

TOWN OF AMHERST  
Historic District Commission

June 18, 2020

**APPROVED**

In attendance: Jamie Ramsay- Chair, Chris Hall – Vice Chair, Doug Chabinsky, Tom Grella – Ex-Officio, and Chris Buchanan.  
Staff present: Nic Strong – Community Development Director, Natasha Kypfer – Town Planner, and Kristan Patenaude – Minute Taker.

Jamie Ramsay called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.,  
Nic Strong read the following statement. I find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, as extended by Executive Orders 2020-05, 2020-08, 2020-09, and 2020-10, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order.

However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are:  
Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means:

We are utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting.

All members of the Commission have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone #312-626-6799 and password 816 1126 7973, or by clicking on the following website address: <https://zoom.us/j/81611267973> that was included in the public notice of this meeting.

Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom or telephonically. Instructions have also been provided on the website of the Planning Board at: [www.amherstnh.gov](http://www.amherstnh.gov).

Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access: If anybody has a problem, please call 603-341-5290.

Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting:

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled.

Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote.

Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to- Know law.

**Roll call attendance: Jamie Ramsay, Tom Grella, Doug Chabinsky, Chris Buchanan, and Chris Hall; all alone and present.**

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Jamie Ramsay noted that he would like to have a moment of silence after losing a long-term member of the Historic District Commission and lifelong resident of Amherst, Charlie Duval. He will be sorely missed by the HDC and by the town. The Commission held a moment of silence.

*Bill Rapf (Alternate) entered the meeting.*

NEW BUSINESS:

**1. CASE #: PZ12367-022120 – Dave & Kathleen St. Jean – 1 New Boston Road,  
PIN #: 019-101-000 – Request for approval to construct a 24' x 24' garage with  
8' x 16' breezeway.**

Present: Dave & Kathleen St. Jean (Owners & Applicants); Dan Boggia (Contractor)

Jamie Ramsay read and opened the case.

Dave St. Jean explained that the proposal is to construct a 24'x24' garage with an 8'x16' breezeway that will allow for ground level entry. This is particularly important because their grandson, who lives on Mack Hill Road, is in a wheelchair and cannot currently easily enter their home. The proposed gable end of the structure, that faces the street, will match the existing house. The siding, trim, and rest of the exterior will also match the existing house.

In response to a question from Jamie Ramsay, Dave St. Jean explained that the breezeway will sit back on the property, so the garage will be at the ground level.

In response to a question from Jamie Ramsay, Dave St. Jean explained that the existing gravel driveway on the south side of the house will be abandoned. Dave St. Jean explained that he spoke with DPW Director, Eric Hahn, who is happy to have the change, due to the existing driveway's proximity to the school entrance. This will be a safer alternative.

In response to a question from Jamie Ramsay, Dan Boggia agreed that the proposed windows are classic, double hung, SDL (simulated divided light) windows with grilles. There will be grilles in-between the glass and ones applied on the exterior of the windows.

In response to a question from Doug Chabinsky, Dan Boggia noted that the proposed windows are vinyl. The windows in the existing house are all wood.

Jamie Ramsay explained to the applicant that the HDC's regulations state that all windows should be all-wood construction.

Dave St. Jean stated that they were aware of that regulation, but were unsure if it applied to garages. If the HDC requires garage windows to also be all-wood construction, they will switch to that type.

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89  
90 In response to a question from Doug Chabinsky, Dave St. Jean agreed that the garage door is  
91 proposed to be a steel door.

92  
93 In response to a question from Bill Rapf, Kathleen St. Jean noted that the top windows of the  
94 garage are proposed to be rectangular, in order to keep with the style of the windows on the front  
95 of the house.

96  
97 Doug Chabinsky stated that there are other garages in the Historic District that have rectangular  
98 shaped windows at the top. This proposal is not unique regarding that item.

99  
100 Chris Buchanan noted that the HDC has no specific regulations regarding the style of the garage  
101 windows and doors. Regarding the specifics of the garage door, it is important to look at the  
102 characteristics of others in the Village. The proposed door seems consistent with other examples.  
103 A rectangular shape for the garage windows is preferred. There are clear regulations regarding  
104 window materials; these state that the windows should be all-wood, SDL.

105  
106 Jamie Ramsay noted that there were a number of manufacturers for the windows, but the one that  
107 had been most consistently used in the Historic District has been a Jeld-Wen product. Dan  
108 Boggia stated that the applicants may look at using BROSCO SSB windows, which are all-wood  
109 but slightly less expensive than other manufacturers, as this is a garage and not the main  
110 structure.

111  
112 In response to a question from Dan Boggia, Doug Chabinsky stated that the Commission will  
113 need an updated materials list for the plan, with the specifics of the all-wood windows being  
114 purchased. Approval can be given conditional on that item.

115  
116 Jamie Ramsay stated that the all-wood windows should try to match the grille pattern on the  
117 existing windows of the home.

118  
119 Dan Boggia agreed the chosen windows will be relatively close in size and will closely match the  
120 specs of the existing windows.

121  
122 Dan Boggia noted that the additional window in the proposed mudroom might be an energy  
123 efficient window and simpler than the ones in the proposed garage.

124  
125 In response to a question from Jamie Ramsay, Dan Boggia stated that the garage will not be  
126 heated.

127  
128 In response to a question from Jamie Ramsay, Dan Boggia noted that the specs for the proposed  
129 garage windows will be of similar size to those on the rest of the first floor of the existing house.  
130 Dan Boggia stated that he believes the sash opening on those is about 2.6" x 4.5".

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Jamie Ramsay stated that the Commission is concerned with the look of the garage windows in regard to the rest of the existing house. If the windows are truly divided light windows, the muntin bars should be around 5/8" – 7/8".

Dan Boggia stated that he will work to match the existing windows as closely as possible.

In response to a question from Chris Hall, Doug Chabinsky noted that the windows on the proposed garage might be able to be seen in a limited view from New Boston Road.

In response to a question from Jamie Ramsay, Dan Boggia stated that the clapboards and corner board on the proposed garage will be all-wood.

In response to a question from Jamie Ramsay, Dan Boggia stated that the proposed roofing for the garage will be made to match the color of the existing roof as closely as possible. The pitch will also be to match. Dan Boggia noted that the front gable end on the right side of the garage might be slightly less of a pitch.

Jamie Ramsay stated that he believes the proposed construction will fit nicely in with the community and has a traditional layout in attaching to the existing house.

**FINDINGS:**

1. Non-contributing property, not listed on the National Register, but located in the Historic District and built in the 1950's.
2. Most of the proposed work is highly visible from the public view, while some of the work has limited visibility.
3. Proposed work to be done is complementary to the existing house.
4. The design elements of the application comply with Article X:
  - a. *Significant historic materials and features should be preserved* – not applicable in this case.
  - b. *The design of the new addition should complement, not compete with or detract from, the historic character of the original structure* – the design of the proposed garage complements the character of the original structure and looks like a two car garage.
  - c. *The historic character of the original structure shall be protected so that the old work remains visually distinct*
    - i. *Consider the new addition both in terms of the use and the appearance of other buildings in the Historic District. The new addition may reference design motifs from the historic building to which it is attached. However, it should complement, not compete with or detract from, the original historic structure in terms of massing, scale, proportions, materials, texture, and detailing.* – the design of the proposed garage fits in with the other houses in the neighborhood.
  - d. *Historic and other character-defining settings around the structure shall be preserved* – none seen.

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5. The proposed materials, as discussed, are compliant with HDC regulations.

**Chris Buchanan moved to approve the application as submitted, with the stipulation that the windows be all-wood, with simulated or non-simulated divided lights, to match the character of the existing structure, and the with the submission of all necessary specs for these pending approval of the Chair. Doug Chabinsky seconded.**

**Discussion:**

Jamie Ramsay noted that, regarding the width of the muntin bars, the applicant should make every effort to match the muntins in the windows of the existing house.

The Commission discussed amending the proposed motion to include Jamie Ramsay's comments, but agreed that the submission of the new window specs to be approved by the Chair should be enough to meet the Commission's requirements.

**Roll call: Tom Grella – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye; Chris Buchanan – aye; Bill Rapf – aye; Chris Hall – aye; Jamie Ramsay – aye. Motion carried unanimously.**

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. He also apologized for the delay in hearing this application, noting that the Covid-19 emergency was an unusual situation for everyone to be in.

**2. CASE #: PZ12459-032720 – Tara Syverson – 12 Main Street, PIN #: 017-006-000 – Request for approval to demolish existing 2-car garage and replace with a 3-car garage with living space above and a connecting structure to the main house.**

Present: Tara Syverson & James Zona (Owners & Applicants)

Jamie Ramsay read and opened the case.

James Zona stated that the proposal is to demolish the existing mid-1930/1940's 2-car garage and build a 3-car garage with living space above. The proposed garage will be not quite square to the house. The proposed connecting structure to the house will essentially be used as a laundry room. The purpose behind the proposal is that there are three older children in the family and more garage space is needed. The additional living space will also help with the family's current tight quarters.

In response to a question from Jamie Ramsay, James Zona stated that the proposed additional space above the garage will be used as a new bedroom, but that there shouldn't be a zoning compliance issue because two of the existing bedrooms in the house will be combined, thus leaving the same total number of bedrooms in the house.

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Chris Hall requested information on the research done regarding the history of the structure proposed to be demolished. He explained that the Commission's regulations usually highly frown on getting rid of any historical structures found in the Historic District.

James Zona stated that he was not able to find much about this structure during his research. He stated that the garage floor appears to be poured concrete and that the structure was an addition to the home due to its angle to the house. He believes the building materials are of a later date than the rest of the house.

In response to a question from Chris Hall, James Zona stated that the foundation of the existing garage is granite blocks and some stone.

Chris Buchanan read the information from the National Register about the property: The Joseph Gushing House, 2 story clapboard, pitched roof, 2 interior chimneys, 5 bay front façade with center entrance (2 doors with sidelights), pedimented entrance porch supported by posts, plain corner pilasters, narrow entablature, window cornices first story and gable end. Built c. 1802-3 by Joseph Gushing, until 1809 editor of Farmers' Cabinet. Altered to duplex.

Doug Chabinsky noted that the National Register information doesn't mention the garage at all.

James Zona stated that he believes the existing garage is a second addition to the house, as the roof lines on the main house run east-west, but the roof line of the existing garage runs north-south.

In response to a question from Chris Hall, James Zona stated that not all of the garage walls are finished inside. It is possible to see the rough cut lumber construction of the structure in parts.

In response to a question from Bill Rapf, James Zona stated that he believes the construction is post and beam, not stick built.

Bill Rapf noted that the structure may have been a barn originally. Jamie Ramsay stated that it may have been a carriage shed.

Chris Buchanan shared with the group a photo from the Historical Society of the property from 1889.

The Commission discussed the photo and how they believe it matches up to the current structure, in order to try to date the existing garage.

Chris Buchanan stated that the photo seems to suggest that the existing garage was part of the structure as it existed in 1889, though it is difficult to tell. The photo seems to indicate that at least part of the structure proposed to be demolished existed in 1889.

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Jamie Ramsay stated that he might be able to tell if the structure was original to the house by looking at the inside of it.

Chris Hall stated that the regulations say that a historic building should not be demolished or removed unless good cause can be shown as to why it should be, such as that a structure has deteriorated beyond repair.

The Commission agreed that it needed more information about the history of the proposed structure to be demolished before it can decide to approve the request.

Chris Buchanan suggested that the Commission could hold a site walk of the property and could also contact the Historical Society to see if there are any additional historic photos of the property that might help the Commission to make the determination.

Chris Hall explained that he feels for the applicants, as this is a difficult process, but the Commission has to be careful not to carry through with demolitions of historic properties unless absolutely necessary. He understands that many historic homes are not set up for today's type of family living, but that the Commission is working to preserve Amherst's heritage and history.

James Zona stated that the building plans for this proposal have been ready to go since March. If the proposed construction carries on into the winter months, this could be a hardship to the process.

The Commission discussed tabling the application to their July 16, 2020, meeting and holding a site walk prior to that.

**Jamie Ramsay moved to table the deliberations regarding this application to the next regularly scheduled meeting of July 16, 2020. Bill Rapf seconded.**

**Roll call: Tom Grella – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye; Chris Buchanan – aye; Bill Rapf – aye; Chris Hall – aye; Jamie Ramsay – aye. Motion carried unanimously.**

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

**3. Historic District Commission – Reorganization**

**Upon establishing that both parties were interested in continuing in their officer roles on the Historic District Commission, Chris Buchanan moved to elect Jamie Ramsay as Chair and Chris Hall as the Vice Chair of the Historic District Commission. Tom Grella seconded.**

**Roll call: Tom Grella – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye; Chris Buchanan – aye; Bill Rapf – aye; Chris Hall – aye; Jamie Ramsay – aye. Motion carried unanimously.**

**4. Minutes: February 20, 2020**

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**Chris Hall moved to approve the minutes from February 20, 2020, as submitted.  
Tom Grella seconded.**

**Roll call: Tom Grella – aye; Doug Chabinsky – abstained; Chris Buchanan –  
abstained; Bill Rapf – aye; Chris Hall – aye; Jamie Ramsay – aye. 4-0-2; motion  
carried.**

Chris Buchanan stated that he would like the Commission to review their regulations, as has been previously discussed. The Commission had an inventory of all the properties in the Historic District completed, and he would like that document to be used as a stepping stone to review and update the Commission's regulations. He volunteered to head the effort, and plans to break the regulations into sections and ask volunteer Commissioners over the next 1-2 months to review each section and coordinate with him regarding any suggested edits.

The Commission agreed to Chris Buchanan's proposal and thanked him for his effort.

Chris Buchanan stated that he will work to break the regulations up into pieces and address each in a narrow scope. He will then compile all the comments from other Commissions together to present them for discussion at an upcoming meeting.

Chris Hall suggested that the Commission seek an outside opinion regarding the history of the property discussed during the last case. The Commission agreed to look into contacting the Historical Society, the state, and personal connections to see if an outside expert can be found.

Will Ludt, Chairman of the Heritage Commission, suggested that the NH Preservation Alliance might have some suggestions on experts who would be willing to assist the Town. He stated that he could call them the next day to discuss it. Jamie Ramsay thanked Will Ludt for this offer.

Will Ludt stated that he spoke with DHR (Division of Historical Resources) regarding meeting virtually this summer to have a check-in on the Certified Local Government Program and to discuss any issues the town might have that the state can shed light on. These check-ins happen roughly every four or five years. He suggested that this meeting take place during the Heritage Commission's regular August 13, 2020, meeting. He suggested that it be a joint meeting with the Historic District Commission. The Historic District Commission members agreed with this suggestion and Jamie Ramsay thanked Will Ludt for cuing up the session.

**Jamie Ramsay moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:45pm. Chris Buchanan seconded.  
Roll call: Tom Grella – aye; Doug Chabinsky – aye; Chris Buchanan – aye; Bill  
Rapf – aye; Chris Hall – aye; Jamie Ramsay – aye. Motion carried unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Kristan Patenaude

Minutes approved: July 18, 2020