

**MINUTES
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
PORTSMOUTH, NH**

Remote Meeting Via Zoom Conference Call

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

6:30 p.m.

November 10, 2020

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

MEMBERS EXCUSED: None

ALSO PRESENT: Nick Cracknell, Principal Planner, Planning Department

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*Vice-Chair Wyckoff moved to **postpone** Work Session B, 132-134 Middle Street, to the February 3, 2021 meeting, and Ms. Ruedig seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

I. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS

1. 180 Middle Street

Mr. Cracknell said the request was permission for a trash bin enclosure for a condominium complex. Vice-Chair Wyckoff noted that there were no hardware details. Mr. Cracknell said it would be black and field painted. Ms. Ruedig said she had no problem with the look of the bin but was concerned about its location because it was in clear view of the driveway, with the carriage house in the back. Mr. Cracknell said the bin needed to be close to the street, and it was further discussed. Mr. Adams said the application had a skeletal nature because it didn't have many details and could set a precedent for similar future applications.

The condominium association secretary Holly Jenness was present and said the enclosure would be like a shed along the fence that would have the same material, color and style and would blend in. Mr. Ryan said the applicant was trying to do the right thing and that it wasn't worthy of a lot of design consideration. Ms. Ruedig said the applicant described the enclosure and that she didn't think there needed to be more detail given. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said it was an administrative approval request and that the shed would look just like the fence.

*Vice-Chair Wyckoff moved to **approve** the item, and Mr. Ryan seconded. The vote **passed** by a vote of 6-1, with Mr. Adams voting in opposition.*

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS (NEW BUSINESS)

6. Petition of **Laura G. Koulet Revocable Trust of 2019, Laura G. Koulet Trustee, owner, and Reed Walker, Applicant**, for property located at **45 Gardner Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow renovations to an existing structure (replace one window on the 3rd floor, add two windows to the 3rd floor, and add one window to the 1st floor) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 103 as Lot 21 and lies within the General Residence B (GRB) and Historic Districts.

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

The applicants Reed Walker and Laura Koulet were present. Mr. Reed reviewed the reasons why the new windows would be located on the back elevation. He said the existing condenser unit would be replaced with a split system, which would be on the side yard and hidden by the front fence, with the condenser itself under the deck.

Ms. Doering said she was concerned about the three-window arrangement under the gable and asked what the reasoning was. Mr. Reed said there was a small wall that bifurcated that segment, so the closet would encompass the large window and a little window, and the bathroom would be lit by the smaller window. He said they wanted the three windows to be symmetrical. Ms. Ruedig asked why the central window had to be so wide and why the casement was necessary. Mr. Reed said the height of the built-in closet required it. Ms. Koulet said the choice of casement was for ease of opening and that she wanted a view from the vanity. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said there was no detail about how the three windows would be trimmed out. He said the center window had a 1930s cottage style look and was inappropriate for a 120-year-old house. He said an egress window would be necessary, and he suggested one that swung out and looked like a double hung. He also thought the windows might be more visible to the public than they seemed. Chairman Lombardi asked if the applicant could just put two larger windows in that space. Ms. Koulet said they could not because of the wall that separated the bathroom.

The project contractor Tim Hron was present and said they chose a casement window because most of the windows in the house were casements. He said the whole top floor was a bedroom suite and that the front gable window would suffice for egress. Mr. Ryan said the three-window combination on the bay didn't look wrong on the Victorian-looking house and thought it could be an acceptable solution. Ms. Ruedig said the three-window arrangement wasn't historically appropriate but was on the back of the house, and she didn't think it would be very visible. She

noted that the Commission had approved similar setups in more visible areas. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said he objected to the cottage style of the center window, and if it couldn't have a rail in the middle to make it look like a double hung, he'd rather see nothing at all. Mr. Ryan said an egress window in a bathroom wouldn't cover the bedroom suite itself, and he suggested a double hung window in the center to replace the cottage-house style window.

Mr. Adams said losing the rectangular double hung sash in the gable end that matched the existing double hung sash in the other gable would be a mistake. He thought the applicant would have difficulty mulling two modern windows into an existing double hung sash, so replacing it with the double hung was better, but he said the existing window dimensions should be honored and would make the design more compatible. Mr. Hron said the two side casement windows were smaller in size and that adding a divider bar between the two double hungs would make that window look even smaller. Chairman Lombardi agreed with Mr. Adams that keeping the existing window in that location would give some space between the side windows and keep the existing configuration still visible. He said he'd like to see the dimensions of the original window in the center of that. Ms. Ruedig agreed that the original window dimension should remain and that two windows could be added on each side.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff said he could not support the proposal as it was. Mr. Sauk-Schubert said there should be drawings showing the existing and proposed conditions. He said the elevation was a mixture of different styles and had an incongruous symmetry. City Council Representative Trace agreed and said it looked like the windows were shoved up near the peak. She asked if there was another place for a vanity on the third floor instead of making the existing window arrangement completely inappropriate for that style of house. She also noted that there were no specifications for the compressor. Mr. Hron said the condenser would be a Trane XR-13 that would fit well under the deck and have all the required clearances on all four sides.

Chairman Lombardi opened the public hearing.

SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR AGAINST THE PETITION

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

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

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

- *That the center window be a double hung similar to the existing window.*

Vice-Chair Wyckoff seconded the motion.

City Council Representative Trace asked to amend the motion so that it was stipulated that the similar double hung window would be brought back as an administrative approval in case there were questions about what the window would look like. Mr. Ryan agreed. Ms. Ruedig also asked that the specifications for the condenser unit be included in the administrative approval request. Mr. Ryan and Vice-Chair Wyckoff agreed.

The **amended** motion was as follows:

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

- 1. The applicant shall submit the specifications for the double hung window on the third floor (matching the existing window dimensions) and the A/C condenser for Administrative Approval.*

Vice-Chair Wyckoff seconded the motion.

Mr. Ryan said the project would be compatible with surrounding properties in the District and would be in keeping with the District.

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

7. Petition of **Andrea L. Ardito and Brad R. Lebo, owners**, for property located at **121 Northwest Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow new construction to an existing structure (construct covered porch off main bedroom) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 122 as Lot 1 and lies within the General Residence A (GRA) and Historic Districts.

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

Project architect Alyssa Murphy representing the applicants was present to review the petition, as were the applicants Andrea Ardito and Brad Lebo. Ms. Murphy said they wanted to add a porch to an addition on the 1855 farmhouse. She said the house was isolated and wouldn't be seen from nearby properties. She noted that they would add more solar panels to the roof as well.

In response to the Commission's questions, Ms. Murphy said the porch would be wood to match the existing clapboards and that the ceiling would also be wood, probably beadboard. Mr. Ryan said the porch looked very contemporary and that it didn't have any elements from the front and back porches, like the square posts and capitals. He said the addition could be improved by extending that language over to it. Vice-Chair Wyckoff agreed and said it would make a big difference to put posts and capitals on the corners of the porch. Ms. Murphy said the design was intended to be simple and differentiate itself from the front porch. Mr. Adams asked what would happen on the inside where the screen porch was attached. Mr. Ryan said it could be detailed so that the screen seemed like it was a temporary seasonal one.

Ms. Ruedig said the proposed porch looked like one for a milder climate, like Florida. She said she wouldn't want to see lots of detailing and fancy column capitals, and she suggested fattening up the two outside corners to give more heft to the corners. Ms. Doering said she had a problem with the mass because it competed with the size of the rest of the building and didn't read like a typical New England porch. City Council Representative Trace agreed and asked why the porch had no egress. Ms. Ardito said she wanted to keep it simple. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said the massing was fine and that the size of the corners could be doubled by adding some weight, or the

porch could be natural wood instead of white. Mr. Adams said the Commission didn't know how big the corner posts of the porch were and dimensions were needed to discuss that kind of detail. Mr. Sauk-Schubert agreed and said the porch was transparent and only the roof and floor of it would be seen, so he wasn't concerned about the massing. Mr. Ryan said the screens could be removed during the off-season.

Chairman Lombardi agreed that more dimensional drawings and details were required. He opened the public hearing.

SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR AGAINST THE PETITION

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

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

*Ms. Ruedig moved to **continue** the public hearing to the December 2, 2020 meeting, and Mr. Ryan seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

III. WORK SESSIONS (OLD BUSINESS)

B. Work Session requested by **132 Middle Street LLC and 134 Middle Street, LLC, owners**, for property located at **132-134 Middle Street**, wherein permission is requested to allow exterior renovations to an existing structure (re-pointing brick, roof replacement, add ADA accessible entry, and front entrance renovations) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 127 as Lots 11 and 12 and lies within the Character District 4- L1 (CD 4-L1) and Historic Districts. *(This item was postponed at the October 14, 2020 meeting to the November 10, 2020 meeting.)*

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

*Vice-Chair Wyckoff moved to **postpone** Work Session B, 132-134 Middle Street, to the February 3, 2021 meeting, and Ms. Ruedig seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

City Council Representative Trace recused herself from the following work session.

C. Work Session requested by **100 Market Street, LLC, owner**, for property located at **100 Market Street**, wherein permission is requested to allow new construction to an existing structure (remove and replace existing front corner entrance) and renovations to an existing structure (remove sunshades) as per plans on file on the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 118 as Lot 6 and lies within the Character District 5 (CD5) and Historic Districts. *(This item was continued at the October 14, 2020 meeting to the November, 2020 meeting.)*

WORK SESSION

The applicant Elizabeth Mullen, President of Springer Jewelers, and project architect Tim Hart were present to review the petition. Ms. Mullen said the major change was adding the awning on the exterior. She said it would highlight the entrance and make it look more welcoming.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff said he didn't see much of an awning projection. Ms. Ruedig said the awning looked flat and asked if there was any slope to it. Mr. Hart said it would pitch forward a quarter to a half inch. Ms. Ruedig asked if the stainless steel that went around the columns would be segmented and why the steel columns were proposed instead of granite. Mr. Hart said the columns would probably be hemispherical and have a seam at the sides and that the stainless steel would bring the entrance out toward the pedestrian environment. He said the existing materials were dark, and the all-glass system with stainless steel would be more transparent and would also be part of the brand identity piece. He explained how the building entrance would morph from an exit/egress corridor into a vibrant retail entrance.

Mr. Ryan said the proposed plan was less pedestrian friendly because it pushed the building right up to the sidewalk. He agreed that the existing entrance was dark but said the materials and lighting could be changed to make it more open and receptive without eliminating the pedestrian element within the building. He said that removing the canopies from the left and right of the corner entrances made the building look more massive and less appealing. He said the applicant was placing a vestibule between the window shopper and the retailer, and he noted that the existing revolving door was historic. He said he couldn't support the proposal. Vice-Chair Wyckoff disagreed and said the proposed entryway was an improvement because the existing one with a triangular roof over a rounded corner and with dark doors wasn't retail friendly. He said the building would be given new life and brought up to 2020 standards. He said it made sense that the proposed design made the building look like a new contemporary one instead of something left over from another age. He said he was in support of the project. Mr. Sauk-Schubert asked what would be done with the existing columns. Mr. Hart said the steel columns underneath would be removed and replaced with stainless steel. He said the cast concrete column covers were just decorative but that he would verify it before removing them.

Ms. Ruedig said the new design and steel columns didn't fit into the District and Market Street as a whole, whereas the existing materials of a stone first floor did. Ms. Doering said the canopy increased the feeling of the starkness and that she would need to see more information on it as well as a different perspective of what it would look like. Mr. Adams said that, as much as he wanted to get rid of the awkward awnings, the fabric awnings added human scale, whereas the glass awnings were stark and hard. Ms. Mullen said they had to clean the building up, which was part of the rebranding, and that they wanted people to see the new store with the fresh new entryway. Mr. Ryan said the Commission was more interested in protecting the character of the District. Ms. Mullen said the columns could be copper and the frame of the door could be black. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said they might look awkward with the rest of the building and suggested that the perspective be put in a three-dimensional presentation that could be seen from different angles so that the Commission could envision it better. Ms. Doering asked whether the applicant had considered white columns. Ms. Mullen said they had not because their vendor partnered with Rolex, whose specific feedback was to remove all the awnings and columns. Ms. Doering said it wasn't the Commission's responsibility to meet people's brand image if it was contrary to its

mission. Ms. Ruedig recommended that the applicant research other examples of where the proposed entryway was seen so that the Commission could see what it looked like in reality.

Mr. Sauk-Schubert said he didn't see how the proposed plans would promote the pedestrian experience. Mr. Hart said the internal remodeling would include lighting, and the glass walls and transparency would be much greater. Chairman Lombardi said that removing all the details on the entryway made the building look flat and uninteresting, like every other corporate building. He said the building was in the District and had been part of the downtown area for a long time, and even though it was quirky, it was interesting because of its features. He said stripping those features off and making an awning that was basically not an awning would take away the spirit of the building. He said the awning was the predominant feature that he missed in the new design and wanted to see a proposal that would keep the entry the way it was but use lighting to enable it to be a more visible space instead of impacting the whole structure of it. Mr. Ryan agreed and suggested leaving the center section recessed and pushing the two wings outward.

There was no public comment.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

*Mr. Ryan moved to **continue** the work session to the December 2, 2020 meeting, and Vice-Chair Wyckoff seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

IV. WORK SESSIONS (NEW BUSINESS)

City Council Representative Trace resumed her voting seat.

1. Work Session requested by **Nobles Island Condominium Association, owner**, and **Michael Street, Applicant**, for property located at **500 Market Street**, wherein permission is requested to allow renovations to existing structures (replace rear decks for buildings A, B, and C) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 120 as Lot 2 and lies within the Character District 4-L1 (CD4-L1) and Historic Districts.

WORK SESSION

The applicants and condominium board members Tom Valentine, Mark Schwanbeck, and Dave Porter were present. Mr. Valentine said they wanted to replace three sets of decks because the existing ones were cantilevered out from the buildings and the steel beams were causing issues. He said they would replace them with a similar type of deck and grade but with supporting posts. Mr. Schwanbeck said they proposed to add lattice to cover up the gap. Mr. Porter said the decks would be replaced with conventional decks with small concrete piers or helical piles and that the rails would stay the same. He said the larger HVAC units would be closer to the slatted corrals, so they wanted to increase the size of the decks by one foot.

Ms. Ruedig said lattice wouldn't look appropriate because the building's design intent was to be floating over the edge of the drop-off. Mr. Ryan said he didn't know if the piers honored the shoreline's do-not-disturb requirement and that there must have been a good reason that the

cantilevered steel beams were put in before. Mr. Porter said he couldn't find the original drawings but had hired someone that dealt with construction near bodies of water. Mr. Ryan said he had no problem with it but wouldn't recommend the lattice. Mr. Adams said he didn't think the extra foot of deck space requested would have an impact on the District. He said the Commission would want to look at the synthetic decking and proposed trim put over the structural work. Mr. Porter said they would do something comparable to the existing deck. He said the existing wooden enclosures were rotting, so they wanted to use a comparable synthetic material that would match the existing. Mr. Adams recommended piers for long term instead of cantilevering. He said adding a foot to the decks would pose more trouble digging. Mr. Porter said they would have an environmental management consultant for that issue. Vice-Chair Wyckoff suggested that the Commission not discuss any kind of apron around the perimeter because there would be lots of tubes and concrete supports and it would primarily all be engineering. He said the building presently looked so clean because of the cantilevering.

Chairman Lombardi said he agreed with all the comments. Mr. Porter said he would return with construction details and deck specifications at a future public hearing.

There was no public comment.

*It was moved, seconded, and **passed** by unanimous vote (7-0) to **close** the work session.*

DECISION

The applicant said he would return for a public hearing.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
HDC Recording Secretary