her backyard and infringe on her and her husband's privacy. She asked whether a second-story deck was appropriate on a Colonial house or whether it could be moved to another side of the house.

Lisa DeStefano said the deck was reduced and recessed into the building 4-1/4 feet, which was enough for a few chairs. City Council Representative Trace said the applicant did everything possible to site the house appropriately and within the property's boundaries, noting that the South End had houses very close to one another. She said she saw no problem with the project and thought it would provide a better view of the cemetery to the abutter.

No one else rose 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 petition, with the following stipulations:*

- 1. Consistent with the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, a certified Archaeologist shall be on-site during all excavation, demolition, and associated Earth disturbance on the entire property.*
- 2. In order to preserve the integrity of the historic structure it shall be relocated (versus dismantled) to the proposed location as shown on the approved site plan.*
- 3. The entry door and pilaster detail shall be redesigned to match the age and style of the historic structure and submitted for Administrative Approval prior to construction.*

Ms. Ruedig seconded.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff said the project would preserve the integrity of the District and would be consistent with its special and defining character, would conserve and enhance surrounding property values, would be compatible in design, and would relate to the historic and architectural value of the existing structure.

*The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

5. Petition of **73 Prospect Street, LLC and Zen Stoneworks, owners**, for property located at **73 Prospect Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow an amendment to a previously approved design (change from approved wood clapboard siding to hardieplank) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 142 as Lot 28 and lies within the General Residence A (GRA) and Historic Districts.

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

The applicant Lenny Cushing was present to speak to the petition and said the new building's details would not change but that HardiePlank material was requested instead of wood clapboard because it was a better product.

Mr. Rawling suggested stipulating that the smooth side of the HardiePlank be placed on the outer side. Mr. Cushing said it was stated as so in the specifications. Ms. Ruedig said she had no problem with the material because it was all new construction.

SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR AGAINST THE PETITION

No one rose 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 petition as presented, and Ms. Ruedig seconded.*

Vice-Chair Wyckoff said the project would complement and enhance the architectural and historic character of the District, and that the new house would be consistent with the special and defining character of surrounding properties.

*The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

6. Petition of **Argeris and Eloise Karabelas, owners**, for property located at **11 Meeting House Hill Road**, wherein permission is requested to allow new construction to an existing structure (rebuild existing garage roof, add new windows, doors, and trim as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 103 as Lot 59 and lies within the General Residence B (GRB) and Historic Districts.

*It was moved, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to **postpone** the petition to a later date.*

IV. WORK SESSIONS (OLD BUSINESS)

A. Work Session requested by **Vaughan Street Hotel, LLC and Stone Creek realty, LLC, owners**, for properties located at **299 Vaughan Street and 53 Green Street**, wherein permission is requested to allow the partial demolition of an existing structure and the construction of a new free-standing commercial structure (5-story Hotel) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said properties are shown on Assessor Map 124 as Lot 10 and Assessor Map 119 as Lot 2 and lies within the Character District 5 (CD 5), Downtown Overlay, and Historic Districts. *(This item was continued at the February 05, 2020 meeting to the March, 2020 meeting.)*

WORK SESSION

Project architect Carla Goodknight and Carthartes Principal Jeff Johnston were present to speak to the petition. Ms. Goodknight reviewed the petition in detail.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff suggested inserting the word ‘public’ on the wayfinding sign to the greenspace so that the public knew it wasn’t just for guests. The infill between the columns was discussed. Mr. Johnston said it was a metal piece with some green at its base that broke up the wood detail and was located in three places throughout the property. He discussed the canopy over the main entrance. Ms. Goodknight asked how the Commissioners felt about the layered façade look. Chairman Lombardi said it was like a wing of the AC Hotel, and Vice-Chair Wyckoff said the windows looked taller. Mr. Rawling said he liked the texture and gridwork on the lower levels and suggested emphasizing the horizontal canopy on the Green Street elevation

to accent the building more. He said the fascia on the building's top part seemed to match the AC Hotel but found it heavy and clunky and thought there were ways to refine them and break them up by adding different materials than those on the AC Hotel. He said the floor plates looked like they were developed separately and just stacked on top of each other, especially on the Green Street elevation. He said the corner metal wraps on the building's middle part didn't relate to anything underneath and that the front façade's entrances should be celebrated more. He said the passageway needed to be more inviting and that the back side of the building could use more design elements like greenery, a trellis, and so on.

Mr. Ryan said he liked the roll-up garage doors at the base because of the transparency but thought the building had a banal design and looked very rectangular. He said the only real expression on the building was the panel with the pink Moxy sign. He suggested carrying over some of the transparency from the base level by creating a more architectural stairway with places to stop and admire views from the water and bridge. He said another sweeping canopy similar to the other one was also needed to mark the entrance and said the back elevation could use more design elements. Ms. Ruedig agreed and said the overall design was generic. She said the first floor was interesting because of the garage doors and entrance to the greenway, but thought they also posed the challenge of not having that greenway public entrance look like a garage entryway. She suggested differentiating it by adding public art or something to make it clear that it was a public accessway for people and not cars. She said the vertical panel on the façade broke up the boxy look but that she didn't care for the big pink sign, and she thought it could be better if it were glass and showed a visible stairway. She also suggested designing the building without relying on the big Moxy sign in case the building changed ownership in the future. She said she preferred that the building be a little lower but thought that stepping it back on the Green Street façade helped break up the big rectangular mass a bit. Mr. Johnston asked about the bay with the sign being treated as one. Ms. Ruedig said it might run the risk of having a wall of monotonous window arrangements.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff said the flat panel in the front was not a good design statement and thought the glass suggestion was a great one that could be capped with a pediment for a classic design. He agreed with the comments about the metal on the corner having no reason to be there, noting that it wasn't so much contemporary as it was an inexpensive way of adding detail. He suggested that more work be put into the front of the building overlooking the parking lot so that people didn't see just a parking lot. Mr. Sauk-Schubert said the front elevation had a fake symmetry that was mirrored in the center line of the vertical panel. Ms. Doering said she wasn't a fan of the garage doors and was bothered by the entry doors set into a wall of glass that she felt didn't work. She said she agreed with the comments regarding the boxy, rectangular look and said she'd like to see different shapes on the building like the surrounding neighborhood ones. She said the building on the left looked like it would fall over because of the corner where the gray and brown colors met. She suggested making the left side of the stairwell with the water view more interesting by making the brickwork pattern or colors form a piece of artwork or a mural.

Mr. Johnston said the greenway access didn't have to have a 15-ft wide sidewalk and could be shorter to bring more weight under one of the bays, and it was further discussed.

City Council Representative Trace suggested making the stairway behind the Moxy sign more of a focal point internally by using glass similar to the garage door type of glass, which would give it a vertical repetitive look. She said the brick walkway could be carried further to the back so that people knew they could go there. Chairman Lombardi said he liked the idea of having an architectural stairway behind the panel and thought the panel could be transparent down to the first floor and have lighting or seating on the landings, as an extension to the lobby. He asked if the windows on the top floor were the same as the others. Mr. Johnston said the mullion would be changed to lighten up the top. Mr. Rawling said that breaking up the roofline would help break up the boxy look, and he cautioned against using too much metal. City Council Representative Trace said if glazing were done instead of having the Moxy sign and the building were lit up at night, it would be spectacular and would draw people in coming off the highway exit. Ms. Sauk-Schubert recommended that the hotel have a more playful look. Mr. Ryan said the first floor could have curved glass corners landing on columns that would lead people to the nature path and would look more dynamic.

There was no public comment.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

*It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to **continue** the work session to the April 1, 2020 meeting.*

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
HDC Recording Secretary