

TOWN OF AMHERST
Historic District Commission Meeting

March 21, 2024

APPROVED

In attendance: Doug Chabinsky – Acting Chair, Tom Grella – Board of Selectmen Ex-Officio,
Tom Quinn – Planning Board Ex-Officio, Bill Glenn, Martha Chabinsky (remote), and Nicole
Crawford
Staff present: Nic Strong, Community Development Director

Doug Chabinsky, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Nicole Crawford sat for Chris Buchanan.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. **CASE #: PZ18456-012324 – Lynda M Tracey (Owner) & Bryan Norwalt (Applicant); 98 Amherst Street, PIN #: 005-044-000** – Request for approval to construct a 28’x25’ two car garage with living space above. *Continued from February 15, 2024.*

Doug Chabinsky read and opened the case. He noted that the applicant has requested a continuance.

Doug Chabinsky moved to continue this case to April 18, 2024, at 7pm at Town Hall. Seconded by Tom Quinn.
Roll Call Vote: Nicole Crawford – aye; Bill Glenn – aye; Martha Chabinsky – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye, Tom Grella – aye, Tom Quinn – aye. 6-0-0.

2. **CASE #: PZ18636-022724 – John Ahearn (Owner & Applicant); 101 Boston Post Road, PIN #: 017-028-000** – Request for approval to replace existing picket fence with similar design.

Doug Chabinsky read and opened the case.

Tom Quinn moved that the application is complete and has no regional impact. Seconded by Tom Grella.
Roll Call Vote: Nicole Crawford – aye; Bill Glenn – aye; Martha Chabinsky – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye, Tom Grella – aye, Tom Quinn – aye. 6-0-0.

John Ahearn, owner and applicant, explained that the existing fence is not in good shape. It was originally installed in the 1990’s. The proposal is for a similar style white cedar picket fence. A couple sections of the existing footprint are proposed to be removed, as they are no longer needed.

Doug Chabinsky stated that the proposed style is not on the Commission’s list of approved items. The 10” bottom rail, as proposed, is not acceptable. If the pickets went past the rail, or the rail was removed, that would be acceptable.

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Martha Chabinsky stated that the pickets should be in front of the 10" rail instead of behind. John Ahearn stated that the bottom board is currently on the same plane as the pickets. Martha Chabinsky stated that she believes the mass of the proposed 10" rail is too much.

Bill Glenn suggested reducing the height of the bottom 10" rail and eliminating the intermediate rail. John Ahearn stated that the current bottom rail sits below the pickets. He asked that the Commission sketch out what they would like to see.

Tom Quinn stated that, if the 10" bottom board was eliminated, the proposal should be fine.

Martha Chabinsky asked if the wider posts go above the top rail. John Ahearn stated that they do not. A line of pickets is seen down the fence.

Doug Chabinsky asked if the applicant would be okay with a straight flat picket fence and to remove the 10" board. Tom Quinn suggested that the Commission could also continue this item in order to find other examples of the proposed style around Town. Bill Glenn stated that a similar design to what is currently on the site, with a wider bottom rail and pickets sandwiched in-between, without an intermediate rail, should be acceptable. John Ahearn agreed to have the drawings amended with the changes to make the fence approvable.

FINDINGS:

1. Contributing property
2. Property is very visible in the Village
3. Modified fence proposal is compliant with the regulations
4. A replacement fence is needed, as the existing fence is falling down.

Doug Chabinsky moved to approve the proposal with the modification of removing the bottom rail and extending the pickets to make it a flat picket fence. Seconded by Tom Quinn.

Roll Call Vote: Nicole Crawford – aye; Bill Glenn – aye; Martha Chabinsky – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye, Tom Grella – aye, Tom Quinn – aye. 6-0-0.

3. **CASE #: PZ18637-022724 – John Bement (Owner & Applicant); 9 Courthouse Road, PIN #: 017-109-000 – Request for approval to remove leaky chimney cap on top of old law office.**

Doug Chabinsky read and opened the case.

Tom Quinn moved that the application is complete and has no regional impact. Seconded by Tom Grella.

Roll Call Vote: Nicole Crawford – aye; Bill Glenn – aye; Martha Chabinsky – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye, Tom Grella – aye, Tom Quinn – aye. 6-0-0.

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John Bement explained that the chimney is just a plywood box and is leaking. In 1916 the original chimney was on the property, but somewhere after the 1980's this was replaced with a plywood box looking chimney. He likes the look of the chimney and would like to consider options for it. The top has been capped over.

Tom Quinn asked if the cost to replace/repair the existing chimney would exceed the cost of reroofing the house. John Bement explained that the whole house was reroofed in 2015. He believes the cost to remove the chimney altogether and redo the roof in that area would be approximately \$3,000. He has not yet decided if he wants to remove the chimney but wants to do the best job for the most reasonable amount of money.

Doug Chabinsky stated that this was one of the defining features called out for the property on the National Register. Removing that would make the house look midcentury modern. John Bement stated that he is considering replacing it with something similar. Doug Chabinsky agreed with replacing it with proper shingling, and drainage underneath, instead of trying to repair the existing fake chimney.

Bill Glenn asked if the repair has been evaluated by a professional. John Bement stated that the removal has been evaluated. He is now considering patching the box and capping it with a watertight material. Bill Glenn asked if it has been determined where the water is entering. John Bement stated that there are a few areas that water is entering. There are cracks in the veneer and the concrete holding it on. He agreed that the house would look funny without the chimney box.

Tom Quinn suggested continuing this case in order to better evaluate the options.

In response to a question from John Bement, Doug Chabinsky stated that if the fix is a replacement in kind, John Bement does not need to come back before the Commission. John Bement asked about changing the top metal material to copper. Doug Chabinsky stated that copper and lead were used on chimneys historically, so a change to copper on the top would likely not be an issue. Doug Chabinsky stated that he believes the best option would be to remove and replace it with better materials that are sealed and have proper drainage.

John Bement stated that because he was leaning toward fixing the chimney box he would like to continue with consideration this evening rather than postponing discussion to a future meeting.

FINDINGS:

1. Contributing property
2. Property is highly visible in the Village
3. Listed on the National Register as a law office and house, late Georgian Federal. One story clapboard shallow hip roof, one chimney rear, two bay front facade door with transom light, one story wing garage, circa 1797.

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- 129 4. Chimney is a distinguishing feature on the property per the National Register and highly
130 visible from all angles in the public view
131

132 **Tom Quinn moved to deny the application to remove the existing chimney on the**
133 **property. Seconded by Martha Chabinsky.**

134 **Roll Call Vote: Nicole Crawford – aye; Bill Glenn – aye; Martha Chabinsky – aye;**
135 **Doug Chabinsky – aye, Tom Grella – aye, Tom Quinn – aye. 6-0-0.**
136

- 137 4. **CASE #: PZ18648-030424 – Christine & James Janson (Owners & Applicants);**
138 **88 Boston Post Road, PIN #: 017-058-000 – Request for approval to replace current**
139 **4-panel bay casement window with a 2-panel casement window.**
140

141 Doug Chabinsky read and opened the case.
142

143 *Doug Chabinsky and Martha Chabinsky recused themselves from this item. Bill Glenn sat as*
144 *Acting Chair.*
145

146 Bill Glenn explained that the case deals with replacement of an existing four-panel bay casement
147 window with a two-panel casement window as part of a bathroom remodeling. This is somewhat
148 obscured from public view.
149

150 **Tom Quinn moved to accept the application as complete and that there is no**
151 **regional impact. Seconded by Tom Grella.**

152 **Roll Call Vote: Nicole Crawford – aye; Bill Glenn – aye; Tom Grella – aye, Tom**
153 **Quinn – aye. 4-0-0.**
154

155 Christine Janson explained that work is proposed on the north side of the house which is fairly
156 obscured from the public view. As part of a bathroom renovation, the existing bay window in
157 this bathroom is not in good shape and proposed to be replaced with a two-panel casement
158 window.
159

160 Tom Quinn asked if the replacement window will be smaller than the existing window. Christine
161 Janson stated that the panels will be the same size, so it will be approximately half the size
162 overall. The window will be all wood inside and out. Tom Quinn asked where exactly the
163 window to be replaced is. Christine Janson stated that it is on the outside wall of the north side of
164 the house, to the left when facing the house. There are a number of similar casement windows
165 already in the house to the rear of the property.
166

167 In response to a question from Bill Glenn, Christine Janson stated that the opening in the wall for
168 the window will be reduced, as this is two panels instead of four. The outside area will be re-
169 clapboarded to match the existing wood siding.
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Tom Quinn stated that it did not appear that the window is particularly visible from the street at any time of year. Christine Janson agreed.

Doug Chabinsky, 89 Boston Post Road, stated that he lives across from the applicant and the windows on the north side of the property are well hidden. He asked if the opening would move toward the back of the house or stay where it is. Either way, making the window area smaller will make it less visible. Christine Janson stated that it will stay in the same location.

FINDINGS:

1. Contributing property
2. Listed as #54 on the National Register: Georgian, 2 1/2 story, narrow clapboards, pitched roof with center chimney, five bay front façade with center entrance, transom lights, heavy cornice, one story wing, early 19th century

Tom Quinn moved to approve CASE #: PZ18648-030424 – Christine & James Janson to replace current 4-panel bay casement window with a 2-panel casement window, with the condition that the work will include patching the exterior to match the existing architecture of the building. Seconded by Bill Glenn.

Roll Call Vote: Nicole Crawford – aye; Bill Glenn – aye; Tom Grella – aye, Tom Quinn – aye. 4-0-0.

OTHER BUSINESS:

2. Minutes: January 18, 2024; February 15, 2024

Tom Grella moved to approve the meeting minutes of January 18, 2024, as written. Seconded by Doug Chabinsky.

Roll Call Vote: Nicole Crawford – abstain; Bill Glenn – aye; Martha Chabinsky – abstain; Doug Chabinsky – aye, Tom Grella – aye, Tom Quinn – abstain. 3-0-3.

Tom Quinn moved to approve the meeting minutes of February 15, 2024, as written. Seconded by Doug Chabinsky.

Roll Call Vote: Nicole Crawford – abstain; Bill Glenn – abstain; Martha Chabinsky – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye, Tom Grella – aye, Tom Quinn – aye. 4-0-2.

Any other business to come before the Commission.

Two Seniors from Souhegan High School, Jenna Wright and Lizzie Benner, came before the Commission for a question-and-answer session for a class project. The Commission described the process by which the Historic District was created; the acceptance by the National Register; the expansion of the district in following years; Amherst is the only remaining village center with this character in New England; the village is unique but the regulations allow upgrades to property to make for comfortable living; the benefits of having an Historic District, including, attracting a lot of people to town, and providing a central focal point for town gatherings; the

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HDC works with applicants to come up with win/win decisions on projects; conceptual discussions are a great opportunity to discuss projects before applications are submitted; how future generations can advocate for preservation of houses, including, volunteering for the HDC, becoming involved in community events, watching for warrant articles on changes to zoning, recognizing that history is important, homes have character and were built with extreme craftsmanship without any power tools or engineered wood, maintaining heritage gives a sense of identity as a person, community and country; what happens if someone wants to renovate a property, the HDC only governs the exterior of the property, the interior could be gutted, although it is worth preserving the craftsmanship and materials; Commissioners described their own experiences with renovation projects, and Tom Grella offered the seniors a tour of the attic in the Town Hall.

Doug Chabinsky asked if the consultant is under contract yet for the design guidelines. Nic Strong stated that the contract has been reviewed by the Town attorney and is now being reviewed by the Town insurance company. Once that is complete, it will be signed and underway.

**At 8:06 p.m., Tom Grella moved to adjourn. Doug Chabinsky seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote: Nicole Crawford – aye; Bill Glenn – aye; Martha Chabinsky – aye;
Doug Chabinsky – aye, Tom Grella – aye, Tom Quinn – aye. 6-0-0.**

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude