

Exeter Historic District Commission

Final Minutes

April 19, 2018

Call Meeting to Order: Patrick Gordon, Chairman, called meeting to order at 7:00 pm in the Novak Room of the Exeter Town Office Building.

Members present: Patrick Gordon, Chairman, Valerie Ouellette, Julie Gilman, Select Board Member, Pam Gjettum, Clerk, Curtis Boivin, Vice Chair, Gregory Colling

New Business: Public Hearing: Continued public hearing on the application of Excel Construction Management (on behalf of Freedman Realty, Inc.) for change to the existing structure located at 173 Water Street. The applicant is requesting review of modifications to the existing building to construct a covered parking lot, a second and third story addition to the structure and associated site improvements. This is Case # 18-01. Patrick stated that the commission did receive a letter from Michael Todd from Excel Construction requesting a continuation of their application until June 21, 2018. They will submit a complete submission on or before June 4, 2018. Patrick then asked the board if they should make a request to the town to send out notification to the abutters after June 4th. Curtis then stated that he thought the town only had to notify the abutters once with the original application but not for any other information. Julie then stated that was correct. Patrick then stated that the commission will use these minutes now to let any abutter aware who may be watching, that the complete submission for the revised drawings will be into the town, on or before June 4, 2018. If they would like to see the new revised submissions, please come to the town after June 4th. Patrick then asked for a motion to table this public hearing until June 21, 2018. Pam made a motion to table the application until June 21st. Julie seconded. All were in favor and the application was tabled.

Next is the application of Carl Stevens for change to an existing structure to permit the addition/restoration of the porch handrail and porch ceiling and to remove some existing landscaping at 61 High Street. This is Case # 18-03. Mr. Stevens stated that he and his wife own 61 High Street. He then stated that this is a continuation of a two decade renovation project. It has been moving along very slowly because they had been renting the house for most of the time, but they moved in a year ago this June. He is trying to wrap up some of the projects they started awhile ago. He started back in 2002-2003 when he did the stone wall around the bottom and fixed the flooring. Now, they would like to do the railings and ceiling. They also would like to get rid of some of the vegetation because it has grown so tall, especially the pine tree. He then stated that two springs ago they had a flooded basement because the roots of the tree grew into the sewer pipe. The pine tree or the burning bush are right on top of the sewer line. For a variety of reasons, they would like them to go. Gregory stated that there were three items: handrails, ceiling and tree removal. Patrick stated that was correct. He then asked if the handrail was intended to replace the wooden one that is there now. Mr. Stevens stated that the handrail will be made of aluminum, curved and white and a matching set of railings going down the steps. Gregory asked Mr. Stevens why he would not just replace what was there before, rather than introducing new material. Mr. Stevens stated he chose this handrail because the original handrail was a

massive section made out of sawed pieces and they got quotes of \$15,000 for a curved wooden handrail. This one he got quoted for \$5,000-\$6,000 and it can be bent to match the radius of the porch. They did not want the massive handrail and the maintenance that goes with it. He feels that the one he has chosen is rod iron looking and a good compromise. He then stated that he could have gotten one made out of cedar, but he would have to assemble it and paint it. This was going to cost around \$7,500. Patrick stated he believes Gregory's concerns are that these materials are thinner and lighter and easier to bend, they are going to look out of place because they are the wrong proportion for the rest of the porch. Patrick then stated that he is not sure this handrail will be acceptable. Patrick's opinion is that it will look a little foreign in style. Curtis then asked Mr. Stevens about going with steel and powder coating. Mr. Stevens stated that the welder he uses did that on his house and the rust bleeds through. He will be painting this white and from the start he knew that he wanted to use aluminum because if there were voids in the paint, there will not be rust bleeding out. Gregory then stated that everything requires maintenance. Patrick stated that what is appropriate to the style has not necessarily been submitted and that is what the commission has to make the decision about. Julie stated that introducing a railing that is lighter than the commission had seen in the past is not ideal, but she thinks it might be in keeping with what is going on. Gregory stated that the metal railing will look odd, like a commercial style railing and inappropriate on this style house. Gregory stated that the commission is there to decide what is appropriate. Mr. Stevens does not understand why back in 2007 when it became part of the historical district, it does not seem right look back at old photos that he has brought in and then use them against him. Gregory stated that the commission is not using the photos against him. They just understand the style of the house and what has been appropriate for it. Mr. Stevens stated that most of the things that would be appropriate to the house have been ripped off. Mr. Stevens then stated that this all happened prior to him owning the home. He then stated that he thinks the railing matches many that can be seen around town. Pam then stated that Mr. Stevens has done a lot of work and the commission is not questioning that. she is not too sure that the porch railing will look too thin, but she has a hard time visualizing it. Patrick stated that knowing this is what the commission has to deal with, is it appropriate or not. The commission then went on for several minutes with discussions of the ceiling and floors of the porch. Patrick asked Mr. Stevens if he has decided on a color for the ceiling. He stated that he has not. Patrick stated that very traditionally and historically, Robin egg blue is used as a porch ceiling color. Patrick told Mr. Stevens that this is just a discussion because they have no jurisdiction over colors. Julie stated that no one really knows where the blue painting on the ceilings come from. Curtis then stated that it was said that they used this color because the flies would not come because they would think it was the sky. Patrick then opened up the discussion for further discussion on the porch ceiling. Gregory asked about the recessed lighting that was on the application and where they would be going. Mr. Stevens stated that he has not made note of where he found the painted over sockets. He was imagining one light in between each set of columns. He is not sure at this time. They have now moved on to the tree and the landscaping. Mr. Stevens stated that he put a new little bush in front of their gas service. He wants to remove all four of the burning bushes and the pine tree. Patrick then stated that the commission should return to the railing. Mr. Stevens then stated that he thought when the new change was voted in at the last election, he sold himself in his head that would apply go projects like this. Patrick stated "minimum impact". Mr. Stevens stated that he has built it already and it is sitting in his garage, but it is not painted. Gregory asked him if he had the handrail fabricated and Mr. Stevens stated that he had. Pam then asked what they can work out here. Valerie then stated that her opinion is that this railing goes against most of the rules and she thinks it should be wood. Mr. Stevens stated that this is the railing that they want and feel it would allow a better view of the house. The other rail was just unattractive and blocked the view. He also does not think visually, it will make a huge difference. Patrick stated that since he has already purchased the railing, it sways the commission because it makes them feel guilty if they are trying to tell

him to use something else, when in fact, that might be the right decision. The reason they have this commission and have public hearings is to allow any abutters or anyone to have the ability to speak out for or against the project. Patrick then recommended to the commission members that they disregard the railing is fabricated so that it does not sway your decision one way or the other. Mr. Stevens stated that he understands, but stated that he added all the historical photos of his home. He then stated that when he was at the Planning Office, he told them that he feels like he is putting himself at risk because he is providing too much information. He felt by providing these photos, the commission would see that the railing they were doing was a curved railing with balusters and they were being true to the basic idea of what that porch had. Patrick stated that he does not feel that Mr. Stevens did himself an injustice by bringing in the photos. The home has changed so much since the original photo and it is not going back there and the commission does not have the authority to have him go back to that. The commission has to evaluate what they have now and what is in front of them. Patrick stated the commission is trying to work with Mr. Stevens to find out if the very delicate railings he has work with what the existing condition is of the home and still work with the overall composition of the home. Patrick stated that he does not think the railing is appropriate. He thinks it is too thin and it does not fit the proportions of the home at all. He then left it open to other members of the commission to comment on before he asks for a motion for acceptance and then approval. Curtis stated that it is not the appropriate railing. The only benefit is does not negatively, permanently affect the structure. Pam asked if there was any way to bulk it up and Patrick stated that there is not. Pam then stated that if the commission votes, "no". Mr. Stevens will just go to the ZBA and they will say "yes". Mr. Stevens agreed that is what he will do. Gregory stated that the commission is here to make recommendations. The intent of the HDC is that homeowners should come to the commission and talk about what changes they are planning to make to their historic home in the district and that is where the commission can serve a positive role in the community and help preserve the historic value of this town. He then stated that at this point, it is out of the commission's hands because Mr. Stevens has already made the railing and will be putting it up. Gregory then stated that he is going to serve his role on this commission and express what he thinks Mr. Stevens should do and that is all he can do. Mr. Stevens stated as someone who bought a home and it was not a historic district and then it became a historic district, that is a completely different mind set. For years, he stated it did not matter what they did. The only decisions they made were what would make the house look nice. Patrick wanted to make a comment about the commission's recommendations and what they are as a commission. He stated that he does not know how this will go because it is a selectmen decision. There is a reason that they are The Historic Commission and the recommendations they make. There are three architects sitting on the board right now and they all have passion for the architecture and preserving the property the best way they can. He is not sure which way this will go. Patrick then called for a motion to accept the application, which is that they have enough information to make a decision on the approval or denial of the application. Pam made a motion to accept the application. Curtis seconded. All were in favor and application was accepted. Moving on to approval, Patrick opened it up for the last time for any commission members with questions or comments on the application. There were none. Patrick then stated there are three components to the application. The railing, the ceiling and the landscaping. Pam made a motion to approve the landscaping and the ceiling. Gregory seconded. Patrick stated that this would mean denial of the railing. Curtis stated that the application should include all aspects. Patrick agreed. Pam made a motion to remove her first motion and Curtis withdrew his second. Pam then made a motion to approve Case #18-03 with change to existing structure. Patrick stated this includes all three components. There was no second. Motion failed. Curtis made a motion to approve the application the remove the landscaping, remove the ceiling, but to recommend the railing be constructed out of wood. Julie seconded. This motion also failed. Patrick then asked if there was a third motion. Julie made a motion to approve two sections of the application which are the landscaping and the porch

ceiling and deny the railing. Curtis seconded. All were in favor and motion for two sections approved. Mr. Stevens was not happy. He stated that this is very personal. He got up and left.

Other Business: Approval of Minutes for March 15, 2018. Julie abstained because she was not at the meeting and also Patrick. The commission reviewed the minutes and had a few changes. Pam made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Curtis seconded. All were in favor and minutes approved.

Julie wanted to speak about questions and comments. She stated that at the last meeting, Ms. Ouellette made some comments about a previous project that had already gone through the process and had a resolution and it is really inappropriate to talk about our past decisions at our meeting stating your opposition or your endorsement of a project that has already gone through. Gregory asked if that was just before the meeting had adjourned and Julie stated it was. Gregory then asked if they are free to speak right after the meeting is adjourned. Patrick stated that technically if they have a quorum, it needs to be notified to the public.

With no other business, Julie made a motion to adjourn. Patrick seconded. All were in favor and meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Herrick
Recording Secretary