

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION MINUTES
June 10, 2015 Meeting
Town Council Chambers – 6:00 PM HDC meeting

Present: Kim Balkcom, Chair; Matthew McGeorge, Vice-Chair, Gregory Maxwell, Kristen Carron, Lauren Drury, Andrew Barkley, and Kingston Fallon.

Absent: Erinn Calise.

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 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. Vincent Meola
19 Somerset Street; Map 75 A.P. 1 Lot 329
Window Replacement - FINAL**

Ms. Balkcom read the applicable standard into the record, being commission number 8. *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 today 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 confirmed the Applicant is proposing blanket approval to replace all existing windows with the Harvey Majesty which is wood and aluminum clad on the exterior window.

Mr. Maxwell questioned the condition of the existing windows as none is provided in the application. Mr. Meola explained he had several contractors look at the windows and all suggested the windows be replaced; some windows have ropes, some do not. He believed that all windows are original to the structure. Mr. Fallon questioned the reason behind the request to replace the windows. Mr. Meola noted for aesthetics as he wanted to remove the storm windows, for lead safety as he has tenants living in the building as well as insulation purposes.

Ms. Balkcom commented the lead safety laws have been in effect for quite some time therefore the Applicant must be in compliance in order to have tenants currently living in the structure. Mr. Meola confirmed the building does meet lead safety laws currently but there have been some refinements in the lead safety rules for rental properties.

Ms. Balkcom questioned if the contractor performing the work specializes in historic property preservation. Mr. Meola stated Bruce Guertin will be doing the work; he has performed work on other historic properties that he owns and feels that Mr. Guertin has done a great job. Ms. Balkcom advised the Applicant that the HDC hears many times that contractors say windows are too far gone and recommend replacement when in reality it is actually a misconception. She noted that it is often easier for a contractor to come in, remove the existing windows and install brand new windows as opposed to reglazing, repairing ropes and pullies, etc.

Mr. Meola verified that this application was not contractor driven as he has been involved with historic properties for over 40 years. He asserted the replacement windows would be an improvement to the property. Ms. Balkcom thought that comment was debatable since the existing windows are original, all intact, and all

appear to be repairable. In her opinion restoring the windows appears to be a viable option in order to maintain the historic character of the home.

Mr. Maxwell agreed with Ms. Balkcom's comments and noted the windows are very important to this particular house. Mr. Fallon, being candid, noted the windows do not look in too bad condition as the Commission has seen worse that get repaired.

Mr. McGeorge commented the Commission has recently received application for this particular window as well as similar replacement windows – one of the issues he has always has with the original windows and quality of original windows that gives to the quality and character of the historic district is that when it was original it was not covered with a storm window so he has started to have a change of heart on character of intent in keeping the window versus energy conservation and aesthetic integrity by covering with something less appealing so although it does not meet the standard he would have less of a problem considering the usage of the home has evolved over time as well. Mr. McGeorge added for him, having approved a similar application recently would be irresponsible not to approve, but the decision does not have to be unanimous.

Ms. Balkcom questioned the windows installed at 38 Peirce Street as she is somewhat disappointed in that window which is the type of window the Applicant is asking for here. The other Commissioners explained in that case it is the trim and grid colors that do not match as well as a gap that throws off the eye when looking at the replacement windows at 38 Peirce Street.

Ms. Balkcom stated she feels the same way Mr. McGeorge does in that too often than not people do not do the proper research and assume replacement windows are the way to go.

Ms. Carron queried if the existing windows are in violation of the new lead law. Mr. Meola verified the windows will be.

Ms. Drury asked if the Applicant explored restoring the windows. Mr. Meola said yes but the joints were rotted and most of the windows are in tougher shape than they appear in the pictures. He added the he understands the situation he is

in as he owns property at 50 King Street and he appreciates the HDC concerns and fiduciary relationship to the Town.

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

Ms. Carron made the following findings of fact:

- 1) A written application has been submitted by Vincent Meola.
- 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 late Victorian/Second Empire.
- 4) The building does contribute to the historic and architectural significance of the district.
- 5) The work proposed by the applicant would affect and remove the character defining elements of the existing building.

Motion by Ms. Carron to approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness at 19 Somerset Street for blanket approval to replace windows with the Harvey Majesty simulated divided lites. This is consistent with Commission Standard #8.

Seconded by Mr. Barkley.

VOTE: 5 - 2. (Opposed by Ms. Drury and Mr. Maxwell).

**2. Hill & Harbour Holding, LLC
404 Main Street; Map 75 A.P. 3 Lot 101
Window Replacement, Siding & Replacement in Kind – FINAL**

Ms. Christine Redfern and Mr. Don Kass represented the application.

Ms. Balkcom noted much of the work to be done is considered replacement in kind which does not require HDC approval. She confirmed the asbestos siding will be removed from the front façade and will keep everything underneath intact. Ms. Redfern confirmed and commented that although she does not have photographic evidence to prove her notion, she believes there were

cornerboards on the building as well as around the front door which she would like to put back on the house. Mr. Barkley verified that if there were cornerboards they were most likely simple and a flat stock would be fine for this era of structure.

Ms. Redfern noted that down the road she will consider abating the rest of the building but simply cannot afford to do it all at this point. Mr. McGeorge suggested the HDC give blanket approval for the siding in order for the Applicant to phase at her own pace.

Mr. Maxwell questioned if the existing clapboard will be restored or replaced. Ms. Redfern confirmed if the clapboard is in reasonable condition it would be kept but added there is very little clapboard on the front façade due to many window/door openings.

Moving on to the roof request, Ms. Balkcom stated the Applicant would like to replace the roof with architectural asphalt shingles. Mr. McGeorge noted the submitted photograph clearly shows a multi layered shingled roof that needs to be replaced; he had no issues with this request.

Ms. Redfern explained she would like to replace all 34 existing windows – 29 of the windows are 2/1 double hung sash while 5 are casement windows located in a later addition. She requested to use the Pella 850 Precision Series which has an interior pine wood with an aluminum clad exterior. She noted the casement windows are in desperate need of replacement. Mr. McGeorge attested the Pella 850 is a good replacement window.

Mr. Maxwell queried about the condition of the existing double hung windows. Ms. Redfern confirmed she had two contractors look at the windows who both confirmed the windows have wood rot on the sills and casings.

Mr. Barkley guessed that the windows in question are not original to the home.

In this case, Mr. Maxwell commented that he did not have any issues with these windows.

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 Hill & Harbour Holdings, LLC (Christine Redfern).
- 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.1855 early Victorian.
- 4) The building does contribute to the historic and architectural significance of the district.
- 5) The work proposed by the applicant improves the character defining elements of the existing building.

Motion by Mr. Fallon to approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness at 404 Main Street for window replacement, siding and replacement in kind. This is consistent with Commission Standards #1, 2, 7 and 8.

Seconded by Mr. McGeorge.

VOTE: 7 - 0.

**3. Benter LLC/Jeffrey T. Butler
319 Main Street; Map 85 A.P. 1 Lot 194
Roofing, Modification of Previous Approval - CONCEPTUAL**

Ms. Balkcom stated Commission Standards 4 and 5 apply to the application. *Standard 4* states 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. *Standard 5* includes substantial additions or modifications to the exterior of the building which states 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.

Mr. Jeff Butler of 2121 Elmwood Avenue, Warwick represented the application. He explained about five years ago he was looking to add a shed dormer for

aesthetic reasons which he received HDC approval for. Since then he ran into financial problems and never added the dormer but has since recovered financially. Mr. Butler noted there are structural issues that need to be fixed which he has had several contractors investigating; it was the third contractor that suggested changing the roof to a mansard roof from the existing gable roof in order to fix the structural issue. He wanted to get the HDC's opinion of a mansard roof before spending money on architects, etc.

Mr. Fallon questioned the existing roof structure. Mr. Butler confirmed the roof structure is decayed and sagging and has been ordered by the Building Official to make repairs. His intention is to keep the existing floor space and will not be adding an additional floor.

Ms. Balkcom commented that this application was tough since there are numerous mansard structures along Main Street but by the same token it creates fake history by altering the existing gable to a mansard roof. She thought if the Applicant needs to remedy the roof issue there are other ways it can be accomplished without completely changing the roof which did not exist to begin with.

Mr. Butler noted that it might cost more for an engineer to come in to structurally engineer the old construction than to put on a new roof. Mr. Barkley advised the building has most likely always been a shallow gabled roof structure.

Mr. Barkley commented there is much more forgiveness allowable if the Applicant looked into adding a shed dormer as the side gable could be engineered. He added that an issue with the mansard roof is that there are two existing chimneys. Mr. Butler said the chimneys have already been removed – he submitted an older picture.

The Commission determined the request is not appropriate for the subject structure as there are other alternatives to fix the roof issue and there are more ways to bring in additional light and space without completely altering what is originally there – there was never a mansard roof and there should not be one.

Mr. McGeorge believed that a mansard roof is not the right way to go but would support the dormer concept. He added any change to the roof is a significant and expensive project and should definitely involve a structural engineer.

Mr. Maxwell commented a design could be accomplished by constructing a load bearing roof to the exterior walls with dormers.

Ms. Balkcom advised hiring an architect and structural engineer who will be fundamental to the project.

Mr. Barkley sketched some conceptual ideas for Mr. Butler who was greatly appreciative.

As this was a conceptual hearing there was no vote taken.

Ms. Balkcom left the meeting and Mr. McGeorge took over as Chair.

**4. 360 Shreeji Inc.
360 Main Street; Map 75 A.P. 1 Lot 390
Minor Modification - FINAL**

Mr. Rasikbheri Patel represented the application.

Mr. McGeorge read the standard that applies to the application, being number 4. Standard 4 states all proposals for architectural changes shall be appropriate to the original design of the building or to later changes that have historic significance of their own.

Mr. Patel explained he needs to replace the existing aluminum clad fascia/soffit which was damaged over the winter. Instead of replacing the soffit with aluminum Mr. Patel would like to use Azek, a composite material which will be the same color white.

The Commission members did not have any issues with the application since the structure is a non-historic modern commercial building.

With no further comments, Mr. McGeorge asked for a motion.

Mr. Fallon made the following findings of fact:

- 1) A written application has been submitted by Rasikbheri Patel.
- 2) The property in question is located within the East Greenwich Historic District.
- 3) The structure in question is a noncontributing building; it is representative of a c.1980 commercial building.
- 4) The building does not 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. Fallon to approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness at 360 Main Street for minor modifications. This is consistent with Commission Standard #4.

Seconded by Ms. Carron.

VOTE: 6 – 0.

Historic District Commission Business

1. MINUTES: Action on the minutes of the March 11, 2015, April 8, 2015, and May 13, 2015 meetings.

Minutes tables to next meeting.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Barkley. Seconded by Ms. Carron. Adjourn at 8:15 p.m.

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

Lea Anthony Hitchen, Assistant Town Planner