

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION MINUTES
May 14, 2014 Meeting
Town Council Chambers – 6:00 PM HDC meeting

Present: Kim Balkcom, Chair; Matthew McGeorge, Vice-Chair; Erinn Calise, Andrew Barkley, Kristen Carron and Kingston Fallon.

Staff: Lea Anthony Hitchen, Assistant Town Planner.

Ms. Kim Balkcom, Chair of the Commission, started the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Ms. Balkcom read the procedures into the record. She 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. Balkcom 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. All applications can be appealed to the Zoning Board of Review. Ms. Balkcom added that each application is reviewed in of itself.

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

Historic District Commission Hearings

- 1) **Kristina Stark**
56 Somerset Street; Map 85 A.P. 2 Lot 204
Minor Modification - CONCEPTUAL

Ms. Stark explained she is in the process of purchasing 56 Somerset Street and converting the existing two-family to a single-family with an in-law which requires zoning board approval. She added that in order to make that conversion a back window will have to be replaced with a door for access to the in-law and a staircase will be added to the back of the property.

Mr. McGeorge commented that conceptually he did not have any issues with the request; he noted the back portion of the structure is a later addition. He suggested for the Applicant to come back for final plan approval with detailed schematics.

Ms. Balkcom explained the process for approvals and when Ms. Stark can return to the HDC for final plan approval.

There was no vote taken as this was a conceptual plan but the HDC had no issues with the plan as proposed.

2) Thomas Testa
17 Bridge Street; Map 75 A.P. 3 Lot 168
New Construction, Window Replacements, Roofing, Replacement
in Kind – Final

(Ms. Calise recused herself from the application.)

Ms. Balkcom clarified that the Applicant is seeking Final plan approval this evening.

Mr. Anthony Menard, the contractor for the project, represented the application and explained that the intent is to renovate the building and restore it back to what it used to look like. Ms. Balkcom interjected to ask if vinyl windows were part of the plan. Mr. Menard said yes although there were some vinyl windows that had been in the structure before it was boarded up.

Ms. Balkcom was of the opinion that the building is a very simple structure that has been boarded up for years and there are some things that have been added which are considered inappropriate. Due to the simpleness of the structure she stated that the windows will be an integral part of this renovation and installing a vinyl window will not be fair to this house.

Ms. Balkcom asked if the Applicant explored other window options such as composite or wood with aluminum clad as opposed to vinyl. Mr. Menard explained that considering the home is wrapped in vinyl siding the plan was to match the siding material with the window material.

Ms. Balkcom clarified that the vinyl siding is staying; she was of the impression the intent of the renovation was to bring the structure back to its original appearance.

Mr. McGeorge stated that he cannot grant final plan approval for this application – the windows do not meet the standards; the deck is not drawn accurately for how it would be framed and the materials are slightly inappropriate as far as the pressure treated wood is concerned. He went on to say the decision does not have to be a unanimous decision to receive approval.

Mr. McGeorge asserted that although the property is a blighted structure it might be better to wait for the right person to do the right thing with this property than to just let it get vinyl windows and a slapped on pressure treated deck. Mr. Menard asserted that the deck was more of an idea and we were looking to see if the Commission would allow us to add one on.

Mr. McGeorge confirmed that conceptually the addition of a side porch would be okay; conceptually replacing the windows would be okay but not with the window unit that has been presented.

Ms. Balkcom completely agreed with Mr. McGeorge and verified that if the Commission were to vote on the submitted application tonight as final it would most likely be denied; if it is denied the Applicant will have to wait one year to reapply with the same application. Her recommendation was to back to the drawing board and explore other window options and other materials for the decking. Ms. Balkcom understands that the house is already vinyl sided and the Commission cannot make it be removed for clapboards which is unfortunate as technically the vinyl can stay. She would like to think the right person would come along and take off the vinyl siding and restore it. Conceptually speaking, Ms. Balkcom noted that replacing the windows are okay and adding a deck is acceptable.

Mr. McGeorge was reluctant to give approval for the location of the proposed deck as it was positioned to be on the front façade – he added the house is a simple, elegant and relevant structure that is visible from Main Street and it is part of the neighborhood; to do what is being proposed does not meet the standards. He went on to say that the fundamental location of the deck is not problematic but the submitted drawing is so far from the truth; the deck should be sensitive and appropriate to the structure, someone who has a little bit more knowledge and sensitivity to what it should look like should have drawn the deck to be laid out properly.

When asked by Mr. Menard if a wood replacement window would be approved Mr. McGeorge stated a wood window replacement would be perfect or a wood core clad window. He added there are a number of window products available that the Board would approve.

Ms. Balkcom suggested that Mr. Menard go back to the owner and brief him of this meeting and strongly suggested he attend the next meeting as tonight put Mr. Menard in a precarious position. She explained that the HDC often sees people come before the Commission who purchase property in the district who want to make certain changes that are not in the best interest of the district; inevitably if we wait long enough there are certain people who come along who properly restore blighted properties.

When asked if anyone from the public had questions, abutting neighbors Jennifer Iannuccilli and Martha Langer commented that if the Applicant is restoring the home they should go about it the proper way – replace with wood windows and remove the vinyl siding.

Mr. McGeorge noted that he has had firsthand experience with removing vinyl siding; the cost of stripping and assuming the underlying clapboard will be in some reasonable condition could cost anywhere between \$8,000 to \$25,000 – considering this house does not have much square footage to it and the house is being gutted with new mechanical and utility systems than the siding is only a small portion of the overall total budget with a significant return on property value.

With no other comments the Commission asked Mr. Menard to take their comments and suggestions back to the property owner.

3) Cindy and John Thomas
48 Somerset Street; Map 75 A.P. 3 Lot 278
Minor Modification and Window/Door Replacement - Final

Ms. Balkcom read into the record the standards that apply to this application, being Standards #4 and 8 which states that all proposals for architectural changes shall be appropriate to the original design of the building or to later changes which have historic significance of their own and Standard #8 states original window sashes can usually be repaired and retained. In the event that a window sash must be replaced the replacement shall match the original in size, operation, materials, configuration, number of lights, muntin width and profile.

Mr. McGeorge noted that he did not have any issues with the application since the assessment value of the property historically and architecturally compared with all the other property in the neighborhood is low and that this window change would not affect the character of the structure. .

Ms. Balkcom also added that she did not have any problems with the application.

Mr. Andrew Santilli, the contractor representing the application, commented that the structure is an unbelievable home and he will be getting rid of the concrete that surrounds the windows. He also clarified that the front elevation windows are the same height as the existing 36"x52" to keep the top of all openings on the same plane and the side elevations where there are three window units will measure 32"x56" in size.

With no further comments, Ms. Balkcom asked for a motion.

Mr. Fallon made the following findings of fact:

- 1) A written application has been submitted by Cindy and John Thomas of 48 Somerset Street.
- 2) The property in question is located within the East Greenwich Historic District.
- 3) The structure in question is a contributing building; it is representative of a c.1950s era hip-roofed stucco home (assemblage home).

- 4) The building does contribute 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. Kingston to approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness at 48 Somerset Street to make minor modifications and replace windows and one door. This is consistent with Commission Standard #4 and 8.

Seconded by Mr. McGeorge.

VOTE: 6 – 0.

4) Sara Doherty
50 Somerset Street; Map 85 A.P. 3 Lot 261
New Construction (Shed) – Final
Addition (Side Porch) - Conceptual

Ms. Balkcom stated she did not have any issues with the new shed. She pointed out that Ms. Hitchen points out in her staff report that the same exact shed has been approved at two other properties. Ms. Balkcom commented that the open porch to become enclosed is also fine as it appears it will be wood shingled and will have the same door to be bumped out.

Ms. Sara Doherty, the applicant and future homeowner of the property, said the side door needs to be replaced since it is hard to open but it will look the same as the front door.

Mr. McGeorge noted he has no problems with the shed and conceptually no issues with the side porch.

Ms. Balkcom suggested for the final plan to have a cut sheet/product literature or picture for the proposed side door. Ms. Doherty explained the contractor who is building the shed is also building the enclosed porch.

Mr. Barkley and Mr. McGeorge explained both the window and door specification should be submitted as well as a determined dimension of the plan. Assuming the contractor is using the existing roof and eave line and building

under the existing roof and adding a frost wall, Mr. McGeorge stated he would be comfortable reviewing whatever the contractor submits for a building permit.

The HDC determined the side porch could be refereed instead of going for final plan approval; Mr. McGeorge and Mr. Barkley volunteered to referee the project. Ms. Balkcom explained the referee process to Ms. Doherty.

Ms. Balkcom read into the record the standards that apply to this application, being Standards # 4 which states that all proposals for architectural changes shall be appropriate to the original design of the building or to later changes which have historic significance of their own and Standard #5 requires that new construction be compatible with surrounding buildings in size, scale, materials and siting and with the general character of the historic district.

With no further comments, Ms. Balkcom asked for a motion.

Ms. Carron made the following findings of fact:

- 1) A written application has been submitted by Sara Doherty for property located at 50 Somerset Street.
- 2) The property in question is located within the East Greenwich Historic District.
- 3) The structure in question is a contributing building; it is representative of a c.1929 early Twentieth century craftsman.
- 4) The building does contribute 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 Ms. Carron to approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness at 50 Somerset Street to construct a new shed and enclose the side porch (the side porch enclosure must be refereed by Mr. McGeorge and Mr. Barkley prior to a building permit being issued). This is consistent with Commission Standard #4 and 5.

Seconded by Mr. McGeorge.

VOTE: 6 – 0.

**5) Red Stripe East Greenwich, LLC
455 Main Street; Map 75 A.P. 3 Lot 87
Minor Modification, Replace Windows and Doors, Signage - Final**

Attorney Andrew Sholes represented the application along with Judd Brown, architect and designer and Paul Conforti, the managing partner of Red Stripe.

Ms. Balkcom read the standards that apply to the application; those being #4, 5 and 8. *Standard 4* states all proposals for additions and architectural changes shall be appropriate to the original design of the building or to later changes which have historic significance of their own. Signage is a type of new construction and thus must comply with Commission *Standard Number 5*. It states that such work must be compatible with the surrounding buildings in size, scale, materials and siting, as well as with the general character of the historic district. *Standard 8* states original window sashes can usually be repaired and retained. In the event that a window sash must be replaced the replacement shall match the original in size, operation, materials, configuration, number of lights, muntin width and profile. Window manufacturers offer a wide variety of factory-made windows appropriate for installation in historic buildings. Storm windows of appropriate design are also available and should be installed to be as unobtrusive as possible.

Ms. Balkcom said she was familiar with Red Stripe's "look" and this proposal is consistent with the other location's appearance. Mr. Conforti noted that Mills Tavern is also associated with Red Stripe. She also noted that the subject property has been altered in a negative way over the years meaning that it has not always been conducive to a restaurant use since it feels so closed up but the proposed façade is a huge improvement.

Mr. McGeorge commented the design looks great and the streetscape looks even better and he is looking forward to seeing the end result.

Atty. Sholes noted a few changes since the original design plan. Mr. Brown explained the possible requested changes would be to make the retractable awning an "in place" awning; reuse the main entry wood doors instead of the proposed glass doors and replace the side glass block "window" with non-folding aluminum windows.

Mr. McGeorge had no problem keeping the glass block assuming the façade treatment would be maintained. He added that the existing wood doors being reused and refinished would actually be more interesting and contrast better than the proposed glass doors.

Atty. Sholes informed the Commission that the liquor license will transfer at the June 9th Town Council meeting with the anticipation of a grand opening in July.

Mr. Barkley asked if the exterior brick will be painted or stained. Atty. Sholes noted there is a dryvit affixed to the original brick which will be removed and the brick will be painted.

With no further comments, Ms. Balkcom asked for a motion.

Ms. Calise made the following findings of fact:

- 1) A written application has been submitted by Red Stripe East Greenwich LLC.
- 2) The property in question is located within the East Greenwich Historic District, located at 455 Main Street.
- 3) The structure in question is a noncontributing building; it is representative of a c.1950 non-historic commercial structure.
- 4) The building does not contribute to the historic and architectural significance of the district.
- 5) The work proposed by the applicant would repair and improve the character defining elements of the existing building.

Motion by Ms. Calise to approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness at 455 Main Street for minor modifications, to replace windows and doors and signage. Possible amendments that may occur which are also approved include an “in-place/nonmovable” awning in lieu of the proposed retractable awning; reuse the main entry wood doors instead of the proposed glass doors; and replace the side glass block “window” with non-folding aluminum windows. This is consistent with Commission Standard #4, 5 and 8.

Seconded by Ms. Carron.

VOTE: 6 – 0.

Mr. Morris thanked the Board for their help.

Historic District Commission Business

- 1) MINUTES: Action on the minutes of the March 12, 2014 meeting.

Motion by Mr. McGeorge to approve the March 12, 2014 minutes. Seconded by Ms. Calise. Approved 6-0.

- 2) Commissioner Comments/Other

Ms. Calise noted a new fence at the corner of Greene and Prospect Streets – it appears to be an arbor in the middle of a cornfield. Ms. Balkcom noted that it is nice, being a flatboard fence with lattice on top. Ms. Hitchen stated technically the fence needs administrative approval.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. McGeorge. Seconded by Ms. Calise. Adjourn at 6:58 p.m.

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

Lea Anthony Hitchen, Assistant Town Planner