

## Historic District Commission

February 20, 2020

### 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, Curtis Boivin, Vice Chair, Pam Gjetlum, Valerie Ouellette, Gwen English, Doug McCallum, new member

New Business: Public Hearing: The application of Gardner House Condominiums, LLC for changes to an existing structure located at 12 Front Street. The applicant is requesting modifications of the previous approval granted by the commission in February 2018 for changes to the main house. Case # 20-02. Dave McKinney of McKinney Architects in Portsmouth stated he is here tonight to discuss modifications to 12 Front Street, an addition to the rear of the building. He said this is a project that the commission should be familiar with at this point. He said he would go through the packet of information that each member had. He said they brought this concept to the board about a month ago and it was a rough concept only to modify the improved demolition of the carriage house structure on the rear addition of the building. In turn, the owner of the building who is here tonight, would like to have a two car garage where the previously approved demolition was to occur. He then went over the packet with the members and said that the replacement structure will have a two car garage and access to the main house. He said that it is important to them when it deals with changes to historic structures to do a couple of things. One is to try and create a structure or change that is not confusing historically to the overall structure. They know this is an important structure to the Town Historic District. What you will see in the design is not a mimic, but a way to bring it into the 21st century use by being able to have a two car garage without destroying the character of the rear of the house. He and the members of the commission reviewed several pages in the packet of what was previously approved. Dave stated that what they brought the last time was a concept for putting a garage in the location of the rear addition. It was discussed that the detailing and the massing of the new garage structure was inappropriate to the historical detailing of the existing building. Therefore, they have taken great pains to change and make the addition more sympathetic to the house. The trim and the windows will be authentic wood. They have not gone through the exercise with the treatment of the existing windows on the main historic house as yet. They are thinking that authentic single light, divided light windows will be used consistently through the rest of the restoration when that occurs. Patrick then asked the members if they had any questions. Valerie said that it looks pretty similar. Pam said that she appreciates that they kept the triple archway. She does miss the lattice work. Dave said that they do too and it was really unique. He said the lattice was very thick and broad and stands off the building quite a bit. It is impossible to use that same detail to create an operable garage

door. They did research to see if they could, but it would not work. Curtis said that he likes the level of detail that was brought into it by preservation. You looked at the structure that was existing and there was a pretty good structural report that said it was inadequate. He then asked if they took an additional look at that structure. Dave said they looked at the structure and did not do a full analysis of it with an engineer. He said he thinks to change the use to a garage, the existing structure would have been inadequate. It would have to be completely removed and reassembled on a new foundation and slab and this would be very difficult to do. Curtis asked what was being proposed for the upper level windows. Dave said he thinks they will be fixed windows and not double hung. He said they are trying to reproduce the window pattern that is there now. Patrick asked if there was going to be livable space above the garage. Dave said that it would not be livable space. It would be more like storage. Patrick then asked if the space was going to be heated. Dave said that they have not discussed that. Gwen asked if the footprint is exactly the same and has not increased in the design. Dave said it is the same overall length and width. Gwen said that at the back of the garage there is a shed addition and is this also in the footprint. Dave told her that this is added space. Gwen then asked if this was needed for the length of the cars. Dave and the owner both stated it was. Gwen then asked about the garage doors. She said there is an entrance door on the existing building and she is curious as to what the garage doors are made of and how they blend the entrance door into the bay. Dave said in the packet it says there is a five panel flush overhead door. You could see this in the drawing. Doug said it all looks very nice and he likes it. He is concerned about how the garage door will look. He thinks it might take some cleanliness away. Dave said it is kind of a struggle to figure it out. He has looked at many garage doors to find something appropriate. Doug was wondering about the windows. He said they seem a little square and not as vertical as some are. He then asked what they knew about the history of the house. Dave said that he has not done any research on the main house. Pam said this house goes back to the early 1800s and maybe around 1820. Doug said that he thinks they have come up with some great massing. To him, it looks just right. He thinks the success will depend on the skill of the builder and the quality of the materials used. Pam said that Mr. Gardner, the original owner, was a very wealthy man and of course he had access to the finest materials. He wanted to build his beautiful house right smack in the middle of downtown so everyone could see what a great house he had. They started having discussions about the windows. Patrick said that he is going to go out on a limb here because looking at the pictures of the home where it shows the access door. He does not think that this door is original to the house at all. Everyone agrees. Dave said it is a 19th century storm door. Curtis said this is the challenge of preservation is that you cannot preserve the 1800s but do they ignore something that happened fifty years ago. He finds it interesting to preserve that part of the house and part of the history of the house whether it was forty years ago or one hundred years ago. Patrick then asked if they are doing a disservice by continuing to include it in the architecture from the 1800s and it is only fifty years old. The architect they are looking at was something added on even though this case in particular was built with the original house, that these are such an add on and such historical things that have changed over time. To add something that might not have been original, makes it an interesting part of the house. Dave said it was not practical to leave the door there where that door is now because it is too close to the car that would be

parked there in the garage. There was some discussion about this door. Dave asked if maybe a six panel door with some lights in it. Patrick said that would be more sensitive to the rest of the period of the house. Dave then said that it was the commission's call. He said they thought it was a unique feature that would recall what was there before. Patrick then asked if any of the members had a strong opinion on this. Pam said that she really does not care one way or the other. Dave said they did run through various options before choosing to go this way. One is a practical matter. They wanted the width of the doors to be a standard garage door size. To make a wider opening, the head of the elide would be even higher if they chose the same way to detail it. Then you start to change or make an imbalance to the facade treatment. Curtis said that he could see a flush panel hidden door on the garage facade and thinks this would be an appropriate solution. He does not think a six panel door in that location would be true to the back of house form at all. Dave then said that they are happy to comply with whatever the commission recommends. By having it as more an invisible, horizontal panel to match up with the joint lines surrounding contacts there would certainly be acceptable too. Patrick stated it is going to be an effort to make that third arch where the passage door is look like the garage doors that will be there. Dave said that is correct. Patrick asked again if the members had any questions or comments for the applicant before it is opened up to the public. There were none. Patrick then asked if there was anyone who wanted to speak for or against the application and there was no one. He then closed the public hearing. He asked for a motion to accept the application because there was enough information to make that decision. Pam made a motion to accept the application as complete. Curtis seconded. All were in favor and application accepted. Patrick asked if there were any further discussion on the information they had before he calls for a motion to approve the application. Curtis stated he thought everything was pretty good on the application. His only concern is whether the door is appropriate in that location, whether that should be more like the existing condition where it is a concealed door, or if they want to have that as something they are introducing as the other piece that was on the building. Curtis then said that he could see it either way. Patrick is torn seeing a vertical slab door in a horizontal plane. There is an oval in there too. He said it is conflicting in that respect. He is leaning more towards let's mimic what is there. George said there is a new structure attached to an old structure and respecting the massing and proportions of the old structure and it is not trying to be an old structure. If you were doing just that building by itself, you would probably put that vertical, horizontal door in. Dave agreed. Curtis stated that he is torn. He likes the quirkiness of the old door, but he can see by following the pattern that is there is appropriate to put something that is almost that horizontal line and stays flush, would look very clean and appropriate. Patrick said its quirkiness makes sense on the rear elevation with that arched window and has a circular shape to it as well. Patrick said that the commission should ask for a condition to respect the proportions of the window lights on the front. If they are square, make them square. If they are portrait, make them portrait. Also matching the mullion widths of the existing. Patrick then asked for a consensus before they make that door being a flush door. There is no yes or no, they are just discussing. Curtis said he would go along with this. It follows the existing conditions of the building in providing a door that matches the new garage panels is appropriate. Patrick said the commission now has three conditions and asked for a motion. Curtis made the motion to approve the application with the following conditions.

The proportion of the glass lights is to match the existing house proportions with similar width with the existing on the new windows and with a flush door in similar pattern to the new garage panels in lieu of the oval window, vertical door as proposed. Pam seconded. All were in favor and application approved.

Other Business: State Commission For Coastal Resilience and Economic Development Program as detailed in SB 285. Patrick said that Julie wanted to bring this to the commission's attention and Julie was not there, so it should be tabled for the next meeting. Curtis asked Patrick to refresh the commission on this program. Pam said it is like an overall giant historic district, but it really isn't a historic district. Curtis said there is not an adjacent town that has a Historic District Board. Pam said that Kensington just turned it down. Patrick believes it was trying to create almost like a district for the purposes of chasing funding or coastal resilience. He does not know anymore than this and they should wait for Julie to fill them in on this one. Next is the discussion on the Demolition Review Process. Julie is the one who knows how this is currently operating with the Heritage Commission's recommendations for demolition. Pam said this goes back to the 7 Oak Street house that was torn down with no permission last fall. They came in on a Sunday and tore the house to the ground. Nobody found out about it until the next week. Patrick said that they should have put an application in for the Heritage Commission to review. Pam said that was correct, but they did not. What do you do after the fact? Well, basically wring your hands. They can be fined, but frankly the fine is not enough to bother anybody redoing their house. Pam said they talked to Doug Eastman and he said to just let it go. Patrick said that part of the demolition review in the sense of our own demolition review process on what is within the Historic District and making sure the commission is not making any conditional approvals for demolition and understanding that our decisions on approval of a demolition should be tied to the property and not the ownership. Pam said that this already is by the rules. It is just that this particular property owner simply ignored the rules. She also said that she cannot believe that whoever he called in for a company did not know that they were supposed to have a permit. Patrick then brought up 1 Franklin Street. That was a demolition that the commission approved with a condition, which Pam stated was a terrible mistake. The commission did approve it to approve what was going to replace it and the property was subsequently sold. It was tied to the owner and not the property. That is the flaw in our regulations.

Last on the agenda is the approval of the December 19, 2019 Minutes. After members made some corrections, Curtis made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Pam seconded. All were in favor, but there were only three members who could approve. Patrick said the minutes would be accepted as amended and tabled to be approved at next month's meeting.

Curtis asked Patrick if he had an update of the windows that went to the ZBA. Patrick said the Miller residence did appeal a second structure of the commission's decision and the December meeting was rescheduled. The January meeting ran out of time so they did not hear the application. It was supposed to be Tuesday of this week and the Miller's asked for it to be tabled until March. It is still outstanding and Patrick is still planning to attend.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Herrick  
Recording Secretary