



Historic District Commission Meeting
Thursday, June 28, 2018 6:30 PM
City Hall, Council Chambers

MINUTES
Approved 7/26/2018

Mr. Messier called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM and asked for a roll call.

I. Roll Call

Members Present: Scott Pope, Kristin Kenniston, David Messier
Absent: Richard Wahrlich

II. Review of Minutes from May 24, 2018

Corrections:

Motion: To approve the minutes from May 24th

Made by: Mrs. Kenniston **Second:** Mr. Pope

Vote: Unanimous in favor

III. Old Business - None

IV. New Business

- A. **HDC 2018-00004 Transitional Properties, 22 Andrea Ave., Hooksett NH** – for replacement windows at **226 Main Street**. Tax map 107, Lot 85. Zone: CR-2.

Mr. Messier read the public notice and invited the applicant to present the application.

Elicia Dowd, applicant and property owner, presented the application.

She started off by saying that every window in this building has been replaced in the last 14 years.

Ms. Dowd referred to photographs that had been provided in the application.

She said these proposed window changes are required by the Fire Department to meet current rental property fire and safety regulations.

The current windows are double-hung – the bottom half of which are too small to provide a means of egress.

Example 1: Two windows on the 2nd floor facing Main Street. Both windows are too small for a 2nd form of egress. These are the only windows in this 2nd floor apartment. The window on the right will be replaced with a casement window that meets code. (The left

window will remain as is so the tenant can have an air conditioner.) The window will be white vinyl with maroon trim. A fake “bar” will be added across the middle of the window to make it look like the other windows in the house. The window opening will not be made bigger.

Example 2: The windows on the left side of the building that face the driveway. Only one window will be replaced in this unit. The window casing will have to be enlarged by 1 ½ inches (lengthen it toward the floor – the bottom of the window can’t be more than 44 inches from the floor). The double-hung window will be replaced with the same casement type window as in Example 1.

Example 3: These windows are on the back of the building on the lower floor. Both windows will be replaced as they are each in a different apartment. The opening size won’t be changed. These are not visible from the street.

Example 4: The 3rd window on the side facing the driveway. This opening will have to be enlarged. It will be the same size as the enlarged window in example 2.

The doors shown in example 5 are interior to the building. The Commission did not need to review them.

Mr. Messier said the front doorway on this house is the most significant feature on this house.

The Commission had no further questions and turned to discussing the review criteria.

There is no architectural inventory sheet for this property.

226 Main Street is in the Lower Village District, an area that was part of the development of Claremont (1830s – 1870s). The house is shown on the map of the Lower Village District and is designated as “Minor”. Although the age of the building dates to the development of the lower village, and the front doorway is very intact (which allows dating of the building), the number of alterations that have been made to it reduce its rating to “Minor”. The alterations obscure the original design of the building.

Mr. Messier said the door tells the whole story. There was an architect, Asher Benjamin, who trained in Boston. He wrote a book in the late 1790s for country carpenters on how to do Federal period houses. He lived in Windsor for a few years and built the church there. In the 1830s when the Greek Revival period was changing from the Federal, he wrote other books about Greek Revival architecture. Several of the Main Street houses – including 226 Main Street - have these doorways that are designed from Asher Benjamin’s book. Mr. Messier said he thought the door itself at 226 Main is the original door. It’s an important doorway (and door).

The gable end portion of the building is the original part of the house. The picture window altered the original appearance of the front of the house.

Criteria #1 Consider the level of historical, architectural, or cultural value of the building, and whether it relates and contributes to the setting.

Historical value (meaning something important happened there or it's connected to an important person): We don't have any information to lead the Commission to believe it has historic value

Cultural value (meaning it's tied to a certain group of people or something similar): there is no information relating to cultural value

Architectural value: The gable and the door have architectural value; the two 2nd floor windows are probably close to their original configuration – meaning size of the openings and placement on the wall – and thus contribute to the architectural value of this building.

The designation of “Minor” indicates that while the building lacks in high or moderate architectural value, it still contributes to the overall character of the setting of the district. It was one of the buildings that was built in the early development of this area of the City. The original structure would have been one that was repeated along this street in other structures. Therefore, it has some relationship even though it has been heavily altered.

Motion: I move that the building located at 226 Main St has minor architectural value and no historical or cultural value and that it does relate and contribute to its setting.

Made by: Mrs. Kenniston **Second:**

Vote: (Consensus)

Criteria #2 Consider how the proposed exterior design, arrangement, texture(s), and materials relate to existing buildings or structures in its setting, or if new construction, to the surrounding use.

This criterion relates to the openings of the windows – exterior design and arrangement. It is important that the arrangement of the windows on the front of the house be retained and they are with this proposal. Some consistency in the windows on the side of the building is being created with this proposal as well, even though none of that area is original to the house and the windows are “all over the place on that part of the house”. The back of the house is not seen from the street.

Motion: I move that the windows being proposed – the sizes and arrangements - are in keeping with the rest of the building and maintaining the original sizes of the windows on the front.

Made by: Mr. Messier **Second:** Mr. Pope

Vote: (Consensus)

Criteria #3 Consider the proposed scale and general size of buildings or structures and whether they relate to the existing surroundings. Consider such factors as the building's overall height, width, street frontage, number of stories, roof type, window/door openings, and architectural details.

(No discussion)

Criteria # 4 Consider how any proposed yards, off street parking, screening, fencing, entrance drives, sidewalks, sign, lights, and/or landscaping and other similar factors might affect the character of any building or structure within the district.

None of these activities are being proposed in this application. Therefore, the Commission found this criterion to be not applicable.

Criteria #5 Consider the impact that the applicant's proposal will have on the setting and the extent. to which it will preserve and enhance the historic, architectural, and cultural qualities of the district and community.

The proposed windows are a far better alternative to an exterior stairway, which was originally being requested by the Fire Department.

The Commission appreciates that the new windows will match the current windows.

Motion: I move that the applicant's proposal will have a positive effect on the setting and will help to preserve and enhance the historic, architectural, and cultural qualities of the district and community.

Made by: Mr. Pope **Second:** Mrs. Kenniston

Discussion: Mr. Messier did not think the project would have a positive effect – nor did he think it was negative – more of a neutral effect. It's not enhancing anything. It's more like keeping a status quo.

Mr. Pope said he felt the positive effect was not having to put a stairway in. Mr. Messier said the stairway was not part of this proposal – that the criterion reads, "*Consider the impact that the applicant's proposal will have*".

Mr. Pope agreed to change his motion to:

Motion: I move that the applicant's proposal will have a neutral effect on the setting and will help to preserve and enhance the historic, architectural, and cultural qualities of the district and community.

Mrs. Kenniston agreed to second the amended motion.

Vote: Consensus

Criteria #6 Consider how the proposal relates to the "Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitation"

None of these windows are original to the building. The front windows are not changing in size – the openings aren't changing. The rest of the windows are in modern additions which would be removed if the house were to be restored. Existing vinyl windows are being replaced with vinyl windows. There is no real impact from the Secretary of the Interior's standards.

Having no negative criteria motions, Mr. Messier called for a motion to accept.

FINAL MOTION

Motion: To accept and approve as presented
Made by: Mr. Pope **Second:** Mrs. Kenniston
Vote: Unanimous in favor

V. Other

A. 39 Central Street

The Commission had received an email from Mr. Pope requesting information about 39 Central Street.

Mr. Pope said the City Council had been reviewing their “Refuse Tax Deeds” (meaning properties that the City will not take back for taxes owed). 39 Central Street is on that list. City Council wanted more information about it. He said Council had dealt with this property a few years ago. Mr. Pope said, “It was a property that was derelict and was coming down – the Historic District at the time – this was before my time on the Council - dealt with this property and allowed them to take down the wooden porches on the back side ... and there was some sort of historic reason that this was not taken down at the time. So, they just wanted background information. They wanted to know if anybody on the Historic District remembered that series of hearings.”

Mr. Pope said it was done maybe in 2014 or 2015. He said, “This property is also currently labeled as having possible hazardous materials due to a fuel tank leak that went through the stone wall and into the soil. It is on the DES quick look up site.” (He said he would send the link for the site to the Commission.) Mr. Pope said, “They (Council) just want to see if we (the Commission) want to take this property since one hundred something thousand dollars is owed in back taxes since 2005. And see if anything can be done, torn down, whatever. I guess the situation is more information is needed in several fronts. What is the historic value, since it was believed it was historically valuable? What is the EPA situation? And as we get our information together that will help us better formulate the decision. What we want to do with it – to be determined.”

Mr. Messier said, “We’ve recently taken some properties and sold them at auction – tax deed – is that correct?”

Mr. Pope, “Yes we have -former fitness center, Hunter property.”

Mr. Messier, “There was one on Pleasant Street that was taken down and the lot sold. My question is, the back taxes that were owed on that property – do/did they need to be recovered when somebody purchases that land? My recollection on this property (39 Central Street) is there was an ownership issue – trying to find who the owner was ...” There was difficulty notifying the owner because the City didn’t have contact information.

Mr. Pope said he didn’t think anyone had been found in the past few years to contact. Mr. Messier asked how the property could be taken if the owner can’t be notified. Mr. Pope said, “Therein lies the problem. You have to do something.”

Mr. Messier said, “What if you take this down and it’s an empty lot. What happens to that lot? Do you want to sell it to somebody?”

Mr. Pope, “That is a situation - if you look back at the North Street work that they did in the late 90’s. They had taken several properties back for various reasons - back taxes - such that some of those lots are still open and possibly for sale and depends on whether the City wants to sell them or keep them. I think there was one recently that went out to request for bids on North Street.”

Mr. Messier, “That gets back to my question – do back taxes have to be paid?”

Mr. Pope said he would have to find out.

Mr. Messier said, “The dilemma is, nobody is going to buy that lot for \$108,000. And nobody is going to buy that house for \$108,000.”

Mr. Pope, “I get it – that’s the question that’s going to be asked.”

Mr. Messier, “If that’s a state law, is there a way to get around it, because, when this came up a few years ago, there were two, maybe three people who came forward and said they would take the house and restore it.”

Mr. Pope, “That’s the information I need to know – three people were interested at the time.”

Mr. Messier, “I can give you one name, but not in public.”

Mr. Pope, “That’s fine. Whatever background you guys have on that. I’m not going to pretend to answer any questions I don’t know the answers to.”

Mr. Messier, “There are people who may take this, but not for \$100,000. So, then the question is, can we get around someone having to pay the back taxes, because that will never happen ... if you can get someone to take the house and restore it, it’s back on the tax roll so you’ll get future taxes on it. If you take it down, nobody is going to buy the lot so you’ll get nothing. So why not let someone take the house and restore it and get it back on the tax roll?”

Mr. Pope, “I get it.”

Mr. Messier, “At that time there was a gentleman, James Garvin, who for years worked for the state department of historical resources – he’s an architectural historian – he sent us a little write-up on this house – both a brief history of ownership and the significance of the house itself and how it relates to the setting. It kind of covers all the bases of what we review in criteria. You can see from our form here (architectural survey) it has the highest rating of 3, because of all those associations and the architecture of the house.”

Mr. Pope, “What I can say is right now it’s kind of in limbo. It’s still probably on the books as being owned by private people so ...that is where it is. Those are the questions to be asked and this is part of the information finding. I’m sure there are some people that know a lot more about it and it’s a good thing to ask.”

Mr. Messier said he would get a copy of James Garvin’s letter so it could be put/kept together with the architectural survey.

Mr. Messier asked Mr. Pope to keep the Commission up to date on developments on this property. Mr. Pope agreed to do so.

There was no further discussion.

B. Gizmo

“Gizmo” is a part of the gasholder house, which was part of the gas works plant located on Lower Cul de Sac on the Sugar River across from the Monadnock Mills complex. Gizmo is comprised of a circular disk with 6 tie rods extending from it. The gizmo was mounted on a central column within the gasholder chamber and assisted in raising and lowering the gas bell. It is apparently the last of its kind in the country. When the gasholder house was dismantled, the gizmo (actually there are two of them) was left in the grass on the site. It was supposed to have been incorporated into an exhibit that was created on the site, but again, was left behind. Gizmo (and its companion) have been rescued by the DPW and are currently stored in a secure trailer at the highway garage on Grandview Street.

Some of the tie rods are either badly bent or are missing (perhaps the reason they were not incorporated into the exhibit).

The concern is that the gizmos may inadvertently end up in the recycle bin if they remain in storage with no accompanying documentation for any length of time – it is not obvious that are of any value or even what they are. The question is, what to do with them?

Mr. Pope said he would need to examine the gizmo(s) to learn the type of material the rods are made of and thus how/whether they could be straightened. It depends on the quality of the steel from this era. He felt certain they could be straightened, it would just be a matter of time and space, although they would never again be exactly straight.

Mrs. Kenniston thought it was worth looking into as a part of Claremont history.

It was agreed to have Mr. Pope view the pieces and make a determination as to what can be done to the tie rods. Then the Commission will develop a plan. Staff would seek grant funds to pay for the project.

VI. Correspondence

VII. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting

Made by: Mr. Pope **Second:** Mrs. Kenniston

Vote: Unanimous in favor

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 PM

Respectfully submitted by,
deForest Bearse
Resource Coordinator