

Historic District Commission

November 21, 2019

Final Minutes

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

Members Present: Patrick Gordon, Chairman, Pam Gjettum, Clerk, Kathy Corson, Select Board, Greg Colling, Curtis Boivin, Vice Chair

New Business: Public Hearings: The application of Richard and Carol Miller for window replacement in the structure located at 30 High Street. Case #19-07. This is a continuation from last meeting in October. Carol Miller stated that she is the owner of the property at 30 High Street and Anthony is here to speak about the windows. Anthony stated he works for Window World. He stated that currently at 30 High Street there are 24 existing vinyl windows. Thirteen other windows will be replaced with the same brand of windows that are there. There are four windows in the back right dining area and one window in the very back of the house. Six on the left side, second floor on the driveway side and two on the second floor, left side. The commission had a packet with drawings of the property and windows. Patrick stated that there are 24 existing vinyl windows on the property and 13 others. He then asked what the 13 others were. Anthony stated that the 13 others needed to be replaced. He then stated that they are all wood. Patrick asked if they had energy panels on them. Anthony did not know if they did or not. Pam then said that she had been up and looked at the windows and they looked like they had storms on them, as far as she could tell. Anthony said that if they do the windows, they will take the storm windows out because there is no need for them and they would be removed. They will be replacing 13 windows that are not currently vinyl. Patrick asked with the notes they had given and the comments they gave in October in regards to the guidelines, did the applicant receive a copy since then or picked one up and read it. Anthony stated he did get a copy of it the other day. Patrick stated that one of the comments was and it is in the guidelines, that vinyl windows themselves are not historically appropriate. He then asked what is changing from this application tabled from the October meeting to now that would somehow satisfy those guidelines. Anthony stated they are putting in the same windows as stated before. Patrick then said that there still is a nonconformance to day light opening. They are being replaced as not full tear out and leaving the frames. This further reduces the day light opening. They are not traditional, they are welded corners. Patrick also stated that Anthony had made a comment about asking what alternatives there are to energy efficiency in terms of these windows in lieu of vinyl. He then asked if they have pursued any of these options. Anthony said that Carol Miller basically wants them all to match. Kathy then stated that the issue they have is they already have vinyl replacement windows on the building. Kathy then asked Carol how long ago the vinyl windows had been replaced. She stated around five years ago. Kathy said as much as the commission hates the vinyl windows, they are there.. Patrick said it is not that they hate them, they are not conforming. Kathy agreed but said they already have them. Curtis then stated there is a precedence on the house and he agrees with what Kathy is saying, but a precedence does not meet the commission standards. Kathy then stated that she thinks the commission should deny it so they can go the Zoning Board and not continue to sit here and talk about it because they are going to go to the Zoning Board and they will

appeal it like they did with the other one. Patrick said this has happened three times now and it is frustrating on their parts because there is grant money and a ton of personal time that went into writing those guidelines. It is frustrating that people do not even get them when they fill out applications. Patrick then stated that he does not really understand what they are expecting to be different without different information. Carol Miller stated that they have 24 windows in the house now that are vinyl and two of them are on the right side of the house. The Secretary of Interior Standards again in Washington DC for Historic Preservations gave vinyl windows a ten year lifetime in terms of recycled replacement and cost. In five years you will be back here asking for more vinyl windows to replace the others that have now failed. Patrick said they have seen it in properties in town where the vinyl windows are bowed. This is one of the reasons they have written the guidelines the way they have written them. Patrick said he cannot be comfortable saying these windows coming in are going to be historically appropriate. Pam then said that she does understand how Carol Miller feels. Half the house is already vinyl windows but the commission does not like to accept vinyl windows. She said they gave a variance a few years back to the academy to put in vinyl windows and then they had to take them all out and put in wood windows. The vinyl windows were warping and not fitting in right. She then said she hates to have the applicant go to another board which is another step and it must be frustrating for everybody. Gregory said that is unfortunate because it is a prominent house in the Historic District. It has a presence and it is practically in the middle of the Historic District. Ironically, a historic district identification sign is on their property on the corner. It makes it difficult to sit here as a Historic District Commission and basically give up and say sure we are going to let you put vinyl windows on a historic house. It sets a bad precedence for the rest of the community and other people who face the same issues with maintaining their historic homes. Kathy then asked if they could for the record just state and reiterate that so that it is part of the record. Unfortunately with this one, there is not much you can do but at least if you state that this is obviously not going to happen in a house. Gregory then said that this is not setting precedence for future discussions that this commission makes and advice they provide. Kathy agreed and said this is all they can really do in that sense. She said she is being hard but they know what is going to happen. Curtis then stated that he is sympathetic to the precedence that has already been set on the house with vinyl windows and looking to match that. He is disappointed that they have not sought out a clad window option and compared the cost of that option with the looks of it on the house. To look at something that meets are standards, how much does it cost to put a clad window on the house? It is also disappointing too because you can call up and get a free estimate for that or even fiberglass. Anthony said that their windows are guaranteed for a long time and these windows will not have to be replaced in 3, 4, or 5 years. The quality of their windows is second to none. Patrick said the reason they have gone through the extensive research of materials for windows in particular is because of the failures they have seen with replacement windows. He then said that they are going around in circles a little bit here in the sense that clearly you have not read the guidelines so he does not think there is any point to them continuing to argue the merits of the work that was put into those guidelines. Patrick then asked for a motion to first accept the application and go from there. Pam made a motion to accept the application. Curtis seconded. All were in favor and application accepted. Patrick then asked if there were any additional questions or comments from the commission members. Gregory stated there was an aluminum or vinyl door that was replaced on that building as well and done not that long ago, at least on time while on the Historic Commission. It seems there are things happening to that house and then they are asking us to approve based on precedence of windows that have already been replaced and he does not think this is fair. Carol Miller asked what

Gregory said about the front door. He said that it has been replaced recently. Carol said that it had been. Gregory then said that it did not come before the Historic Commission to his knowledge. Carol's daughter said that she thinks it came through the commission. No member can remember. Patrick asked Carol if the original door that was replaced was wood. She said it was. Patrick asked again if there were any more questions or comments from the commission members. Pam said that nobody looked up how much it would cost to get another kind of window. That is correct. Curtis stated even though cost is not a burden. Carol then said that she was not doing this for the cost. She has combination windows like these in her house and they have been there for twenty years. They have never bowed or anything. She thinks it just depends on the expense of the window. Kathy then said if the commission members want to deny it, to just deny it so they can go on to the ZBA because that is what is going to happen. Gregory said they are trying to help and have a better outcome than giving up. Gregory then asked Carol if she would consider an alternative window system. Carol asked if they would look different than what is up there, the vinyl ones. Patrick said they would look better because there would be more glass. Gregory said they would look more appropriate to the historic character of the home. Pam then said that it still would be a half and half and that would still look funny. Gregory said that half is better than none. Patrick said there is another reason (Kathy I agree with you), that this conversation is going as far and as long as it is. He is hoping the recording of this meeting is giving enough evidence as to why we are making the decisions, we are making so that the people who are overturning our decisions that are looking at what evidence do we have to overturn this decision by a regulatory board. This will actually give them some facts. He is not sure if they are watching these meetings beforehand and it is a shame on our parts if we are not providing enough information within this meeting to uphold our agreements. This is another reason why we continue to talk about why it is not enough in conformance. Gregory asked Carol again because she did not answer the question about whether she would evaluate other options for replacing the windows that would be comparable in price. Carol said she probably could if they looked the same as the other two front windows. Curtis said they would look much closer to the arch windows of the original house. Gregory said that the choice here tonight is whether Carol is interested in looking at alternatives because otherwise, it is going to be black or white and deny it. He then said that he hates to sit here and have an antagonistic relationship with people in the community. We are here to help you and set some guidelines so that other home owners in the community have a beautiful community to live in. Pam then stated that this house is right in the middle where everybody sees it. Patrick asked Carol if the front two windows on the right hand side have been replaced in the last 4-5 years. Carol said yes, they had been. Patrick then asked her if she came to the board for that. Carol said she did not because she did not know she had to. Patrick said this is part of the problem and it is being used as a precedence now. Carol said she called Doug's office and they said as long as they were replacing them and not adding, it was fine because it was just a replacement. Gregory said they had this discussion at the last meeting where he said Carol misinterpreted that and it was replacement in kind, which means the same materials and the same site lines of the windows. Patrick then said this is also in the guidelines. It looks like there is not going to be an effort to work for a different kind of solution or product. Carol said she tried to do the right thing and Pam said they understand that. Kathy said that nice replacement windows does make a difference and she did it on her own home. She then said that she has not been on this board very long, but she totally agrees with the members and she does not want the board to think she is not agreeing with them. Curtis said that he wanted to make a motion to deny the application for vinyl windows for this residence. Pam seconded. All were in favor and application denied.

One of the owners of 69 Water Street (Noodle Bar) was there to apply for an awning on the outside of the front door of their business. Kathy told them that they have to put in an application because they were not on the agenda. The owner stated that her partner said they did that and just to come tonight at 7 pm. Patrick told the owner that in order for an application to get onto the agenda, it has to be submitted before the first of the month. If it came in after the first of this month, it is likely going to be on next month's agenda. She said that would be ok.

Next is the application of R.V. Pauline for changes to the existing structure located at 1 Center Street (Peoples United Bank). The applicant is proposing to remove the existing canopy to the rear of the building over the drive-thru window and constructing a new canopy that will accommodate a two-car wide drive-thru structure. Case #19-08. No one is there to represent them so Patrick tabled this application until next month's meeting.

The application of Exeter Med Real, Inc. has been withdrawn at the applicant's request.

Other Business: Division of Historical Resources – Certified Local Government (CLG) Grant. This is what the commission has entertained in previous years for rewriting guidelines, for rewriting the application the way it is now and there are three avenues for the funding. Three types of projects that can be funded. One is public awareness and transparency. This is what the commission used for the application and the guidelines. One is architectural survey and the third is building permits. Gregory is on the Facilities Committee. Curtis asked if there were any historic buildings that have a need for something. Gregory said the couple on the old town building, they are looking at restoring it. They would like to make it weather tight because right now it is leaking. Patrick said that the last time they had talked about this, they had come up with two ideas. He loves the idea of making it water tight. We should talk about that. Kathy said they actually approved a company out of Maine that is going to be doing the restorations and the soffits on the building as well. It is Steeple Jacks. Gregory said that this project has already been funded out of the town's budget already and Kathy said it has been. Gregory said there are other aspects of the preservation of this building that need to be considered. One is the enormous windows that have storms on some of them and they are not in great shape. Patrick said that repairing the roof is already funded and Kathy said it was so they should go after something else. Kathy then asked how much they usually got for a grant. Pam said they got \$20,000 for the Winter Street Cemetery. Patrick said it is all relative. It is a fund that comes down from the federal government and then to the state level and then the state level disperses it through the Division of Historic Resources. Pam said they got a lot more money year's back when nobody knew about it. Patrick said it is becoming more popular now. Pam would like to get some money to fix the Gas House Cemetery. She said that the poor place is going back to the wild. It is right across from 277 Water Street. It really needs to be cleaned up. Curtis would also like to do something with the lighting for the building. Kathy asked how much the lighting might cost and Curtis thinks around \$30,000.

Discussion on Demolition Review Process. Pam stated they talked about this at the Heritage Commission Meeting on Tuesday. It was triggered by 7 Oak Street up by George Olson's house. It just disappeared one weekend last spring. The guy who lived there did get a permit for interior renovations. He renovated right down to the ground. The Heritage Commission is supposed to oversee demolition and suddenly it is gone, so what do we do. Doug did not know what to do either. Pam said that if this ever happens again, they will still have to apply for a demolition permit even though it is after the fact. The applicant is made to go through all the hoops. They would do the research on the building and call a

public meeting to see if it is worth saving, even though it is already not saved. Gregory said that this sounds like a Building Department issue. They are supposed to issue a permit and one was not issued so the applicant should be in violation. Kathy said that something should be put into the ordinance she thinks. Kathy said that Julie wanted to be here to discuss this as well, but she was not feeling well. Patrick was curious as to what Doug's comments were and Pam said that he got pretty defensive about not enforcing.

Last is the approval of the minutes from October 17, 2019. Gregory had some changes. Kathy made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Pam seconded. All were in favor and minutes approved.

With no further business, Patrick made the motion to adjourn at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Herrick

Recording Secretary