

RIDGEFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Lower Level Small Conference Room
Town Hall, 400 Main Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877
May 16, 2019

APPROVED MINUTES

A 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, May 16, 2019, 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
Rhys Moore
Mark Blandford (Alternate)
Kam Daughters (Alternate)
Harriet Hanlon (Alternate)

AGENDA

- 1) **77 High Ridge Avenue – Certain changes to original approved plans on porch reconstruction**
- 2) **17 Main Street – Certain changes made to previously approved plans on new garage construction**
- 3) **Approval of the HDC Meeting/Site Visit Minutes – April 11 2019, April 15 2019 and May 1 2019**

MEETING

The meeting was called to order by Mr. O’Brien at 7:27 p.m.

- 1) **77 High Ridge Avenue – Certain changes to original approved plans on porch reconstruction**

Alex Bellina of Doyle|Coffin Architecture was present on behalf of the homeowner. He distributed copies of the proposed modified plans.

A. Bellina said a minor modification was being presented. The porch was remaining the same. He stated that in the back of the house, the client wanted a larger kitchen so they were looking to extend the gable by the Northeast wall. As such, the gable would now be 30” wider and 10” higher as a modification. A. Bellina showed the changes on the modified plan. A. Bellina said the windows would remain as presented and there were no changes to the material. M. Blandford asked the total height. A. Bellina said from lower level to peak, approx. 22 feet. H. Hanlon asked if that didn’t change the line to the top. A. Bellina said no. B. Tobin asked if the pictures shown were the view from the road. A. Bellina said yes. J. Gasperino asked if the pitch was the same. A. Bellina said the pitch was identical to original plans. M. Blandford said it appeared the modification was minor.

M. Blandford moved and J. Gasperino seconded a motion to approve the application as presented for extending the gable no wider than approximately 30” and no higher than approximately 10” higher. Motion passed 5-0.

2) 17 Main Street – Certain changes made to previously approved plans on new garage construction

The homeowner, Jill Rae was present, along with Gary Doski of Doski Building & Remodeling.

D. O’Brien asked G. Doski if he had the opportunity to review the 2-3 ft change identified by the Commission in siting the structure closer to Main Street which was not approved. G Doski said he had not. D. O’Brien said in revisiting the plans once more, it appeared that the structure was approximately 2-3 feet closer to the street. If that was correct, then that would be the fifth change made by the Applicant without HDC approval.

D. O’Brien said G. Doski must provide the HDC with a listing of all changes in writing made without HDC approval. He asked when G. Doski could give him that list. G. Doski said he could give it to D. O’Brien the following day, Friday May 17th.

D. O’Brien said that assuming the 2-3 ft difference was unapproved, this item needed to be added to the list of violations. G. Doski asked if D. O’Brien had an extra set of plans as he did not have any more copies.

D. O’Brien read the following motion:

In addition to the violations issued by the Commission on April 11, 2019, the Commission now further notes and proposes the following additional violation: structure moved approximately 2-3 feet closer to the street from the approved plans and breezeway shortened by a like amount.

S. O’Kane moved to approve the motion. J. Gasperino seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0.

D. O’Brien asked G. Doski if he had a proposal to bring the structure into compliance with the approved plans. He said that he did not.

B. Tobin said the unapproved changes had an effect to make the structure appear larger. D. O’Brien said this is a scale issue. The HDC had taken some comfort in the grade sloping down towards the proposed garage from the driveway and the unapproved raising of the foundation slab negated that, also the windows were raised, and the structure was sited closer to the road. These cumulative unapproved changes all negatively affected the scale of the new structure in relation to the historic main house. The HDC members had expressed their concern about the scale from the beginning of this application process. G. Doski asked other than ripping off the roof, what changes would suffice. D. O’Brien said that cosmetic changes would not alter the scale problem created by the unapproved changes.

G. Doski stated that the difference in structure size overall at 13% was a minor change and didn’t make the structure jump out. He said he believed the HDC was making an example of the application in that unless there was compliance, there was repercussion. He said the neighbors thought the structure was beautiful. D. O’Brien said the HDC had been very specific about the scale issue from the start and that this application was not singled out for any other reason.

G. Doski said the changes were not maliciously done. D. O’Brien said the project was out of compliance by not an insignificant amount.

B. Tobin said the unapproved changes were discovered by reports from people walking by and reporting that the garage looked larger than what had been approved, relative to the size of the house. M. Blandford said height was an issue. He didn't see a 13% size change, he saw a 30% size change because of the change in clapboard. Pointing to the plan, he showed G. Doski what he meant. By adding 4-5 clapboards not approved, he said the area was 30% larger, which he saw when he walked by the site. M. Blandford said he didn't see a solution without a roof and window change. He said not addressing those would result in not likely approving the project. D. O'Brien said the roof and windows had to be lowered.

S. O'Kane said the HDC views proposed structures in terms of elevation. He said visual perspectives can mislead. Good judgements cannot be made on renderings. However, when comparing the relative size from one structure to another, there was a dramatic difference. Especially when looking at the plans of what was approved versus what was built. The neighbors might love it, but to the HDC members who walked by, it was immediately apparent how dramatic the changes appeared.

G. Doski said he was more focused on ZBA restrictions. D. O'Brien said the Certificate of Appropriateness clearly stated that for any changes, the applicant was required to return to the HDC. G. Doski said in the builder world, they focused on the ZBA. G. Doski thought the look was insignificant, not on his radar. D. O'Brien said he thought G. Doski had told them he had experience with Historic districts. G. Doski said he did have that experience.

M. Blandford said he inquired of peers at his commercial real estate development company and asked them if they had ever made construction changes without notification to the appropriate regulatory bodies, and they said 'no'. G. Doski said he made the changes unknowingly and the window change was at the owner's request.

G. Doski said he raised the slab because he wanted to eliminate drains. M. Blandford said he had similar pitch issues at his home, but he didn't have to raise the slab. S. O'Kane said the slab was not raised 6 inches as stated by G. Doski but it was raised 1.3 feet. This was all about proper proportion. In early April, when the structure was in studs, G. Doski was advised there was an issue and yet he continued to work on the structure. When a violation was issued, he still continued to complete the construction, thus adding to the eventual cost to remedy the issue.

G. Doski asked where to go from here. D. O'Brien said the Applicant and owner must bring the project to substantial compliance or face the prospect of the HDC requesting the Court to issue an order directing that the violations be corrected or removed. He suggested that G. Doski read the CT Statute 7-147h. G. Doski said that he had. D. O'Brien said G. Doski was the agent and the applicant, so he is one of the responsible parties here. Daily fines could be levied by the Court until the project was brought into compliance. G. Doski asked if what they were asking for was lowering the roof and windows. M. Blandford said across from the First Congregational Church, on the 2nd floor, there were small windows. That structure had faced similar issues. The little windows went to the ground. J. Rae asked if they lowered the roof to where it should be, would the windows also need to be lowered? B. Tobin said it needs to be both.

S. O'Kane said to bring into compliance, the knee wall and roof had to be lowered. The knee wall was likely changed from 5 ft to 6 ½ ft and the slab was raised to 1 ½ feet on an unapproved basis. These were substantial unapproved changes. He further said the HDC had agreed to larger shed dormers in the back to provide light.

R. Moore said the original approved plan had been discussed, analyzed, and approved by the Commission. All parties appeared satisfied and were informed of the HDC's stand on the issue of scale. G. Doski now had to come with a solution. It is not the HDC's responsibility to propose a solution. D. O'Brien emphasized that it would need to be a substantive solution. D. O'Brien said to call him when they had a proposed solution to present to the Commission. The HDC is willing to provide a reasonable but not unlimited amount of time for an acceptable solution to be presented.

3) Approval of the Special HDC Meeting Minutes – April 11, 2019

B. Tobin said at 2 Parley Lane, HDC members should take a look at a section of the fence at the southwest corner of the property from West Lane to High Ridge which S. O’Kane had made a comment about its design. He would like to have the HDC members thoughts at the next HDC meeting.

J. Gasperino moved and B. Tobin seconded a motion to approve the April 11, 2019 Special HDC meeting minutes, with Commission members who did not attend such meeting abstaining. Motion passed 5-0.

4) Approval of the Special HDC Meeting Minutes & Site Visit – April 15, 2019

S. O’Kane moved and K. Daughters seconded a motion to approve the April 15, 2019 Special HDC meeting minutes & Site Visit, with Commission members who did not attend such meeting abstaining. Motion passed 4-0.

5) Approval of the Special HDC Meeting Minutes & Site Visit– May 1, 2019

B. Tobin moved and J. Gasperino seconded a motion to approve the May 1, 2019 Special HDC meeting minutes & Site Visit, with Commission members who did not attend such meeting abstaining. Motion passed 5-0.

R. Moore moved and H. Hanlon seconded a motion to adjourn the Historic District Commission meeting at 8:28 p.m. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Fields
Recording Secretary