

Exeter Historical District Commission

November 19, 2015

Final Minutes

Call meeting to order: Patrick Gordon, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7 pm in the Wheelwright Room of the Exeter Town Office Building.

Members present: Patrick Gordon, Chairman, Julie Gilman, Selectwoman, Pam Gjettum, Clerk, Nicole Martineau, Fred Kollmorgen, Valerie Ouellette

Before starting the agenda, Patrick stated that they did have some events at the last meeting that ended a little roughly and he wanted to make a public apology to Doug Eastman and the Planning Department. Patrick stated that he spoke out of line by saying they had taken action by issuing a demolition permit for a property and Patrick did not verify this information with the applicant prior to announcing that at a public meeting and that was his responsibility and he takes full responsibility for that being incorrect. He wanted to say sorry for doing that and it is a lesson he has learned in terms of procedure. Thank you Doug Eastman and the Planning Department for what you do for us.

New Business: Continued public hearing on the application of Leavitt Farm Condominiums Association for new construction/change in appearance to exterior entryway/door at 89 High Street. This is a continuation from the last meeting. Applicant not present so Fred made a motion to table the application. Julie seconded. All were in favor and application tabled to December 2015.

Next on the agenda is the application of Kathleen Mahoney (d/b/a Porches At Exeter, LLC) for demolition of the existing structure located at 20 Franklin Street, (former Al's Automotive), and for proposed new construction of a three-story residential townhouse structure to include five dwelling units. Jeff Demers was representing Kathleen Mahoney. He is the architect for her project. Kathleen was unable to attend due to a family obligation. Jeff passed out some paperwork to the commission. He is here tonight for some feedback. As a designer, he respects historical scales, such as roofs. One of the sheets showed the material they would like to use. Jeff asked the commission not to be put off by the color of the sheets he passed out because those are not the colors they are proposing. Jeff and Kathleen are still talking about the proper pallet for all of this. Patrick stated that in the commission guidelines, they do not have any jurisdiction over color. The commission does have guidelines to suggest pallets. Jeff is hoping that this project will revitalize the current conditions on Franklin Street and thereby extend and enhance the historic fabric of the Exeter downtown district. Patrick then asked the commission if they had any questions for Jeff. Julie stated the application was the most complete of any they have ever had. Julie then made a motion to accept the application. Fred seconded. All were in favor and application accepted. A question that Patrick has was there are mid-American vinyl accents on the ends that are called out, both the triangles and circular vents. Are they vinyl in material. Jeff stated that they are. Patrick stated that vinyl is what the commission frowns upon for the exterior. Certainly the commission does not accept it as a siding material. What the commission has accepted in the past in terms of trims that are synthetic, composite or pcs. This means not only the gable ends, but also the shutters as well and Jeff agreed. Fiberglass is a better option for durability of the shutters. Patrick then stated that two other pieces he saw were he doors onto the balconies from the second floor, in appearance they look and are called out as a French door in style and then what shows at the bottom is a sliding door. Jeff stated that the manufacturer represents this as a French sliding door.

Patrick then asked about the divided lights for the windows themselves, will Jeff be using a simulated divided light and Jeff stated that is correct. Patrick stated these were his comments for the front elevation. The commission was concerned about the shutters not being the right size and perhaps not having the shutters as an option. Jeff was not sure how strongly Kathleen feels about the shutters. He will discuss this with her. Patrick stated that he thought the front elevation was too busy. Maybe remove the shutters and embellish the trim around it.

Patrick then stated that in terms of going forward with this application, he needs to ask if anyone from the public would like to speak and there was no one. He then asked the commission if there were any other discussions on this before he calls for a motion and it is going to be a conditional one. Nicole used the shutters as an example. Patrick stated they would need to be fiberglass and not vinyl. Nicole stated yes or no to the shutters. If we keep the shutters what about the what ifs. If we take them out, we ask for more trim but the client is not here to say yes or no, so how do we do this. Nicole hesitates to vote on anything anymore with conditions. It has not been favorable for the commission in the past. Fred suggested that the commission move for approval subject to coming back with drawings and incorporate our comments tonight, including a revised specification sheet. Patrick did not think this was a bad idea based on our comments. The commission will give Jeff a list of the comments. Jeff asked if there could be a condition of approval with conditions because Kathleen and the builder are anxious to get started. The demolition of the building cannot be started without an approval from here. Nicole then stated that she is willing to do a special meeting to approve this. Next week is Thanksgiving so maybe the first week in December. She does not feel comfortable approving anything conditional. Nicole's question to the board is would anyone else be willing to do a special meeting to get this moving forward in a timely manner. All were in agreement for the special meeting. Jeff will check with Kathleen to see if she wants this special meeting and be in touch with the commission.

The list for Jeff is on the front elevation, no shutters on the dog house dormers. We are talking about better proportions for the shutters over the entries. For the windows, simulated divided light and there are several window types that need to be evaluated. Jeff stated that sometimes it is tough to get a certain size window to maintain that proportion throughout certain rooms and is sometimes difficult. Patrick stated that the commission is in agreement that the front elevation in terms of how those light cuts are working with each other and that is ok. Fred stated more information is needed for the brackets. The sliding doors will be French sliding doors. Nicole stated that the shutters in general, the style and material if they are to stay. Patrick again stated non vinyl. Nicole also stated that if the shutters go, decorate the trim. Fred made a suggestion for the client to go and see a home at 72 Front Street. It was built in 1790 and has no shutters. Jeff will let Kathleen know about this. Patrick stated that the commission does not have anything else and a special meeting will be set up if Kathleen requests one. Patrick then asked for a motion to table the application until either December's meeting or a special meeting. Nicole made motion to table application. Julie seconded. All were in favor and application tabled.

Next on the agenda is the application of Paul Young for change in appearance to structure at 129 High Street. Mr. Young was not present and he also had an application for change in appearance to structure at 84 Front Street. Fred made a motion to table both of these applications. Nicole seconded. All were in favor and applications tabled to December's meeting.

Other Business:

Update from Hoyle Tanner & Associates on the String Bridge project. Jen Mason, the assistant town engineer and she had Joseph and Shawn with her from Hoyle Tanner and they will talk about what they have been working on for the String Bridge project and construction on this will begin next year. Shawn

passed out paperwork to the commission. This is their second time in front on the commission. They are working on a rehabilitation of the String Bridge. The project itself is going to include the road being partially closed and concrete repairs will be done to the railing. They will redo some of the utilities. They will be put underground. What is next for Hoyle and Tanner after tonight is they are heading back to the DOT Culture Resource Committee. They are working on preliminary plans that are about 60 percent complete. The final plan is in February and the project will start sometime next year. Nothing has been fully designed or decided yet. The two concerns that the commission had at the last meeting were repairs and the lighting. The rail that is there now is the original rail and it has been repaired in the past. What they are looking for tonight is some input of what the treatment should be particularly for the rail and also on the lighting. The first thing is really to do nothing and just repair the concrete. They did investigate a concrete stain. He brought samples for the commission to see. The concrete stain is not a great solution. It will not look very good. The next is a concrete coating. It is long term and more durable. Nicole stated that the question becomes about the financial reality of this project. This is in the historic district and we should make some sort of effort to make it look uniform so option one is not an option to just patch it and walk away and let it be different colors. She is also not sure if the other two are the right solution either. There does not seem to be enough information. Shawn stated he has one more to talk about and it is an acrylic coating. Patrick likes the acrylic coating and prefers the fine texture because it may hide some of the joints and patches. Shawn stated that if they went the route with the acrylic, they would put in a contract that the contractor would specify three products. They will pick one and then have them do test sections for review.

Jen stated that this is a State Aide Bridge Program and it is an 80/20 split. DOT is covering 80 percent of eligible items. Nicole asked Jen what the towns take is on this. Jen stated that if it is within the budget, it is something that can be considered. It all depends on how the numbers work out. It was a 2008 Warrant Article that was approved for \$1.13 million total, but it was assuming a 20 percent contribution from the town of that \$1.13 million so based on that Warrant Article, we cannot spend much more of our own money on it, so it really comes down to the numbers. Jen stated they are working on a preliminary design right now and will be getting it in December and along with that will be cost estimates. This will give us an idea and if things seem like they are close, there is always the option of doing an alternate so that if the prices from the contractors come in too expensive or if the first option is too expensive, we can pick something else. Fred asked Jen who makes the decision for this and she stated she thought the Selectmen would be the ones who would make that decision.

Patrick stated that as a recommendation from the board, would be to do the repair and let the repair look so esthetically so different, new to old is not necessarily best serve the town. Someone may think that \$1.13 million is spent on this and it looks like it was just patched together. Patrick thinks that the esthetic treatment of it is very important because people will want to think it is a new bridge and something has been done. Patrick stated that as the Chairman of the board, he would be willing to write a letter to the selectmen in recommendation of superior finish. Jen stated it all comes down to the money and they are right at the \$1.13 million for everything – engineering, the design, the construction, all of it. Patrick asked if the article was from 2008 and Jen said it was. Patrick then stated that seven or eight years later and no inflation. Jen stated that if they were to put in an application now, funding would not be available for ten years. The last part is the utilities will be put underground and also one of the lights. Patrick asked if the board had any other questions and they did not. Jen stated they will probably have another meeting at some point to talk about utilities, they can also talk about an appropriate time to bring this in front of the selectmen once they have preliminary designs so we actually have something to show and present.

Next is RSA 79E discussion with Economic Development Director, Darren Winham. Darren passed out information to the commission which included the actual RSA and an application. Darren stated that he

wanted to talk to the commission about the 79E and what this group's role is in it, along with the Heritage Commission. This is a new tool that was designed by the State to be very lenient in its implementation. This tool is used at the town's discretion. The town voted this in and the incentive is for qualifying structures. Darren stated what is important is the time line. Someone submits an application and there is 60 days before a hearing has to be held. What Darren plans to do with the select board is two things. One, what type of covenant do they want. What will they accept and the second part is what the trigger time is for the time frame. In other words, what can and cannot be done before someone makes an application in order to qualify. Julie asked Darren to explain where this commission comes into play in this process. If you look at the RSA on page 3, it mentions Heritage and HDC. Darren stated that if someone was doing rehabilitation and it is a historic structure, there is nothing within the RSA that says the HDC will weigh in. His assumption is that this board probably wants to have some sort of input because they have to come in front of the commission anyway. Nicole stated only the structures in the commission's district. Julie stated there were two points here. One is if it is worked on in the historic district, we are going to see it anyway. The other areas, Portsmouth Avenue and around the train station are not in the historic district. Patrick stated that what is within the historic overlays, we are going to see and we can have a determination of whether it meets the qualification for benefit. Outside of that historic overlay, the Heritage Commission should be the one that is reviewed on that. Patrick stated that there is the potential that someone could say this enhances the economic liability downtown, but say nothing about the cultural or historical and the commission would have no recommendation. Darren's thought is that if it is a historical building, the select board would want to hear from this commission. Nicole agrees with this. She stated she understands the role of the Heritage Commission and she thinks it is valuable, but for renovations, new construction, additions, this is not their specialty. She is questioning that rule on whether this is the way we want it or not. Fred stated that Nicole was implying the commission should take on more responsibility. Nicole stated she is trying to understand whose responsibility it ultimately is going to be. Darren stated because they have 60 days and if the board agrees with him, the 60 days do not matter in terms of the time frame. If the board had the trigger mechanism come earlier, the 60 days could take too long. He does not see any reason why if the structure is historic that is something that can go into a system electronically to the members this board and the Heritage Commission. Darren would like to merge these two boards together on the 79E issue so they could give input on any historic structure.

Darren stated that two things have to happen for an application to be approved and qualified in order to get the incentive is the covenants have to be accepted and the application has to be accepted. He stated that the easiest way to do this that an applicant applies and you start a project and you are half way through it, too bad. You can only get the incentive from the time the trigger starts.

Julie stated that she voiced a concern to Darren a few days ago. The trigger is when someone comes in and applies and may have already started work. What is our purpose if the work is already started. Darren stated that just because the work has been started, does not mean that all the decision have been made on it. It could be a project that has phases. Where he sees this commission and the Heritage Commission being involved is if it is a historic structure, the commissions would want to weigh in on it one way or the other. Nicole agrees with what Darren is saying but thinks the commission should be cautious. If someone comes to the commission and they are 70 or 80 percent done, that is way too far for the commission to even make a comment. The question then becomes, when is too much and too far for creating that trigger. Fred stated that this just adds more items to our agendas that are not in our district. Darren is willing to come back again and let the commission take this information and think about it. He is not going to the select board until he has some feedback from this commission and the Heritage Commission. Nicole would like to keep the option open. Patrick stated that one thing he thinks an applicant would get great benefit out of would be promotes the preservation and reuse of existing buildings by rehabilitation of historic structures.

Patrick stated he thinks there are definitely opportunities for this commission and the Heritage Commission to want to weigh in. Patrick stated going back to what the commission is actually recommending as it is written, the only thing the commission needs to approve or recommend to the Board of Selectmen is if it enhances or improves the structure that is culturally or historically important. Nicole thinks it is still worth it to have it pass through the commission.

Darren wants the commission to think about this and talk again. He will say to the select board that it is his recommendation that any historic structure go to the Heritage Commission and the HDC for input if they want to give it. This is what he is recommending. Patrick asked Darren to ask if it has to be a public hearing because if it does have to have a public meeting, then the commission has to have a meeting to do it or a special meeting. Fred stated that the commission is already stretched pretty thin. They are all volunteers and there is a high turnover because people get burnt out sitting on this commission and other boards. For the commission to get together and discuss something is very hard. The commission thanked Darren for coming.

Next is the approval of the October 15, 2015 minutes. Patrick gave his copy with changes to the recording secretary. Pam made a motion to approve with changes. Fred seconded. All were in favor and minutes approved.

Patrick stated there was one more item. They had in front of them draft recommendations for a new certificate of appropriateness for signage within the HDC that Nicole prepared for the commission for comments. Nicole would like any comments by December 1st. They can be e-mailed to her. She would like to get them before the next meeting.

Second piece is the request for proposal for the Historic District Design Regulations. This will be requesting firms to submit their qualifications and proposals for helping us re-write our guidelines into regulations. This is a document that also has been reviewed by the town manager and it does have some legal language in it. This is something the commission is trying to issue by November 30th so comments are needed as soon as possible. Nicole would really like any comments back by this Sunday. Patrick stated that the accepted applicant's proposal and subsequent guidelines will be paid for by the Certified Government Grant for 2015. Patrick stated to read, digest and send comments to Nicole. The RFP is the top priority and the signage application is second priority.

The last piece Patrick has is from Protecting NH Coastal Water Shed Communities, it is the NH Coastal Risks and Hazards Commission draft recommendations. This is an invitation from them to join one of their discussion groups.

With no further business, Julie made a motion to adjourn. Fred seconded. All were in favor and meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Herrick
Recording Secretary