

Exeter Historic District Commission

Draft Minutes
Nowak Room, Exeter Town Offices
August 19, 2010

Introduction: *Members present were Julie Gilman, Wendy Bergeron, Kathy Corsen, Judith Rowan, and Chairwoman Pam Gjetum.*

Call Meeting to Order

Chairwoman Pam Gjetum called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town offices. Wendy Bergeron was introduced as a new member of the Historic District Commission.

New Business: Public Hearings

1. The application of Dana DeNiro (d/b/a Luna Chics) for the installation of an exterior wooden screen door at 131 Water Street. The subject property is located in the WC-Waterfront Commercial zoning district. Tax Map Parcel #72-20-3. Case #10-05.

No one was in attendance to present the application. It was tabled for the meeting in September.

2. Continued discussion on the application of Fastrax for replacement signage for the property located at 1 Center Street. The subject parcel is located in the C-1, Central Area Commercial zoning district. Tax Map Parcel #72-216. Case #10-11.

The application was presented by Shawn Norton of Fastrax Signs Service, on behalf of People's United Bank. The application for a replacement sign was accepted during the July HDC meeting. The Board requested Mr. Norton return with several new options that would reflect the town's historic context. Mr. Norton presented the Board with two new designs: The People's United Bank logo with brass lettering and the second formatted in Times New Roman font with brass lettering. Mr. Norton explained that the Bank would prefer the first option, but would accept the Board's decision. The Board discussed the font sizes and what would be acceptable for the Historic District. Julie Gilman motioned to accept the Times New Roman, 12-inch, brass lettering sign. Kathy Corsen seconded: Vote unanimous.

3. The application of RCMP Realty Trust (Richard Miller) to replace an existing first floor porch and a second floor walkway and stairs at 51-53 High Street. The subject property is located in the R-2, Single Family Residential zoning district. Tax Map Parcel #71-114. Case #10-12.

The application was presented by Richard Miller, who previously requested permission to replace an existing first floor porch and second floor walkway and stairs during the July HDC meeting. The Board did not accept the application and requested Mr. Miller return after speaking with the Exeter Fire Department in order to determine whether the new construction follows fire code. After meeting with Lieutenant Paul Morin and Chief Brian Comeau from the Exeter Fire Department, Mr. Miller was informed that the construction does not break fire code.

and would not be an issue. He also presented the Board with a complete set of drawings, and explained that the balustrades would be two inches in diameter. Kathy Corsen made a motion to accept the application as complete, Julie Gilman seconded: Vote unanimous.

Chairwoman Pam Gjetum asked the Board if there were any additional questions concerning this application. The Board agreed that all necessary details had been discussed during the July HDC meeting. Julie Gilman motioned to approve the application, Kathy Corsen seconded: Vote unanimous.

4. The application of Roman Catholic Bishop of Manchester (d/b/a St. Michael's Church) for a change to signage located at 93 Front Street. The subject property is located in the R-2, Single Family Residential zoning district. Tax Map Parcel #73-299. Case #10-15.

The application was presented by Robert Ivey, parishioner of St. Michael's Church, requesting for a sign change along Front Street. The sign, manufactured by Reedy Signs, would be six feet wide and forty inches tall. Julie Gilman began a discussion concerning the materials of the sign. Mr. Ivey explained that the posts are granite, but was not sure as to the material of the sign, assuming wood. Specifications were not included in the presented information packet. Julie Gilman made a motion to accept the application as presented, Kathy Corsen seconded: Vote unanimous.

The Board discussed the details of the sign, and their preference as sign material was wood. Kathy Corsen began a discussion concerning the lighting of the sign, explaining that lighting from below could accidentally be moved by people or lawn mowers. She recommended Mr. Ivey consider lighting the sign from above to avoid any problems. Julie Gilman made a motion to approve the application with the condition that the material be wood, Kathy Corsen seconded: Vote unanimous.

5. The application of MetroPCS Massachusetts, LLC for the proposed installation of a concealed wireless telecommunications facility to be located at 21 Front Street. The subject property is located in the C-1, Central Area Commercial zoning district. Tax Map Parcel #72-222. Case #10-16.

Julie Gilman recused herself as a Trustee of the Exeter Congregational Church. The application was presented by Matt Boles, from New England Wireless Solutions, on behalf of MetroPCS Massachusetts, LLC. Mr. Boles explained the background of MetroPCS as a new cellular phone provider to this region, looking to expand into Exeter. MetroPCS turned to the Exeter Congregational Church to install a telecommunications facility within their building. The Church already houses a Sprint Nextel telecommunications facility within the steeple and agreed on the installation.

The original construction was to install antennas within the lower section of the steeple, but the Church did not agree to add the necessary louvers to the structure. Instead, MetroPCS plans to install the antennas within the column structures of the steeple by creating pockets within the columns. The wooden exterior would be replaced with a material that would optimize signal transmission, unlike wood. Mr. Boles explained that the appearance of the church would not change with this new material. The column structure is not dependant upon the exterior façade and the installation would have no bearing on the structure of the steeple.

Chairwoman Pam Gjetum asked about the proposed HVAC system. Mr. Boles explained that a small unit would be installed alongside the existing system located within the present landscaping. The Exeter Congregational Church currently maintains the landscaping and would continue to do so.

Mr. Boles also offered the Board a letter from the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, stating that the proposed project does not cause any adverse effect. Judith Rowan moved to accept the application as complete, Kathy Corsen seconded: Vote unanimous

The Board discussed the project and their appreciation of the letter provided from the NHDHR. Judith Rowan moved to approve the application as presented, Kathy Corsen seconded: Vote unanimous.

6. The application of Christopher Roseberry for demolition and reconstruction of rear porch/deck area and existing barn located at 55 High Street. The subject property is located in the R-2, Single Family Residential zoning district. Tax Map Parcel #71-109. Case #10-17.

The following application was divided into three separate applications.

A. Installation of fiber-cement clapboard siding on house and barn, point one.

Christopher Roseberry presented the application, explaining the history of repairs to the house. He shared several pictures of its existing condition, explaining that the paint is falling off the wood clapboard siding, due to an existing water problem. Mr. Roseberry consulted several contractors who suggested options, but also explained that many of these water problems are hard to identify and could be very expensive. After researching several options, Mr. Roseberry decided to replace the wood siding with cement board in order to alleviate the paint problem.

A sample of the cement board was presented to the Board and Mr. Roseberry explained that the product has the same appearance as wood siding, includes a 15-year color guarantee, optimizes ventilation, is available in flat or wood grain texture, is made with 30% recycled content, and comes in a fish scale design to match the existing house. The boards would be four inches and have the same seams as the existing siding. He also explained that the color is "baked in" instead of painted on, and is available in a variety of historic colors. Mr. Roseberry explained that the house was built sometime between 1850 and 1880. In order to match the Stick Victorian architecture, his intention is to use two shades of grey throughout the structure.

Kathy Corsen moved to accept point one of the application as it was presented, Judith Rowan seconded: Vote unanimous.

Judith Rowan began a discussion about whether the flat or wood grain clapboard style would be most appropriate for the house. The Board requested a comment from John Merkle, Heritage Commission Chairman who was present at the meeting. Mr. Merkle explained that the flat clapboard style would be more appropriate for Stick Victorian architecture. The Board discussed more details concerning the existing water problem. Mr. Roseberry explained that during the installation, he will also apply a new vapor barrier. Mr. Merkle suggested the applicant should invest in finding a solution to the water problem in order to prevent interior water damage in the future.

Judith Rowan moved to approve point one of the application, Kathy Corsen seconded: Vote unanimous.

B. Demolition and reconstruction of porch/deck area, points two and three.

Mr. Roseberry provided the Board with pictures of the back porch, explaining how it sits on rotten decking and needs to be rebuilt. The addition, an interior room, would have the same footprint of the existing house and would not be visible from High Street. Mr. Roseberry introduced Wayne Cop as his builder, who was in attendance at the meeting.

The railings would match the house and neighboring houses within the area. The Board discussed material choices for the construction, preferring a wood railing and a wood exterior window in order to maintain its integrity. Mr. Roseberry explained that he would use a wood composite for the railing, not plastic, and would change his choice of vinyl windows to wood windows. Judith Rowan explained that the spacing of the banisters should match the existing banisters on the house.

Judith Rowan moved to accept points two and three of the application as complete with the described wood composite material for the railing and wood exterior windows. Kathy Corsen seconded: Vote unanimous.

The Board thanked Mr. Roseberry for being thorough in his application and research.

Judith Rowan moved to approve points two and three of the application including the wood composite material for the railing and wood exterior windows. Julie Gilman seconded: Vote unanimous.

C. Demolition and reconstruction of the existing barn, points four and five.

Mr. Roseberry explained the existing use of the barn as storage space, and stated that he would like to make it more useful by converting it to a garage. After planning to add support to the floor of the barn, Mr. Roseberry realized the space would not be large enough to store vehicles. The structure of the barn would also not provide the necessary support for a vehicle. Mr. Roseberry stated that the best option would be to demolish the barn and rebuild it from a 20-foot by 20-foot to a 24-foot by 24-foot footprint, in order to provide enough space for vehicular storage.

Mr. Roseberry provided the Board with pictures of the barn as well as renderings, explaining that any changes would be imperceptible due to the identical rooflines and trim lines. The new barn would also be built with a poured foundation to support the weight of vehicles.

Kathy Corsen pointed out to the Board that the demolition of the barn would require the Demolition Review Committee, subcommittee to the Heritage Commission, to review the structure before demolition. The Board requested Mr. Merkle, Heritage Commission, to explain the process. The applicant would be required to file a permit for demolition, allowing the Demolition Review Committee five days to review the structure for any cultural or historical significance. If the DRC decides that the barn is historically significant, they have a 30-day window to convince the applicant to take another route, other than demolition. Mr. Merkle explained that the DRC can not prevent demolition, but rather suspend the process.

The Board decided to continue the application, pending Demolition Review. The Board discussed the proposed doors, how the barn would expand, and its connection with the existing house.

Judith Rowan moved to accept points four and five of the application as presented, Wendy Bergeron seconded: Vote unanimous.

Judith Rowan moved to approve points four and five of the application with the new construction, exterior cladding, and details to be the same or nearly the same as the existing house as presented, pending Demolition Review by the Heritage Commission. Julie Gilman seconded: Vote unanimous.

7. The application of Phillips Exeter Academy for a change in appearance to the windows of the existing roof cupola of the structure located at 69 Front Street (Browning House). The subject property is located in the R-2, Single Family Residential zoning district. Tax Map Parcel #72-209. Case #10-18.

The application was presented by Mark Leighton, Associate Director for Facilities Management of Phillips Exeter Academy, who introduced John Merkle and Nicole Martineau, TMS Architects. Mr. Leighton introduced the application, explaining that the Browning House currently functions as a student dormitory and is in need of repair. During the June HDC meeting, the Board approved an application to raise the existing cupola six inches, providing enough room to install insulation and fiberboard. Since then, the contractor has suggested another option to raise the window-sill detail seven inches instead of the entire roof structure. This option would result in less impact to the building, and would keep the cupola intact. Mr. Leighton presented two images of the building, one from 1890 and the other of the present condition, as well as several construction drawings.

Julie Gilman made a motion to accept the application as presented, Judith Rowan seconded: Vote unanimous.

The Board discussed several details of the application, including the previous visits to the site. Julie Gilman made a motion to approve the application, Judith Rowan seconded: Vote unanimous.

Other Business

1. Discussion of proposed expansion of Historic District along Portsmouth Avenue

The Board invited John Merkle to speak on behalf of the Heritage Commission to discuss the possibility of expanding the Historic District along Portsmouth Avenue. The origin of this proposal was brought about during a Demolition Review for 8 Portsmouth Avenue. The Demolition Review Committee reviewed and researched the property, discovering that the house was part of an older section of town. The research brought evidence of older buildings within the area along Portsmouth Avenue. In the end, the DRC was not able to complete the public hearing process and no dialogue occurred between the applicant and the DRC. Mr. Merkle stated that the applicant is now free to demolish the building, and the property's location within the C-2 zoning district allows for any building type to replace it.

Mr. Merkle explained that changing this area to a transitional district between the commercialized areas and the two historic districts would save a lot of historic and cultural structures which may be at risk. Expanding the Historic District would allow the Historic District Commission design review, and could ultimately prevent demolition.

The Board discussed several other options for regulating this section of Town. Kathy Corsen explained that the Planning Board has a mandate within the Division Regulations on architectural design and construction standards that could be edited to help maintain this corridor. She explained that although it would not prevent demolition, it could regulate new construction. Mr. Merkle also explained an idea proposed by Peter Michaud to consider a change in zoning, as done by the Town of Stratham. Another suggestion was to make the area into a Heritage District.

The Board discussed that a combined meeting with the Planning Board, the Heritage Commission, and the Historic District Commission needs to take place in order to discuss all options and provide other ideas. Kathy Corsen suggested bringing the discussion to the Zoning Ordinance Review Committee in order to consider other proposals. The Board agreed that each option should be researched thoroughly before presentation. Mr. Merkle hopes to use a town-wide mapping survey of historic and cultural resources as a tool to help understand and decide the boundaries of the proposed district.

The Board then had a conversation about how the public could be more informed about buildings submitted for demolition. Julie Gilman suggested using the Exeter website as a tool

for notifying the public. Mr. Merkle requested that the Heritage Commission be notified of any demolition applications received by the HDC, so that proper procedures can be taken.

2. Preliminary consultation regarding proposed reconstruction of the “Green Bean on Water” restaurant located at 33 Water Street.

Pam Gjettum noted no one was present to discuss the matter and it was tabled for the September meeting.

3. Discussion regarding abutter notification.

Chairwoman Pam Gjettum informed the Board that she spoke with several people in the Planning Department and preferred their suggestion for abutter notification. She explained that the Planning Department would decide which abutters need to be notified, and would inform Ms. Gjettum who to send the notifications to. Judith Rowan suggested delegating the job of deciding abutter notification to Ron Schutz. Ms. Gjettum explained that if Mr. Schutz agrees to this job, she would prefer that option. The Board decided to discuss it further with Mr. Schutz during the September meeting.

Julie Gilman suggested the Board consider a different type of abutter notification. She suggested that each Board place their own sign on properties that require abutter notification in order to inform the public about the changes throughout the Town. The signs could include a single letter that would denote which Board would be reviewing the application and inform the public which meeting to attend for more information. The Board discussed more details concerning the possible application of this idea.

4. Approval of Minutes: March 18, June 17, and July 15, 2010.

There were no minutes to approve.

Julie Gilman suggested the Board discuss the use of sandwich-board sidewalk signs at the September meeting.

Julie Gilman made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Kathy Corsen seconded. Chairwoman Pam Gjettum adjourned the meeting at 9:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gillian R. Baresich
Recording Secretary