

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION MINUTES
February 26, 2020 Meeting
Town Council Chambers – 5 PM HDC meeting

Present: Kristen Carron, Chair; Matthew McGeorge, Vice-Chair; Gregory Maxwell, Erinn Calise and Nicole D’Amato.

Absent: Andrew Barkley.

Staff: Lea Anthony Hitchen, Assistant Town Planner

Ms. Kristen Carron, Chair of the Commission, started the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

Ms. Carron read the procedures into the record as follows: Each person addressing the Commission will state his/her name for the record. Although the Commission does not generally swear in applicants or their representatives, all witnesses are responsible for providing the HDC with true, accurate, and complete information. The applicant or the applicant’s representative shall present the request before the Commission along with arguments and material in support of the application. HDC members will then have the opportunity to discuss the proposal and ask questions which are pertinent to the application. All other persons wishing to speak in favor of or against the application will then be asked to do so. All speakers are asked to avoid repetitive comments and confine their comments to those which are relevant to the application at hand. Cross examination by the general public may be allowed only if the Commission feels it would be appropriate and useful. All questions from the floor will be directed through the Chair only. After all of the relevant facts have been heard, the Chair will call for a motion. Once the motion has been made and seconded, the HDC only will discuss the motion followed by the Chair’s call for a vote. Only active members of the Commission shall vote. The alternate will sit as an active member with full voting rights only when a regular member is unable to serve at any meeting. During the discussion among voting members, no further testimony from the floor will be accepted unless specifically requested by a Board member. Every effort will be made to render a decision this evening. The minutes of this meeting will be on file in the Planning Department within 14 days. Certificates of Appropriateness granted this evening will be available in the Planning Department within two (2) days of this hearing. The hearing of any HDC application which has not yet started before 10:30 p.m. will not be heard this evening and a special hearing date will be scheduled. This rule, however,

may be waived by a majority vote of the Commission. All decisions of the HDC are final and legally binding under the authority of Article XI of the East Greenwich Zoning Ordinance and Article 45, Section 24.1 of the RIGL. All decisions of this Commission may be appealed to the Zoning Board of Review.

Ms. Carron added the HDC considers local standards as well as Federal guidelines when reviewing applications and noted this is a collaborative process between the Board and the applicant. Ms. Carron explained the sequence for review of applications and its helpfulness to understand how the process works before the Board hears the applications. She noted each application is reviewed in of itself; the Commissioners receive the applications prior to the actual meeting in order for each Board member to review the content. The Board members identify properties and character defining features and historical and architecturally significant to the district that are taken into consideration. When applicants come before the Board there is a discussion in order to better understand the project at hand and answer questions that arise. The Board determines the standards that apply; hearing applications in this type of forum allows the Board to discuss alternatives, offer suggestions and provide support for the applicant to hopefully have a successful outcome and possibly save money.

Ms. Carron introduced the Board members and Staff present and read the application items into the record.

Historic District Commission Hearings

- 1. Pamela Unwin-Barkley of Greenwich Bay Design for Seth & Sophia O'Donnell
17 Marion Street; Map 85 AP 1 Lot 268
Proposed Work: Demolition of Rear located 10'x12' structure & outhouse; replace with 2-story addition – FINAL**

Ms. Carron stated Commission standards 4, 5 and 9 apply to the application. *Standard 4* states that proposals for architectural changes or alterations shall be appropriate to the original design of the building or to later changes that have acquired significance of their own. *Standard 5* states new construction includes substantial additions or modifications to the exterior of existing buildings. The design of new construction need not be an exact or modified copy of historic

styles and could be totally different in concept. However, all proposals for new construction shall be compatible with the surrounding buildings in size, scale, materials and siting, as well as with the general character of the historic district. *Standard 9* states demolition, either partial or total, shall only be acceptable provided it would significantly benefit the Town, would serve the greater interest of the community as a whole, and that there are no alternatives to demolition available. Demolitions shall not result in a significant threat or loss of an historic and/or architectural resource to the Town, State or nation.

Ms. Pamela Unwin-Barkley of Greenwich Bay Design, architect for the project, represented the application for the homeowners, being Seth & Sophia O'Donnell. Ms. Unwin-Barkley explained the overall project includes the demolition of a rear located 10'x12' structure to be replaced with a 2-story addition.

Ms. Unwin-Barkley stated she was before the HDC in November when she received a conceptual approval and has since secured the necessary zoning relief for an encroachment along the north side setback line on January 28th. The plan includes the removal of the rear (west) 10'x12' single story structure currently being used as a laundry room as it is not insulated, not weather tight and the walls, frame and threshold are in poor condition. The intent is to match all existing conditions with siding, trim and windows in the new addition.

Mr. McGeorge said from his perspective the application is great and it represents a natural evolution of a historic structure. He finds the projects to be a very appropriate addition based on scale of proportion and materials and fenestration pattern. With that being said it is an exemplary application of what is a typical adaptive reuse of a historic home. Mr. McGeorge did not have any objections with the proposal.

Mr. Maxwell commented that this project seems like the addition that should have happened originally. His only one concern with the project is with the removal of the outhouse as he is disappointed to see it simply be removed and not saved. Mr. Maxwell questioned if there was any way the outhouse could be set aside on the property considering there are few left in the district.

Mr. Bill Sims, project contractor, said he certainly can dig it up and put it somewhere else on the property as it is a light structure, given it does not fall

apart. Ms. Unwin-Barkley pointed out she has had conversations about the outhouse being repurposed, possibly becoming a potting shed.

Mr. Maxwell noted it being reused as something else would be wonderful and animal-proofing it can easily be done. Mr. Maxwell said he is in total support of moving it out of the way.

Ms. O'Donnell was not opposed to the idea of repurposing the outhouse but commented it definitely needs tidying up and it probably could be done.

Ms. Calise and Ms. Carron were also in support of keeping the outhouse on the property and preserving it as it was there before the later ell which is being demolished.

With no further comments Ms. Carron asked for a motion.

Mr. Maxwell made the following findings of fact:

- 1) A written application has been submitted by Ms. Pam Unwin-Barkley of Greenwich Bay Design for Seth & Sophia O'Donnell.
- 2) The property in question is located within the East Greenwich Historic District, specifically 17 Marion Street.
- 3) The property in question is a contributing structure, being a c.1775 Greek Revival.
- 4) The building contributes to the historic and architectural significance of the district.
- 5) The work proposed by the applicant would not affect the character defining elements of the existing building.

Motion by Mr. Maxwell to approve the application as submitted at 17 Marion Street for demolition of the rear located 10'x12' structure & outhouse to be replaced with 2-story addition. This is consistent with Commission standards #4, 5 and 9.

Seconded by Mr. McGeorge.

VOTE: 5 – 0.

Adjourn at 5:15 pm.

For additional information, please contact the Planning Department.
Respectfully submitted by:

Lea Anthony Hitchen, Assistant Town Planner