



Historic District Commission Meeting

Thursday, October 26, 2006

Council Chambers, City Hall, Claremont at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Meeting called to order by Chair Messier at 7:00 PM.

I. ROLL CALL

Present: David Messier, Jeffrey Barrett, John Hall, Lori Richardson, Deborah Cutts, Trinity Dix (alternate)

Absent: None

ALTERNATES

Trinity Dix appointed as a regular member

II. REPORT OF SECRETARY:

Consensus that the minutes from the September 28, 2006 meeting will be addressed at the next meeting due to the numerous items on the agenda.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

Chair Messier opened by explaining that the Historic District is regulated under the city's zoning ordinance. The ordinances set forth the "purposes" for establishing the Historic District and set the limits of the Historic District Commission's review process for approval or denial of applications for Certificates of Appropriateness. Mr. Messier read the following "Purposes" from the Ordinance for establishing the Historic District.

1. Safeguard the heritage of the city by providing for the protection of structures/areas representing significant elements of its history.
2. Enhance the visual character of the city by encouraging and regulating the compatibility of architectural styles within the historic district reflecting unique and established architectural traditions.
3. Foster public appreciation of and civic pride in the beauty of the city and the accomplishments of its past.
4. Strengthen the economy of the city by protecting and enhancing the city's attractions to residents, tourists and visitors.
5. Stabilize and improve property values within the city.
6. Promote the private and public use of structures/areas within historic districts for the education, prosperity and general welfare of the community.

Chair also read the scope of the Historic District Commission's review and items requiring a certificate of appropriateness.

- A. Like a Rock Ent., LLC, Richard J Kangas, 32 Opera House Square, Claremont, NH 03743 -**
A Certificate of Appropriateness Application has been submitted to install a sign indicating **Green Acres Market**, at 32 Opera House Square. Map 120, Lot 43-44, Zone B1. Property owner of record, Zullo- Dauphin Group.

Chair reads from the Historic Survey on this building when the Historic District was established. The building was given a rating of 3. Chair Messier explains that the rating's are from 0 to 3 with 3 being the highest. Level 0 indicates no known contribution to the Historic District, level 1 indicates minor importance, level 2 would be of moderate of importance and level 3 would be the highest rating possible.

Richard Kangas advised that he owns Like a Rock Enterprises and his business is Green Acres market. He presented his plans to install a sign above his business with the name of the business in the center, a 3 dimensional horn of plenty on the left side and a logo of "New Hampshire's Own" on the right side.

Mr. Kangas confirms that the letters will be applied wooden letters painted gold on a green and black background. Mr. Kangas advised that they will be illuminated by two existing spot lights. Mr. Kangas advised that it will be consistent with other signs in the area, that it will fit into the exiting signage area, and that it is the old sign that was there, but he redesigned for his use.

Open public hearing: No comments from the public
Closed public hearing

Motion: The proposed sign will not adversely impact the historic, architectural or cultural value of the building and its relationship and contribution to the setting

Made By: Ms. Richardson **Second:** Ms. Cutts **Vote:** Unanimous

Motion: That under section 22-409, the compatibility of the exterior design, arrangement and materials proposed, and relationship to existing buildings or structures and its setting and to the surrounding uses will not be adversely affected by this proposal

Made By: Mr. Hall **Second:** Ms. Dix **Vote:** Unanimous

The commission reaches consensus that Review Criteria #3 does not apply to this application.

Motion: That plans for the sign are in keeping with the character of the district and do not adversely affect the character of any buildings in the district

Made By: Mr. Barrett **Second:** Mr. Hall **Vote:** Unanimous

Motion: That the applicant's proposal will not have an adverse affect on the setting and will help preserve an enhance the historic architectural cultural qualities of the district and the community

Made By: Mr. Barrett **Second:** Mr. Hall **Vote:** Unanimous

The Commission reaches consensus that Review Criteria #6 does not apply to this application.

Motion: On the basis that out of the 6 Review Criteria, 2 were not applicable and the remaining 4 were approved unanimously, I move that we approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the application to install the proposed sign.

Made By: Ms. Richardson **Second:** Mr. Barrett **Vote:** Unanimous

- B. Michaela Nelson, P.O. Box 1705, New Canaan, CT 06840** - A Certificate of Appropriateness Application has been submitted to remove and return a mural on the west side of the building and create a store front which will match the store front on the east side, at **42-44 Opera House Square, Claremont, NH 03743**. Map 120, Lot 45, Zone B1. Property owner of record, River Ridge Realty, LLC.

Mathew Nelson presented his plans to renovate the storefronts of his building by taking the basic design of the existing storefront on the right and copying it on the left. He plans to expose the original metal posts on the front and asks about color options. A basic CAD drawing was provided to give an idea of the final plan. Applicant advises that the existing glass is not shatterproof and he would like to replace it.

Applicant wants to change the material on the knee wall under the glass and is not sure what would be allowed. He also wants to know what would be an acceptable replacement for the windows on the second and third stories.

Mr. Messier advises that although the building survey indicates this is a level 3 building for its overall design and contribution to the setting, that the existing storefronts are not original and were likely remodeled in the 1950's or later. The applicant, therefore, has more options than if a historical storefront existed, and that repairing and updating the existing storefront and matching that design on the left side is a viable alternative to re-creating the original design. New elements being added should be made when possible from materials generally available at the time of original construction or match those as near as possible. Mr. Messier explains that the HDC does not have review over color options of previously painted items such as the posts, and the applicant should consider colors that coordinate with the overall scheme. As to the material of the knee wall, there are many materials in use of nearby buildings, so there are many options. Applicant asks if dark marble like that used on a nearby building would be acceptable, and is told it would be.

Chair Messier advised he has questions about the signage area. The existing aluminum band that covers part of this area obscures some of the detail in the brick work. Chair Messier advised that he would like them to make sure they do not obscure architectural details. It is unclear on the drawing on how the architectural detailing works. Mr. Nelson advised he is not sure what is behind the aluminum strip, but is willing to adjust the design so as not to obscure any architectural details. The application does not include any specific sign designs.

Open public hearing: No public comment

Closed public hearing

Motion: Under section 22-409, I move that the historical, architectural, and cultural value of the building and its relationship and contribution to the setting will not be adversely affected by the proposed changes to the building

Made By: Mr. Hall **Second:** Ms. Dix **Vote:** Unanimous

Ms. Cutts advised that she agrees with the plan, Ms. Richardson advised she also agrees with the plan. Mr. Hall advised that it is nice to see the building being developed and the changes will contribute to the setting.

Motion: I move that the exterior design, arrangement, texture and materials proposed to be used are compatibly with the existing buildings and structures in this setting

Made By: Ms. Cutts **Second:** Ms. Richardson **Vote:** Unanimous

Motion: I move that the other buildings in the district will not be adversely affected by the proposed renovations to the facade.

Made By: Mr. Hall **Second:** Ms. Cutts **Vote:** Unanimous

Chair Messier asked if there was lighting on the building. Mr. Nelson advised that there is lighting on the building. Ms. Cutts asked if the lights are not working, are they repairable will they be replaced. Mr. Nelson advised that there were some flood lights, but they have been removed. Chair Messier advised that if they were to add lighting they would have to return to the Historic District Commission, unless they were to use the existing fixtures.

Commission reaches consensus that Review Criteria #4 is non applicable

Motion: that the applicants' proposal will have no adverse affect on the building's setting and will help preserve the historic architecture and cultural qualities of the district and the community

Made By: Ms. Dix **Second:** Mr. Hall **Vote:** Unanimous

Review Criteria #6 advises that the committee needs to consider the Secretary of Interiors Guidelines for Rehabilitation.

Chair Messier asked Mr. Nelson if he is going to keep this property as a commercial building. Mr. Nelson advised that it was going to continue to be a commercial building so there will be no change in use.

One of the guidelines advises that if you want to use chemical removing you will need to use the gentlest means possible as to not damage historical materials. Chair Messier advised that the left side of the building is partially painted. Mr. Nelson advised that they will try to remove it with a pressure washer. Chair Messier offered the applicant a copy of a "Preservation Brief" which discusses the various methods of removing paint from stone and masonry buildings.

Motion: that the applicants' proposal is in keeping with the guidelines of the Secretary of Interiors Guidelines for Rehabilitation

Made By: Ms. Dix **Second:** Ms. Cutts **Vote:** Unanimous

Motion: out of the 6 review criteria 1 is not applicable, and based on the proceeding motions, I move that the HDC approve the application for proposed renovations to the Dickenson Block on Opera House Square, owned by River Ridge Realty.

Made By: Chair Messier **Second:** Mr. Hall **Vote:** Unanimous

Applicant asks about replacing his widows. Chair advises that since the current windows are wood; they are permitted to replace the windows with new wood windows that are the same configuration. Mr. Nelson asked if they would be permitted to use bronze colored aluminum windows. Chair Messier advised that this would be acceptable as long as he matches the configuration of the existing windows, does not change the size of the window openings, and that any dividers in the windows be applied to the exterior of the glass.

Motion: that the change to aluminum windows with the same design and configuration of the originals be approved as part of the application.

Made by: Mr. Hall **Second:** Ms. Cutts **Vote:** Unanimous

C. Misha Yakovleff, Service Link, SCS, 1 Pleasant Street, Claremont, NH 03743 - A Certificate of Appropriateness Application has been submitted to install a sign indicating Service Link, Resource Center, at 1 Pleasant Street. Map 120, Lot 53, Zone B1. Property owner of record, Union Block Company, Gary Trottier.

Mr. Yakovleff advised that the storefront is in Union Block on the Sullivan Street side. He would like to amend the proposed length of the sign from 60” to 75” with a height of 2’. He would like to use the logo of “Servicelink” for the design of the sign so that current clients would recognize the new location easier. The sign would be white painted wood, green lettering and black outline.

Mrs. Cutts questions if the sign had a molding or border. Applicant advises there will not be a border or molding, but will be a flat sign. Mr’s Cutts questions whether there are other signs in the district of similar designs. Chair notes there are flat signs on other buildings in the district, though most have a painted border or metal trim to protect the edges of the sign. . Mr. Yakovleff advised that edges will be sealed and will be weather resistant. Mr. Barrette advised that he felt this design is not out of step with the other signs in the area.

Open public hearing: No public comment

Closed public hearing

Commission reached consensus that Review Criteria # 1 does not apply to this application.

Motion: That the materials, and sign design proposed for Southwest Community Services, Service link would be compatible, and are in keeping with the surrounding buildings in the historic district

Made By: Mr. Barrett **Second:** Mr. Hall **Vote:** Unanimous

Commission consensus that Review Criteria #3 would not apply to this application.

Chair Messier asked if he would be lighting the sign area. Mr. Yakovleff advised there will be no lighting to the sign.

Motion: the applicant’s plans for signage are in keeping with the character of the district and do not adversely affect the character or structures within the district

Made By: Mr. Barrett **Second:** Mr. Hall **Vote:** Unanimous

Motion: the applicant’s proposal will have no adverse affect on the District and will help to preserve and enhance the historic architectural and cultural qualities of the district and the community

Made By: Ms. Richardson **Second:** Mr. Barrett **Vote:** Unanimous

Commission consensus that Review Criteria #6 does not apply to this application

Motion: based on the preceding findings of fact, I move that the application be approved for a Certificate of Appropriateness at 1 Pleasant St to hang signage as presented

Made By: Mr. Barrett **Second:** Mr. Hall **Vote:** Unanimous

- D. St Mary Parish, 32 Pearl Street, Claremont, NH 03743 - A Certificate of Appropriateness**
Application has been submitted to demolish the St. Mary's Convent, located at **16 Central St.** Map 119, Lot 349, Zone R2. Property owner of record, Roman Catholic Bishop of Manchester – Diocese of Manchester.

Chair Messier opened with a disclosure that since this issue was published in the paper, many people have expressed their opinions about the proposed demolition. Also, as part of the “duties” of the commission under zoning ordinance 22-403, #6, “it is the commission’s power and duty to request reports and recommendations from city departments and agencies and other organizations and sources that may have other information or can provide advice pertinent to the application or its impact on the district.” It is also their “power and duty to retain professional consultants as may be appropriate to carry out the purposes of this division.” In the past week Chair Messier advised that he has met with the Planning Department, and the City Attorney. He also met with the NH Division of Historical Resources which has responded with a letter that will be read later. He has contacted various historians and professionals involved in historic preservation. He stated that demolishing any building in the Historic District is something that must be considered very carefully. Chair Messier advised that it is important that as commissioners, they must keep an open mind and listen to all parties who want to provide information. He stated that they are still in the information gathering stage of this process.

Father Sean Therrien introduced himself as the pastor at St. Mary. Their application contains 2 reports on the Convent building. The first is a “Property Condition Assessment” done in June 2001. The second is a “Limited Structural Inspection” done by a different firm in October 2006. He advised that the application does not include using the lot for parking. He stated the parish has been working on the issue for over 6 years, that they have taken this seriously, and the demolition is needed to allow their limited funds to be used to preserve the rest of their buildings. There are currently six buildings in the church complex that belong to the Diocese.

Victor Bergeron introduced himself as president of the pastoral council. He was a member of the task force back in 2001. They looked at every building in the parish to consider how to bring them up to the condition they needed to be in. The final decision by the task force was that in order to save the other 5 buildings, they would have to tear down the convent building. They felt it would be cost prohibitive for the church to renovate the convent. They feel the church is not eligible for grants, because they are a religious institution. He also expressed concerns over safety issues concerning the convent.

Mr. Bergeron also stated they have no intention of making the area a parking lot. They want to demolish the building to make this a viable parish. People have made suggestions about selling the property. The parish council feels they cannot sell it, as they would have to sell some parking also. They want to retain all their parking areas for their services. Mr. Bergeron stated this building has been added onto 3 or 4 times, and it is no longer in its original construction. He stated that selling the property or fixing it is not one of their goals and does not fit their criteria. There is also concern about selling the property because its proximity to the Catholic School which is adjacent to the Convent.

Chair Messier read notes from the city’s “Architectural Inventory” sheet on the Convent building. Every building in the Historic District was inventoried and analyzed by preservation teams when the Historic District was entered into the National Registry of Historic Places. There is information on the age, style, ownership, architect, and relationship of this building to the other buildings in the complex. The building has the highest rating for buildings in the Historic District, the architect was Mr. Howland, built in 1835-36, is “an outstanding Greek Revival mansion, one of 3 remaining from a row of 4 built for four prominent early industrialists”. The original owner was Ormand Dutton who came to Claremont in 1836 and was agent for the Sullivan Manufacturing Co. Second owner was E.L. Goddard, agent of Claremont Manufacturing Company. St Mary purchased the home in 1904. Additional information on inventory sheet included as attachment to these minutes.

Questions/comments from Commissioners:

Questions and comments from the commission included:

-Concerns that the applicant may not have exhausted all their options for finding a new use for the building, included leasing or selling it to a developer who might be in a better financial position to renovate the building.

-Concern that the #1 recommendation in the applicant's "Property Condition Assessment" is that the applicant "should consider razing the Annex, Convent, and Rectory Buildings" all of which have the highest ratings possible in the Historic District.

-Concerns about how to reconcile the plan to demolish a highly rated historic building with the "Purposes" outlined in Claremont's Historic District Zoning Ordinance?

-Concerns that the "Limited Structural Inspection" states "Removing this building will not be a major impact on the overall historical nature of the area", but does not provide any qualifications of the author for making such a statement.

-Questions whether parking concerns are valid, since a new public parking garage is being constructed adjacent to the church property. Was there any inquiry about obtaining parking variances for different uses which might be compatible?

-Concerns for creating precedence for demolishing highly rated buildings in the historic district due to an owner's inability to afford maintenance costs.

Open public hearing

Susan Doody Ward II, parishioner spoke in opposition to the proposal. She thought the money used to demolish the building would be better used in making repairs. She states many people have told her they are very sad about this. She feels if the building is properly maintained, it will stand for many years.

Tom Donovan Ward II, parishioner spoke in opposition to the proposal. He felt the commission's role is to safeguard the heritage of the community. He feels these are a unique group of buildings with tremendous historic significance to the community. He felt there are other uses for the building which would not be a danger to the school. He would like to have other options explored.

Chair Messier invited Ms. Judy Hayward of South Royalton VT to speak as an expert in the preservation field, without objection from the commission. Ms. Hayward is a nationally recognized preservation professional who has worked in the field for 25 years. Ms. Hayward once chaired the HDC in Claremont for 7 years. She stated that we know these buildings are historic and we know they are important in relation to one another. She offered the applicant an information package on "*Partners for Sacred Places*" which has not been contacted, and recommended them as a good resource, regardless of the demolition question and its resolution. She states there is a national problem today for churches to balance the financial realities of providing for their ministries as well as for the care of their architectural resources. *Partners for Sacred Places* is a non profit organization based in Philadelphia, and it has helped over 100,000 churches throughout the US with these very problems. The question is, how do you raise the capitol to care for the architectural resources if you ministry is located in a historically significant buildings? St. Mary's should know that they are not alone in this dilemma. Ms. Hayward also provided a brief on historic preservation #31 for "Moth Balling Historic Structures" which gives procedures and techniques for closing a building down, not heating it and doing the appropriate tasks to prevent the acceleration of the deterioration of the building. Ms. Hayward said she would be happy to donate a couple hours of her time to the Church to assist in the process.

Chair Messier asked Ms Hayward if she could provide any additional information on the building itself.

Ms. Hayward advised that she brought a copy of the book *New Hampshire Architecture, An Illustrated Guide*, by Bryant Tolles. The book was written in 1979 and published for the NH Historical Society and is a wonderful summary of the architectural highlights in the entire state. Included in the book are these Greek Revival buildings belonging to the church with text and photos. Ms. Hayward stated that this row of buildings represents great examples of the Greek Revival style, by noted architect Aaron P. Howland of Walpole, who has other buildings on the National Register. The later use of the buildings by the church is an important part of the cultural life of Claremont, the growth of various congregations, and the movement to establish parochial schools in the United States. This campus is illustrative of that. It has a wonderful and thriving school and it should be protected. Ms.

Hayward advised that she doesn't doubt that the financial estimates are real and noted that most charitable giving is done by individuals. It is that kind of funding program that *Partners for Sacred Places* can help congregations with.

Mike Gilbert, Ward II, parishioner spoke in favor of the proposal. He states that parishioners were given copies of the reports and there is no doubt that the buildings have historic value, but the church has been deficit spending for years. He says the parish has known for years that this was a problem and no one offered any solutions. He questions who will provide the finances?

Walter Stapleton, Ward III spoke in favor of the proposal as a parishioner and citizen. He felt that although it is a shame to let a historic property go derelict, the church is in a period of declining attendance and therefore declining revenues. It is an unfortunate decision for the parish but their resources are limited. He asks the board to grant their request so they can get out from under this burden.

Kyle Messier, Ward I spoke in opposition to the proposal. She has sympathy for the financial situation of the church, but is not convinced that all options have been explored or that compromises cannot be made. She encouraged the HDC to take their time in deliberating, as this is a tough choice. She also does not want to see St. Mary's misfortune become the misfortune of Claremont

Bill Corey, Ward I states he recently bought a mill building in the Historic District. He then questioned the authority of the Commission to decide on such matters when the owners have made their decision

Chair Messier read a letter from the NH Division of Historic Resources, which is a State agency. The letter was written by James Garvin who is the State Architectural Historian. He is also the author of the book *A Building History of Northern New England*. Mr. Garvin had reviewed the Church's application and the two reports provided. His letter is in opposition to the application and is attached to and is part of the minutes herein.

Public Comment closed.

Chair Messier suggests continuing consideration of the application due to the late hour, and to give the members of the commission more time to carefully consider all the information provided.

Ms. Cutts advised that under the zoning's "Purposes" section, the zoning ordinance states that it is a matter of public policy to ensure general welfare of the entire community. This board is charged with a significant decision. She suggests asking the city solicitor to attend the next meeting. She feels that although the church is part of the community, the commission is charged with looking at the welfare of the entire community. Ms. Cutts also requested that we have a preservation attorney present at the next meeting if possible.

Motion: to continue the application for demolition to the November 20th meeting , to invite the city solicitor to that meeting as well as someone who could provide legal advice on a state level who has knowledge of preservation issues.

Made By: Ms. Cutts **Second:** Ms. Richardson

Vote:

Roll call:

Chair Messier – Aye

Mr. Barrett – Nay

Mr. Hall – Aye

Ms. Richardson - Aye

Ms. Cutts – Aye

Ms. Dix – Nay

4 Aye and 2 Nay

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to: To Adjourn

Made by: Chair Messier **Second:** Mr. Barrett **Vote:** Unanimous

Meeting Adjourned at: 10:10 pm

Respectfully Submitted By,

Michelle Aiken

Boards and Commissions Coordinator