

TOWN OF AMHERST
Historic District Commission

November 21, 2019

APPROVED-AMENDED

In attendance: Jamie Ramsay- Chair, Doug Chabinsky, Chris Hall, Chris Buchanan and Bill Rapf (Alternate).

Staff present: Nic Strong – Community Development Director, Kristan Patenaude – Minute Taker.

Jamie Ramsay called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm. He introduced the Commissioners.

OLD BUSINESS:

- 1. CASE #: PZ11392-053119 – Carol & John Bennett (Owners & Applicants) – 6 Main Street, PIN #: 017-084-000 – Request for approval to replace vertical board siding on side of barn with clapboard & replace existing rotted shutters. Applicant requested to withdraw the application on 10/25/19.**

**Chris Buchanan moved to untable the case. Chris Hall seconded.
All in favor.**

**Chris Hall moved to grant the withdrawal of the application, without prejudice.
Chris Buchanan seconded.
All in favor.**

NEW BUSINESS:

- 2. CASE #: PZ11957-103019 – Gerard & Maureen Zimmer (Owners & Applicants) – 6 Davis Lane, PIN #: 005-096-002 – Request for approval to construct a 14’x20’ storage shed.**

Present: Gerard Zimmer (Owner & Applicant)

Gerard Zimmer stated that the proposal is in hopes of moving items to the storage shed in order to use the existing garage for cars. He worked with the nearest neighbor to determine the best location in the backyard for the shed. The neighbor had no objections to the project. The proposed shed will be from Reeds Ferry, the Colonial design.

Bill Rapf agreed that the property’s backyard is very large and the shed will be far from anything. This is a modest, non-contributing house and he doesn’t believe the proposed shed will be distracting at all.

Chris Hall noted that the Commission is not in receipt of some details, including the number of windows, doors and specifications.

In response to a question from Chris Hall, Gerard Zimmer stated that the proposed shed will be as shown in the pictures, but without shutters or a cupola. He also stated that the doors and

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windows will be as shown in the picture, but that he is open to whatever type of siding the Commission recommends.

In response to a question from Chris Hall, Gerard Zimmer stated that there will be a base of crushed stone under the shed but that the structure will not be raised up at all.

FINDINGS:

1. Non-contributing property, #51 on the National Register
2. Proposed structure will have slight visibility from the public view.
3. Proposed shed is similar to the shed next door, and thus not out of place in the neighborhood.
4. Proposed size of the shed, 14'x20' is not overpowering to the property.

Jamie Ramsay noted, initialed and dated on the application that the proposed shed will have cedar clapboard siding and that the cupola in the picture will not be on the shed.

**Chris Hall moved to approve the application as amended. Bill Rapf seconded.
All in favor.**

Jamie Ramsay explained to the applicant how the 30-day appeal process works, in case the Historic District Commission's decision was contested by an abutter or other interested party.

- 3. CASE #: PZ11955-103019 – Christina Ferrari & Timothy Yarnall (Owners & Applicants) – 5 School Street, PIN #: 017-080-000 – Request for approval to replace wood fencing, deteriorating woodwork on front porch, replacement of columns, flashing on porch roof & footings, remove and replace gutters and downspouts.**

Present: Christina Ferrari (Owner & Applicant) & Greg Mattison, Mattison Contracting, LLC

Christina Ferrari explained that this proposal is identical to one presented to and approved by the Commission in September 2017. Due to a change in contractor on the project, the work was not initiated and the approval has since lapsed.

In response to a question from Jamie Ramsay, Christina Ferrari explained that there is no change to the intent of the originally submitted proposal. The proposal looks to replace most items in kind. The fence will need to be redone, but in the same style.

In response to a question from Doug Chabinsky, Christina Ferrari agreed that the major change between the two applications, is that this one includes a fence.

Greg Mattison, general contractor, stated that he plans to utilize all of the existing steel rods from the fence, as they are German rods. Mahogany may be used for the fence. The decking will be

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recreated with Douglas Fir tongue and groove decking, in order to replace it with historically correct materials.

Will Ludt, 3 School Street, stated that he is a next door neighbor to the project, and appreciates that the applicant will be keeping the curve to the fence. He believes it to be an iconic fence in town.

Doug Chabinsky requested that a full list of the materials to be used be submitted. Greg Mattison agreed and stated that he would have the list to the Commission by the first week in December.

In response to a question from Jamie Ramsay, Christina Ferrari stated that she would prefer the deck facing to be square-shaped.

The Commission reviewed the findings as referenced from the approved minutes of September 21, 2017, as follows:

FINDINGS:

1. House is on the National Registry, Lot #80
2. House is a Contributing Property
3. Proposed construction is highly visible
4. Proposed construction materials are all wood, or consistent with current materials

**Doug Chabinsky moved to accept the application, with the amendment of receiving a list of materials after the holiday. Chris Hall seconded.
All in favor.**

Jamie Ramsay explained to the applicant how the 30-day appeal process works, in case the Historic District Commission's decision was contested by an abutter or other interested party.

- 4. CASE #: PZ11956-103019 – Thomas Stantial & Melissa Gallery (Owners & Applicants) – 5 Foundry Street, PIN#: 017-040-000 – Request for approval to install two high velocity HVAC systems to be located on the left side of the house – one to be located behind the house and the other to be located on the left side of the house.**

Present: Thomas Stantial & Melissa Gallery (Owners & Applicants)

Thomas Stantial explained that they just closed on the house on November 1st. They have renovated three historic homes in the past. This property has forced hot water and baseboard heaters. They would like to correct these items, as they are not historically accurate. They would also like for the home to have central air conditioning. They are proposing two high velocity HVAC units, one to be located behind the garage and one mid-way on the left side of the house. They hope to re-landscape the property in the spring, and will work to conceal both units at that time.

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Chris Hall noted that the unit to the side of the house appears quite close to the neighbor.
Thomas Stantial explained that these are the quietest units that can be purchased.

Chris Buchanan noted that, per Historic District Commission Regulations - Article 7, Section 8.1, D: "The visual impact of ... utility structures and equipment shall be minimized." In the past, the Commission has asked others to minimize the appearance of such structures with shrubs that will obscure them year-round.

Matt Longo, 7 Foundry Street, stated that he is the nearest neighbor and has concerns regarding the proposal. He is concerned because the property lines are not exactly known and he is worried about some of the landscaping possibly crossing onto his property. He also has concerns about the aesthetics of the house in regards to the unit on the side of the house. Finally, he is worried about the possible noise from the unit. He is opposed to the proposal in its current suggested location.

Thomas Stantial stated that they would prefer to have both units at the back of the house, but the HVAC company stated that running copper pipe from the front of the house all the way to the back would not be the best idea.

Jamie Ramsay stated that the abutter's property line is to be respected.

Chris Hall and Matt Longo took time to review the application as presented.

Chris Hall explained that the applicant will buffer the sound and look of the unit in any number of ways, hopefully with as natural of a look as possible. Matt Longo stated that this is a reasonable compromise.

FINDINGS:

1. Contributing property, #40 on the National Register
2. Property is in a very prominent location and is highly visible
3. Per Article 7, Section 8.1, D this does not comply visually, but to help make it comply, the applicant has agreed to put some sort of shrubbery around it to keep the sound in, make it less visible from the street and from the neighbor's property.

Thomas Stantial agreed that they will get the neighbor's approval before deciding on what to buffer the side unit with.

**Chris Buchanan moved to accept the application as submitted, with the inclusion of landscaping to obscure the utilities year-round. Doug Chabinsky seconded.
All in favor.**

Jamie Ramsay explained to the applicant how the 30-day appeal process works, in case the Historic District Commission's decision was contested by an abutter or other interested party.

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5. CASE #: PZ11968-103119 – Brendan & Katherine Farrell (Owners & Applicants) – 84 Boston Post Road, PIN #: 017-057-000 – Request for approval to replace existing fence in front of house and repair rotted siding.

Present: Brendan Farrell (Owner & Applicant)

Brendan Farrell explained that he is proposing to replace the fence almost exactly as it is. It will be the same color and same architecturally.

Chris Hall noted that the pictures submitted appear to show a Gregorian style fence. This is not allowed for in the regulations. The regulations state that simple picket fences are allowed, but not gothic style pickets.

Brendan Farrell agreed that the simple picket style is the type of fence that he will put up. The Commission agreed that this is a replacement in kind.

In response to a question to a question from Chris Hall, Brendan Farrell explained that the rotting siding areas will be replaced in kind with the same material and paint color. The Commission agreed that this is also a replacement in kind.

Due to both of the items being replacements in kind, the applicant does not need to move forward with the hearing process.

Chris Hall moved to accept the application for withdrawal, without prejudice, with the understanding that all work done will be strictly replacements in kind. Jamie Ramsay seconded.

All in favor.

OTHER BUSINESS:

6. Minutes: October 17, 2019

Chris Hall moved to approve the minutes from October 17, 2019 as submitted.

Jamie Ramsay seconded.

3-0-2 (C. Buchanan & D. Chabinsky abstained); motion carried.

7. Chris Buchanan, Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee – Discuss a plan to use interlocking brick-style permeable pavers in place of asphalt on upcoming road construction.

Chris Buchanan, Chair of the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee described what a Special Roadway District is, as per the Multimodal Master Plan. There are not many places in town that can be designated as such, but the Village streets fit the concept. The idea is to encourage safety by defining the area as different from the surrounding zones. In the past, signs

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have been used to communicate these spaces, but this type of highway language is not very effective, per experts. The best way to communicate this message is through gateway treatments and alternative pavement surfaces. These proposed modifications would be done during already scheduled roadwork, as a way to reduce costs.

The currently proposed roadwork schedule is for Davis Lane, Carriage Road, and Main Street in the Village. The Committee is seeking a capital reserve fund to be funded over several years, in order to obtain funds for the gap between the cost for asphalt and the proposed interlocking pavers.

Chris Buchanan explained that UNH conducted an environmental and plowability study which showed that the interlocking pavers are a positive idea. The plan would be that eventually all of the roadways in the Special Roadway District would be changed over to the pavers, but this will only be done in small segments during road construction. The intent is to change the character of the entire district in order to make streets more becoming of mixed use.

Chris Buchanan introduced Ashley Allard and Dan Nevinckas, of the company Unilock, to describe their product. Ashley Allard explained that interlocking pavers help to slow down drivers and also are permeable and thus, a cost-savings to the town as a drainage system. The visual effect of the pavers is that the road is no longer dominated by vehicles, but shared in conjunction with pedestrians and cyclists. The pavers can be plowed and no special snow maintenance equipment is needed. The town would want to use salt, not sand, as a snow treatment on the pavers.

Chris Buchanan noted that the town is moving towards using 100% salt on their streets, which would work well with these pavers.

In response to a question from Jamie Ramsay, Ashley Allard stated that the high quality concrete pavers have a high PSI and will stand up to rock salt. There is a long-term savings to the town with these pavers, as regular asphalt needs to be re-sealed or re-surfaced over time, where these do not.

In response to a question from Doug Chabinsky, Ashley Allard explained that the entire roadway would be redone in the pavers, leaving less of an issue for frost heaves. The interlock of the pavers allows for a natural warming area in the base, which prevents popping.

In response to a question from Chris Hall, Dan Nevinckas stated that there are paving lots done by Unilock that are 35 years old. Unilock is the oldest paving stone manufacturer in the United States. Roads constructed with these pavers have a long life expectancy, 25 years or more.

In response to a question from Chris Hall regarding the driving area in front of the previous Sports Authority area, Ashley Allard explained that this roadway is actually stamped concrete. This is not paver material and is usually slippery in the winter.

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In response to a question from Jamie Ramsay, Dan Nevinckas explained that an engineer signs off on the full spec of the project.

In response to a question from Chris Buchanan, Dan Nevinckas stated that Unilock recently completed a project on Church Street in Portsmouth. The city decided that they didn't want these pavers to be permeable due to steep slopes in the area and are so far very happy with the project. Portsmouth is looking for ways to expand their city standard and Unilock took into account its historic design.

Will Ludt, 5 School Street, suggested that if the Village streets are going to be reconstructed, the town might want to consider burying the cables while there's an opportunity to do so. He also suggested that there be more of a push for no thru trucking in the Village.

In response to a question from Chris Hall, Dan Nevinckas explained that there are options to factory-seal the pavers in order to lessen the amount of tannic acid staining that occurs naturally when leaves fall on them. These stains will not absorb into the pavers however and will eventually wear off.

In response to a question from Chris Hall, Ashley Allard explained that, during a typical application, there will be a rigid edge created between the streets and abutting driveways, and then an edge treatment will be done to merge the two. This makes for an aesthetically pleasing transition point.

Doug Chabinsky stated that Amherst never historically had cobblestone streets. He believe this idea feels out of place with the Village. Asphalt has become almost innocuous versus this new cobblestone-like material (uniform vs. patterned). He is not sure the aesthetic view fits the Village, but he think it might be better safety-wise.

Chris Buchanan stated that the number one objective of this project is to increase safety for multimodal users in the Village. The Commission's regulations also call for a reduction in asphalt, which this would help to achieve.

Chris Hall noted that he is open-minded to the idea. The project is not looking to create false cobblestone streets, but simply another type of surface.

In response to a question from Chris Hall, Chris Buchanan stated that there is about a \$155,000 gap between asphalt and these pavers for the three Village streets. The plan would be to complete these three streets over three years. Ashley Allard also noted that the pavers give a long-term, lifecycle cost savings to the town.

Chris Buchanan explained that the CIP Committee will be taking a deeper look at this project from a planning perspective. The Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee will also be communicating with the DPW in order to get an updated schedule for road construction. The next major steps for this project will probably come at this time next year.

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In response to a question from Chris Hall, Chris Buchanan stated that the Village lampposts were ordered in July and took about 8 weeks to make. He will check with the DPW on the status of that project.

The Board discussed the compliant from 120 Amherst Street briefly, and decided to defer the item to the next meeting, to give time for consideration of the options involved.

Chris Buchanan moved to adjourn the meeting.

Discussion:

Nic Strong asked the Commission if the group was going to begin cases by accepting the application as complete, and determining regional impact, as noted in the Staff Report.

Jamie Ramsay stated that he believes regional impact is a moot subject for this Commission, as its objective is to maintain and preserve the District.

Nic Strong noted that any land use board that receives an application is supposed to consider if there could be regional impact; the Historic District Commission is a land use board. She agreed that there could be a motion made at the beginning of each meeting to state that there is no regional impact on any of the applications to be heard.

Chris Buchanan explained that there is not much guidance on how the Commission should conduct itself; if Nic Strong has any suggestions for the group, they would find it helpful.

Nic Strong explained that the Commission can look at the list of items to be submitted for an application, and then determine if the application is complete or if other items are needed.

Doug Chabinsky stated that applications were once checked more thoroughly for completeness in the Community Development Office before coming before the Commission. If there are certain requirements for an application, the Community Development Office should tell applicants at the time of submittal.

Chris Hall noted that about 80% of the applications in the past six months had insufficient information and very few were turned away, as the Commission worked with homeowners during the process. Help from the Community Development Office would help head off these applications and give the owners a heads-up. The paperwork is pretty clear to fill out. He is confused as to why so many applications are now coming to the Commission incomplete.

Nic Strong explained that the Community Development Office can tell applicants to submit certain items but the only entity that can accept the application as complete is the

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Commission itself. If applicants don't submit certain items, or don't understand the application, they can still come before the Commission. Each applicant gets a copy of the staff report before the meeting, which includes the checklist of items needed/submitted.

The Commission discussed a process by which each Commissioner would go into the Community Development Office once a month to review received applications for completeness.

Doug Chabinsky stated that the Commission wants to encourage applicants to do work correctly. The process can still be made easier for applicants; a completeness pre-review by the Office or Commissioners might achieve this.

Nic Strong agreed to consider the pre-review process. She also noted that there is likely some language on the checklist that is confusing to applicants and should also be reviewed.

Chris Buchanan explained that the Commission has been considering an overhaul to their regulations since 2016.

**The motion was moved at 9:16pm. Doug Chabinsky seconded.
All in favor.**

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude

Minutes approved as amended: February 20, 2020