

TOWN OF AMHERST
Historic District Commission

June 15, 2023

APPROVED

In attendance: Doug Chabinsky – Acting Chair, Martha Chabinsky (remote), Tom Grella – Board of Selectmen Ex-Officio, Tom Quinn, Chris Buchanan, Nicole Crawford (remote) – alternate, and Bill Glenn - alternate
Staff present: Kristan Patenaude, Recording Secretary (remote)

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

Public Hearing on the adoption of amendments to the Historic District Commission Regulations. (See separate notice.) *Continued from May 18, 2023*

Doug Chabinsky explained that some of the changes made by Town Counsel allowed for the regulation language to match the RSAs. Maps of the Historic District were also added to the regulations.

Chris Buchanan stated that a lot of progress has been made to the regulations. There may likely still be flaws in the document, but he suggested moving forward with the draft at this time.

Doug Chabinsky stated that he will be recommending a maximum of a two-year review period for the regulations, sooner if need be. There are currently no guidelines in the regulations for solar use. This is being researched and may be added in at a future time.

There were no public comments at this time.

Doug Chabinsky closed the public hearing.

Tom Quinn moved to approve the regulations, as submitted. Seconded by Chris Buchanan.

Roll Call Vote: Doug Chabinsky – aye, Chris Buchanan – aye, Martha Chabinsky - aye, Tom Grella – aye, and Tom Quinn – aye; Motion carried 5-0-0.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. **CASE #: PZ17408-053123 – Matthew Pierson (Owner & Applicant); 6 Sunset Road, PIN #: 017-050-000** – Request for approval to install a backup generator adjacent to the house and a new replacement 7'x9' garage door.

Doug Chabinsky moved to that there is no regional impact, and the application is complete. Seconded by Chris Buchanan.

Roll Call Vote: Doug Chabinsky – aye, Chris Buchanan – aye, Martha Chabinsky - aye, Tom Grella – aye, and Tom Quinn – aye; Motion carried 5-0-0.

Matthew Pierson explained that the generator was installed two years ago. He apologized and noted that he did not realize this required approval of the Commission. He explained that he is the owner of the property, but his mother resides at this property.

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Doug Chabinsky stated that the proposal is to replace an old and rotting garage door with a steel door, which is appropriate. The plantings proposed to shield the generator are also appropriate and necessary. While not a contributing property, the style of the proposed windows at the top of the garage have a curved line instead of being straight, which is not in keeping with the style of the property. He would like for these windows to have straight lines and match other lights in the District. He would like proposal to mimic the existing structure. He suggested also not moving forward with the proposed decorative hardware.

Doug Chabinsky moved to accept the application with straight windows across and no arches, no faux hardware on the door, a steel garage door, and plantings around the generator as proposed. Seconded by Tom Quinn.

Roll Call Vote: Doug Chabinsky – aye, Chris Buchanan – aye, Martha Chabinsky - aye, Tom Grella – aye, and Tom Quinn – aye; Motion carried 5-0-0.

Doug Chabinsky noted that there is a 30-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.

2. **CASE #: PZ17409-053123 – William Glenn & William Charmak (Owners & Applicants); 154 Amherst Street, PIN #: 017-116-000** – Request for approval to install a red cedar arbor in the west courtyard set upon four embedded concrete masonry units.

Tom Quinn moved to that there is no regional impact, and the application is complete. Seconded by Chris Buchanan.

Roll Call Vote: Doug Chabinsky – aye, Chris Buchanan – aye, Martha Chabinsky - aye, Tom Grella – aye, and Tom Quinn – aye; Motion carried 5-0-0.

Bill Glenn, 154 Amherst Street, explained that this request is being made as the property contains an existing wisteria plant that grows uncontrollably. The proposal is to install a trellis to train the wisteria to grow on it and create a canopy to sit under. This will also allow for a bit more privacy.

There were no comments or questions from the Commission.

Chris Buchanan moved to accept the application as submitted. Seconded by Tom Quinn.

Roll Call Vote: Doug Chabinsky – aye, Chris Buchanan – aye, Martha Chabinsky - aye, Tom Grella – aye, and Tom Quinn – aye; Motion carried 5-0-0.

3. **CASE #: PZ17410-053123 – Daniel & Leslie Lynch (Owners & Applicants); 9 Carriage Road, PIN #: 017-020-000** – Request for approval to replace existing front fence with a new painted white cedar fence.

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Chris Buchanan moved to that there is no regional impact, and the application is complete. Seconded by Tom Quinn.

Roll Call Vote: Doug Chabinsky – aye, Chris Buchanan – aye, Martha Chabinsky - aye, Tom Grella – aye, and Tom Quinn – aye; Motion carried 5-0-0.

Dave Hanlon, builder for the project and representing the owners, explained that in January 2021 a fence and aggregate was approved but more information was requested to complete the work. An application with details for the fence and aggregate was thus submitted.

Chris Buchanan stated that he found the materials submitted to be thorough and informative.

Doug Chabinsky stated that the proposed materials are appropriate. The style also appears to be appropriate and is similar to a nearby fence. The proposed aggregate material appears appropriate. He stated that he approves the additional details presented.

Chris Buchanan moved to accept the application as submitted. Seconded by Tom Quinn.

Roll Call Vote: Doug Chabinsky – aye, Chris Buchanan – aye, Martha Chabinsky - aye, Tom Grella – aye, and Tom Quinn – aye; Motion carried 5-0-0.

In response to a question from Doug Chabinsky, Dave Hanlon stated that he expects the project to be completed within a month or so. The driveway needs a month to cure before the pea stone can be laid.

OTHER BUSINESS:

1. LED lighting proposal

Bill Stoughton, Board of Selectmen, addressed the Commission. He explained that there is a Town-wide project commencing in the next several weeks to replace all of the streetlights that the Town pays for. This will remove the old, high pressure sodium lights and replace them with LED lights. This will not only save the Town considerable amounts of money, but also cast more light down to the ground, allowing for less glare. These lights are considered dark sky compatible, meaning that none of the light from them goes directly up. This will help people to be able to see the stars at night. He noted that the Commission is interested in appearance issues and asked to show some example pictures of fixtures.

DPW Director Eric Slosek explained that the objectives for this project are energy savings, to improve safety, and to reduce environmental impacts. This project is for the conversion of all non-metered, municipal lighting to LED fixtures. This mainly deals with streetlights, although there is also one floodlight that shines on the Congregational Church steeple. Regarding the proposed energy savings, the currently estimated savings from this project to the Town is

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\$14,409 annually. This is using current rates, but savings are expected to grow over time. The project has approximately a 3.07-year payback. Regarding improving safety, these LEDs allow for a more efficient light distribution. The LEDs focus and direct light downward to where it is needed, without illuminating outwards. The existing high pressure sodium lights distribute light outwards in all directions, whereas the proposed optical lenses focus the light down. The LED lights have some adjustability and can be angled up to 5 degrees. These LEDs are dark sky compliant, so there is no upward lighting at all. The lights themselves will be crisper and cooler in color, the existing lights have more of an orange glow. Additionally, the LED lights reduce glare. The existing lights have a degree of glare that can be seen when driving down the street. The optical lenses of the LEDs focus the beam and reduce the glare considerably. Regarding the reduced environmental impact, the vendor installing these lights has stated that the CO2 abatement from this project alone is 28.2 tons annually of CO2.

Eric Slosek stated that the existing lights are a high-pressure sodium light. There are 111 of these existing lights in Town. These are predominantly 95-Watt lights, especially in the Village District. The brightness, of these 95-Watt high pressure sodium lights, is 5000 lumens. The proposed LED replacement lights are manufactured by the vendor that they are being purchased from and installed by. These are direct replacements for the 95-Watt lights but are only 18 Watts themselves. These will require less energy and result in crisper, cooler, and more focused lighting. As the light will be directed exactly where it is needed, it will almost become more visible and brighter.

Eric Slosek explained that the plan includes reusing existing equipment, including the arm and wiring. The only thing that will change on the pole is the light fixture itself. He explained that an audit of the streetlight infrastructure in Town was conducted. A map shows the existing 95-Watt fixtures that will be replaced with the 18-Watt LED fixtures. There is one existing streetlight in the area of the Country Mansion that will be replaced with a 50-Watt LED light. This is a challenging location due to the sidepath and an 8' wide crosswalk across Main Street to the Country Mansion. This was recently discussed at a Traffic Safety Committee meeting regarding concerns of safety at the intersection. Approximately two years ago, a large pine tree across the street from Country Mansion took down the light pole in that location and Eversource replaced the pole but did not replace the light. There are also some private lights, not owned by the Town, shown on the map, which will not be replaced.

Eric Slosek explained that there are 42 existing lights in total in the Village. The audit provided detail regarding the Town's lighting infrastructure. The vendor that will be completing this work is Affinity LED. This is a Dover, New Hampshire based company. They manufacture their own products and have a military/veteran workforce. Other local Affinity conversion projects include Milford and Mont Vernon. Other towns were contacted as references and spoke of these conversions as a great success and expressed overall satisfaction with the work. Product delivery is anticipated next week, and product installation will take approximately three days. The work will commence sometime in July.

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Chris Buchanan stated that in 2019 there was a discussion regarding the DPW acquiring four post lanterns to install in the Village. This was approved both by the Commission and the Board of Selectmen. The purpose of those lights was more aesthetic than this project. It was also to help with lighting from the Town Hall across the Green. He asked the status of this item. Eric Slosek stated that he remembers hearing of this item from the previous DPW Director. Bill Stoughton stated that, from an employee standpoint, people currently walk along not well illuminated paths to their cars. The proposed LED lighting should help with this a bit. If, after some amount of time, additional path lighting needs to be addressed and all associated parties agree, he would be happy to consider this item with the Board of Selectmen again.

Doug Chabinsky asked the angle of the light cone for the proposed LED lights. Eric Slosek explained that these lights have the capability of broadcasting light a certain distance in either direction, as well as a bit in front and behind. The purpose is to illuminate the road and intersections clearly. Bill Stoughton agreed that, by design, this creates an oval footprint on the ground. The intention is to illuminate the intersection and crosswalks. Each installation will be discussed as to exactly what should be lit and how to angle the LEDs to best make this happen.

Eric Slosek explained that anyone can drive to Milford, Mont Vernon, or the other towns that have already been converted to see the difference. He explained that he has a streetlight directly outside his house in Mont Vernon. The older lights used to shine in his window, but the LED conversion allows him to see better outside while shining more downward.

Tom Grella asked about ownership of the arm. Eric Slosek explained that the Town will own from the connection of the mast arm to the fixture. The connection to the pole is owned by Eversource.

Tom Grella asked about the longevity of the LEDs. Eric Slosek explained that Affinity has installed these lights in 54 other towns in NH, and the rate of failure is less than 1%. Public Works will purchase a few extra lights that can be used for replacements if needed. These can be replaced by Eversource, Affinity, or other companies.

Tom Grella asked if the existing connection will be changed. Eric Slosek explained that the lights will now be hardwired. The new connectors are a quick-disconnect that does not require exposure to electric currents.

The Commission thanked Bill Stoughton and Eric Slosek for the presentation.

2. Minutes: May 18, 2023; May 30, 2023, work session

**Tom Grella moved to approve the meeting minutes of May 18, 2023, as presented.
Seconded by Tom Quinn.**

Roll Call Vote: Doug Chabinsky – aye, Chris Buchanan – abstain, Martha Chabinsky - aye, Tom Grella – aye, and Tom Quinn – aye; Motion carried 4-0-1.

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Doug Chabinsky moved to approve the meeting minutes of May 30, 2023, as presented. Seconded by Tom Quinn.

Roll Call Vote: Doug Chabinsky – aye, Chris Buchanan – abstain, Martha Chabinsky – aye, Tom Grella – aye, and Tom Quinn – abstain; Motion carried 3-0-2.

3. Any other business:

Doug Chabinsky stated that the Commission should begin to update its application to tie into the approved regulations. The Commission also needs to review its Rules of Procedure as a separate document. The application needs to be clear regarding which sections of the regulations are applicable.

Doug Chabinsky stated that, with the new regulations in place, the Commission needs to consider houses with mechanical equipment, specifically, that is not screened. The regulations state that all mechanicals need to be screened from public view and Town Counsel noted that, if an item is in the regulations, the Commission can request that the owners comply. The Commission should come up with a list of items it feels need to be addressed and then work with the Building Inspector to insure compliance. Chris Buchanan noted that the first step will likely be a politely worded letter, requesting compliance. This could occur while discussing additional steps. Doug Chabinsky stated that he would like the other steps to be in place in case there are questions when the initial letters are sent out.

Martha Chabinsky noted that there are also mailbox compliance issues in the District to address.

Doug Chabinsky explained that, as the Town is undergoing a Village Streets study, it will be important to consider items that maintain the Village character and address any blatant items within the public view.

Bill Glenn asked how a generator can be treated when it has a connection. Doug Chabinsky stated that portable generators do not count. The regulations deal with permanent installations.

Tom Grella stated that there needs to be a representative from this Commission on the newly formed Village Streets subcommittee. Doug Chabinsky noted that he already volunteered for this item as he has a vested interest in the topic.

Bill Glenn noted that there is an Administration portion of the regulations that mentions a pre-meeting with the Commission when considering starting a project, prior to a formal application. Doug Chabinsky noted that these meetings are placed on the agenda and allow for discussion with residents prior to an application. This type of meeting has had great success in the past, allowing for a smoother process for applicants. Tom Quinn noted that this is similar to a non-binding design review process that the Planning Board carries out.

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259 **Tom Grella moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:00pm. Seconded by Tom Quinn.**
260 **Roll Call Vote: Doug Chabinsky – aye, Chris Buchanan – aye, Martha Chabinsky -**
261 **aye, Tom Grella – aye, and Tom Quinn – aye; Motion carried 5-0-0.**
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263 Respectfully submitted,
264 Kristan Patenaude

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266 Minutes approved: July 20, 2023