

Draft Minutes

Historic District Commission

June 21, 2012

Members present: Len Benjamin, Selectman Rep. Julie Gilman, Wendy Bergeron, Nicole Martineau, Ron Schutz, Fred Kollmorgen, Patrick Gordon and Pam Gjettum, Chairwoman.

Call Meeting to Order

Chairwoman Pam Gjettum called the meeting to order at 7:02pm in the Wheelwright Room in the Town Office building.

New Business: Public Hearing

The application of Neal Katz for new construction and changes to exterior of the structure located at 57-59 High Street. The subject is located in the R-2, Single Family Residential zoning district. Tax Map Parcel #71-108. Case #12-05.

Prior to the start of the public hearing, Mr. Schutz asked to be recused as he lives at 58 High Street across from the applicant's property although he was not included on the abutter's list.

Mr. Neal Katz owner of the multi-family residential unit at 57-59 High Street stated he wished to construct four (4) balconies to the rear on the second and third floors to serve as egresses for those units. He confirmed four windows would be removed and replaced with doors. The balconies will be identical to the existing balconies on the first floor units. A profile photo of the building with the existing structures was provided as was a Photoshop rendering of the building with the addition of the proposed-constructed balconies.

Mr. Katz stated the decks are to be constructed of pressure treated lumber and will be approximately 6(deep) x 8 (across) ft. in dimension. They would be allowed to weather and not be painted. Mr. Katz added they would be cantilevered decks and attached by a brace to the building. Mr. Gordon noted the Photoshop view does not accurately represent the actual mass of the balcony and questioned the means of attaching; offered possible construction details so as to reduce the bulkiness of the decks. Mr. Katz agreed to pursue the construction details

Ms. Martineau voted to ***accept*** the application; seconded by Ms. Gilman. Motion carried.

Noting the application had been accepted, Ms. Gjettum asked for any further discussion as the Commission proceeded to approve the application; asked for additional comments from members and public comment.

From the public Mr. Schutz said the decks were in full view as you walk along the street. He felt it sounded like rough construction; not trimmed out or painted. His concern it was not in keeping with the Historic District. Mr. Katz: if the natural/weathered pressure treated wood is an issue he would paint.

Dr. Christopher Roseberry, 55 High St., felt it wasn't consistent with the guidelines of the Historic District. It was an 1880 structure similar to his residence. Mr. Katz replied it was not a Victorian home but a commercial unit and has been for some time. Everything has been wrapped in vinyl; no exposed wooden window trim. Even the shutters are metal; it is what it is.

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Understanding the function of the space, Ms. Martineau stated she would feel more comfortable having it painted white; would blend in and be more appropriate of the HD. No problem for the applicant.

Mr. Gordon noted the balconies represented in Photoshop image as being too “thin” and felt the final structures would be more of a visual obstruction to the neighbors. Mr. Katz agreed with the limitations of Photoshop in showing no structural elements. Discussion continued on alternative construction methods to replace the present proposed 35-45 degree bracket cantilevered attachment method. Mr. Kollmorgen agreed and felt a vertical corner post extending from the first floor to the second and third floors would make for safer construction.

Mr. Kollmorgen moved to **approve** the application subject to the use of vertical post at the corners to eliminate the need for the cantilevered construction. Ms. Martineau asked they be painted white. Mr. Kollmorgen amended his motion to include Ms. Martineau’s request the balconies be painted white; seconded by Ms. Bergeron.

The Chairwoman asked if there was any further discussion. Dr. Chris Roseberry submitted a photo of his house and asked to imagine the addition of balconies to the second and third stories to his house which was of the same size and age (1880). Didn’t feel there should be dual standards for approving an application for a commercial building and a residential building; felt it was setting a precedent. He did understand it has been a multifamily unit for some time but it is the nature of the Historic District.

Ms. Gjetum added the Commission often needs to realize the realities of living in the twenty-first century.

With no further discussion, the Chair called for a vote. Those in favor; Mr. Kollmorgen. Those opposed: Ms. Gilman, Mr. Benjamin and Ms. Martineau. Mr. Gordon and Ms. Bergeron abstained. Ms. Gjetum stated she only voted in a tie but because there was not a quorum of voting members her vote would be in favor which created an impasse. Mr. Kollmorgen asked the abstainers to explain their reasons for their vote as there did not appear to be a conflict of interest. Ms. Bergeron and Mr. Gordon did so.

Members from the public continued to offer their opinions. Mr. Clarence Cross of 8 Marlboro stated he has been looking at the house for 17 years and it is a large house in the Historic District. Dr. Roseberry had to abide by the rules in his renovations; felt it would devalue the neighborhood.

Ms. Amy Bailey at 60 High St. agreed saying it was a big white elephant (for which she apologized) but has been for 20 years; it is what it is. She was under the impression that when the HD came in it wasn’t to make that would never conform conform; to accept what was there and let it continue. Yes, it was an old house underneath but it hadn’t been a house for a long time; this (addition of decks) made it more livable. She had no objection but agreed she only sees its front.

Mr. Gordon continued referring to the side-view photo with the balconies. His question referenced the third story balcony and would it cut into the existing eave. Mr. Katz replied it would not; all contained within the recess. Mr. Gordon felt when going back to drawing board it (the return of the eave) will be impacted. Mr. Katz repeated there is no disruption to the eave; could make that a condition of approval.

Ms. Gjetum then asked the wishes of the Commission; did those abstaining wished to change their vote. Mr. Gordon replied he would like to revote.

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The Chair re-read the motion: to approve (the new construction and changes to the exterior of the structure) subject to the addition of vertical posts at the corners and all balconies painted white. Mr. Katz added if they Commission wished to add *no affection to the eaves* that would be acceptable to him. With that, the motion was amended to say: approval is subject to the addition of vertical posts at the corners and all (balconies) will be painted white and construction will be accomplished without affecting the eaves on either side. Motion seconded by Mr. Benjamin

Before voting Mr. Benjamin asked for a point of information: what powers does the HDC have if the eaves are affected. Ms. Gilman replied it would be in violation of the approval. Mr. Katz assured the Commission it would not happen as it would be too costly, not appropriate; trying to keep it a simple project.

Proceeding to vote; Mr. Kollmorgen and Mr. Benjamin voted in favor. Members opposed; Ms. Martineau, Ms. Gilman, Mr. Patrick and Ms. Bergeron. **Motion to approve application failed.**

Based on this decision, Mr. Katz asked what his options were. Mr. Kollmorgen replied he had 30 days to appeal to ZBA and suggested talking with Planning Department about appealing a decision. Mr. Katz also asked for an explanation for his application not being approved.

Ms. Martineau cited her reasons for voting in opposition and stressed they were her opinions. She felt new construction should be respectful and reflective of the traditional scale, proportions and rhythm of historic structures; new construction may use building augmentation and be imitative of historical elements and be in harmony with adjacent buildings, even when it is in the rear (of the building).

Simply, in summary, Mr. Kollmorgen replied it violates Historic District guidelines.

Mr. Katz was thanked for his time.

The application of Daniel Demers for new signage on the building located at 155 Water Street. The subject property is located in the WC-Waterfront Commercial zoning district. Tax Map Parcel #72-18. Case #12-06. Mr. Daniel Demers stated the signage for the coffee shop is to be about 2 x 3 feet and painted wood. The background color is to be shades of brown and the lettering will be brick red. It will be a hanging sign using the existing iron bracket; does comply with guidelines of the bottom of the sign being 8' from the ground.

Mr. Schutz advised the applicant the dimensions of the sign need to be specific for approval of the application. Mr. Benjamin suggested the application state *not to exceed 2'x3'3"*. Mr. Demers confirmed there will be no lighting of/on the sign.

Ms. Bergeron moved to **accept** the application; seconded by Ms. Martineau. Vote: motion carried

With no further discussion, Mr. Schutz moved to **approve** the application with the stipulation the sign is not to exceed the dimensions of 2'x3'3" and be of painted wood and the lettering to be carved or painted; seconded by Ms. Martineau. Motion carried.

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A request from John Taylor (on behalf of Geoffrey von Kuhn) for an extension of the approval granted by the Commission on June 16, 2011 for the property at 89 Front Street. The subject property is located in the R-2, Single Family Residential zoning district. Tax Map Parcel #73-301. Case #11-03.

Mr. Taylor was not present for the Commission to act upon the application. Mr. Kollmorgen asked the application be tabled.

Other Business

- **Minutes of April 19, 2012** Mr. Kollmorgen moved to accept the draft minutes as submitted; seconded by Mr. Schutz. Motion carried with Ms. Bergeron, Ms. Martineau and Mr. Gordon abstaining.
- **Election of Officers**
Ms. Gjettum agreed to stay on as Chairwoman and Mr. Schutz agreed to stay on as Vice Chairman; Mr. Kollmorgen asked not to remain as Clerk. The duties of the Clerk were outlined and Ms. Bergeron agreed to assume that office.
Ms. Gilman moved the slate of officers for the year to be Pam Gjettum- Chairwoman
Ron Schutz - Vice Chairman
Wendy Bergeron- Clerk

Seconded by Mr. Kollmorgen. Motion carried.

Mr. Patrick Gordon was introduced informally. It was noted he is an architect and currently works with a window firm. In further discussion of educating the public and the Commission on the use of windows and in the need for replacement or restoration, Mr. Gordon did say his company offers seminars as Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credits to members of the American Institute of Architects (AIA); two being on historic sensitivity. He would be glad to share his knowledge.

Ms. Gilman spoke of a window restoration professional hosting workshops and the possibility of holding such in Exeter; would re contact to verify availability, fees etc.

- **Plan reading**
Because the necessary audio/electronic equipment was not available in the Wheelwright Room, Ms. Gilman tabled the session to another time.

With no further business Mr. Kollmorgen motioned to adjourn; seconded by Ms. Bergeron.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Raub
Recording secretary