

RIDGEFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Lower Level Conference Room
Town Hall, 400 Main Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877
May 18, 2017

APPROVED MINUTES

A regular 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 18, 2017, and beginning at 7:30 pm.

The following members were present:

Daniel J. O’Brien, Chair
Harriet Hanlon (Alternate – Voting for Joe Gasperino)
Sean O’Kane (Alternate – Non-voting)
Rhys Moore
Eric Pashley
Briggs Tobin

Absent:

Joe Gasperino

Kam Daughters, a candidate for an alternate position on the Commission, was in attendance.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. O’Brien at 7:30 p.m.

The minutes of the April 20, 2017, meeting were approved with a modification provided by Eric Pashley regarding 87 High Ridge Avenue voting.

1. 87 High Ridge Avenue

Mr. Richard Jabara, Applicant, presented several photos of the existing carriage house on his property along with photos of the main house and the house immediately across the street on High Ridge Avenue. Mr. Jabara stated that he would like to improve the look of the carriage house by adding cement quoins to each of the building’s corners which would match the style of the quoins on the property’s main house and would be similar to the corner quoins on the residence directly across the street. In addition, he would add back wood shutters on the carriage house windows which appear to have been removed many years ago. By adding the quoins and shutters, the carriage house would better match the main house and would result in a more attractive structure. Also, a cornice on a roof corner would be added. An ornamental tie rod would also be added to one side of the building.

Several Commission members had questions for Mr. Jabara on the renovation, including from S. O’Kane who inquired whether it was appropriate to add quoins to the corners which had brick columns. Mr. Jabara also confirmed that the shutters for the carriage house would be working shutters, hung on period-appropriate hinges.

H. Hanlon made the following motion which was seconded by R. Moore and unanimously approved:

Motion to approve as presented the proposed renovation of the carriage house to include the installation of quoins on each of the building’s four corners; the addition of shutters on the windows; addition of a cornice; and, the addition of an ornamental tie rod.

2. Youth Barn

Mr. O’Brien introduced Denise Cleary, the Chair of Ridgefield’s Youth Commission, as a member of the public. Ms. Cleary said that she was interested in informing the Historic District Commission of plans for the addition of a mural on the side of the Youth Barn facing Governor Street preliminary to filing an application for appropriateness at a later date when plans are being finalized. The intended mural would be comprised of ceramic tiles which when assembled will be an artistic rendering intended to convey a sense of peace and openness. Ridgefield residents would participate in the preparation of individual tiles. The work would be designed by and under the direction of The Art Spot, a school of fine arts located in Ridgefield. The mural is removable (i.e., not permanent).

Several Commission members had questions including whether lighting would be part of the project (unknown at this time) for Ms. Cleary on the project. The apparent consensus of the Commission members was positive towards such a project and resulting mural for placement on the Youth Barn exterior wall facing Governor Street.

Ms. Cleary stated that she would file an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness when plans were further along and that she looked forward to appearing before the Commission at a later date.

3. Main Street – Road Construction

Sean O’Kane presented the Commission members with an update on plans for certain changes in the Main Street business district intended to improve the traffic flow through that area. The project is under the direction of the State since Main Street is a state road. To date, the State representatives have been very open to changes and options proposed by the Town, and the State representatives have indicated that the project will only move forward if the Town is in agreement with the proposed plans. While the area of Main Street subject to these plans lies outside the geographic area of Ridgefield’s Historic District, Mr. O’Brien indicated that Rudy Marconi has been

interested in feedback from all groups and concerned citizens and that, as an historic district commission, it is incumbent that its members be kept up to date on the project and that they have an opportunity to express their personal opinions, particularly as this proposed project has impact upon an historically important part of our Town.

The focus of Sean O’Kane’s presentation centered on the proposed work at and around the intersection of Prospect and Main Streets and the entrance to the CVS parking lot area. There were two items of particular concern as a general consensus among the Historic District Commission members:

1. Realignment of the Intersection

Studies show that traffic “calming” elements are appropriate for villages where there is high pedestrian traffic, and the jog at CVS is one such element. By realigning the intersection, the concerns expressed were that (a) while traffic would be able to move through the intersection from Prospect Street directly into the CVS parking lot, such faster traffic flow creates a potentially greater danger for pedestrians and motorists; (b) results in the elimination of convenient and well-working drop-off/parking area running parallel to a Ballard Park entrance; and (c) the proposed changed view for persons walking or driving up Prospect Street towards Main Street results in an unattractive view centering on the CVS building versus a present pleasant partial view of Ballard Park. One of the issues at the intersection is that pedestrians do not always give traffic entering CVS the right of way so cars have to wait in the street for pedestrian traffic to clear, and this adds to the congestion. One suggestion would be to beef up the pedestrian signals at the entrance to the CVS lot.

2. Addition of Retaining Wall with Metal Fencing

The proposed addition of a retaining wall with metal fencing along the top on the west side of Main Street and running just south of the proposed CVS entrance to the area in front of the current toy store will pose a barrier and significantly detract from the beauty of our Main Street. There will be a loss of green, planted space along this stretch.

The motivation and principal reason for the addition of this extensive wall and fencing appears to be the retention of a very small number of parking spaces – perhaps three or four on this side of the street. The addition of this wall and fencing and the additional walkway and other construction elements related to it will be a high-dollar cost to the State and will create a significant visual barrier which will only detract from Main Street’s beauty. Hopefully, the Town will be able to explore with the State and our local authorities other options for these parking spaces such as by allowing parking on Bailey Avenue among other options. This small change in location of a few parking spots will better protect the beauty of Main Street for which the Town is well known.

Overall, the Commission members support the effort to reduce congestion by synchronizing the traffic lights and creating additional turning lanes (northbound onto Catoonah and southbound into Bailey).

The regular meeting of the Historic District Commission was closed at 8:50 p.m. by unanimous vote. The next meeting of the HDC is scheduled for Thursday, June 15th – 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel J. O'Brien