

**RIDGEFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**  
**Lower Level Small Conference Room**  
**Town Hall, 400 Main Street**  
**Ridgefield, CT 06877**  
**October 7, 2021**

**APPROVED MINUTES**

A meeting of the Ridgefield Historic District Commission (“HDC”) was held in the Lounsbury House at 316 Main Street, Ridgefield CT, which was open to the public, on Thursday, October 7, 2021, and beginning at 6:30 p.m.

The following members were present:

**Dan O’Brien, Chair**  
**Briggs Tobin, Vice Chair**  
**Rhys Moore**  
**Sean O’Kane**  
**Kathleen Daughters (Alternate to Harriet Hanlon)**

**AGENDA**

- 1) **353 Main Street – St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church – Handicap ramp**
- 2) **351 Main Street**
  - **Landscape lighting plan**
  - **Deer fence and pathways**
  - **Retaining wall**
- 3) **321 Main Street – Demolishing and rebuilding of barn**
- 4) **62 High Ridge Avenue – Roof replacement**
- 5) **Signs for Historic Districts**
- 6) **Future Commission meeting schedules**
- 7) **Approval of Minutes**

**MEETING**

**The meeting was called to order by Mr. D. O’Brien at 6:34 p.m.**

- 1) **353 Main Street – St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church – Handicap ramp**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. O’Brien at 6:34 p.m. Mr. Stefan Karlson and Mr. John Kukulka were present representing the Church.

Plans were distributed to the Commission. Mr. Karlson presented larger plans on a tripod easel as he spoke. Mr. Karlson said the drawings were revised to be simpler and yet still ADA compliant. The view from Main Street showed the changes matched the Church’s façade and church details. The brick inlay when exiting the top of the ramp matched the church steps. The new ramp would be brushed concrete with bluestone edging.

The ramp wall will be fieldstone to match the church. Mr. Tobin asked about the slope. Mr. Karlson said it would be about two feet high at its highest point. You would come down the ramp, to the pad, then to the sidewalk. The railing detail would be simpler. There was a top and bottom railing, with the top lighted downwards. The posts would be wider apart which would make the railings less visible. A small finial was added to the posts. Mr. Tobin asked if the finial matched the South side of the door. Mr. Karlson said yes. Mr. O'Brien asked about the sidewalk. Mr. Karlson said it was going to be 4 feet wide concrete, not bluestone. Mr. Kukulka said bluestone was slick in the rain. Mr. Karlson said he looked into historical references to be consistent with other handicap ramps. The overlying theme was to mimic the building. When he looked at Jesse Lee, there was a simple railing, concrete ramp with a little more body to the spindles. The ramp resembled the building and didn't obstruct the view while serving the ADA compliance. Mr. O'Kane said it appeared all items spoke about at the last site meeting with regards to design perspective, material and visualization had been addressed. For the visual, to have the ramp slope down made the ramp blend in better. Mr. Tobin agreed. Mr. Tobin said he was agnostic about concealing the slope or not. Mr. O'Kane said the slope was fine.

**S. O'Kane moved and R. Moore seconded a motion to approve the application as presented and as discussed on the August 31, 2021 Site visit, for the installation of the ADA compliant handicap ramp. Motion passed 5-0.**

2) **351 Main Street - Landscape lighting plan, deer fence and pathways, retaining wall**

Steven March (Applicant) and Victor Melendez, owners, were in attendance.

Plans were distributed to the Commission. Mr. March mentioned he got ZBA approval for the garage. Thanked the HDC commission for their support.

**Deer fence and pathways** - The proposed South side deer fence would close the loop to the property. Currently, there was very heavy unauthorized pedestrian traffic that came thru. Mrs. Daughters asked about the height. Mr. March said it would be parallel to the neighbor's 8 ft cedar stockade fence. There would be heavy plantings on the inside. The fencing was black wire, but not visible to the street. They had an existing blue stone path. They wanted to extend it to the porch and to place stepping stones to the porch. It would be a very casual pathway.

**Landscape lighting** - At the front entrance door, they were not interested in step lights. Rather, they would use small uplights with a switch inside the house. Mr. O'Kane said that landscaping would soften the appeal. Mr. March said for the car park, they would use small uplights and highlight the middle urn. For the two trees in the canopy and the Beech tree in the corner, larger uplights would be used. For the Sunroom, they would be putting in step lights. For the stepping stones, there would be path lighting that resembled small mushrooms. These lights would be in copper and the lumens would be very low.

**House lighting** – Mr. March said they were going for a traditional look, which complimented the look of the house. Mr. Tobin asked if it would be soft or bright. Mr. March said he could use 40W. Mr. March said he was looking to maintain proper scale. The current fixture choices were close to medium size. On the East and North elevation plans, the proposed lighting were small hanging lantern types. On the North elevation plan, there was a small change with regards to lighting outside Victor's office which would be ceiling flush mounted lighting. For the West elevation, which was the back of the house, they were looking at Sussex small ¾ lanterns. On the South elevation, by the French doors they would be using the same Sussex small ¾ lanterns. By the garage, they would be using the same type but bracketed lights to be consistent with the rest of the house.

For spot lighting, Mr. March said they needed to put in something inconspicuous. He looked at 188 Main Street which had white lights on the house which illuminated the driveway. Their thinking was to put the first one in the back of the house and in the South elevation, in the corner. Mr. O'Brien asked about the perimeter illumination. Mr. March said the lights had about an 80 ft perimeter, downwards. Mr. O'Kane asked if these were motion detection activated. Mr. March said he believed so.

**Retaining wall** – Mr. Marsh said the retaining wall in the front northeast corner next to the Church's driveway would be about two feet at its highest. Mr. O'Kane said the retaining wall did not have to match the Church. It should blend into the landscape and that therefore field stone as chosen was the proper choice.

**B. Tobin moved and S. O'Kane seconded a motion to approve the application as presented for the landscape lighting (incorporating soft lights with low lumens with indirect lights), deer fence, pathways and retaining wall. Motion passed 5-0.**

### 3) 321 Main Street – Demolishing and rebuilding of barn

Michelle Hogue (General Contractor and Applicant) representing the homeowners, James DeStefano (DeStefano & Chammerlain) and Andy Misiak (AMO Carpentry) were also in attendance.

Ms. Hogue stated plan modifications were made and submitted. Mr. DeStefano, as a structural engineer, had done an evaluation of the barn structure and submitted his report. He found there were structural concerns, much of the structure was not original and it was currently not safe. Ms. Hogue said the homeowners wish to rebuild with modifications. As suggested by the HDC, she said they had checked with Planning & Zoning and had begun the Additional Dwelling Unit "ADU" process. The survey would be done next week.

Currently, the interior stairs were not to code. Mr. O'Brien asked about the South elevation. Ms. Hogue said they would be putting in a dormer. On the North side, there was an outdoor shower that would remain. They were looking to do a small bump out to make a laundry/mechanical room inside. They believe that this would still fall within the 1200 sq. ft ADU requirement. They estimated the footage was around 980 sq. ft.

French doors would replace the garage doors. Mr. O'Kane asked if they could do sliding barn doors. Ms. Hogue said the doors were not visible from the street. The driveway was gated. You could only see a window. You wouldn't even see the garage door. Mr. O'Brien disagreed with that assessment on visibility and said that the east side barn front was clearly visible when you disregard landscaping and fencing as required of the Commission by statute. Mr. O'Kane said landscaping had a shelf life. It could not shield façade and say you couldn't see it. Mr. Tobin asked if the French doors, below the double hung windows were the same dimensions. M. Hogue said the homeowner had not approved any outside aesthetics. Ms. Hogue said they were looking to mimic the French doors from the house. Mr. O'Kane said they could have barn doors slide in front of the French doors. He said the plans also needed to include accurate drawings of the existing barn.

Mr. O'Kane agreed with Jim's report. And that modifications should replicate as close as possible. But the drawings referenced on the report were not there. The Commission needed a complete package. The references had cross sections but were not included in the report. Outriggers needed to be called out and be part of the drawing package. Mr. O'Brien said the Applicant needed to present final drawings that the homeowner has signed off on. He mentioned that in his prior email to Ms. Hogue.

Mr. O'Brien said that in his prior email to Ms. Hogue, he outlined the following requirements which would need to be addressed in a new application as follows:

- 1) Carefully remove and reuse the older sound beams and wood first during the demo and incorporate into the new barn such that they are a visible link to the earlier historical nature of the structure. (Mr. O'Kane commented that he didn't see the cross sections. Exterior elements were very important to the HDC.)
- 2) Incorporate the gothic elements, i.e. the front 6/1 double hung window on the new front façade. Mr. O'Brien said the front window was to be incorporated.
- 3) The reconstructed barn should replicate exactly the form, size, roof pitch, exterior siding and details and height of the existing. (Mr. O'Brien reiterated that the Commission will need "as built" plans showing all dimensions including roof pitch.)
- 4) The owner shall submit detailed plans and elevations of the proposed work to the Historic District Commission attesting to the above and for approval of the plans and the application.

Ms. Hogue said the homeowners were being flexible which is why they had not agreed on specific elements in the plan. Mr. O'Kane said for the laundry/mechanical bump out on the North side, why was it that tall? It would be more palatable if this was not included. None of the eaves matched. Mr. DeStefano said they could extend the roof line on the West side and extend down. Mr. O'Kane said that may help blend it in.

Mr. O'Brien said restoring versus rebuilding was key question. Was it impossible to restore? Mr. DeStefano said he has performed both conversion and restoration projects. This structure does not have an intact frame. There were only fragments of the original construction. Coupled with what was there and the structurally deficient nature of the structure, he said that rebuilding was the most feasible and reasonable option.

Mr. O'Brien requested that plans be resubmitted to the HDC based upon tonight's discussion. Mr. O'Kane asked if they were reusing the siding as stated on the plans. Mr. DeStefano said they couldn't because it had lead paint.

Mr. O'Kane said the plans required more detail, more defined design and the homeowner's approval. Mr. O'Brien said the homeowner should be on board with the revised plans to be submitted. Mr. Tobin said the homeowners were welcomed to attend the meetings. Mr. O'Kane said the HDC's role was not to be a design service. The applicant needed to come before the HDC with owner-approved plans. Ms. Hogue said the homeowner was interested in being flexible on what the HDC may suggest. The homeowner respected Ridgefield and wanted to honor the town. Mr. O'Kane suggested returning with clear and clean plans for the next HDC meeting.

#### **4) 62 High Ridge Avenue – Roof replacement**

Mr. O'Brien advised that Mr. Wattles had submitted an application for replacing his roofs with exactly the same material, wood cedar on the house and detached garage. He reminded the Commission members that a site visit was made on November 8, 2020 to see the structures but Mr. Wattles decided at that time to defer plans for roof replacement. Mr. O'Kane said a pressurizing treatment to the wood may extend the roof life significantly.

**S. O'Kane moved and R. Moore seconded a motion to approve the application as presented for new wood cedar roof replacements of the existing wood cedar roofs for the house and detached garage. Motion passed 5-0.**

5) **Signs for Historic District**

Mr. O'Brien distributed a glossy sheet showing the new sign design and possible placements within the town. Mr. O'Kane asked if the signs were double sided. Mrs. Daughters said she would check. (Ms. Daughters reported subsequently that the signs were double sided.) Mr. Tobin said he liked the taupe background with black lettering. Mr. O'Brien said he would speak with the First Selectman.

6) **Future Commission Meeting Schedules**

Mr. O'Brien distributed the 2022 meeting schedule. During the past year, there had been numerous Site Visits. The suggestion was made that the HDC stick with its once-a-month regular meetings on the third Thursday of each month to hear all applications for that month. A once-a-month site visit day would be subject to a fixed yearly schedule. For the Monthly regular meetings, he polled the Commission members who agreed with the regular 7:30 p.m. time. As for site visits, a set day of the week during the summer would vary with the winter due to the seasonable availability of evening daylight hours. For the winter months, it was agreed that Sunday at 11:00 a.m. be scheduled for site visits. During months with greater daylight, weekday evening site visits would be scheduled on a fixed schedule.

7) **Approval of the August 31, 2021 Site Visit and Special Meeting minutes**

**B. Tobin moved and R. Moore seconded a motion to approve the August 31, 2021 HDC meeting minutes, with Commission members who did not attend such meeting abstaining. Motion passed 4-0.**

**R. Moore moved and K. Daughters seconded a motion to adjourn the Historic District Commission meeting at 8:16 p.m. Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Fields  
Recording Secretary