

Heritage Commission/Demolition Review Committee

December 15, 2021

Final Minutes

Members Present: Jay Myers, Chairman, Julie Gilman, Select Board Rep., Pam Gjettum, Clerk, John Merkle, Vice Chair, John Grueter, Planning Board Rep., Bill Campbell

Call Meeting to Order: Jay Myers, Chairman, called meeting to order at 7:00 pm in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office Building.

This is a public meeting to discuss a proposal by Exonian Properties LLC for the proposed partial demolition to the roof of the existing structure located at 43 Front Street in order to facilitate dormer windows and balconies. Parcel #72-198.

Members from Exonian Properties were present.

Jay then entertained a motion to open this hearing. Bill made the motion and Pam seconded. All were in favor and motion approved.

Jay said the purpose of this meeting is to consider some applications at the property of 43 Front Street. This is a public hearing so it is an opportunity for the public to hear about the proposed design. We are here because the Zoning Ordinance gives the Heritage Commission an opportunity to preview building demolition. Jay then turned it over to the property owners.

Rob Law spoke and said he had met most of the commission members at the site walk. He is an associate with an architect firm in Boston and he is working with David Cowie and Florence Ruffner of Exonian Properties.

He said our project is about proposing an adaptive use of this beautiful, historic church. We are proposing an eleven unit condo building. He had a few slides to show the commission members. How we are proposing to do this is by infilling with two new floors, a third level and a fourth level. The ground level would be lifted up for accessibility.

Rob said the main thing we are proposing here are dormers on either side of the existing building. In order to do that, portions of the existing lower roof and a portion of the main roof structure will need to be demolished. Another thing he wanted to point out is some of the texts on the slides are red and they represent minor changes to what they had initially submitted to this committee. One of the items that we are proposing is replacing the existing roof with asphalt shingle. In their opinion, a lot of the roof structure design is the addition of the dormers is really going to be a focal point of the building. Going with another material that may have more detailing to it, might draw more attention to it.

Another one of the changes they made to this plan was on the third floor regarding the windows. He said the next change they wanted to highlight is that they are going to propose to keep the tower slate. He said this is really a key part to the building and they felt very strongly the slate should remain in the tower.

Rob said on the front elevation, they are proposing to keep the window heads and jambs as they are, but lower the windowsills to a more residential height.

The front steps are not in good shape and they feel this is a strong part of the architecture and they would like to do what they can to save those existing steps and possibly give them a new life with a stone cladding or something appropriate. The steps would also have new railings.

Finally Rob talked about the rose window. What they are proposing is that they will keep the master frame of the rose window and just remove the stain glass portion and insert clear vision glass.

Jay then asked the commission members if they had any questions, thoughts or comments.

John Grueter said he is confused about what was said about replacing roofing with synthetic slate and at some point it was said the slate would stay on the tower and there was also talk about architectural shingles and asphalt. He then asked this to be clarified.

Rob said their initial submission to the commission was for a synthetic slate product for the entire roof and the tower. After more consideration of what that would mean and look, they felt that the tower should have the slate that is there and be repaired. He said they then wondered what to do with the main expanse of the roof. He said there is some existing scalloping detailing in that slate as it sits now. Once you put a dormer addition there, all of sudden it becomes a focal point of the roof line. He said they felt by putting slate back and having that kind of detailing might make it look too busy and that is why they are changing their position and propose asphalt.

Bill said his concern about the whole project is the fact that this church resides in what he calls a settled area and there has not been much disturbance. He thinks what is proposed is radical and what does it add to the historic nature of this area.

Pam said she shares Bill's concern, but on the other hand, she was afraid that the whole thing might go and this is much better.

Jay said he likes the idea that owners are paying special attention to the steeple and the bell tower and maintaining them.

Rob said they are going to insert a floor in there so it is like lofted living space for that condo unit. He said this is one of those times when they would want to mimic what was there in a new creation way.

Jay then asked John Merkle if he had any comments. John said he is really torn by this but he understands and he likes what they have done. He said they have kept the spirit of what the building was. John said as far as the demolition part of it, he felt it was handled very well.

Bill made a motion to close the public hearing. Julie seconded. All were in favor and public meeting was closed.

Pam made a motion for the commission having no objection to demolition as presented. Julie seconded. All were in favor except for Bill.

With no further business, meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Herrick

Recording Secretary