

RIDGEFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Lower Level Small Conference Room
Town Hall, 400 Main Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877
May 24, 2016

APPROVED MINUTES

A Special 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 Tuesday, May 24, 2016, and beginning at 7:30 p.m. This was a continuation of the Regular Meeting held on Thursday, May 19, 2016.

The following members were present:

Daniel J. O’Brien, Chair
Joseph Gasperino
Rhys L. Moore
Sean O’Kane
Harriet Hanlon
Briggs, L. Tobin

Absent: Jim Hancock
 Eric Pashley

AGENDA

87 High Ridge Avenue - Changes to front courtyard entrance including resurfacing and movement of existing brick pillars facing street.

MEETING

The meeting was called to order by Mr. O’Brien at 7:30 p.m. This special meeting is a continuation of the regular meeting held on Thursday, May 19, 2016. Present for the discussion of the proposed changes for 87 High Ridge Avenue were Jane Didona, Architect, and property owner, Richard Jabara. D. O’Brien stated how this meeting was called in order to not delay the start of the construction of the proposed changes.

Mr. Jabara stated how when he purchased the house, a landscape architect was hired to look at the whole site and prepare a master plan. When the decision was made to add the pool and the gazebo, J. Didona worked on this project. Mr. Jabara brought the old plans with drawings in case they would be helpful to this evening’s discussion. Mr. Jabara indicated that these prior plans were approved by the Commission at that time and presented a Certificate of Appropriateness so stating. Certain of these changes were

never completed. Currently there is not a good transition from the back yard to the front yard, although they did put in some steps.

J. Didona presented the drawings she had made since the previous meeting on May 19, which depicts the view from Peaceable Street and where the Japanese maples were planted. The driveway is to be dropped down an additional 1 ft. to 1 ½ ft. from its current level with the surrounding grounds sloping down and away from the house. She understands the concern by some of the members of the HDC about the proposed low brick retaining wall. This “look” will be reduced some by the lowering of the driveway.

Mr. Jabara expressed the desire to keep everything very lineal. He showed pictures depicting square corners. He wants to keep that feeling. He pointed out how the old pictures showed the balustrades and railings and how he wants this look replicated. He feels that he and his wife are “the keepers of the house”. S. O’Kane stated how the balustrade if decided upon should come around the side “like a guardrail”. D. O’Brien pointed out that two of the Commission members prefer the proposed plans without the balustrade.

D. O’Brien asked for additional comments about the proposed main gate entrance wall. The front walls are to be both 25 ft. in length with the piers on the corners. The wall will “scoop” down to 2 ½ ft. and then back up to 4 ft. The 3 ½ ft. section will be about 20 feet in length.

S. O’Kane stated how the Commission cannot take landscaping into consideration. Mr. Jabara stated agreement in bringing the wall back to 20 ft. instead of the proposed 25 ft. S. O’Kane suggested continuing the privet hedge up to the pillars. Mr. Jabara stated how the house is at an unusual and dangerous intersection. The entrance needs to be defined. It does not say, “enter me”. He wants to create an entrance that looks like something from the era in which the house was built.

D. O’Brien stated that many stone walls in town are typically 3 ½ ft. in height, while this house has no stone walls. The proposed 3 ½ ft. high brick entrance wall would be fairly consistent with such stone walls on visibility issues. 3 ½ ft. in height, one can look over the wall and see the house.

The existing piers could have been original and could have used the original brick.

Mr. Jabara indicated his willingness to shorten the wall by 5 ft. and trim the pillars down. S. O’Kane suggested curving the wall in. J. Didona stated how there are currently no curves anywhere – everything is very linear. J. Gasperino stated how when one enters the property, one may be confused on which way to go.

D. O’Brien stated how the Commission appears to be agreement on the wall 20 ft. in length and more slender piers with no balustrade in the courtyard, and the gate will be approved at a later date, and on the condition that the drawings reflect what has just been discussed. S. O’Kane will be the Alternate tonight in the absence of E. Pashley.

J. Gasperino stated for the record how he supports the balustrade as does Ms. Hanlon as someone might slip off the edge of the berm.

B. Tobin moved and R. Moore seconded a motion to approve the plans as presented for the renovation of the existing driveway entrance from High Ridge Avenue and add a second service driveway entrance from High Ridge Avenue on the south side of the property with brick piers similar to those at the main entrance as well as the addition of a connecting driveway between these two driveways on the condition that the proposed brick walls no higher than 42” with brick piers bordering each side of the renovated main driveway entrance be no greater than 20 feet each in length and that the brick piers at the end of each of these brick walls be reduced in size but not height from that presented and that such columns will have blue stone base and caps. The proposed balustrade bordering the proposed courtyard drive area in the front of the house has been eliminated from the proposal. Approval of the lighting and finials for the entrance piers and gate design and material are subject to presentation and approval by the Commission at a later date. Motion passed with a unanimous vote.

CLOSING

J. Gasperino moved and R. Moore seconded a motion to adjourn the Special Meeting of the Ridgefield Historic District Commission at 8:15 p.m. Motion passed with a unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel J. O’Brien
Chair