

RIDGEFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Thursday, December 16, 2021
The Keeler Tavern Museum
132 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877

Policy: Historic District Commission meetings will be conducted under Roberts Rules of Order and all participants are expected to conduct themselves with dignity and treat all those present with respect, empathy and civility.

APPROVED MINUTES

A meeting of the Ridgefield Historic District Commission (“HDC”) was held in the Keeler Tavern Museum at 132 Main Street, Ridgefield CT, which was open to the public, on Thursday, December 16 2021, and beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Dan O’Brien, Rhys Moore, Sean O’Kane, Kathleen Daughters (Alternate to Harriet Hanlon) and Mark Blandford (Alternate to Briggs Tobin)

AGENDA

Keeler Tavern Museum, 132 & 152 Main Street – Several proposed changes to the property’s grounds and campus including:

- 1. Provision for additional parking;**
- 2. Addition of brick walkways and Belgium block aprons;**
- 3. Removal and relocation of existing stone walls between Visitors’ Center and the Museum;**
- 4. Demolition of existing garage behind Visitors’ Center;**
- 5. Relocation of existing historic post office structure;**
- 6. Additional entrance on cottage behind the Museum to facilitate access to a public rest room from carriage barn; and,**
- 7. Addition of steps on northwest front corner of Visitors’ Center**

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 6:08 p.m.

Ms. Hildegard Grob, Executive Director and Ms. Mary Ann Conners, Events Director were present from the Keeler Tavern Museum. Mr. O’Kane presented on behalf of the Keeler Tavern Museum and recused himself from the Commission decision on the application. A large scale A2 survey (existing property layout) and a proposed plan board were presented to the HDC commission members.

Ms. Grob explained they were presenting the next phase of the Keeler Tavern Museum development plans. In 2016, they launched a capital campaign. This was in large part due to their purchase of 152 Main Street, which allowed the museum to expand. They are currently operating as a museum and also have private events capped at 80 people.

Ms. Grob stated that they currently had three curb cuts, which was confusing. They were looking to make the entrance more accessible. The plan was to take down a building in the back of 152 Main Street to make a car parking lot with vehicular access to the existing roadways. They just received the landscape, lighting and signage plans. Ms. Grob said because they had just received those plans, they were not prepared to cover them today.

However, their goal was to improve public accessibility and safety. The proposed plan hopefully addressed those issues. With the increased property size, they are looking to improve the traffic flow and accessibility. Mr. O’Kane said that a daytime site visit should be scheduled to discuss each point. Today’s presentation was only meant as an introduction of proposed changes and that presentation of a final plan including proposed lighting, landscaping and signage would be presented to the Commission at a later date.

Mr. O’Kane stated one of the two buildings at the rear of 152 Main Street Museum Visitors’ Center would remain. The existing three car garage would be removed. Looking at the proposed plan, the curb cuts were to remain. The 24’ wide curb cut by the Visitors’ Center however, could be 20’ wide. They are looking to lower the retaining wall. A Commission site visit would make this clearer. Most of the parking lot would be gravel, although that was still to be determined. There would be some paving. The decision would be a function of the possible erosion. Mr. Blandford asked if the 20’ wide entrance would be two ways. Ms. Grob said yes, it would be both an entrance and an exit. Mr. Blandford said St. Stephens had a similar driveway that was recently painted. He pointed out that it appeared different in size than what is being proposed here. Mr. O’Brien said he saw the Church driveway had been painted, but that he was not concerned about the look. Mr. Moore said the painting probably highlighted their driveway change.

Mr. O’Kane said they were reviewing the retaining wall and they could possibly just regrade. He would rather have a lower wall if one is needed. Mr. Blandford said the driveway should be as narrow as possible. Mr. O’Kane agreed. On the proposed plan, the dark lines represented brick walkways. He pointed out that the proposed plan was still in development. Mr. O’Brien asked about the timing. Ms. Grob said as soon as possible. Mr. O’Kane said the Belgian block was used as transitioning between the street and the driveway. It was being added to all three curb cuts and at the barn. Looking at the proposed plan, the north entrance would be the primary entrance.

Mr. Blandford asked about this middle area of the plan drawings where the proposed plans stated there were overgrown shrubs. Mr. O’Kane said the trees that were dead by the stone wall would be taken down. Any stonework would be reused for the newly expanded entrance. The new entrance was originally proposed as brick. However in retrospect, it should be fieldstone. The retaining wall height is still to be determined if needed.

Mr. Moore asked if only the front building in the back would be taken out. Mr. O’Kane agreed. There is a rear rental apartment that would remain.

Ms. Grob said there was a Town-owned historic post office structure on site and wasn’t sure when it had relocated at its present site. It could be temporarily moved, given the plans. And they could host it until there was a permanent solution. The museum had done some repairs to it, but it is in fact a town-owned structure. Mr. O’Brien said it was an interesting piece of history, but didn’t originate on the property. Ms. Grob said the Ridgefield Historic Society was excited about it but had not yet made arrangements to take possession of it.

Mr. O’Kane said the plan was ongoing. He wanted to schedule a site visit to further discuss the seven points. Mr. O’Brien said the first scheduled site visit was on January 9th at 11:00 a.m. It was agreed the HDC would schedule a site visit for that time.

Mr. Blandford asked if the proposed plan could be presented as an overlay to the existing survey. Mr. O’Kane said he would speak with the surveyor.

Mr. Blandford moved and Mr. Moore seconded a motion to adjourn the Historic District Commission Meeting at 6:37 p.m. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Fields
Recording Secretary