HISTORIC DISTRICTS COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, August 4, 2016

Pursuant to notice duly filed with the Town Clerk's office, the Town of Concord Historic Districts Commission held a public meeting on Thursday, August 4, 2016 at 7:00 P.M. in the First Floor Conference Room, 141 Keyes Road, Concord, Massachusetts.

Present:

Full Members
Mark Giddings, Acting Chair
Dennis Fiori
Nea Glenn
Justin King

Associate Members
Luis Berrizbeitia
Kathleen Chartener
Peter Nobile

Lara Kritzer, Senior Planner

Acting Chair Mark Giddings called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. Voting Members for the meeting were Ms. Chartener, Mr. Fiori, Ms. Glenn, Mr. Giddings, and Mr. King...

CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

Boynton Brennan Builders LLC, 12 Bow Street, Monument Square/North Bridge Historic District, to demolish the existing house and garage and construct a new house and garage

Applicants Johanna Boynton and Mark Brennan presented their completed site plan for the proposed building and explained that their purpose was to gather feedback on their proposal. They explained that the redesign was intended to address the previous concerns with massing and the look of the property from the streetscape. The new house was more diminutive than the original proposal and stepped back on the site. They noted that the existing house was structurally unsound and felt that the existing house was a badly designed 1950s gambrel home with little detailing. At the last meeting, the Commission had agreed that the new design was worth considering but had wanted more information. The new site plans showed both the existing and proposed floorplans to give a sense of what was there and what was proposed. They explained the elements of the building that would be part of the streetscape and how the proposed house would be set back more than the existing one. The Applicants thought that the new house would have a more Colonial/New England feel in comparison to the existing building.

A Commission Member stated his appreciation for the additional information and noted that a site visit was still needed to better understand how the new house would sit on the site. He noted the topography on the plans and how the site rose significantly from the street to the rear of the proposed building. The Applicants agreed and explained that they were proposing a 1 ½ story house to keep it low on the site. Another Member asked for a comparison of the height of the new and proposed buildings and the Applicants presented the comparison plan shown at the last meeting. The Applicants also noted the portions of the house that would be set back farther from the street and how the proposed house would

have a narrower front façade than the existing building. The Member expressed concern with the retaining wall in front of the proposed house. She presumed that it was intended to provide a level front yard for the house and asked about its height as she was concerned that it would add to the visual height of the house. The Applicants explained that it would be a maximum of 3' high and explained that they might also be able to create a level space without an actual wall. It was noted that a site visit would be helpful to better understanding how these elements would work together.

A Commission Member noted that the site's elevation rose from the front façade to the rear façade and asked how much of the foundation would be visible. The Applicants explained that they planned to keep the foundation as low as possible. He thought that a mud wall could be used at the rear of the house and garage, which would allow them to lower the foundation by 8", and explained how this type of foundation wall was constructed.

A Commission Member stated that he was not convinced that the existing house had to be demolished. A second member explained that the Commission had discussed this question at the last meeting and had agreed to send a clear message to the Applicants that the existing house could be replaced with one of another style. A third Member stated that he had noted at the last meeting that the replacement house needed to be of equal architectural character to the existing house. He did not believe that the current proposal met that standard as he felt it lacked the relevance and architectural value of the existing building. He felt that the existing house had some important architectural features and noted the classic symmetry of the front façade with its central entrance. He did not have a problem with a new design being used here but did not think that the current proposal was the one to be used. The first Member explained that he could yet be convinced that the existing house should be removed but agreed that he was not at that point yet.

A Commission Member noted that the proposed house was Greek Revival in style and noted that many new houses now used these details. He asked why the Applicants had not chosen to replicate the style of the existing house. The Applicants explained that they were initially trying to make the profile of the house narrower and that by using the existing form, they would have a square house with a boxy addition to its rear. The Applicant was not opposed to a Gambrel style house but did not want to build a stripped down version to match the existing house. The Commission Member stated that the new house could be a 2016 interpretation of a Gambrel in the same way that the existing house was a 1950s version of the style. He noted that this was a 1950s style house, though, and that the proposed new house was more Colonial in form. The Applicant noted that there were more Colonial style houses than 1950s style houses in the area. A second Member agreed that the Commission would prefer to see the house rebuilt and the existing character maintained, but stated that it was his personal feeling that this was not possible. The second Member expressed concern that the Commission was pushing a specific design preference on the Applicants. Members discussed this question and the mandate of the Commission.

A Commission Member felt that the existing house had a place in the character of the streetscape and stated that he would like to see a replacement design that could also contribute to the existing environment. He suggested that the new design share the characteristics of the existing house without replicating it and noted that the existing house made sense in the neighborhood and was designed with an awareness of its site and surroundings. He felt that the existing house was a charming addition to the street. The Applicants asked what features the Commission would like to see in the new structure. The Commission Member stated that he liked the symmetrical front façade which reflected back to Colonial homes. He thought that the proposed house was fine but that it could be anywhere and did not speak to this location.

Another Commission Member noted that the existing house was also generic in design. He believed in looking at the Commission's purpose of protecting the Districts by looking at the overall perspective. He thought that the Applicants had taken many of the Commission's concerns to heart in the new design and felt that the North elevation in particular had responded well to the Commission's concerns with massing. He thought that the design was heading in the right direction from a streetscape perspective and would fit into the area well over time. He thought that the design was beginning to meet the Commission's requirements and his one concern was that the design not become too forced. A second Member agreed with these comments and thought that the proposed design had improved in massing and size. She also agreed with the previous comments on the symmetry of the existing design. She pointed out that each structure left its marks on the terrain and contributed to the District in their own way. She agreed that the proposed design was an improvement, but also wondered if there was a way to combine the new with the existing design.

A Commission Member noted that the Districts were not frozen in time and stated a preference for a modern design that put the stamp of today's buildings on the Districts. He noted that the example of a contemporary house on Bedford Street that was out of scale but in design terms served to freshen the neighborhood. He asked to see a design that was more creative. A second Commission Member stated that he respected the previous comments of Members but felt that the proposed design was a big improvement on the existing building.

The Applicants noted that a preservation consultant had looked at this building in the past and felt that the existing house was not a contributing element of the Historic District or one worth preserving on its own. She explained that they had gone in a direction which they thought would fit well into the neighborhood.

The Acting Chair opened the discussion to public comment. Bruce Blumberg, 36 Lowell Road, stated that the new house proposed to improve the streetscape by imposing the size of the new house on the surrounding neighbors. He noted that the new house would stretch 100' into the lot with the proposed garage and would have a huge impact on abutters. He urged the Commission to require that the Applicants use a professional landscape designer to mask the building if the project went forward. He also agreed with the Commission member who stated that the existing building had a certain charm and preferred to see a new house that was closer in design to that structure. It was noted that the proposed new building would not impact the large pines which Mr. Blumberg had expressed concern over at the last meeting.

Sarah Weiner, 20 Bow Street, also agreed with the Commission Member that the existing house is charming and had hoped for a new house with the general shape of the existing house with a new addition. She was not sure why that approach could not be done and questioned the value of narrowing the front façade when it meant that the house had to be longer. She noted the importance of the green scape at the center of the block to this area and how the large, deep lots were designed with the massing of the house close to the street. She thought that this green space so close to Concord Center was important and that a strip of house down the lot would be very visible and have a negative impact on the area. She was also concerned with the height of the proposed garage which she thought was unnecessarily high.

The Acting Chair stated his sense from the discussion that Members had not reached a consensus on what should be done on this site. He asked Members to take a straw vote as to whether the proposed design was generally acceptable, with the clarification that this was not a binding vote but only to give the Applicants a direction for future meetings. A Commission Member noted that the existing house is

around 1,900 square feet and had previously stated that a 1,000 sf. addition to the existing house would most likely have been successful. He thought that a new house of around 3,000 sf. to 3,500 sf. was the way to go and that the Applicants were moving in the right direction. A second Member stated that he did not support the current direction. A third stated that he had no issue with the house going back but was more concerned with the design of the front façade. A fourth agreed that it was realistic that the house would go farther back on the site and would rather keep the front façade's height down from the street. She did not hate the proposed new design but did not want a reproduction either. A fifth member stated that she thought that the new design was an improvement but would like to see some of the symmetry and charm of the existing house retained. A sixth Member noted that the design was responding to pressure from all sides and was moving in the right direction. He thought that the design was hard edged and suggested softening it but thought that the Applicants had listened to the Commission's concerns with how the house could be viewed and sited.

The Acting Chair summarized that the Commission liked what had been done so far and felt that the massing and size was moving in the right direction. There was agreement that the front façade still needed revision and he asked the Applicants to take another look at this. He would not rule out the current proposal but asked the Applicants to take another look at the project with the Commission's comments in mind. The Applicant asked if a central entrance was really what the Commission wanted, as it would require a wider and taller front façade. Members discussed this option and noted that the narrower option was generally preferred although the wider structure would fit into the historic context of the District.

Aiyana Currie, 47 Lowell Road, stated that she was curious about the proposed massing. She asked why the front façade of the new house had to be smaller than that of the existing house. Members agreed that it did not need to be smaller. The Applicant noted that the guidelines generally ask for a narrow front façade and Members explained that it was not intended to require buildings smaller than an existing house but to limit the extent of larger structures.

Further discussion was continued until the September 1, 2016 meeting. A site visit was scheduled for 8:30 AM on Thursday, September 1.

NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

Town of Concord, 141 Keyes Road, Main Street Historic District, for paving

Senior Planner Lara Kritzer represented the project on behalf of DPLM Director Marcia Rasmussen who had not been able to attend. The Senior Planner explained that the brick walkway leading to the entrance at 141 Keyes Road was in bad condition and an investigation had determined that the bricks needed to be completely removed and reinstalled with a more substantial base. The Town was considering the use of granite pavers instead. The Senior Planner showed photos of the area of the existing brick walkway and explained that this entrance had been added when the building was renovated in the 1990s. The building had existing granite thresholds at the entrances and a granite foundation. Members reviewed the sample of proposed granite pavers and the photos of the existing building. Members agreed that they would like to see a rectangular stone used in place of the square sample, and would like to see a plan for how it will be installed. It was also suggested that the proposed granite was too bright, and that the Town should look for a richer color of stone with more reds and yellows to match the existing granite on the building. The Senior Planner agreed to look into the proposed changes. Further discussion was continued to the September 1 meeting.

Aiyana Currie, 47 Lowell Road, Monument Square/North Bridge Historic District, to remove window

Owner Aiyana Currie presented her application to remove a window from the dormer on the rear façade of her home. She explained that they were proposing to remove the window and would replace it with a board painted to match the body of the house. The trim would remain in place. She presented photos of the rear façade and the right side façade, where this treatment had been used for a small window in the gable end. Members reviewed the photos and noted that the rear façade had limited visibility from across the Mill Brook area on Keyes Road, and that this visibility was generally limited to the winter months. A Commission Member expressed concern that the change would impact the symmetry of the dormer. Members discussed both the visibility of the change and the previous similar change. It was noted that the right façade window change was not documented in the HDC's files but may have been done some time ago.

Members agreed that there were no objections to the proposed change. The Acting Chair opened the discussion to Public Comment and there was none at this time. Mr. King moved to approve the removal of the left side window in the dormer on the rear façade and its replacement with a solid board to be painted to match the body of the building as submitted. Mr. Fiori seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR.

Town of Concord, 1276 Main Street, Church Street Historic District, for new roofing at the Harvey Wheeler Community Center

Council on Aging Director Ginger Quarles and Facilities Manager Jana Dengler presented the application to replace the existing Terra Cotta tile roof at the Harvey Wheeler Community Center. The Facilities Manager began with a brief presentation on the building, explaining that it has an elevated entry facing Main Street with a street level entrance to the parking lot on the opposite side. The building had a Terra Cotta tile roof which was old and in bad condition. She explained that the roof has been a safety hazard for some time as snow would collect and then dump from it in great amounts on the sidewalks and accessible ramps surrounding the building. The former school now serves as a very busy community center with senior programs and a preschool program using the building during the day and nonprofit groups and Town committees regularly holding evening meetings here. She explained that the building was used year round and included a commercial kitchen, auditorium and stage.

The Facilities Manger explained the layout of the building and how the snow from the roof collected around the exits to the building and the ramp to the lower level, and showed how snow had collected around the building two years ago. She then presented photos of the existing tiles, explaining that the roof had small snow stops throughout which were not working. Many of the tiles were broken, and some had been replaced with different materials over the years. She has been researching the tile and possible replacement materials. She noted that Terra Cotta was not typical to New England and was not cut out for the extreme weather. She proposed to replace the tiles with a different material and presented a sample of asphalt coated metal roofing and composite material faux tiles for Members to review.

Members reviewed the photos of the building and noted how a bad snow could close off access. The Facilities Manager explained that in addition to the new roofing, she also wanted to install a new, heavier snow guard. She showed a photo and explained that it would be 6" tall and installed in two rows on the roof – one at 20 inches from the edge and a second at 36". She proposed to install the guards across the entire façade on the West, East, and North facades of the building. The Main Street façade did not need the guards as it was not a primary entrance area.

Members reviewed the sample tile replacements and agreed that the composite tile in "Desert Red" would adequately replicate the look of the existing tile roof. A Member stated that he understood the reasons for the snow guards but was concerned with the extent of the proposal. Members agreed that the new snow guards, particularly if installed in two layers, would be very visible and wondered if it was really necessary with the new roof. The Facilities Manager noted that the project could be done in two parts – they could replace the roof, and if they found that the new composite tiles were still not dealing with the snow, they could come back to request the snow guards. She added that the guards could also be painted to match the tile roof to reduce their visibility. Members agreed that they preferred to only install the new shingles at this time and that they would be happy to look at the snow guards in the future if they were still found to be necessary.

The Acting Chair opened the discussion to Public Comment and there was none at this time. Mr. King moved to approve the installation of new composite material shingles in "Desert Red" in place of the existing Terra Cotta roof at the Harvey Wheeler Community Center as submitted. Mr. Fiori seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR.

OTHER BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes – Members had reviewed the July 7 and July 21 draft meeting minutes prior to the meeting and agreed that they were complete. Mr. Fiori moved to approve the July 7 and 21 minutes as submitted. Ms. Chartener seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR.

Proposed Picnic Tables on Keyes Road – Staff explained that Jim White had agreed to donate two picnic tables to the Town as part of the Mill Brook Markey project. The picnic tables were proposed to be located on Keyes Road across from the Town buildings and would replace ones previously on the site which had deteriorated. The Commission had been asked to weigh in on what type of table should be installed and agreed that the new tables should match the previous table and be a traditional picnic table with attached benches. Mr. Berrizbeitia moved to approve the installation of two unpainted traditional cedar picnic tables with attached benches to be located in the green space on Keyes Road across from 135-141 Keyes Road. Ms. Glenn seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR.

Mr. Fiori moved to adjourn. Mr. Nobile seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR**.** The Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Lara Kritzer
Senior Planner

Minutes Approved on: September 1, 2016

Nea Glenn, Secretary