

TOWN OF AMHERST
Historic District Commission Meeting

December 15, 2022

APPROVED

In attendance: Doug Chabinsky – Acting Chair, Tom Quinn - Planning Board Ex-Officio, Martha Chabinsky (remote), Tom Grella – Board of Selectmen Ex-Officio, Nicole Crawford. Staff present: Nic Strong, Community Development Director; Kristan Patenaude, Recording Secretary (remote)

Doug Chabinsky, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He introduced all members present.

Nicole Crawford sat for Chris Buchanan.

PUBLIC HEARING(S)

- 1. CASE #: PZ16552-103122 – Shauna & Daniel Rooksberry (Owners & Applicants); 164 Amherst Street, PIN #: 018-003-000 – Request for approval to replace siding. Continued from November 17, 2022.**

Doug Chabinsky read and opened the hearing. He noted that this hearing was tabled last month by the Commission. The Commission previously accepted the application as complete and found that it had no regional impact.

**Tom Quinn moved to untable this hearing. Seconded by Tom Grella.
Vote: 5-0-0; motion approved unanimously.**

Shauna Rooksberry explained that she is proposing to move forward with a textured Hardie board siding at this time, as suggested by the Commission. She has chosen a textured finish, to resemble wood siding more closely, but is also amenable to a flat texture. This is proposed to have a 4” exposure, to match the existing vinyl siding.

Tom Quinn stated that, even though this is technically a synthetic material, it will be an upgrade from the existing vinyl siding, which is completely disallowed by the regulations. As this is a non-contributing property, this seems like a reasonable proposal.

Doug Chabinsky noted that most cedar siding has a smooth texture and asked which texture the Commission would like to see for this Hardie board. He stated that he would likely prefer a smooth texture. Doug Chabinsky held up the sample for Martha Chabinsky to see on the camera. Tom Quinn noted that the grain may be more pronounced if there is a high sheen to the product. Shauna Rooksberry stated that there are a number of options, but she had thought the Commission would prefer the rougher texture. Martha Chabinsky stated that she prefers the smooth finish, especially with the sheen. Tom Grella agreed. Tom Quinn and Nicole Crawford stated that they were indifferent to the texture.

Shauna Rooksberry stated that there may have been a miscommunication with her contractor, with the textured Hardie board already ordered. She stated that she would call her contractor to see if this is the case. She asked if she would need to come back before the Commission if a

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change needs to be made, as she sees this as more of a preference of the Commissioners. Martha Chabinsky noted that the product should not have been ordered, prior to approval. Doug Chabinsky asked the applicant to determine if the product has already been ordered and stated that she should let Nic Strong know and they would take it from there.

Shauna Rooksberry texted her contractor and stated that her contractor said that he had only ordered the trim so far. Either texture of the actual siding can now be ordered. Doug Chabinsky stated that the Commission seems to prefer the smooth texture.

In response to a question from Shauna Rooksberry regarding garage door material, Doug Chabinsky stated that the Commission would generally prefer a steel door with wood flat.

Shauna Rooksberry noted that the portico has been removed from the plan.

FINDINGS:

- 1. Non-contributing property**
- 2. Proposed siding material eliminates a prohibited material and replaces it with a material that will improve the historic situation of the property**
- 3. Proposed work is visible from the public right of way**

Tom Quinn moved to approve CASE #: PZ16552-103122, for Shauna & Daniel Rooksberry to replace the siding with smooth Hardie plank, with changes to the application that there be no portico and that the siding have a 4" reveal. Seconded by Tom Grella.

Roll Call Vote: Martha Chabinsky – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye; Tom Grella – aye; Tom Quinn – aye; and Nicole Crawford – aye. 5-0-0; motion approved unanimously.

- 2. CASE #: PZ16553-103122 – Ashley Stiles (Owner & Applicant); 27 Middle Street, PIN #: 017-105-000 – Request for approval to replace all siding on main part of house with proposed Color HPX siding. *Continued from November 17, 2022.***

Doug Chabinsky read and opened the case.

Tom Grella moved that the application is complete. Seconded by Tom Quinn.

Roll Call Vote: Martha Chabinsky – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye; Tom Grella – aye; Tom Quinn – aye; and Nicole Crawford – aye. 5-0-0; motion approved unanimously.

Doug Chabinsky moved no regional impact. Seconded by Tom Quinn.

Roll Call Vote: Martha Chabinsky – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye; Tom Grella – aye; Tom Quinn – aye; and Nicole Crawford – aye. 5-0-0; motion approved unanimously.

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Doug Chabinsky held up the sample of the proposed siding to the camera so that Martha Chabinsky could see it.

Doug Chabinsky asked if the existing siding is original to the house. Ashley Stiles stated that the siding does appear to be quite old, but she cannot be sure if it is original to the structure. Doug Chabinsky asked why the applicant is proposing a manufactured siding, instead of cedar siding. Ashley Stiles stated that her father is a real estate developer in Nashua and has used this type of siding on his historic home in northern NH. This allowed the structure to keep its historic character while having a low maintenance quality. This siding is a cedar wood product which is adhered and primed to make for easier maintenance. She stated that she does not believe this is a synthetic material. Doug Chabinsky disagreed.

Tom Quinn stated that the regulations are fairly clear that, especially for contributing properties, original materials should be maintained or restored. He asked what the applicant's reasoning is for requesting to stray from this. Ashley Stiles stated that the siding is badly damaged in certain areas. Peter Dolloff, Ashley Stiles' father, stated that this siding was primarily being proposed for ease of maintenance. This product feels and looks like wood. He stated that he believes there will likely be many issues in terms of framing and the structure once work begins on the house. The proposal is to reside the house in a more maintenance-free material, 1-2 sides per year, over the next several years.

Doug Chabinsky noted that, once an approval is granted, applicants must complete the approved work within two years.

Tom Quinn noted that, if a material is deemed not repairable, it is supposed to be replaced with a like material. He is not sure if the proposed material would qualify as a like material. Given the prominent nature of this house, it is important that it follows the regulations as closely as possible. Martha Chabinsky stated that the Commission's responsibility is to follow the regulations.

Tom Grella stated that he would rather see regular wood siding. The proposed material has a certain texture, which is not appropriate to match the existing siding. Peter Dolloff stated that the literature on the proposed material states that it mimics cedar siding. He explained that the existing siding contains some cedar siding, some vinyl siding, and is generally a hodgepodge of material types.

Ashley Stiles stated that she is not married to the proposed material. She understands that it is important to use materials that maintain the historic character of a house. She believes it is important to replace the siding on this house and was trying to do so with a lower maintenance material.

Doug Chabinsky noted that this type of material may have been appropriate for a less visible, non-contributing property. Due to this property being a contributing property and one of more prominence, a like material is more appropriate.

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In response to a question from Peter Doloff, Doug Chabinsky stated that the siding can be any color, as the Commission does not vet based on color. The Commission rules on elements such as massing and architectural style.

Tom Quinn noted that, per the regulations, original materials should be repaired and replaced as a last resort. He noted that some of the so-called oddities of the house, such as the boarded up double door area, will be lost if the siding is completely replaced, instead of repaired. Doug Chabinsky stated that these are not necessarily architectural details of the structure and do not need to be maintained.

FINDINGS:

- 1. Highly visible property from two streets**
- 2. Wood siding will be appropriate and match existing materials**
- 3. Color will be at the owner's choosing**
- 4. Existing exposure varies from 2 ¾" - 4 ½' and new siding will fit in this range**

Tom Grella moved to approve CASE #: PZ16553-103122 for Ashley Stiles to replace the siding, with changes to the application that the material be cedar clapboards.

Seconded by Martha Chabinsky.

Roll Call Vote: Martha Chabinsky – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye; Tom Grella – aye; Tom Quinn – nay; and Nicole Crawford – aye. 4-1-0; motion approved.

Shauna Rooksberry re-entered the meeting room and noted that she had additional information to relay to the Commission. Doug Chabinsky indicated that she could speak with the Commission after the next case.

- 3. CASE #: PZ16670-112922 – Timothy & Diane Lolatte (Owners & Applicants); 131 Amherst Street, PIN #: 005-020-000 – Request for approval to install a 20KW Kohler Standby Generator and a 325 gallon above ground propane tank.**

Doug Chabinsky read and opened the case.

Tom Grella moved that the application is complete. Seconded by Tom Quinn.

Roll Call Vote: Martha Chabinsky – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye; Tom Grella – aye; Tom Quinn – aye; and Nicole Crawford – aye. 5-0-0; motion approved unanimously.

Tom Quinn moved no regional impact. Seconded by Tom Grella.

Roll Call Vote: Martha Chabinsky – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye; Tom Grella – aye; Tom Quinn – aye; and Nicole Crawford – aye. 5-0-0; motion approved unanimously.

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Timothy Lolatte explained that, during an inspection of the property in October, it was determined that the electrical panels and backup breaker for the generator are probably close to 40 years old. Three vendors involved with the project noted that these were likely unsafe. He noted that neither the vendors, nor his real estate agent, mentioned that this was a property in the Historic District. This was picked up once the Town inspections for the work began. He stated that the location of the generator is approximately 286' from the road. It is masked on one side by a stonewall and a bank on the other. He also plans to plant a few lilac trees to shield the generator.

Timothy Lolatte explained that an underground propane tank is not possible on this property, due to the way the water flows. Thus, an above ground tank was installed. This will likely be shielded by fir trees.

Tom Quinn stated that the proposed work is not visible from a public way and, as this is a non-contributing property, the proposal seems reasonable.

Timothy Lolatte noted that two of the three vendors who visited the property suggested the location for the generator.

FINDINGS:

- 1. Non-contributing property**
- 2. Improvements sit approximately 300' from the road and are not visible from any direction**
- 3. Plantings are proposed around the improvements, as required**

Tom Quinn moved to approve CASE #: PZ16670-112922 for Timothy & Diane Lolatte for an after the fact approval to install a 20KW Kohler Standby Generator and a 325 gallon above ground propane tank. Seconded by Doug Chabinsky. Roll Call Vote: Martha Chabinsky – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye; Tom Grella – aye; Tom Quinn – aye; and Nicole Crawford – aye. 5-0-0; motion approved unanimously.

Shauna Rooksberry addressed the Commission. She explained that, in fact, her contractor has already ordered the textured Hardie plank siding. This can be exchanged for the smooth siding, but this is a special product with a lead time of approximately 12-16 weeks. The current plan is to have the old siding removed from the house this upcoming Monday.

Doug Chabinsky noted that only certain Commissioners seemed concerned with the siding texture.

In response to a question from Doug Chabinsky, Nic Strong explained that the Commission would need to vote to reopen the hearing and reconsider the previous motion of approval.

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Doug Chabinsky moved to reopen CASE #: PZ16552-103122 for Shauna & Daniel Rooksberry. Seconded by Tom Grella.

Roll Call Vote: Martha Chabinsky – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye; Tom Grella – aye; Tom Quinn – aye; and Nicole Crawford – aye. 5-0-0; motion approved unanimously.

Shauna Rooksberry stated that she believes any texture of siding will be an improvement over what currently exists. Martha Chabinsky stated that she does not necessarily believe this to be true. Shauna Rooksberry stated that some of the siding is stained and broken. Doug Chabinsky stated that he agreed with the applicant that this will be an improvement over the existing siding.

Tom Quinn stated that he believes, if the Commission voted against this, and the siding remained vinyl, it would be very difficult to get new siding to match the existing siding.

Shauna Rooksberry noted that traffic on this road travels very quickly and no one will notice the siding material. Tom Quinn agreed that there will not be great visibility from the road.

Tom Quinn moved to amend the previous decision for CASE #: PZ16552-103122 for Shauna & Daniel Rooksberry, to change from Hardie board siding with a smooth finish, to a cedar-textured finish. Seconded by Tom Grella.

Roll Call Vote: Martha Chabinsky – nay; Doug Chabinsky – aye; Tom Grella – aye; Tom Quinn – aye; and Nicole Crawford – aye. 4-1-0; motion approved.

Doug Chabinsky noted that there is a 20-day appeal period, during which time anyone can appeal the Commission's decision, starting from the date of approval. Beginning work within this time period, is at the applicant's own risk.

OTHER BUSINESS:

4. Minutes: November 17, 2022

Tom Grella moved to accept the meeting minutes of November 17, 2022, as amended [Line 100-101: change "Doug Chabinsky's" to "her"]. Seconded by Tom Quinn.

Roll Call Vote: Martha Chabinsky – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye; Tom Grella – aye; Tom Quinn – aye; and Nicole Crawford – aye. 5-0-0; motion approved unanimously.

5. Site Walk Discussion for January

Doug Chabinsky stated that he would like to perform site walks on the Saturday prior to an upcoming meeting, during daylight hours.

6. Continued Discussion on HDC process

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Nic Strong explained that she believes this has been a great exercise for the Commission. She explained that she reviewed the regulations in terms of how an applicant reading these would know what they have to provide to the Commission to get their application approved. There are some questions that she has from that perspective. She stated that she believes next year the Commission may want to consider reviewing the regulations to make sure there are not conflicts between them and the section in the Zoning Ordinance which authorizes the Historic District. There are also Rules of Procedure mixed in with the regulations which should be separated into a standalone document. There are some guidelines currently mixed in with the regulations. She suggested that she circulate her comments and questions to the Commission prior to its next meeting.

Doug Chabinsky stated that he believes the Commission also needs to update its application and checklist to define how items are tied to the regulations. Nic Strong noted that the checklist is never a substitute for the detail of the regulations. Doug Chabinsky suggested that the beginning of each section could define the information or documentation required by the Commission to determine an application's adherence or compliance to the regulations.

7. Any other business

Nic Strong stated that she spoke with the Division of Historical Resources regarding the Commission's grant, and it was indicated that the group has until FY24 to complete the project. It was also suggested that she reach out to the Commission's preferred consultant to discuss phasing of the project. She will also need to determine if the Commission needs to follow the Town's RFP process.

Doug Chabinsky agreed that the Commission needs to determine the proposed scope of work for the project, as that will likely have an impact on the cost. The Commission may want the consultant to consider the significance of properties in the District and potential waivers for less significant properties. The Commission may also want to consider the houses identified as being historically significant in the 2019 report, but which are still not listed on the Register.

**Tom Grella moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:06pm. Seconded by Tom Quinn.
Roll Call Vote: Martha Chabinsky – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye; Tom Grella – aye;
Tom Quinn – aye; and Nicole Crawford – aye. 5-0-0; motion approved
unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude

Minutes approved: January 19, 2023