

RIDGEFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Lower Level Small Conference Room
Town Hall, 400 Main Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877
October 17, 2019

APPROVED MINUTES

A 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, October 17, 2019, and beginning at 7:30 p.m.

The following members were present:

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

In addition, Justin Che, a member of the public, attended. Mr. Chen is a third-year college student with an interest in preservation of historical properties.

AGENDA

- 1) **304 Main Street – Placement of signage for a home business**
- 2) **57 Rockwell Road – Replacement of roof**
- 3) **351 Main Street – St. Stephen’s Church – Railing for proposed new handicap ramp and installation of related lighting**
- 4) **63 High Ridge Avenue – Relocation of recently installed fence**
- 5) **316 Main Street – Lounsbury House – Installation of a new fountain**
- 6) **Approval of the September 19, 2019 regular meeting minutes**
- 7) **Executive Session**

MEETING

The meeting was called to order by Mr. D. O’Brien at 7:29 p.m.

- 1) **304 Main Street – Placement of signage for a home business**

The homeowners, Leslie and Dan Tewes, were present.

L. Tewes distributed photo renderings of two posts (single and double post). Each post was smaller in size, lower to the ground, had less text, had uniform font and were less colorful than that which was previously presented. The only color shown was found in the graphic. The post will be placed to the north side of the driveway. M. Blandford said he liked the double post. D. O’Brien also liked the double post as well as

K. Daughters. B. Tobin said it appeared that Ms. Tewes' proposal was consistent with HDC Commission's suggestions of last month.

M. Blandford said he would like to see the sign lower to the ground. If the sign were 12 inches from the ground, it would be better. D. Tewes said the issue with the height of the bottom of the sign was the plow, which is why they were thinking 24 inches from the ground. D. O'Brien said maybe it could be put further North. K. Daughters asked if they had investigated the easement. D. Tewes said it was clearly within their property. D. Tewes said they were looking to put the sign where other similar signs were placed on Main Street.

M. Blandford moved and J. Gasperino seconded a motion to approve the application as submitted on the condition the sign is double posted and placed no higher than 12 inches above the ground. Motion passed 5-0.

2) 57 Rockwell Road – Replacement of roof

The homeowner Maureen Rivard and Steve Anderson were present.

D. O'Brien said there was an administrative matter which needed to be addressed regarding the outstanding Notice of Violation with respect to the porch railing and basement door. In view of subsequent improvements made by the current owners, the violations no longer exist.

M. Blandford moved and B. Tobin seconded a motion to release the Notice of Violation placed on 57 Rockwell Road dated June 15, 2018 as the violations noted therein had been addressed and no longer existed. Motion passed 5-0.

M. Rivard emailed D. O'Brien the address of a GAF Glenwood asphalt shingle roof installed in Wolcott. Although there were other addresses provided that had the same material, this property had the best visual of the installed product. D. O'Brien said currently, 57 Rockwell Road had a wood shingle roof. Their proposal was to go to an asphalt product. S. Anderson said it was a GAF, Glenwood asphalt shingle, which appeared to be close in likeness to a wood roof in texture and design. This asphalt shingle was more expensive than others asphalt roofs in the Historic District. K. Daughters said she thinks that while it looks like a nice roof, proposed material doesn't have the texture or look of a 1730 house. K. Daughters is torn because of the economics but the roof is a prominent part of this house.

M. Rivard said the house is only one third historic. D. O'Brien said the issue was that the roof faces the road and is distinctive. The house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as well as the State's Register of Historic Places. There are only 13 Ridgefield properties and places that are on the National Historic register. M. Rivard asked if the other properties had wood roofs. B. Tobin said these were pre-revolutionary homes like the Keeler, Hawley and Old Trading Post (oldest structure) which had wood roofs. There were other houses to the south of Main Street with wood roofs. In fact, the Weston Historical Society just did their roof in wood. S. Anderson said he saw some homes in the Historic District which had asphalt roofs. D. O'Brien said the HDC came into being in the 1970's. So it was possible that there were some asphalt roofs installed prior thereto on historic properties. B. Tobin said that what is unique about wood roofs is how they weather, shape and how the light plays over time. D. O'Brien said the roof is uniquely prominent on this historic house and it is very close to the road. S. Anderson asked if the shape and light change denoted some type of deterioration over time. B. Tobin said he couldn't say, but that he grew up with wood shingle roofs. M. Rivard said as stewards, they were not only concerned about cost but the continued upkeep. This asphalt product actually helped preserve the structure better by minimizing moisture and pests. This house had sat empty for many years. This seemed like the right thing to do preservation-wise. S. Anderson said by changing to asphalt, they were preventing ice damage. Wood roofs don't protect against ice damage. Shakes are on strips. J.

Gasperino asked if they had checked the rafters to support the asphalt shingles as it would be heavier. M. Rivard said they had not. But would do whatever was necessary once the roof was opened up. J. Gasperino said marrying the two, aesthetically and preservation wise was difficult to do. M. Rivard said there were other things that defined an antique, not just the roof. B. Tobin said changing this roof would materially change the house from the road. M. Rivard asked if it would be detrimental. D. O'Brien said similar roofs were also preserved. M. Blandford said a similar project was presented for the Hawley House. Same arguments, similar process, with valid materials. Ultimately, the applicant did a great job in preserving the property.

J. Gasperino moved and M. Blandford seconded a motion to deny the application as presented to replace the wood shingle roof with asphalt shingles on the basis that such replacement of materials is not appropriate in view of the important historical nature and prominence of such structure. Motion passed 5-0.

3) 351 Main Street – St. Stephen's Church – Railing for proposed new handicap ramp and installation of related lighting

D. O'Brien said he received an email from J. Doyle saying they were withdrawing the application for the railing for the proposed new handicap ramp and installation of related lighting and that the Church may resubmit a new application at a later date when their plans are more certain.

4) 63 High Ridge Ave – Relocation of recently installed fence

Mark Blandford was present on behalf of the owner Mr. W. Diamond, and was recused. K. Daughters served as alternate to S. O'Kane.

M. Blandford distributed photo pictures showing a proposed 8-foot relocation of the existing fence moved westward from the current location. Also, a page showing different fence styles was submitted. M. Blandford said the owners put up a fence for demo purposes.

After taking in suggestions and understanding the major objection to the current placement, they were proposing moving the fence back 8 feet from the ridgeline. D. O'Brien said there was little drop in the property at 8 feet and that the property dropped significantly the further back you walked from 8 feet. M. Blandford said the hope was that by moving 8 feet back, you wouldn't see the bottom of the fence. This was a big improvement, using the same fence height. K. Daughters asked why 8 feet. M. Blandford said this lined up with the edge of the a/c unit and maintained the play area for the kids.

M. Blandford said they were hoping the aesthetic satisfied the HDC. D. O'Brien said placement was the first priority, with fence material and design being a second concern. B. Tobin said both issues were related. The closer to the road, the more apparent the thicker material would appear. R. Moore asked how much of a drop within the 8 feet. M. Blandford said he tried to measure it and it appeared to be approximately a 6 to 9 inch drop. M. Blandford said he would try to get a better measurement. B. Tobin said if they moved back twice as far, the fence would be much less visible. M. Blandford said driving north past the property, the fence was harder to see. B. Tobin said the demo fence was quite prominent, and as you pass by the other adjacent properties, it really stands out in an unattractive way.

D. O'Brien said by proposing to move the fence back, the application was going in the right direction. This was a good first step. However, moving the fence further back was something which is needed. There is a lot of space in the back of the property. Anything on that ridgeline sticks out. M. Blandford said a combination could work, with dropping the fence and moving it back. J. Gasperino asked if a shorter fence was an option.

M. Blandford said the fence was 48 inches. The thought was perhaps sculpting the lawn a bit might also help. B. Tobin agreed that this was a step in the right direction. He said some combination like moving the fence back and using material that better disappeared from view may work. The design and thickness of the bars were relevant. Minimizing the material view, setting the fence in ground and moving back were all important. At the August site visit, there had been talk about going around the tree that didn't impact the corner being used. Also, he recalled at 16 feet back, the drop was significant to the view and height perception of the fence from the public street. M. Blandford said dropping down accomplished part of the invisibility view.

M. Blandford said they appreciated the members' time. D. O'Brien said they were hopeful to reach a conclusion at the November HDC meeting amicable to all the parties. The Commission members were looking to see the fence move more than 8 feet back, a better drop in grade/ground and reduced visibility/perception.

5) 316 Main Street – Lounsbury House – Installation of a new fountain

D. O'Brien said at the last meeting, there was a question on the size of the existing fountain. S. O'Kane did the fountain measurement and sent an email to D. O'Brien advising the size looked fine.

K. Daughters moved and R. Moore seconded a motion to approve the installation of a new fountain as presented, with Commission members who did not attend such meeting abstaining. Motion passed 3-0.

6) Approval of the HDC meeting minutes –September 19, 2019

B. Tobin moved and R. Moore seconded a motion to approve the September 19, 2019 HDC meeting minutes, with Commission members who did not attend such meeting abstaining. Motion passed 3-0.

B. Tobin moved and J. Gasperino seconded a motion to enter into Executive Session. Motion passed 5-0 at 8:42pm.

The Commission returned to public session at 9:10 p.m.

R. Moore moved and K. Daughters seconded a motion to adjourn the Historic District Commission meeting at 9:11 p.m. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Fields
Recording Secretary