

Historic District Commission

May 16, 2019

Final Minutes

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, Pam Gjetum, Clerk, Kathy Corson, Select Board, Gregory Colling, Curtis Boivin, Vice Chair, Nicholas Gray

New Business: Public Hearings: The application of Morin Contracting Services, Inc. (on behalf of Citizens Bank) for the proposed replacement of exterior doors in the structure located at 154 Water Street. Case # 19-03.

Dan Morin of Morin Contracting is representing Citizens Bank. Dan stated that what the bank is looking to do is replace the existing two doors at the main branch on Water Street. The doors have a long history with the bank. Probably about twelve years ago, they spent quite a bit of money to rehab the doors. They were fully refurbished and brought back to life. What has happened since then, is they have been experiencing further issues with these doors because they are wood. About a year or so ago, the bank underwent a full renovation and the doors were fitted with a card reader. They have been having a lot of issues with the reader. The bank has people out constantly trying to fix the problem. They have spent thousands of dollars on these doors. This is a seasonal thing also. When the doors swell, they will adjust them in the summer time. Winter time, there are frost issues. There have been some security issues because this is their main door. What happens sometimes is that the doors are not latching and securing. When they are doing their branch openings, someone can literally walk by and open the door. They have also had issues during the day when the doors are binding. Customers are walking away because they think the bank is closed do to the latching mechanism. Another big thing with them is ADA accessibility. The existing doors that are there now, and a pair of doors that will not allow for a wheelchair access. With the renovations, they did install two automatic door openers with a push button to open to help. When you have two doors, you have twice the issues of something going wrong. Due to the binding of the doors, one door will open and one will stay closed. So what this does is that someone in a wheelchair cannot get in and the bank really frowns upon that. They are having issues with accessibility, security and basic operation of the doors. The bank does know that it is in a historic district and they did this before several years ago.

Mr. Morin then stated that the bank would like to know if the commission would consider replacement of these doors and replace the new ones with aluminum. Knowing that these are very historic doors, try to keep appearance the same. The aluminum doors they have researched, look like wood. He stated that there is a great expense to this. The bank would really like the commission's permission to change these doors. They are willing to try to make something look historical. Mr. Morin included a drawing in the packet each member had. It is a preliminary drawing of what the doors could be. It would be going from a pair of doors down to one single door, 36" wide with wheelchair accessibility and two side panels on either side. Still taking up the same footprint of the opening that is there. Mr. Morin had samples from the manufacturer of what the aluminum will look like. It is made to look like a wooden door.

Patrick asked the members if they had any questions. Gregory stated that he has looked at the doors and he does not think they are original to the building. They look like they were a later addition and for the period of the building, there would not have been stained wood. He states he looks at the proposal for the storefront with the arch, and he does not think that would look attractive. It is a Georgian Building with white trim and these doors do not suit the building. He would prefer to see a simple storefront door there.

Curtis stated that one of the issues is frost heaving. How is replacing a door going to resist the frost heave. If you put an aluminum door in, isn't the problem still there. Mr. Morin stated that it is. What would happen when the doors were removed, the threshold area below the doors would be excavated down to the foundation. Curtis had another comment that anytime a material tries to mimic another material like aluminum and make it look like wood, does not seem like an appropriate solution. Mr. Morin stated that they are obviously open to suggestions. Curtis stated that he thinks the biggest thing is safety and security. The commission cannot prevent someone from make something safe and secure. Patrick asked if in the future of this building, is there any other option for an AEPA entrance. Mr. Morin stated that there is one around the backside, but it is not the main entrance to the bank. This one also does not allow any wheelchair access.

Pam state that she understands why they need a new door. She then stated that the commission really does discourage using aluminum. Is there anything else that could be used. Mr. Morin stated that the bank is really trying to do away with wooden doors. There are metal, aluminum, wood and glass doors and really this was the only feasible option that the bank is looking to help diminish their maintenance cost with the constant upkeep of these doors. Replacing the doors with new wood doors may be better, but probably not alleviate what the bank is trying to do.

Pam stated that it is a beautiful, nice federal building. Gregory then asked Mr. Morin if he had a picture of the building and he did not. Gregory stated that it would be helpful. He then stated that he thinks the aluminum storefront door with the top rail with the arch cut out of it, is not very good looking. It is not a very good substitute for the doors that are there. He prefers to see a simple design. They have an overall picture of the building and it is a brick Georgian Building with white trim and there is a white transom above this door that can be seen in the image Mr. Morin provided. Gregory would suggest just putting in white aluminum storefront doors that would blend in with facade. Gregory then stated that these doors always bothered him when he walked by because they are not appropriate for the building. Patrick then stated that he thinks what Gregory is trying to say is what they have there is trying to be something it is not. It does not match the building. What the commission sees presented is the nature of the aluminum is very thin. More beneficial would have been larger stock, heavier styles, heavier trim because it is made from traditional lumber and that is where it got its strength. He thinks Gregory is spot on in the sense that let's not try to replicate that panel arch that is there because it adds immense cost. He thinks that a representation that is more in the style of the overall building that is heavier. Patrick stated that the arch transom above is absolutely beautiful and that should be the inspiration for what is going on down below. Patrick then stated as for doing aluminum and doing faux paint on top of the aluminum, he agrees with Curtis that it always tries to be something it is not. He knows there are manufacturers out there that are probably cheaper than what the current solution is. They are an aluminum clad exterior door, commercial grade, interior wood door. Patrick thinks this would be more appropriate than the aluminum style and frame.

Curtis then stated that he agrees with what Patrick said because he specified commercial wood aluminum clad doors quite often for storefronts.

Patrick said that the commission's recommendation would something that has a little bit more thought involving the transom above, style of the building and maybe it will be completely solid or maybe there are no lights at all. Mr. Morin stated that the other issue that has been happening is the grates that are

on the windows because if somebody is not paying full attention, they have bumped the door into somebody coming in.

Gregory stated that he thinks the building has its own integrity and the opening now reads kind of a void, its dark. To have something light there, would be ok too. Gregory stated that he is contradicting what Patrick is saying about creating heavy styles and rails on the door. Gregory then stated that for him, aluminum always looks better because it is a stronger material. Patrick stated that whether it is aluminum or something else, it should try and stay within the proportions of the overall historic look. Mr. Morin stated that he thinks this could definitely happen and it is encouraging talking about it. He thinks that even with tradition aluminum, he likes the idea of using white to match the windows that are there. You can add some flare to aluminum storefronts and they do not have to be just plain styles and square rails. They can introduce an architect to see what they can do to come up with a design based on the building and the arch above.

Patrick then asked if there was anyone from the public who wanted to speak out for or against the project. There were none. He asked if there were any more questions from the board. Curtis stated that the next question would be whether Mr. Morin wants to proceed with the application and we vote on it, or if he wants to re-apply. Patrick stated he thinks the next step would be to accept the application before they approve it. He feels the commission has enough to accept. Curtis stated unless he wants to withdraw the application and re-apply. Patrick stated they can accept the application and table it. Patrick then asked for a motion to accept. Pam made a motion to accept and Curtis seconded. All were in favor and application accepted. Patrick stated they now have the information and had a good discussion with good direction. He then asked with Mr. Morin's approval to table it for final approval. He will come back with what he has that is new because the board does not have that today. Mr. Morin stated that if he understands correctly if they were to use the white aluminum, is that something that the board would agree with. Patrick stated this was an option that was presented and he does not think it would be a violation of any of their regulations and it could be brought back as an option. Curtis stated that he is not completely sold on the aluminum storefront, but he is not saying no to it. Mr. Morin stated that aluminum storefronts are not like the 70s. They have added a lot of different options. He then stated that maybe it is the commercial in him but wooden entryway vs aluminum entryway for security. He understands that there are products out there that are very heavy duty, but they are really trying to get away with using wood.

Gregory wanted to clarify one thing. There are aluminum storefront systems that are used for restoration projects that have traditional profiles.

Patrick then asked for a motion to table the application. Curtis made the motion to table it. Pam seconded. All were in favor and application tabled.

Next, but not on the agenda, Emma Gray, the Executive Director of the American Museum down town wanted to meet with the board to let them know they are about to start a large scale rehabilitation project around the perimeter of the Gilman House to address drainage issues. They are just in the midst of engineering plans so she wanted to come meet with the board to notify they will be starting. This is an LCHIP based project so it will be overseen by the Division of Historic Resources. They will be starting archaeology on Monday and it will just be the archaeology at this point. This is going to be primarily rehabilitation work to address drainage issues. There is a lot of moisture coming into the basement of the 1721 Gilman House. They are working to regrade a lot of the property to keep that water flowing away. She would like to get a sense of what the commission would like them to come to them for approval. The scope of the project will be to address drainage in terms of pulling up concrete masonry skirt that was put in around the 1950s and replacing that with a more modern drip edge. They will also be adding in a pathway to the landscape, addition of new storm doors and then foundation repairs. Emma stated that she believes this project will go through October or November.

Patrick stated that the HDC would like to review the archaeology elements and storm doors. Patrick then stated that if there are any other architect features of landscaping like a stone wall, guard rail, those elements the commission would like to see. Emma then stated that there will be some elements because they have a stone retaining wall, part of which has already failed on the property. They will be regrading and moving those stones from the property completely and re-sloping it. This is what the engineer has proposed and they are waiting for LCHIPs approval on. Patrick asked if she had any history on the wall. Emma stated that she was told it had been put in over 100 years ago. Emma stated that she will be back when she receives the approval and will be added on the agenda for the June's meeting.

Other Business: The approval of the March 21, 2019 minutes. Patrick opened it up to questions, comments, amendments. He was absent so he will abstain. Gregory was also absent and will abstain. Pam made a motion to approve the minutes. Curtis seconded. All were in favor and minutes approved.

Last on the agenda is the election of officers. Patrick stated that every seat is available and nominations can be taken. Pam nominated Patrick to be Chairman again. He was happy to accept the position for another year. Nicholas seconded Patrick's nomination. All were in favor and Patrick is Chairman for the next year. Moving on the Vice Chair. Patrick said that Curtis is doing a fantastic job and would like him to continue. Curtis would be glad to take the position again. Gregory seconded. All were in favor and Curtis will remain Vice Chair. Last position is the Clerk. Pam stated that she would do it again. Curtis seconded her nomination. All were in favor and Pam will remain Clerk.

With no further business, Pam made a motion to adjourn. Gregory seconded. All were in favor and meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Herrick
Recording Secretary