

Historic District Commission
April 17, 2025
Draft Minutes

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

Members Present: Grayson, Shepherd, Chairman, Pam Gjetum, Clerk, Verity Boyer, Julie Gilman, Select Board Rep., Kevin Kahn, Vice Chair, Gwen English, Planning Board Rep.

New Business: Public Hearing: The application of Blue Hour Design, LLC (on behalf of Judith & William Meaney) for review of a proposal for demolition, new construction, window replacement and miscellaneous restorations to the existing residential structures located on the property at 89 Front Street.

Beverly Bitowitz spoke on behalf of Blue Hour Design, LLC. She had slides to show the commission members and everyone had a packet with diagrams. I am the Project Manager on the project. I am presenting on behalf of my principal Kyle Sheffield who is out of town. We were here last month and I am here to formally present all the proposed renovations for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

The front main structure of the Amos Tuck House is an Italian structure and it was the first in Exeter. The rear buildings, barn,

carriage house and the rear L are all colonial structures. What we are proposing is staying within the footprint that has already been expressed here in the existing site plan and making a two story structure and adding a deck on the back that was similar to what was there before.

We are proposing to work on the property in those areas which all fall within the jurisdiction. The overall goals of the home are the Meaney's plan to live there the rest of their lives and they want to be stewards to the home. Ideally, we want to make it accessible for the owners as they age through their timeline. Adjusting floor levels in the rear L is important so they have easy access on the second floor. There is a two foot drop between the main volume and the rear L. Also, improving the overall natural light in the home for the kitchen. As part of the accessibility, we want to add some elevators into the building. In order to do so, we would have to dig down for that two story structure to have easy access to the elevator. We are proposing to demolish a portion of the L.

As part of the original house, we want to put the kitchen back in the rear.

Pam said, we have seen this house before.

Julie said, this is a much more substantial project than the last owner brought before us.

Beverly said, additionally off the rear of the building, we are proposing adding a deck. Lastly, for more access into the house to get to the basement where the elevator lives there will be a ramp that goes down.

We pulled the windows apart but we wanted to keep the amount of windows just to make sure there would be enough light.

Julie said, back in the 80s when someone was adding new construction onto an existing house, the HDC got a bad name because we wanted it to replicate the existing house. Now we understand houses grow and they change.

Julie said, on the windows, the shutters stick out to me because you look at the original house and the shutters actually fit the windows, but on the addition, they are tiny shutters and if you used them they would not cover the window. I recommend no shutters.

Pam said, the L has been done and redone and you don't see it from the street so I don't really care. I don't like the big walkway.

Verity said, I am uneasy about the windows and I commented last time that I felt they were inappropriate for the L. On the opposite side of the L, you have a more singular window pattern. I also think that changing the configuration style of windows in a way that is not compatible is not appropriate per our guidelines. I think a more singular window pattern is more appropriate. My other concern is that I don't see a lot of windows like this in the district so this is kind of a departure from what is presently in the district now.

Beverly asked, veering away from double hung that were already there?

Verity said, I feel as though the way the windows are so close to one another it looks like a triple window and then you have two double windows. I don't see that anywhere else in the house. You have two six over six close to each other. Just have them be more like what is currently on the L. They are just too close together in my opinion. It looks like one big window the way you have it now.

Beverly said, we are just trying to maximize the amount of light in the kitchen. Our clients are early birds and morning light is a wonderful thing to have, but I understand what you are saying.

Verity said, would you be uncomfortable to follow the similar window pattern and just instead of that small window, break those three up so they follow a more traditional pattern on that top part?

Beverly said, I will see how much I can update.

Verity said, I think it would be a great way to balance what I think is a great design.

Judith Meaney spoke and said, I agree with Julie on the shutters. They need to have the size to cover the windows.

Gwen said, so what you are saying is on the upper floor have three windows spaced evenly apart without shutters and on the first floor breaking up the massing of those two blocks of windows.

Verity said, I think two windows would be acceptable. Two being one six over six and another six over six and I am not opposed to shutters.

Grayson said, what is the reason for the transition from the existing stone to the brick.

Beverly said, there is existing brick in the rear that we found to be the original foundation.

Verity asked what kind of replacement windows would be used?

Beverly said, we will be doing insulated glass with divided light windows. We will be using Marvin or even going to Little Harbor. These would be on the addition and the carriage house. For the carriage house, we will just be taking away the three windows shown on the slide and and put in four windows that are the exact same size.

The third portion of what we are asking is the porte cochere. This is part of the design to make both out buildings as accessible as possible. It will go from first floor to second and the L will have an elevator that goes from the basement to the second floor.

Judith Meaney spoke again and said, when you get old, you want to stay in your own home as long as you can. Our reason is we will be living in the back of the house and one of our children will be living in the front. I have a question about the connection. When you are talking about the curve that connects the second, that structure is really only 12 years old so it is not historic.

If we go over 200 feet, we can do whatever we want. There is a balcony on the back of the garage and we could make a connection on that level to the barn and we would have every right to do that.

Kevin said, I am ok with how this project has been presented.

Grayson asked, how are you going to handle the windows on the east elevation?

Beverly said, we could drop to one larger window with larger shutters or maybe take out the center window and remove the shutters altogether.

Julie said, the original house has shutters and they need to stay, but if you are going to have shutters, they need to be the appropriate size and this does not happen on the east elevation of the L because the windows are so wide. If you take away the middle window on the second floor, the shutters will work fine. If you don't change the first floor windows, then take all the shutters away on both sides.

Grayson said, I see this as two buckets. One is the elevation and the other aspect is the roofing material.

Julie said, for me it wasn't just the roofing material. It was the massing of it too.

Verity said, I think the addition of the arch would be a nice way to mediate and pertain some of the architectural style that is there now.

Grayson then asked the commission members if they had any other comments. There were none.

Any public comments? There were none. Do I have a motion to approve the application as complete? Pam said, move to approve. Julie seconded. All were in favor and the application approved as complete.

Grayson said, now we actually get to discuss the application. Are there any further comments?

Gwen asked, what is happening to the barn doors?

Beverly said, they are being replaced in kind and will still be wood.

Grayson said, let's run through the conditions. For the east elevation, (pg. 204), the second level will have the middle window removed and all shutters on the L will be removed.

For the connector, the bottom is to maintain the arch consistent with the existing shape.

Kevin made a motion to accept the application with the amendments as stated. Julie seconded. All were in favor except for Pam and Verity.

Grayson said, the motion passes four to two.

Beverly said, thank you again for your time this evening.

Next on the agenda is the approval of the March 20, 2025 minutes. After review and a few changes, Grayson asked, do I have a motion to approve the March 20, 2025 minutes as amended. Pam said, so moved. Verity seconded. All were in favor except for Julie and Grayson who were not present at the last meeting and the minutes were approved.

Other Business: Julie said, The NH Office of the Planning and Development Spring Exhibition Conference Series has for a number of years never had anything to do with Historic Preservation or Historic Districts. It was all about planning and zoning. Last year, I finally got them to do something on preservation. Now they have three tracks of classes. There is a planning track, zoning track and historic track. I don't think it costs anything but if it does, the town will pay for it or reimburse you for it.

The other thing is that I was trying to explain to somebody the difference between old growth wood and new wood. I found these pictures that show existing old windows and also an illustration of the difference between the woods. (photos passed around)

On May 10th is the LY Festival and the Sustainability Committee is having a table on their project and I was wondering if we wanted to put a little something on a table. I am planning to go and it will be held at Founders Park.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Herrick
Recording Secretary