

RIDGEFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Lower Level Small Conference Room
Town Hall, 400 Main Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877
September 20, 2018

APPROVED MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Ridgefield Historic District Commission (“HDC”) was held in the lower level small conference room of the Town Hall, 400 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877, on Thursday, September 20, 2018, and beginning at 7:30 p.m.

The following members were present:

Dan O’Brien, Chair
Briggs Tobin, Vice Chair
Joseph Gasperino
Sean O’Kane
Kam Daughters (Alternate for Rhys Moore)
Harriet Hanlon (Alternate)

AGENDA

- 1) 236 Main Street – Hawley House – Replace shingle siding on south side of house with clapboard matching other sides. Restore and/or replace other siding as necessary
- 2) 77 High Ridge Avenue – Various changes and additions to the existing exterior of the house
- 3) 23 West Lane – Window replacement or restoration

Executive Session

MEETING

The Meeting was called to order by Mr. O’Brien at 7:29 p.m.

- 1) 236 Main Street – Hawley House – Replace shingle siding on south side of house with clapboard matching other sides. Restore and/or replace other siding as necessary

Don Ciota, the owner of the house, was present along with Neal Hicks of Hicks Construction LLC.

N. Hicks said in the back where the bad bulge was located, he took off approximately 3-4 feet of siding. All removed siding was saved. N. Hicks believed that around the 1970’s-1980’s, work was done to try to replace a rotted sill with 2 x 6’s. Unfortunately, the work was not flush, and subsequently covered up creating a bulge. N. Hicks said clearly substandard workmanship but the good thing was that it was not caused by the chimney. D. Ciota said when he saw it, he was appalled. N. Hicks said it appeared the original sill plate rotted out. He could see where it had rotted. He would have to cut more out, approximately another foot, to avoid worrying about any more rot. J. Gasperino asked if this might have been a result of movement over time. D. Ciota said the engineer said it was not a foundation movement. N. Hicks said he guessed this was fixed in preparation for the house to be sold by a prior owner.

S. O’Kane asked about the condition of the siding on the south side, all of which had been removed. N. Hicks said they came off nicely. Found to be pine, soft wood. Said he would reuse most of them. S. O’Kane asked if they were regular length. N. Hicks said yes, regular length of sawed clapboard. N. Hicks said he didn’t know if these were original to the house. However, they were old enough to be put back on and consider them historic.

N. Hicks said he hadn’t worked on the other sides. D. O’Brien said the HDC had not approved that removal. N. Hicks said yes, he knew that but had taken about 3-4 ft. on the south side only. N. Hicks showed the HDC a sample cedar shingle siding removed, stamped on the back with “Brooklyn PA”. D. O’Brien asked about the other sides of the house. N. Hicks said the other sides would be taken apart gingerly. The south side was newer material. N. Hicks said on the other sides where the clapboard was eaten or rotted through, they would be installing milled clapboard siding, similar in size and shape to the existing clapboard. S. O’Kane said why not the south side? Material is square shape, not tapered. If three sides are that shape, why not the South side? D. Hicks said why not use newer material. Wouldn’t change the look of the house using today’s version. D. O’Brien said it may look different. N. Hicks said patches of the newer siding were removed. S. O’Kane said repair was not under the HDC purview, but stripping was. N. Hicks said the removed cedar siding shingles were replacements. Using today’s material, he would use cedar, grade A clapboard on the South side and make it similar to the other sides. N. Hicks said D. Ciota agreed he could use a band saw to make the same size, style siding for the South side to match. N. Hicks said to do the shingles, a substrate had been added. If he needed to take off because of the relationship to the window jambs and exterior trim, he would do that.

N. Hicks found there were no insulation in the walls. Some insulation in the repaired work – localized. J. Gasperino asked about the South side. N. Hicks said he was nervous about insulating because it could create moisture/breathing problems. To close all that with foam would also be too costly. D. Ciota said in addition, the insulation could turn into a moisture sponge. J. Gasperino asked if inside the wall was sheetrock. N. Hicks said yes, but that also plaster was used. There were ¼” strips of sheetrock. J. Gasperino asked if he saw wood lathe used inside the South wall. N. Hicks said he hadn’t looked, but there might be. This area was where the pantry was located. D. Ciota said the engineer said this was a more modern structure. There weren’t any bricks back when the house was built. N. Hicks said that since this was a working man’s house, they probably wouldn’t have used brick either. The dining room was probably the original kitchen.

D. Ciota said the addition, in the back of the house, might have been a shed with an open porch. Then it might have been enclosed, and a second floor added.

D. O’Brien asked if today’s products would be used on the South side. J. Gasperino asked if pieces would be made by custom machine or stock used. N. Hicks said yes, stock. J. Gasperino said the South side would look different, mixing old with new. N. Hicks said it would not look different as he was only replacing what had to be taken off. He has a friend with a band saw which would cut the wood in the same way. J. Gasperino asked how close the pieces could be milled to include the 40 coats of paint. N. Hicks said using a band saw, he could replicate as good/as close as possible.

D. O’Brien asked if there were alternatives. N. Hicks said his thinking was somewhat different than perhaps the Commission’s in that the materials were disposable wood, not meant to last forever. If he could recreate the look, then he would be preserving the historical perspective.

S. O’Kane said the key element was exposure, and at the end of the day, texture. N. Hicks showed the HDC members the texture of the sample shingle. He said the painted portion is different than the unpainted. S. O’Kane asked if there were short clapboards. N. Hicks said not a lot of smaller ones. N.

Hicks said there were a lot of metamorphosis through the years. D. O'Brien asked N. Hicks to guestimate on how much clapboard would be lost on the other sides. N. Hicks said he would think 10% would be high. D. Ciota said when he was doing the windows, he thought he would have to replace at least three of them, but it was only one. D. Ciota said thinking of the architectural detail like moldings, hand hewn things, he thought siding was a wearable item to be replaced. In deference to the HDC, he spoke to N. Hicks to reuse the removed clapboards. They were very careful in removing them, but some were split. These were more the exception than the rule. D. Ciota said N. Hicks was doing a faithful representation. D. O'Brien said they had been very thorough with looking towards restoration.

D. Ciota asked about the Dutch door. D. O'Brien said the HDC would also take action on that tonight.

D. O'Brien said if anything unusual were to come up, or they were going to replace more siding than expected, D. Ciota would need to return to the HDC for review before proceeding further.

J. Gasperino asked if there were any plans with the shutters. Were they going to be taken off? N. Hicks said that was a winter project. D. Ciota said if anything, the shutters would be repaired. D. O'Brien said if the shutters were going to be replaced, D. Ciota should return to the HDC. D. Ciota said the shutters were non- functional and the wood was deteriorating. When they were repaired, they would remain non-functional.

S. O'Kane moved and J. Gasperino seconded a motion to approve as presented the application for:

- 1. Replacement of the shingle siding on the south side of the house with wood clapboard on the condition that such new wood clapboard will be beveled, clear cedar wood clapboard and with butt thickness to match the clapboard on the other three sides;**
- 2. Restoration of the wood clapboard on the east, west and north sides of the house on the condition that any replacement of wood clapboard which is not possible to restore will match the existing material in size and style; and**
- 3. Replacement of existing rear door with wider Dutch door.**

Motion passed 5-0.

2) 77 High Ridge Avenue – Various changes and additions to the existing exterior of the house

S. O'Kane recused himself from this discussion.

Peter Coffin and Alex Bellina of Doyle|Coffin Architecture were present on behalf of the home owner. Copies of the proposed plan were distributed to the HDC members.

P. Coffin stated this was a house rich in history with numerous facelifts, dating back to 1890, and known as grey shingle. In the 1920's, the shingle style was enveloped into a 7 bay, Georgian-Federal revival style. Between 1980-1988, it was pushed back into a shingle style where the wrap around porch was added. The porch is currently in disrepair. P. Coffin said the homeowner wanted to rebuild it. A Yankee gutter system was applied to the edge of the trim, built out, so all edges had a funny wing. This was usually built into the roof itself. There were certain things that troubled the homeowner. P. Coffin researched precedence. As a result, it was decided to move forward with the historical shingle style. Analysis of the façade, showed it worked perfectly as a 7 bay house. The Yacht club in Oyster Bay (circa 1891), has a similar structure with porch and single center gable, with the biggest difference being the roof treatment.

P. Coffin proposed rebuilding the porch with a mixture of 11 Ionic and 12 columns. The house worked, but the pediment hit at the edge of the window at the entry point. Plasters can be added from top, to open the front portico, opening the view to the door. The new railing would be similar to the railing style (~1890).

Materials underneath the porch are failing. The pediments and frieze were not done to proportion. He proposed rebuilding the eaves, getting rid of the Yankee gutters, and extending the eaves on both ends. The client was looking for more house detail, moving to the original style of the house. The changes are subtle.

P. Coffin said there were turrets in the front and back corner. He was proposing adding symmetry.

P. Coffin proposed under the porch, an angled wall becoming a bay window. He proposed cleaning this up by removing the deck. H. Hanlon asked if this could be seen. P. Coffin said it didn't add to the appeal. He would be able to square it off underneath the porch itself.

D. O'Brien said given the scale of the project, this would call for a site visit. P. Coffin said there really were no major changes to the building. Rather, they were bringing detail to the facade in a subtle way. D. O'Brien said they were proposing a new porch, some roof work, which would be best seen to appreciate. J. Gasperino said there was a window change in the center. P. Coffin said also in the far end. And in time, kitchen changes. B. Tobin asked why a change in the railing. P. Coffin said the client liked the change, and there was precedent within the style. K. Daughters asked the name of the style. P. Coffin said no specific name. Rather, it has a more straight forward baluster. P. Coffin said there were big hedge rows that blocked the front view. Originally, the entry was straight on center. But currently, it's around the back and the driveway circles around to the front. H. Hanlon asked if the front door could be seen. P. Coffin said that was why they wanted to open the pediment, to let in the light. They were mainly dealing with changes in the front. The back was almost a salt box, with shingle style elements.

D. O'Brien said they could do a site visit and special meeting. HDC members and A. Bellina agreed to meet on Sunday, September 23, 2018 at 3pm, for the site visit.

3) 21 West Lane – Window replacement or restoration

John Doyle of Doyle|Coffin Architecture, Bob Speziale of Kolbe Windows, and Joe Kovacs and Chris Bennett of the First Congregational Church were present. Property pictures were distributed to the HDC members.

J. Doyle said there was a mix of window styles, but none were in the Italianate style. On the side of the house, the muntins seemed thin. On the back corner, the structure looked like a later addition. Some windows were placed 6 x 6's over the original section. J. Doyle met with Bi-Glass to do the work in the field for the Bay window. J. Doyle showed a picture, and there was no detail on the muntins bar. J. Doyle said they would pull the sash out and replace, but was not convinced it would be a tight fit. Stops would be replaced. Outside muntin bars would be replaced and new wood would surround the glass. D. O'Brien asked if they would match what was there. J. Doyle said he was skeptical of energy efficiency. D. O'Brien said he had his windows done and they were a tight fit. J. Doyle said the front 6 x 6 casement windows were not in good shape. He asked Bi-Glass who said it was more of a 40's window. H. Hanlon asked if the windows were original. J. Doyle said he wasn't sure, but that they appeared to be in the Italianate style. S. O'Kane asked about the windows on the East side. J. Doyle said those were original. He said if the windows were not original, he would not use Bi-Glass.

B. Tobin asked if all the windows were going to be replaced. He said the application stated full replacement. J. Kovacs said they would be done in phases. J. Doyle said one of the three apartments would be done now.

D. O'Brien asked what Kolbe suggested. J. Doyle said they were looking for historical looking windows. D. O'Brien asked what about the sash, wood? B. Speziale said yes, wood, with no storms needed. S. O'Kane asked if simulated divided lites were proposed. B. Speziale said yes, comparable material to be used. D. O'Brien asked 2 over 2 throughout. J. Doyle said they were looking to turn back to 2 over 2, to be more uniform to the Victorian style. S. O'Kane said the windows over the kitchen were visible from the West Lane. J. Doyle said he would take a look to try to make it similar to the rest of the house.

S. O'Kane asked when drawings would be submitted. J. Doyle said they would be submitted shortly. The first step would be the front (by the parking lot) and the church side (seen by West Lane) to start. S. O'Kane said he would be interested in seeing the overall look from West lane and the parking lot. D. O'Brien said both sides should be the same. No approval sought tonight. Applicant should come back with the Kolbe proposal. S. O'Kane said the bay window should be done by a restoration company. S. O'Kane said he liked the work Bi- Glass had done in Ridgefield. Kronenberger & Sons Restoration also did good work. S. O'Kane said in the front, to leave the original frame and thick sill. No frame within frame. D. O'Brien said the HDC would see them in October.

4) Approval of the HDC Meeting Minutes – June 21, 2018

J. Gasperino moved and K. Daughters seconded a motion to approve the June 21, 2018 HDC meeting minutes, with Commission member who did not attend such meeting abstaining. Motion passed 4-0.

5) Approval of the HDC Meeting Minutes – July 19, 2018

B. Tobin moved and S. O'Kane seconded a motion to approve the July 19, 2018 HDC meeting minutes, with Commission members who did not attend such meeting abstaining. Motion passed 3-0.

K. Daughters moved and H. Hanlon seconded a motion to adjourn the Historic District Commission Meeting at 9:10 p.m. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Executive Session

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Fields