

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION MINUTES

March 11, 2020 Meeting

Town Council Chambers

MEETING TIME: 6:30 PM

Present: Kristen Carron, Chair; Matthew McGeorge, Vice-Chair; Gregory Maxwell, Andrew Barkley, and Nicole D'Amato.

Absent: Erinn Calise.

Staff: Lisa Bourbonnais, Town Planner and Andy Teitz, Town Solicitor.

Ms. Carron, Chair of the Commission, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and read the hearing procedures into the record.

Historic District Commission Hearings – 6:30 PM

1. Hatched, LLC/Patricia Burton 241 Main Street; Map 85 AP 1 Lot 208 Proposed Work: New Signage – FINAL

Dan Hatch, Co-owner, was on hand to represent the petition. He explained his signage proposal and staff noted the request was consistent with the zoning code. Commission members were curious about the restaurant's opening date, operating hours and menu. Mr. Hatch indicated that he and his partner Ms. Burton would like to open the first week of April.

With all questions answered and with no one else on hand to speak about the proposal, the Chair called for a motion. Motion by Ms. D'Amato, second by Mr. McGeorge to approve the application as submitted based on the following findings of fact:

- A) A written application has been submitted by Hatched, LLC/Patricia Burton.
- B) The property in question is located within the East Greenwich Historic District, specifically 241 Main Street.
- C) 241 Main Street is a contributing, mixed-use structure that has for decades, included some type of commercial signage.
- D) The work proposed by the applicant will be consistent with Commission Standard of Review #5 pertaining to new construction and the work will

not affect the character defining elements or permanent features of the existing building.

VOTE: 5- 0 – 0 in favor of the motion to approve.

**2. Shenjay, LLC/ Michael L. Schein
19 First Avenue; Map 75 AP 3 Lot 41
Proposed Work: New Signage – FINAL**

Michael L. Schein was on hand to represent his application. He began by noting that he purchased the property last November and would like to install new signage, essentially consisting of a 3’X4’ wooden placard sign on the front and west side of the building. Signage would not be illuminated and is designed to demarcate the office entrances. The Commission appreciated the sign renderings and generally agreed the proposal was tasteful and visually in-character.

With conclusion of the discussion and with no one else on hand to speak about the proposal, the Chair called for a motion. Motion by Andrew Barkley, second by Mr. McGeorge to approve the application as submitted based on the following findings of fact:

- A) A written application has been submitted by Shenjay, LLC (Michael L. Schein).
- B) The property in question is located within the East Greenwich Historic District, specifically at 19 First Avenue.
- C) The subject address is a contributing historic structure with minimal alterations and with most character defining features intact.
- D) The proposed work will serve to unify the property signage while remaining fully removable without impacting or damaging the historic structure. It could therefore be said to improve, in some small way, the visual quality and character of the property.
- E) The work proposed by the applicant will be consistent with Commission Standard of Review #5 pertaining to new construction and the work will not affect the character defining elements or permanent features of the existing building.

VOTE: 5- 0 – 0 in favor of the motion to approve.

**3. Robert Marchand of Pella Windows & Doors for Rebecca Stockdill
54 Division Street; Map 85 AP 1 Lot 246
Proposed Work: Replacement of Four (4) Windows – Two on North
elevation, One on East elevation, and One on South elevation – FINAL**

Mr. Marchand was on hand to represent the application. The homeowner was not present. Mr. Marchand briefly explained the application noting there are four windows proposed for replacement by his company – two of these are on the front face, one is on the second floor on the side and the third is an attic window. He asserted that in the owner's view, the second floor window is the most crucial as it is damaged, drafty and potentially dangerous and is located in a child's bedroom. If approved, he would likely make that replacement first.

In response to questions from the board, Mr. Marchand explained there is something of a mish-mash of windows currently present at the property. There are some original windows remaining plus some Pella replacements that he is trying to now match and a third window type representing some replacement work done a number of years ago.

Commissioners opined that the subject structure is very prominent and very significant. It has a higher architectural value than most properties they see in an average year and the windows, especially facing the street, are a big part of that value and quality. The second floor windows on the front face are in rough space but they match identical first floor windows that sit under a porch and are well-protected and thus not proposed for replacement. The other complicating factor was the presence of a third second floor window that is expected to remain. Some Commissioners felt that the need to retain the matching characteristic of all front-facing windows was imperative. It was noted that the replacement windows now proposed are a very good quality product and have been approved in other locations around the District before, but this case is unique in terms of the home's contribution to the character of the neighborhood and the importance of the windows to the façade. There was a substantial discussion of the merits of the application and the Commissioners ultimately agreed that the so-called side wall and attic windows components of the application were fine; the real sticking point being the front face.

After additional debate, a motion was made by Mr. Maxwell, second by Mr. McGeorge to approve the application with one major modification/condition,

being: The two second floor windows on the front face can only be replaced if the third window on that floor of that face is also replaced to match.

In support of the motion, the following findings of fact were noted for the record:

- A) A written application has been submitted by **Robert Marchand** on behalf of owner Rebecca Stockdill.
- B) The property in question is located within the East Greenwich Historic District, specifically at 54 Division Street.
- C) The subject address contains a very significant, contributing historic residence with most of its original character defining features intact, the main façade windows being chief among them.
- D) The work proposed by the applicant, if implemented per this conditioned approval, will be consistent with Commission Standard of Review #8 pertaining to window replacements and the work will not negatively affect the character defining elements of the building.

VOTE: 5- 0 – 0 in favor of the motion to approve.

**4. East Greenwich Cove Builders, LLC
64 Long Street; Map 85 AP 1 Lot 345
Proposed Work: Relocate the Primary Structure at 64 Long Street to 22
Castle Street – CONCEPTUAL**

Jerry Zarrella of EG Cove Builders was on hand to represent the conceptual plan. He opened his remarks by noting that he has no intention of demolishing the subject structure and if the relocation request is not approved, the house will remain onsite. He further noted that he is not looking to gentrify this neighborhood and desires to keep new and rehabilitated units small, simple and in keeping with the character of the area.

Regarding the specific proposal, the house at this address sits on a compromised foundation. It is basically a house sitting on a rubble stone wall. At a minimum, it needs to be jacked up and set upon a real foundation. It is also less than 18 feet tall and dwarfed by some buildings nearby which presents a further opportunity to raise it up. Mr. Zarrella's general impression is that given that level of effort, it might become worthwhile to completely relocate the structure. Under the current petition, the house would just slide down the

street, keeping its Long Street address because it could be set to face that way. He presented photos of the house at 22 Castle Street and noted the two structures are basically twins and work well together on the same site.

Commissioners praised the idea of not tearing the house down and also of not doubling its size or doing other work or add-ons that would result in the original fabric being absorbed or lost. But they also had a lot of questions, many of them being as yet unanswerable. For example, what becomes to the vacated 64 Long Street site – what would be built in place of the subject house, if anything, or would it become a parking lot?

If the house is allowed to be moved down to the Castle Street corner, what modifications would it be subject to? While the applicant attests it will remain small and simple, it would obviously need to be modified and expanded a little and details of that work will need to be made clear. An existing non-original ell would likely be removed and dormers added at a minimum and the Commission hesitated to comment on the appropriateness of these features until plans are actually presented. The applicant stated he simply desired to gain a sense from the board of what might be purely off-limits for the future of this house. Commissioners agreed by consensus that anything dramatically altering the original structure's character would not be welcomed. This includes major additions that would turn it into something unrecognizable, whether remaining on-site or being relocated. In terms of the relocation itself, the board is not conceptually opposed, especially if the house continues to face Long Street and address the right of way in a manner similar to existing conditions but the details will become very important. Commissioners also noted that it seems a number of structures nearby appear to have been moved to their current locations and the applicant might want to do some research there and present evidence on the record to that effect to help his cause.

The Commission wrapped up their discussion not by granting a conceptual approval *per se*, but instead by noting they would like a continuing opportunity to comment on the concept plan as the applicant rounds out the details, both regarding how the relocated house will be treated on its new site and regarding how the old vacated site will be newly improved.

Historic District Commission Business – After Hearings

1. Minutes: Review and approval of the November 13, 2019, January 8, 2020, February 12, 2020, and February 26, 2020 meeting minutes. No action.

2. COMMISSIONER REPORTS: Commission members may report on cases where they have been appointed as Referee, and refer observations or possible violations that they have observed to staff. Any substantive discussion of any such Report shall require addition to the Agenda by motion.

Motion by Ms. D'Amato, second by Mr. Maxwell to add a couple of items to the agenda for discussion only. The first of these was the "blue house" by the Lutheran Church on Division Street and the second was an outlying historic house on Division (just west of Playground Prep day care) that has been discussed by the Commission on several occasions before. Motion unanimously supported.

The so-called blue house appears to have a big hole in the roof and staff was asked to reach out to the building official to have that condition abated. The other property is essentially abandoned by its owners and while it has been fenced so as to not become an "attractive nuisance and liability," it continues to be open to the weather and to further deteriorate. Staff noted that without an "anti-demolition by neglect ordinance," it is difficult for local governments to contend with such situations.

Motion at 8:30 PM by Ms. D'Amato, second by Mr. McGeorge to adjourn.
VOTE: 5 – 0

For additional information, please contact the Planning Department.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Bourbonnais, Town Planner.