

RIDGEFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Lower Level Small Conference Room
Town Hall, 400 Main Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877
May 21, 2020

APPROVED MINUTES

A meeting of the Ridgefield Historic District Commission (“HDC”) was held via teleconferencing, which was open to the public, on Thursday, May 21, 2020, and beginning at 7:30 p.m.

The following members were present:

Dan O’Brien, Chair
Briggs Tobin, Vice Chair
Rhys Moore
Sean O’Kane
Mark Blandford
Kam Daughters (Alternate)
Elizabeth DiSalvo (Alternate)

AGENDA

1) 63 High Ridge Avenue – Fence relocation

MEETING

The meeting was called to order by Mr. D. O’Brien at 7:33 p.m.

1) 63 High Ridge Avenue – Fence relocation

The property owner Bill Diamond was present. Mark Blandford was present and was recused.

Mr. Diamond requested that the condition of the previously issued Certificate of Appropriateness requiring that the relocation of the present fence be also sunk in a 6-inch trench be waived due to problems expressed by his fence contractor with doing so and that burying a portion of the fence would lead to corrosion of the fence and will as well affect the look and actual height of the fence.

D. O’Brien asked what the measured distance from where the fence was today to the Northwest corner of existing lattice which was the previously approved relocation line of the fence. B. Diamond said about 12 feet and that there was just a little bit of play in that that the existing large tree would be 15 feet from where the fence is today. D. O’Brien said then there was another three feet available for westward movement of the fence before hitting the tree. B. Diamond agreed.

D. O’Brien said the issue was moving the fence off the ridgeline and moving it further enough back so that its appearance from the public way would be approximately half in size. S. O’Kane asked moving it back 12 feet from where it was originally approved, did it reduce the perception of the height of the fence? If it did reduce the perceived height of the fence, in his view it was accomplishing what the Commission was trying

to do. D. O'Brien said to clarify, it wasn't an either or, what was approved was a combination of moving it back 12 feet from the Northwest corner from lattice work and trench 6". B. Tobin said that trenching was added because from looking from the road, the Commission wanted the fence further back than the line actually agreed upon and the trenching was to help compensate for that. The trenching was a way to reduce the height perception of the fence to a point acceptable to the Commission. The fundamental issue was perception of the height of the fence from the road.

D. O'Brien asked B. Diamond if he was open to moving the fence back a foot or two from the fence line previously approved. B. Diamond said the most they could do was move the fence back all the way so it grazed the tree. He thought it would look cleaner if the fence was somewhat away from the tree. Seemed odd for it to brush up against the tree.

B. Tobin said we had already looked at this. By moving the fence another 10 feet beyond what was approved, the view was lower. B. Tobin said that B. Diamond didn't want to do that because it narrowed his backyard too much.

D. O'Brien asked the other Commission members their thoughts. S. O'Kane proposed that many of times when doing pool fences where people were sensitive to a fence view, they would do an invisible fence like using arborvitae. The Commission doesn't regulate landscape and they've spoken about this. But to be sympathetic, it was a bad idea to bury a fence in a trench where it could degrade. He was sympathetic as an architect, but in terms of hiding a fence, the best way was to create a landscape element like a green fence. D. O'Brien said that a green fence wouldn't do much for an 'open' space look which works so well on High Ridge Avenue.

K. Daughters said she didn't remember the distance between the tree and the play set. Could the fence go behind the tree? B. Diamond said the issue was it would divide the back yard. He was looking for balance. At that point you would have a fence running thru the back yard.

D. O'Brien inquired if anyone was prepared to make a motion. B. Tobin said B. Diamond's proposal was to leave the fence at the location as approved but not dig the trench for reasons cited. S. O'Kane said he was willing to agree with a vegetative fence. That would solve the problem in his mind as an architect. He would, however, be in favor of advocating to keep the fence to protect the dogs, with the stipulation that there be some vegetative screen along the High Ridge side to mitigate the metal fence.

R. Moore said that the Commission has been struggling over this issue for far too long. He was amenable to moving the fence further back and foregoing the trench but didn't agree with the vegetative fence. He said that blocked the vista.

D. O'Brien said there was room for some compromise with three feet to play with and this would be a step in the right direction. B. Diamond said he could move back to within one foot in front of the big tree. That way, it wouldn't scrape the tree. D. O'Brien said that was positive. B. Diamond said they'd move the fence so it would clear the tree.

B. Tobin said he would like to talk about a type of fence that was less visible, thinner at the top cross and thinner vertical bars. For him that had always been the issue as well as visibility from the road. D. O'Brien said there was nothing ornamental about the existing fence which was a positive. K. Daughters said this issue first came up a while ago and that the fence was up in many places before the Commission's first site visit. The Commission was never consulted on whether this fence was appropriate before its installation. It was just put up. She agreed with B. Tobin. The Commission didn't have an opportunity to discuss the type of fencing because it was already up. D. O'Brien said that the main issue at hand was the trench. He said he believed the

Commission had an opportunity to discuss the design of the fence when the fence was approved in December and that the previously approved Certificate of Appropriateness took into account the current design of the fence.

R. Moore moved and D. O'Brien seconded, a motion to approve as presented an amendment of the previously issued Certificate of Appropriateness dated December 20, 2019 whereby the condition that the fence be installed into a six-inch trench below grade level for its entire length be eliminated and that the previously approved fence line which was to run from the northwest corner of the existing lattice fencing adjacent to the house and terminating at the property line on the north side of the property be amended so that such proposed fence line will be located further westward to within approximately one foot in front of the existing large tree which is in front of the playground equipment. Motion passed 3-1; Messrs. Moore, O'Kane and O'Brien voting for and B. Tobin voting against.

D. O'Brien asked Mr. Diamond approximately when the fence would be relocated. B. Diamond said he would try to schedule the fence relocation for approximately two weeks.

2) Approval of the March 1, 2020 HDC site visit & special meeting, April 16, 2020 HDC meeting and May 16, 2020 HDC site visit & special meeting minutes

S. O'Kane moved and R. Moore seconded a motion to approve the March 1, 2020 HDC site visit and special meeting minutes. Motion passed 5-0.

B. Tobin moved and K. Daughters seconded a motion to approve the April 16, 2020 HDC meeting minutes. Motion passed 5-0.

M. Blandford moved and S. O'Kane seconded a motion to approve the May 16, 2020 HDC site visit and special meeting minutes. Motion passed 5-0.

R. Moore moved and K. Daughters seconded a motion to adjourn the Historic District Commission meeting at 8:13 p.m. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Fields
Recording Secretary