

RIDGEFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Lower Level Small Conference Room
Town Hall, 400 Main Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877
March 21, 2019

APPROVED MINUTES – SPECIAL MEETING

A Special meeting of the Ridgefield Historic District Commission (“HDC”) was held at the Ridgefield Historical Society, 4 Sunset Lane, Ridgefield, CT 06877, on Thursday, March 21, 2019, and beginning at 6:15 p.m.

The following members were present:

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

Ridgefield Historical Society Attendees: Sharon Dunphy (President), Betsy Reid (Corresponding Secretary)
Daughters of the American Revolution Attendee: Sara Champion (Regent)

AGENDA

Discussion with RHS leadership regarding areas of mutual interest, and familiarization of available RHS historical data resources.

MEETING

The Historic District Commission members were given a tour of the Scott House. At approximately 6:42pm, Mark Blandford had to leave.

The meeting was called to order by Dan O’Brien at 6:44pm.

Background: D. O’Brien provided some background on the Ridgefield Historic District Commission; when the HDC began (around 1968-1969), and the whole process involved in creating a Historic district. When the Penn Street train station was torn down in NYC in around the mid 1960’s, there was a mobilization towards creating town historic preservations in the area. Approximately 55 towns in Connecticut formed Historic Districts areas. The HDC was currently responsible for the exterior changes, what’s seen from the street or public way. B. Tobin said by State statute, the HDC had no say over paint color. D. O’Brien said the public was encouraged to call the HDC first before beginning any repair project in the Historic District. S. Dunphy said they sometimes got calls meant for the HDC, which she passed over to D. O’Brien. D. O’Brien said he believed that the HDC should copy the RHS with any HDC approvals and will do so in the future. S. O’Kane said if the HDC needed more information, they should ask the RHS before application review. Both groups have the same objective and should coordinate and join forces. Especially on the Ridgefield’s Plan of Conservation and Development 10 year plan.

Demo Delay Ordinance: D. O’Brien distributed a summary page from the Town’s 2010 Plan of Conservation and Development with respect to Historic Resources, along with a listing of Connecticut towns indicating Demo

Delay Ordinance in place. With regards to the consideration of adopting a Demolition delay ordinance, he said it was important to try to get it passed as soon as possible. He noted that amongst our neighboring towns, we were an exception to this type of ordinance. D. O'Brien researched Wilton's Demo delay ordinance.

B. Reid asked what would be the parameters for a possible delay in demolition. J. Gasperino said it would not be just age. There would be other factors too. For example culturally significant architecture, major historic events, whether the property was on the National or State list of registry or not. S. O'Kane said the view should also be a consideration. B. Tobin said to S. O'Kane's point, not just structure was important, but also the view should be protected. It would be worth thinking of a definition – like vista/sense of place.

J. Gasperino said he recently attended a Planning & Zoning listening session held on March 5 2019, where John Kinnear of the Architectural Advisory Committee spoke of their concerns. J. Gasperino suggested the AAC could be another group with which to share information. D. O'Brien said strong points were made by the AAC. B. Reid said the P&Z Commission had thought there was already a Demolition Delay ordinance in place.

D. O'Brien spoke by phone earlier with Phil Esser, who was the past Chair of the HDC. P. Esser said they tried to have the Demolition Delay ordinance passed before, but the BOS voted it down. S. Dunphy said they were getting some push back by some of their own RHS members. Of concern was what qualified as 'significant'. D. O'Brien said in his view, it would be better to have this Demolition Delay ordinance instead of having nothing at all. If there were any litigation, the Town would stand behind it.

S. O'Kane asked how the other towns had fared. D. O'Brien said the property owners currently had at worst to wait 90 days. S. Champion said she would talk to other towns to find out their experiences. She was interested in finding out if any legal expenses were incurred. B. Reid said she had on file the template for the original suggested Demolition Delay ordinance. She would email it to D. O'Brien.

B. Tobin said in Wilton, the ordinance was a resource to reference. S. Dunphy said she thought the age of the home was a good criteria. She said anything over 50 years, specific properties, Ridgefield's Historic Architectural Resources Survey would be good criteria although Ridgefield's HAR survey had missing properties. B. Reid said the HAR Survey should be updated as it was last done in the 70's. S. O'Kane said in the library, this type of information was hard to find. B. Tobin said outbuildings were also significant.

D. O'Brien suggested both groups should work together. S. Dunphy nominated B Reid and S. Champion to be on a joint committee to work on the Demolition Delay ordinance. D. O'Brien nominated S. O'Kane and B. Tobin. B. Reid also mentioned there was the situation of demolition by delay/neglect, as what was happening on Bailey Avenue. She asked how this could be prevented. The RHS has sent the owner letters, with no response. S. O'Kane said the structure was still known as a former granary, by tradespeople in New York.

S. Dunphy asked when the next P&Z listening session was scheduled. She thought comments had to be submitted by the next session. They had started a draft. D. O'Brien said he would contact the P&Z to understand the schedule. J. Gasperino said that if there was no modification, the POCD for historic preservation should remain the same. B. Tobin said a plan of implementation (timeframe) should also be included in the POCD. D. O'Brien said the HDC supported all the items in the 2010 plan, but little to no progress were made since 2010.

S. Dunphy said the groups would work together in the future, exchanging information. B. Tobin said if the group was large enough, that Ridgefield Academy could host the joint meeting. B. Reid also suggested working with the CT Trust. D. O'Brien agreed, saying they were a great resource.

The meeting was concluded at 7:44pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Fields
Recording Secretary