

**HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**March 11, 2015 Meeting**  
**Town Council Chambers – 6:00 PM HDC meeting**

Present: Kim Balkcom, Chair; Kristen Carron, Gregory Maxwell, Andrew Barkley, Erinn Calise, and Lauren Drury.

Absent: Matthew McGeorge, Vice-Chair, and Kingston Fallon.

Staff: Lea Anthony Hitchen, Assistant Town Planner.

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

Ms. Balkcom 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. Balkcom 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.

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

#### Historic District Commission Hearings

- 1. Nelson Niles  
136 Spring Street; Map 85 A.P. 2 Lot 171  
New Construction (Detached Garage) and Minor Modification  
(Front Porch Overhang) - FINAL**

Ms. Balkcom read the applicable standards into the record, those being commission standards 4 and 5. *Standard 4* states that all proposals for additions and architectural changes shall be appropriate to the original design of the building. *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.

Ms. Balkcom disclosed she had a conversation with Mary Lou Wernig who lives on Mawney Street, an abutter to the project who she talked with a couple of months ago.

Mr. Nelson Niles, of 136 Spring Street, owner of the property, represented the application. He reminded the Commission he and his architect presented the conceptual plan back in October which was approved; he has since received zoning approval from the Zoning Board of Review. Ms. Hitchen noted the detached garage received a height variance as well as the front porch overhang.

Mr. Niles explained he would like to replace the front door overhang which previously existed; the feature will once again extend 3' into the front yard and the detailing will resemble the existing house. There will be a metal Boston roof with gable supported by brackets; the new roof detailing will match the existing house shadowline. He added the existing wall-mounted lights are planned to be removed and a new ceiling-hung light will be installed from the beaded fir porch ceiling.

Mr. Barkley suggested the proposed bracket could use more detail.

Mr. Karl Sauerbrey, architect for the project, commented that when designing the overhang he could not find precedent, desired a flatter tie-in and used the design as a nod to the existing steep roof and looked at the whole elevation and scale as a whole.

Ms. Balkcom noted she did not have any objections to the overhang as long as the house should have evolved that way. Mr. Sauerbrey stated that he would like to slightly lower the pitch in keeping with the Greek Revival style.

Moving on the second part of the application, the detached garage, Mr. Maxwell inquired about the type of windows to be installed. Mr. Sauerbrey stated that the garage windows will be a simulated divided lite; he still needs to verify that the Anderson 200 Series comes with the spacer panel.

Ms. Balkcom confirmed that all the windows need to be the same; she did not think the Anderson 200 Series was available with a SDL package, an upgrade to the Anderson 400 Series was necessary to get a simulated divided lite.

Mr. Sauerbrey commented that the existing structure's windows do not have an exterior grille; he did not know if that held any weight in whether the garage's windows needed to have exterior grilles. We echoed the house in details.

Ms. Balkcom commented that not all the details have to match the existing with new construction; on the other hand this Commission has not approved a vinyl window in quite some time. Mr. Niles noted that he understood the Commission's viewpoint and would comply with the request to install a simulated divided lite. Conversation took place about whether the windows should be 2/2, 2/1 or 1/1; Staff commented the 1984 survey sheet notes that most windows are 1/1 double hung sashes. The Commission did not have a preference with any of the configurations as long as there was an external muntin.

In terms of the back of the garage, Mr. Niles preferred the slider windows since that is what he was used to in his previous home, but he was willing to change the windows if that is what the Commission wanted. In terms of the rear windows the Commission preferred to see the same double hung windows throughout, not sliders. The Commission left the window layout up to the Applicant although the architect would redesign the plan for the windows to be doubled up with no shutters.

Moving on to the proposed garage doors, Ms. Balkcom requested the Applicant eliminate the decorative hardware. Mr. Niles has no objection to eliminating the hardware and commented the doors will be painted gray which is a composite steel/foam door product. Mr. Niles confirmed the roof shingles will match the house and be architectural shingles.

The topic of siding arose; Mr. Niles explained with the garage located further back and with the desire for low maintenance he selected the Hardiboard product in solid white which will was easily.

Ms. Balkcom commented the Commission has previously approved the Hardi product but it can get tricky when the materials are not consistent throughout

the property – in other words if the house is already Hardi she would not have an issue but in new construction she does not have a problem with hardiboard. Mr. Barkley added that in his opinion Hardiboard is a judgement call.

Ms. Balkcom stated that the Commission has approved the Hardiboard on structures and the general population cannot distinguish between Hardi and clapboard unless you get real close to it and the product wears well. Her preference would be for clapboards but she also understood that Hardi is a decent product and you don't have to worry about painting and this particular application is new construction.

Mr. Niles confirmed he would use the “smooth” texture of the Hardiboard.

Mr. Maxwell questioned the trim detail for the garage. Mr. Sauerbrey explained the trim detail will be exact to that of the existing home.

Mr. Maxwell inquired about the scale and pitch of the garage roof. Mr. Sauerbrey explained his client preferred a higher pitched roof; he had explored the house, a carriage house and the house and garage as well as examined historical homes along Benefit Street but generally with a steeper pitch and the existing house it is rare that there is a relationship with steep and semisteeep, not steep and pancake flat. Mr. Niles noted that he was not crazy with a shallower pitch as the side view would eliminate detailing which he was looking to tie into with the look of the house and he would not be in favor of that.

Mr. Maxwell said it appears there is too much roof and it seems as though the garage is the same size as the house next door which is an indication that it is too big and out of scale. He questioned if there is some way to bring down the scale. Mr. Barkley noted the largest car he is aware of is a '72 Lincoln; he suggested taking 3' or 4' off the depth of the garage or altering a portion of the pitch. He also advised a monitor, light and/or dormer to reduce the scale.

Ms. Balkcom commented her initial reaction was the garage was huge because we were reviewing it in it of itself.

The HDC members discussed the proposal further noting they always consider the scale factor as it is a big consideration when making decisions; they also commented the district consists of little houses next to big houses and big barns

practically attached to modest sized homes. Ms. Balkcom agreed with Mr. Maxwell in that she felt the same way when she first saw the three-car garage, but in reality there are quite a few three car garages in the district. She said it is the roof that throws off the scale of the structure which Mr. Maxwell agreed with and is his main concern.

Mr. Barkley commented the roof has a lot of exposure and needs to have an additional focus or detail to it; his initial reaction was to add dormers or a monitor to go across the top, a widow's walk – something to break down the scale of the roof. Ms. Drury also preferred to see the garage not as massive.

Ms. Hitchen suggested staggering/pushing back one of the garage doors in order to appear smaller.

Ms. Balkcom explained the procedures for continuing the application versus voting on the plan before the Board; she strongly suggested going back to the drawing board to modify the garage.

Mr. Sauerbrey mentioned he had prepared rendering of the garage with a gable roof as well as considered pushing back one of the garage bays.

Ms. Balkcom noted the front portico could be voted on this evening.

With no further comments from the Commission members, Ms. Balkcom opened the hearing to the public for comments.

Mr. Robert Mazzeo of 34 Mawney Street noted he also attended the Zoning Board meeting to object to the application primarily due to the overwhelming mass of the garage in the neighborhood. He thought he was being held to a different standard than the Applicant. Mr. Mazzeo suggested possibly making the garage a 2-car garage or moving the work area to the rear of the garage. He recommended lowering the scope of what the Applicant wants.

Ms. Mary Lou Wernig of 24 Mawney Street noted she too also attended the Zoning Board meeting. She mentioned the proposed garage will be located on a hill making it appear even bigger; it is the overall size and scope that she objects too. Ms. Wernig wants Mr. Niles to have a garage but what is proposed is bigger than abutting homes. She did not think that landscaping could hide the whole

garage, particularly the height. She acknowledged there were other 3-car garages within the district but they are half the size as the one the Applicant is proposing. Ms. Wernig simply wants something smaller in scale.

Ms. Sandra Saunders of Spring Street also expressed concerned of the scale of the proposed garage. She thought it would look massive as constructed but suggested turning the building to face Spring Street.

Mr. Barkley commented the existing garage used to be a washroom and small kitchen.

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

Mr. Carron made the following findings of fact:

- 1) A written application has been submitted by Nelson Niles.
- 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. 1895 Victorian with Queen Ann features structure.
- 4) The building does contribute to the historic and architectural significance of the district.
- 5) The work proposed by the applicant does not affect the character defining elements of the existing building.

Motion by Mr. Carron to approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness at 136 Spring Street for the front door overhang. This is consistent with Commission Standard #4 and 5.

Seconded by Mr. Barkley.

VOTE: 6 - 0.

The proposed garage will be continued to a future hearing date.

**Historic District Commission Business**

- 1) MINUTES: Action on the minutes of the November 12, 2014, December 10, 2014 and January 14, 2015 meetings.

Ms. Carron motioned to approve the November 12, 2014 minutes, seconded by Ms. Calise. Unanimously approved.

December 2014 and January 2015 minutes continued to the April meeting.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Barkley. Seconded by Ms. Carron. Adjourn at 7:45 p.m.

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

Lea Anthony Hitchen, Assistant Town Planner