

Exeter Historic District Commission

Approved as Amended, October 21, 2010
Wheelwright Room, Exeter Town Offices
September 16, 2010

Introduction: *Members present were Julie Gilman, Ron Schutz, Fred Kollmorgen, Wendy Bergeron, Judith Rowan, and Chairwoman Pam Gjetum.*

Call Meeting to Order

Chairwoman Pam Gjetum called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. in the Wheelwright Room of the Exeter Town offices.

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.

Dana DeNiro, owner of Luna Chics at 131 Water Street, presented the application. Ms. DeNiro explained that she always leaves the door to her business open year round and requested to install a screen door. This screen door would help keep bugs out, provide security for children to stay inside the store, and allow the store to cool down in the late afternoon when it gets warm. The applicant presented the Board with an image of the door she would prefer, explaining that it has an old-fashioned appearance and would be painted black to match the exterior of her store. Fred Kollmorgen moved to accept the application, Wendy Bergeron seconded: application accepted.

The Board further discussed the appearance of the door. Ron Schutz moved to approve the application with the preferred Home Depot, Summit Model door, Fred Kollmorgen seconded: Vote unanimous.

2. The application of Samdperil & Welsh, PLLC for new signage at 100 High Street. The subject property is located in the R-2, Single Family Residential zoning district, Tax Map Parcel #71-51. Case #10-19.

Julie Gilman recused herself as a neighbor to the applicant. Richard Samdperil presented the applicant, introducing Joe Welsh as his partner at Samdperil & Welsh, PLLC. Mr. Samdperil currently has two signs on the building and is requesting to move those two signs and to add a primary hanging sign to the property. The two signs, which only show the logo of the business, would be moved flush with the building, one by the entrance of the business and the other by the parking lot. The new hanging sign would be attached to the existing post, at a size of 18 inches by 30 inches, and would include a logo and the address of the business. The colors would be blue, white, and black. The Board asked what the sign would be made of. Mr. Samdperil explained that it would be constructed of MDO, medium density overlay, which is a type of plywood. The two existing signs are made of PVC, one being three square feet and the other, 1.33 square feet. Fred Kollmorgen moved to accept the application, Wendy Bergeron seconded: Vote unanimous.

Mr. Kollmorgen began a discussion concerning the lighting of the sign. Mr. Samdperil explained that until they felt that there was a need to light the sign at night, it would be restricted to two hours before opening the business in the morning, and two hours after closing in the afternoon. The light would be a direct-focused stationary light and would only illuminate their sign. The current light regulations restrict sign lights to be on past 9:00 p.m. Mr. Kollmorgen confirmed with the Deputy Code Enforcement Officer, Barbara McEvoy, that the property, located within the R-2 Zoning District, is considered a Legal Non-Conforming Use. There was a further discussion concerning exactly how many signs are permitted. Mr. Samdperil explained that within the Sign Ordinance for the Historic District – Commercial, Section 5.7.7, the Zoning Ordinance states that “Each business shall be permitted one primary and one secondary sign per street façade.”

Richard Harmon, abutter to the property, requested that the Board add an amendment to the application, requiring the applicant to remove the existing sign posts from an abandoned sign. Mr. Harmon explained that they are unsightly and have caused problems in the past concerning sign grandfathering. Fred Kollmorgen pointed out to the Board that they can not add an amendment to the application that requires more work than outlined in the original application. In response, Richard Harmon requested that the applicant consider the removal of the sign posts as a benefit to the appearance of his business. Mr. Samdperil asked that the Board consider this request not be a contingency of the approval of the application at hand, and stated that if he were to remove the sign posts, he would need to gain approval from the other owner of the property. The Board further discussed the sign posts and how the issue could be resolved. Fred Kollmorgen moved to approve the application, Ron Schutz seconded: Vote unanimous.

Other Business

Ron Schutz added two more issues to the agenda:

1. Discussion concerning the distribution of letters to residents within the Town of Exeter Historic District.
2. Interaction between the Historic District Commission and the Heritage Commission, specifically concerning demolition.

1. Approval of Minutes: June 17, July 15, and August 19, 2010.

Julie Gilman made a motion to approve the June 17 minutes as presented, Fred Kollmorgen seconded: Vote unanimous.

The Board discussed two changes to the July 15 minutes, changing the spelling of “*Kathy Corsen*,” to “*Kathy Corson*,” as well as changing “*The application was presented by Janice Page, Debbie _____, and Nancy Kingston*,” to “*The application was presented by Janice Page and Nancy Kingston*.” Julie Gilman made a motion to approve the July 15 minutes as amended, Judith Rowan seconded: Vote unanimous.

Fred Kollmorgen abstained from voting on the August 19 minutes due to his absence. Julie Gilman noted a change from “*Kathy Corsen*,” to “*Kathy Corson*.” Judith Rowan moved to accept the minutes of August 19 as amended, Wendy Bergeron seconded: Vote unanimous.

2. Discussion regarding abutter notification.

Julie Gilman began a discussion concerning abutter notification, explaining that currently the Chairman is responsible for deciding which applications warrant abutter notification. The public has expressed several concerns with this system, mostly due to the fact that the public

has different opinions regarding the importance of applications and when the Board should notify abutters. Ms. Gilman suggested that the Board make it a requirement to notify all abutters regardless of the application. The applicant would still be required to pay for mailing the notifications, charging \$10.00 per certified letter. Barbara McEvoy explained to the Board that within the Downtown area, certain properties could require the notification of up to ten abutters, which would require an additional \$100.00 for mailing the notifications. Fred Kollmorgen suggested charging the applicant a percentage of the construction cost instead of charging per abutter. Several other options were considered and discussed.

Julie Gilman also recommended the idea of requiring applicants to post signs on their property, explaining that they are under consideration by a Town Board so the public can be notified. Ms. Gilman provided the Board with several designs of the proposed signs along with examples used by other towns. This system would be used in addition to the abutter notification, but would help to notify anyone interested in properties throughout the Town of Exeter that are not direct abutters. The applicant would receive the sign from the Planning Board and it is their responsibility to put it up and return it. The sign would be 18 inches by 24 inches and would need to be visible from the street. The Board discussed several matters of the appearance of the sign and how they would enforce this system. Ron Schutz motioned that the Historic District Commission would be in favor of using a system of sign notification when an application comes before the HDC. Judith Rowan seconded: Vote unanimous.

3. Discussion regarding the use of sandwich-board sidewalk signs.

The Board discussed the illegal use of sandwich-board signs outside commercial businesses. The subject has been brought before the Board of Selectman, and there have been many complaints about the inconsistency of enforcement. Doug Eastman, Building Inspector and Code Enforcement Officer for the Town of Exeter, has informed business owners of their illegal uses of the sandwich board signs enforcing the issue has become a problem.

The Board discussed methods of enforcing sandwich board signs, such as providing a time limit to the businesses. Other towns require a license to use one and require the applicant go through an application process. The Board's main concern is providing consistency and a successful method for regulation. Judith Rowan stated that she prefers the smaller signs which add a commercial appeal to the downtown area, but the larger ones can hinder foot traffic and many are made with plastic materials that do not match the context. It was agreed to research the topic and discuss a possible solution at a future meeting.

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

Julie Gilman made a proposal that the members of the HDC attend a combined meeting with the Heritage Commission (HC) to discuss the possible expansion of the Historic District along Portsmouth Avenue. The HC, which now acts as the reviewing body for Demolition Permits, meets on the first Wednesday of every month. Ron Schutz, member of the HC, explained to the Board the origin of this conversation. Mr. Schutz stated that after reviewing and researching several properties along Portsmouth Avenue, the HC found this corridor to act as a strong historic gateway into the current Historic District. However, several of the residences in the area have been replaced with commercial businesses over time, and that historic presence is being lost. The HC is researching ways to preserve Exeter's culture and history along that gateway.

The Board agreed to attend the following Heritage Commission meeting in October.

5. Discussion of the interaction between the Historic District Commission and the Heritage Commission

Ron Schutz explained that the Heritage Commission has taken on the function of reviewing Demolition Permits. The HC acts as an advisory committee but does not have the legal right to prevent demolition. The purpose of the HC Demolition Review Committee is to review the property and determine if the structure has any historical or cultural significance. If that property is deemed significant, the demolition is halted for 30 days in order to persuade the applicant of preserving the building under review. If the property is located within the Historic District, this research is given to the HDC in order to decide whether the demolition should be approved or denied.

Recently there has been an issue concerning 55 High Street, where applicant Christopher Roseberry appeared before the HDC and was given approval for the demolition of his barn. Due to the fact that Mr. Roseberry did not apply for a demolition permit, the Heritage Commission was not notified of the applicant's appearance before the HDC. When the Demolition Review Committee reviewed the property, they deemed the barn historically significant, but the HDC had already given approval for the demolition. Mr. Schutz explained that in order to prevent problems like this in the future, the HDC needs to reconsider their regulations.

The Board discussed several options of changing the regulations. It was agreed that when an applicant applies to the HDC for an application involving demolition, they are required to first hand in a demolition permit. This permit, which triggers the Demolition Review Committee, would ensure that the Heritage Commission has the chance to review a property and determine if it is historically or culturally significant, before the HDC can approve the demolition. Fred Kollmorgen volunteered to revise the Demolition Guidelines.

6. Distribution of letters to residents within the Historic District

Ron Schutz began a discussion concerning whether the HDC should revisit the idea of sending letters to residents within the Historic District. The letters would inform people of the website and resources throughout the town. The Board discussed whether to send the letters to every resident within the Historic District or just new residents. The mailing budget is still available for the HDC to use and could be utilized for this purpose. Fred Kollmorgen explained that previously when the HDC looked into this, they had problems with creating a database that would organize and print each letter and envelope. When it was previously done, it had to be done manually and took half a day to organize about 180 different residents. The Board had a conversation concerning when they would take the time to create this list and agreed that it would be most appropriate after 2011. Julie Gilman agreed to talk to someone within the Finance Department, where they send out bills to all the residents and already have a database created.

Chairwoman Pam Gjettum adjourned the meeting at 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gillian R. Baresich
Recording Secretary