



TOWN OF WINCHESTER
Design Review Committee

Town Hall, Winchester, Massachusetts 01890

Juli Riemenschneider, RLA, ASLA, Chair
Ellen Spencer, Vice Chair
Adrian LeBuffe, LEED
Eileen Casciari, RA
Mary Grassi
Tracy Burhans
Jamie Devol, AIA

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 4, 2022, 7:30 pm - Town Hall, Mystic Valley Room

Present: Riemenschneider, Spencer, Burhans, Devol,
Recording Secretary Nancy Upper

1. Open meeting. Vote to approve April 6, 2022, minutes - All in favor.

2. 7 Thompson Street Sign Application

- The sign's black background and gold letters are in keeping with other Thompson Street signage.
- DRC has no design recommendations.

3. 80 Washington Street – Library Sign Application follow-up discussion

Guest presenters: Ann Wirtanen, Winchester Library Director
Jane Murray, Chair of Library Trustees

- Wirtanen showed original documents of the pdfs she had emailed to Recording Secretary Nancy Upper.
- Discussion ensued about color, materials, and typeface of the new lettering, and how it will be mounted on the Library facade.

DRC Recommendations:

- Match new letters to original letters as closely as possible.
- New letters should not be black but darker than the stone, so they are visible.
- Painted letters will chip, so the finish on the new letters should be durable and corrosion-resistant. Anodized aluminum suitable for

exterior use, in a gray tone, should be considered for its color and longevity.

- Give the letters a matte pewter finish, not a shiny silver finish.

4. Petition 3961 - 142 Sylvester Avenue, Winchester MA

That of WILLIAM and MARIA RUTNAM concerning the property at 142 SYLVESTER AVENUE, WINCHESTER, MA. The petitioners are seeking a Special Permit under Section 3.5.5 of the Winchester Zoning By-Law in accordance with Chapter 40A, Section 9 of the Massachusetts General Laws so as to be permitted to construct an addition that will be located closer to the side property line than permitted as of right. The property is located in the RG (General Residence) zoning district and contains 7,528 +/- square feet.

Guest presenter: Bill Rutnam, property owner

- Sylvester Avenue is a dead-end street. The Rutnam house stands at the end of the street and abuts conservation land.
- The existing house is a Cape style with no garage. The roof is steeply sloped in front and slightly sloped in back.
- The Rutnams seek to add a two-story addition on the driveway side of the house. The ground floor of the addition will be a garage, the second story a master bedroom, bathroom, and office.
- The shape of the lot, location of the house on the lot, and location of nearby wetlands limit the options for the placement of the addition.
- Recent renovations to the house pose constraints on the addition:
 - In 2014, the Rutnams renovated their kitchen, and the new kitchen windows provide views the back yard and woodland. Placing the proposed addition at the back the house would block these views.
 - In 2021, the Rutnams installed photovoltaic solar panels on the existing roof at considerable expense. They would need to remove and reinstall the panels if a second story was added over the one-story portion of the house.
 - Roof slopes on the addition are important for safety, so snow slides off easily.
- At Rutnam's request, his architect, Paul Zbruz Design of Lowell MA, created two plans for the addition:
 - Option 1: The roof ridge line is at the same elevation as the existing house. A narrow portion of the house — over the new side entry door and vestibule, and closer to the front of the existing house — is a full two stories and extends above the eave of the addition's roof.

This option was sent to the DRC and distributed to members after the meeting.

- Option 2: The ridge line of the addition is approximately five feet higher than the existing roof. The roof over the side entry door and vestibule is on the same plane as the rest of the addition's roof.

This option was in the petition application and viewed at DRC's May 4, 2022, meeting.

- Both plans have a vestibule with a ground-level front entrance that connects the existing first floor to the new garage. The new second-floor bedroom, bath, and office double the living area of the second story.
- Both plans have the same footprint.
- Rutnam thought that Option 1 looked "too boxy" so asked his architect for the second design.
- Four DRC members thought the Option 2 form and placement of the addition make it look mismatched with the house.
- DRC member Jamie Devol preferred Option 1, because it "maintains the ridge height of the main house, thereby reducing the visual impact of the addition."
- Devol, a registered architect, observed that, because of the front-wall closet in the Option 1 connection, "there may be enough head room to continue the addition's roof slope on over the connection, which will tie the two roofs together and prevent an awkward roof valley."
- Devol suggested ways to open the interior and exterior of Option 1. For example:
 - Fully open the second-floor wall between the house and the addition.
 - Add skylights.
 - Add windows on the north wall facing the woods to let in light and access views.
- Devol researched the rough cost of removing and reinstalling photovoltaic panels: \$1,500 - \$6,000. She suggested exploring an alternative design option that would:
 - On the existing second floor, create a master suite by adding a shed dormer facing the street.
 - On the north [driveway] side of the house, add a one-story, one-car garage with a gable roof that matches the existing roof slope.
- Riemenschneider favored Option 1, because of the "reduction in height of the addition."

Ellen Spencer made the motion —

Favorable action with one condition:

Investigate alternative designs that better integrate the form of the addition with the existing house.

Reasons why: All agreed that the proposed addition did not complement the house, but members understood that options for placement of the addition are limited because of site constraints.

The applicant offered to send Option 1 drawings to the DRC, so members could evaluate them individually and consider alternate forms for the addition.

All in favor — **Vote 4-0.**

5. Petition 3963 - 121 Church, Winchester MA

That of BRANDON and LAUREN BETTENCOURT concerning the property at 121 CHURCH STREET, WINCHESTER, MA. The petitioners seek a Special Permit from Section 5.1.10(1) of the Winchester Zoning By-Law in accordance with Chapter 40A, Section 9 of the Massachusetts General Laws so as to be permitted to have the width of the driveway entrances greater than 10 feet. The property is located in the RDB (Single Residence) zoning district and contains 15,997 +/- square feet.

Guest presenter: Brandon Bettencourt, property co-owner.

- Bettencourt seeks to widen the two ten-foot openings of the property's U-shaped driveway to allow for safer entry and exit along a heavily congested section of Church Street.
- DRC viewed a photograph showing that, between the east and west driveway entrances, Church Street expands from a single lane to a double lane.
- The 10-foot-wide entrances force Bettencourt to make wide turns to enter his driveway without hitting the curb. Cars attempt to pass him on the right as he does so, even if his right-turn signal is on.
- A drawing showed that Bettencourt seeks to make the west driveway entrance 14 feet wide and the east entrance 15 feet wide.
- Bettencourt noted that Winchester Bylaws allow a single driveway entrance to be 20 feet wide without a Special Permit. If a house has two driveway entrances, each must be 10 feet wide without a Special Permit.
- If the Town permits Bettencourt to widen his driveway entrances, he said he will take responsibility for rebuilding the sidewalk and replacing greenery.

DRC members' comments:

- Juli Riemenschneider favored widening both entrances to make easing in and out of street traffic safer, due to the location.
- Ellen Spencer favored widening one entrance.
- Tracy Burhans favored widening one entrance.
- Jamie Devol favored keeping both entrances 10 feet wide to make the street and sidewalk safer for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Ellen Spencer made the motion—**Favorable action with one condition:**

Widen only the west end of the U-shaped driveway.

No vote. Too few in favor for a quorum decision.

6. Petition 3960 - 25 Yale Street, Winchester MA

That of WALID SUKARIEH concerning the property at 25 YALE STREET, WINCHESTER, MA. The petitioner is seeking a Special Permit under Section 3.5.5 of the Winchester Zoning By-Law in accordance with Chapter 40A, Section 9 of the Massachusetts General Laws so as to be permitted to construct an addition that will be located closer to the rear property line than permitted as of right. The property is located in the RDB (Single Residence) zoning district and contains 12,433 +/- square feet.

Guest presenter: Walid Sukarieh

- The Sukarieh family seeks to build a two-level addition behind the house. The top level will be an enclosed sun porch, the bottom section used for storage.
- The addition will be in line with the existing deck, which extends two feet into the setback. This deck has been in existence for more than 50 years.
- The proposed addition will connect to the existing deck and will extend the same two feet into the setback.
- The Sukarieh house sits at the corner of Yale Street and Foxcroft Road.
- The proposed addition will be visible to the neighbors behind the house, at 12 Foxcroft, whose property abuts 25 Yale. These neighbors wrote a letter stating that they are "happy to support" Sukarieh's proposal.
- The proposed addition will not be visible from Yale street, will be only slightly visible from Foxcroft Road, and will affect barely 1% of open area and green space.
- The forms and materials of the proposed addition are 100% compatible with the scale and character of the existing house, and with buildings in the neighborhood.
- Each window in the addition will have a 2-row, 3-panes-across grid pattern on top with a single large pane on the bottom. Said Sukarieh, "The whole point is, we want a room with a lot of light."
- The proposed addition will enhance the aesthetic appearance and value of the house.

For all of the above reasons, **Ellen Spencer made the motion —**

Favorable action with no conditions.

All in favor — **Vote: 4-0.**

7. Petition 3962 - 11 Watson Place, Winchester MA

That of ZHONGJING DUAN and WEI JIANG concerning the property at 11 WATSON PLACE, WINCHESTER, MA. The petitioners are seeking a Special Permit under Section 3.5.5 of the Winchester Zoning By-Law in accordance with Chapter 40A, Section 9 of the Massachusetts General Laws so as to be permitted to construct an addition that will be located closer to the front property line than permitted as of right. The property is located in the RG (General Residence) zoning district and contains 4,932 +/- square feet.

No guest presenter(s).

Key points from Zhongjing Duan and Wei Jiang's Special Permit application:

- The Petitioners seek to add a second story to the side of the house that currently is a single story.
- The existing single story portion is non-conforming to the front yard setback, so the second story, though no closer to the front yard, will likewise violate the setback.
- The addition will not extend the footprint of the house and will be compatible with the scale and character of properties in the neighborhood.
- The house sits at the end of this dead-end street. The proposed addition will be to the portion of the house furthest from the nearest neighbor at 9 Watson Place, so it will not affect the neighbor's property.
- The style and materials of the addition will comply with those of the existing house.

DRC viewed drawings of front, right, left, and rear elevations of the proposed addition.

DRC supports adding a second story, but discussed at length how to make the addition more successfully integrate with the existing house.

DRC recommendations include:

- In front, continue the existing ridge line, roof slope, and eave line across the addition. Because of the narrow width of the addition, the ridge line will not be centered on the roof.
- To increase the square footage of the second story, and to make it similar to the existing house, place a shed dormer in the front of the addition.
- In back, continue the existing roof slope.
- Note: When viewed from the back of the house, the width of the roof will be narrower and the eave higher than the existing house.

Ellen Spencer made the motion—

Unfavorable action.

Reasons why:

- DRC feels that the roof line can be resolved in a way that would look more aesthetic from the street, and that the plans should add a dormer in front to match the existing dormer.
- The existing house is a historic bungalow in a neighborhood cited as having historic significance. The addition should complement the historic features of the vicinity.

All in favor — **Vote 4-0.**

8. Adjourn.

SUMMARY of Design Review Committee VOTES — May 04, 2022			
Minutes #	Item	Address	Vote
4.	Petition 3961	142 Sylvester Ave	Favorable action 4-0 with one condition and reasons why
5.	Petition 3963	121 Church Street	No Vote. Too few in favor for a quorum decision.
6.	Petition 3960	75 Yale Street	Favorable action 4-0 with no conditions
7.	Petition 3962	11 Watson Place	Unfavorable action 4-0 with reasons why

Next meeting: Wednesday, June 1, 2022. Location to be announced.

Respectfully submitted by Recording Secretary Nancy Upper.