



TOWN OF WINCHESTER
MIDDLESEX COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
TOWN HALL
WINCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01890

Meeting Minutes

Date: September 12, 2022

Location: Town Hall, Mystic Valley Room with remote access via Zoom

Members Present: Jack LeMenager, Chair
Jon Carlisle
John Clemson
Janet Boswell
Emily Dowling
Michelle McCarthy

Members Absent: Bruce Hickey, Vice Chair

Also Present: Brian Szekely, Town Planner
Larry Murray, 165 Washington St.
Daniel Belknap, 19 Hancock St.
John Leavitt, 153 Cambridge St.
John McConnell, 4 Wildwood Terrace
Nick Rosettos, Winchester Planning Board
Rachael Edmonston, Recording Secretary
Arianie Keeney, 98 Thornberry Road

The meeting was convened at 7:30.

Board of Appeals Petitions

36 Salisbury Road – Special Permit

The owners of 36 Salisbury Street, Lori S. and Richard L. Evans, 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 side property line than permitted as of right.

Chair Jack LeMenager explained that the house at 36 Salisbury Road was built in 1930. The attorney for the couple, Larry Murray, explained that the owners wished to build a small, 331-foot addition on the rear of the property. He noted that the family had moved into the house in February 1999 and wished to continue to live in the house and age in place. To do so, they wanted to expand the house slightly by adding the addition to the rear. He added that the color and materials would match the original house, and that the addition would be in keeping with the look and feel of both the original house and the surrounding neighborhood.

Mr. Murray said that all of the abutting neighbors had seen and approved of the plans for the addition. Furthermore, the Design Review Committee had liked the plans for the property, and the assistant town engineer did not find any issues with the proposed addition. Mr. Murray continued that the Massachusetts Bylaw had special criteria for preexisting nonconforming single-family houses, which required that the Zoning Board of Appeals test that a proposed plan allowed for a specific percentage of green space, open space, and hardscape. The proposed plan met these requirements.

The elevation drawings were presented to the Historical Commission. Chair LeMenager said he liked the plans and agreed with the Design Review Committee. He said that it did not impact the look or feel of the neighborhood.

Commissioner John Clemson noted that the design did not impact the saltbox outline and therefore had no objection to the addition. The rest of the Historical Commission did not have any questions or comments.

MOTION: In accordance with Zoning Bylaw Section 9.4, subsection 8, the Historical Commission finds no adverse effect on a historical or cultural resource. The motion was made and seconded.

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed (1 absent).

Center Business District review

14 Thompson Street (a.k.a. The Spot, to be Karma)

The new owner of 14 Thompson Street wanted to reconfigure the entrance by creating a new one to the left of the current entrance where a window presently sits. The elevation drawings for the renovations were presented to the Commission.

The Town Planner, Brian Szekely, noted that the current entrance would be bricked up. He said that the Planning Board had not been fully aware of the plan, and he was not sure whether they approved of it. He added that the project had a “by right” permit for exterior work and that the Planning Board had not yet reviewed the project.

Chair LeMenager expressed his regret that the existing half-moon window would be removed by the renovation. He said that while he did not love the new design, so long as the owners maintained the same materials to construct the new entrance, he was okay with the plans.

Commissioner Janet Boswell said that the entrance way was a defining element of the property. Nick Rosettos of the Planning Board agreed and said the doorway gave the building its distinct “English pub” look and feel. He said that the new proposed building materials were not aligned with the current appearance of the building. Commissioner Michelle McCarthy agreed. She did not like the new materials and was glad that others agreed. She said the design was strange and asked what was on the side of the doors. Mr. Rosettos said that they were antique bronze panels. Commissioner McCarthy again expressed her regret that the old entrance way was being altered but said that she did not have any other disagreements with the design.

Commissioner Clemson said that the building was part of a rare surviving example of a “streetcar” shopping center that was popular in the 1920s. He noted that some of the original colonial revival aspects of the building had regrettably already been altered in the past and added that he did not like the design.

Chair LeMenager said that he did not want to send a letter to the builders detailing the Commission’s comments but would prefer to meet with them in person. The Commission agreed.

MOTION: The Historical Commission will meet with the builders responsible for the renovation of 14 Thompson Street to discuss the Commission's recommendations. The time and date of the meeting will be determined at a later date and according to the Commission's availability.

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed (1 absent).

Other matters

19 Hancock Street – discussion with owner re: Section 4.5 waiver

The owner of 19 Hancock Street, Daniel Belknap, received a letter from the Historical Commission detailing the alterations that he was permitted to make to his property under the Section 4.5 waiver of the Winchester Zoning Bylaw.

Chair LeMenager asked Mr. Belknap if he had any questions or reactions to the Commission's determinations. Mr. Belknap answered that, on the whole, he agreed with the Commission's conditions. He asked if they were allowed to build a second story deck on the property. Commissioner Clemson answered that this was permitted, as properties like 19 Hancock Street frequently had double decker porches on the back. He added that all alterations and enlargements should be on the rear of the property.

Mr. Belknap asked if any additional permitting was required to add an additional enclosed staircase needed to access the attic level. Commissioner Clemson and Chair LeMenager reiterated that alterations would be appropriate on the rear of the property, or else not visible from the public view.

Mr. Belknap asked if wood was necessary to repair the trim, or if PVC could be used. Commissioner Clemson answered that PVC could be used so long as the molding profile was reasonably close to the original trim.

Regarding window replacement, Belknap asked if he should keep all windows in the same style. Commissioner Clemson stated that if one window broke, then Mr. Belknap should replace it in the same style as the existing windows. If all of the windows needed to be replaced, however, he said that Mr. Belknap should replace them all with higher quality, divided light windows. He noted that they could have that discussion at a later date, if need be.

In an instance when a building permit would be required, Mr. Belknap asked if he would have to come before the Historical Commission for a special permit or site plan review. Mr. Szekely stated that it depended on the situation. He noted that anything Mr. Belknap did would be preexisting non-conforming, so if the project was exterior, it would depend on the nature of the work.

Commissioner Clemson stated that the town would hold the easement for the property and would need to review and approve all changes going forward. The Historical Commission did not currently know which that official would be but told Mr. Belknap that they would find out and let him know.

Mr. Belknap noted that the single door on the property was specifically mentioned as a defining element. He wanted to make two private entrances to the property: the existing one for the upstairs unit, and one for downstairs. Commissioner Clemson stated that the project was very well thought out and he would be willing to allow the second entrance, so long as Mr. Belknap put a window on or by it, in keeping with the style of the existing house. Chair LeMenager agreed. Commissioner Clemson added that the style of having two doors is typical of the 1900s and later, so he would modify the conditions to permit it. Chair LeMenager added that the materials would need to match the style of the original.

Chair LeMenager also suggested that the Commission add a new condition that would stipulate that the new house would need to be a similar size and look like the surrounding properties, in keeping with the neighborhood, and the garage should be in the rear of the property. Mr. Belknap said he had no objection to this and added that he would be creating a double driveway. He said that the second house that he planned to build on the property would be a craftsman and asked if that would be appropriate for the neighborhood. Commissioner Clemson said yes, because the style of houses in the neighborhood were quite diverse, they were more concerned that the massing of the new structure.

Chair LeMenager asked if a mature tree on the lot would be preserved. Mr. Belknap noted that it would be cut down, but the trees on the street would remain.

MOTION: The Historical Commission votes to accept the conditions for 19 Hancock Street as amended.

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed (1 absent).

Chair LeMenager said that he would make the discussed changes in the Historical Commission's letter and. Mr. Belknap thanked the Commission for its time.

10-16 Mt. Vernon Street

The owner of the property, John Leavitt began by telling the Commission that he was a forty-year resident of Winchester. He stated that he had brought his project before the Historical Commission over two years ago but wasn't aware of the procedures and was looking for additional guidance. He stated that he redid the rear of the building so as to not disrupt his abutters, but he was trying to include extra space and needed guidance on a potential third floor.

The consultant who is working on the project, John McConnell said that in the past, it had been suggested that they set back the third floor, but he explained that this was not economically or structurally feasible. He noted that the project would eat up their budget and the "wedding cake" style setback would not look historically accurate. He reiterated that their goal was to add a third floor to add housing in the middle of town. He noted an attic story might be the most feasible.

Commissioner McCarthy asked if legally, the third floor had to be set back. Chair LeMenager said that it was an aesthetic discussion.

Mr. Leavitt noted that he also had to consider the adjacent Lyceum building. He said the chimneys of the Lyceum were on his building. Chair LeMenager asked Mr. Leavitt what he was looking for from the Historical Commission. Mr. Libeth answered that he was looking for the Commission's opinion on his plans.

Commissioner McCarthy stated that she would feel more comfortable waiting for the town planner, Mr. Szekely to look over the plans.

Commissioner Clemson stated that the owners shouldn't worry but focus on creating new designs for the building in line with the existing historical features: the oriels, and the ionic cornices. He noted that the building dated back from 1892 and appeared to be in a colonial revival style.

Chair LeMenager stated that he liked the plans for the building as presented and noted that the new 10 Converse Place building, which would be diagonally across the street, would be taller.

Commissioner Clemson agreed and urged the preservation of the historic details. He also suggested that the builders try to make the third floor almost unnoticeable by enhancing the cornice and decoration of the second floor. Chair LeMenager agreed and noted that they could use the cornices to make it appear as if the second floor protruded more.

Commissioners Jon Carlisle and Boswell stated their approval. Commissioner Emily Dowling said that the bay windows made it very attractive and gave her approval.

Commissioner Clemson said that they would need a review by the Planning Board.

Mr. Leavitt thanked the Commission for their time.

68 Harvard Street

The Commission discussed the work currently being done on 68 Harvard Street. Commissioner Clemson stated that it appeared to be a substantial demolition to him, and that the developers had dug a large hole and pulled down a part of the foundation. He expressed regret that the project had had not been reviewed by the Historical Commission.

Chair LeMenager agreed and noted that 68 Harvard Street was located in the historic African American neighborhood of Winchester.

Mr. Rosettos stated that there were defining historical details on the house, including the original windows. He noted that the Commission could try to flag the historical details to the developer and figure out why it wasn't brought before them, in order to avoid similar occurrences in the future.

Commissioner Boswell said that she did not think the developers were in violation of the zoning laws. Chair LeMenager asked Commissioner Clemson to send him the building permit. Commissioner Clemson agreed to do so and noted that the owner planned to build a duplex with a gable face and bridge the units. He suggested that the Commission try to ask the developer to reduce the height but noted that it might be too late.

Chair LeMenager noted that they would have to ask the building commissioner, Al Wile. He said he and Mr. Szekely would speak with Mr. Wile about the project.

Returning from a prior engagement, Mr. Szekely answered that Mr. Wile would be able to pause the project, if necessary.

Approve August 8, 2022, meeting minutes.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the August 8, 2022 Historical Commission Meeting.

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed (1 absent).

Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the Historical Commission meeting of September 12, 2022.

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed (1 Absent).

The meeting adjourned at 8:53pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rachael Edmonston, Recording Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. LeMenager', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

10/4/2022

Jack LeMenager

Date