

**RIDGEFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**  
**Lower Level Small Conference Room**  
**Town Hall, 400 Main Street**  
**Ridgefield, CT 06877**  
**April 25, 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 Monday, April 25, 2016, and beginning at 7:30 p.m.

The following members were present:

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

Absent: Jim Hancock and Sean O’Kane

**AGENDA**

- 1) 258 Main Street – Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum – proposed extension of use of temporary sign previously approved
- 2) 103 Main Street – First Congregational Church of Ridgefield – various changes to proposed addition and parking area previously approved and other proposed exterior changes
- 3) 188 Main Street – new fencing, pathways, driveway, patio, pool, sports court and other landscaping
- 4) 188 Main Street – renovate existing Carriage House including proposed exterior changes
- 5) Approval of HDC Meeting Minutes – January 21, 2016

**MEETING**

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

- 1) 258 Main Street – Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum – proposed extension of use of temporary sign previously approved  
Alyson Baker, Executive Director and Robin Phillips, Internal Affairs Director of The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum were present.

A. Baker said the Aldrich was in a rebranding process over the past year with their printed materials and website. The Aldrich wanted their presence on Main Street to match the new sign. They’ve been very busy with this process. D. O’Brien asked if the website would be up soon. A. Baker advised the website is up but the Aldrich has not set a formal launch date (i.e. announcement). As for the sign, they know what they don’t want. The benefit of a temporary

sign is the patron feedback. At the recent gala event, feedback had been that lights focusing down on the sign made it difficult to read, especially at night. The Aldrich is currently looking for a year extension on their temporary sign previously approved, but can make a shorter time frame work. D. O'Brien said the commission was thinking more in line with a six month extension. J. Gasperino questioned the need for a year extension. J. Gasperino agreed with D. O'Brien in approving an additional six months. E. Pashley said his concern was with the concept of 'temporary'. E. Pashley is not a fan of 'temporary' and believed the old sign should have stayed in the interim while the Aldrich was going through their rebranding process.

**J. Gasperino moved and R. Moore seconded a motion to approve the application for an additional Six month extension of use of the temporary sign previously approved. Motion passed 5 to 1.**

2) 103 Main Street – First Congregational Church of Ridgefield – various changes to proposed addition and parking area previously approved and other proposed exterior changes

The Architect for the First Congregational Church, John Doyle of Doyle Coffin Architecture was present.

D. O'Brien stated that J. Doyle was here to recap the plans and run thru the scale back of the prior approval for those commission members who were not here at the prior commission meeting. J. Doyle presented storyboards showing the revised proposed changes to the parking area and terrace. The parking lot approval remained. The scale back was due to funding. The terrace will be even to church level. It is a transit between the grade and church. The ramp is a sloped walkway. The visibility from Main Street is to show a welcoming entrance with a wider entry to the sanctuary. The proposed added terrace has no walls. The grass goes to the edge. Longer windows are to engage the inside/outside view. Landscape berm to driveway. The 10x12 entry is off the front and a few steps to the main terrace level. The whole interior is still being renovated. Enlarged view from Main Street remains. Changes will match the stone of the church. Same language as the church, inside and out. Both roofs match. The changes are the view from parking lot, small sweep on the coned roof over the two new doors, and the added glass to the doors.

B. Tobin asked if there were windows by the roof part. J. Doyle said 'yes'. J. Doyle said they are proposing to open the windows up and by adding glass to the entry doors. The terrace is at grade outside those doors.

R. Moore asked what material would be used at the terrace. J. Doyle said bluestone at surface, and on edge, stone from the church. The canape brackets will match what is currently there.

R. Moore asked if the windows had been addressed previously. J. Gasperino said 'yes', along with the windows and door. J. Doyle said they were previously discussed, along with the reduction of scope.

E. Pashley asked about the railing material. J. Doyle said the railing would be a simple 4-6 foot black iron hand rail. J. Gasperino asked if the rail was ADA compliant and J. Doyle agreed it was compliant. J. Doyle also said the handicapped parking was to come up to the ramp.

B. Tobin said if there were further changes or additions, the architects should come back. J. Doyle agreed.

**B. Tobin moved and J. Gasperino seconded a motion to approve the revised application as submitted. Motion passed unanimously.**

3) 188 Main Street – new fencing, pathways, driveway, patio, pool, sports court and other landscaping

D. O'Brien recused himself from the discussion as he previously owned the home at 188 Main Street. E. Pashley chaired the discussion. The owner, James Prusko was not present. The landscape architect for the Prusko family, Michael Mushak of Tuliptree Site Design was present.

E. Pashley and R. Moore visited 188 Main Street on Saturday, April 23, 2016. R. Moore asked for a recap of the plans. M. Mushak presented several colored renderings. The front yard will be the same with a new Walpole white picket fence. An open gate will be in front, very traditional. The owners are keeping a beautiful Japanese Katsura tree in the front yard. Continuing in the back, the current terrace will flow out to a play lawn. The current marble and brick wall will stay. There is a bird bath that will be removed. Further along, the grade drops down with a proposed boulder retaining wall and right below will be a Sports court half the size of a basketball court. Continuing to the end of the property, the 10 foot landscape border by law will be beefed up. M. Mushak said they had agreed with the neighbor on the north side to use a 6' wire fence with black mesh, no horizontal bar on top. Essentially invisible by 50 feet away. The intent is to let the hedge grow through the fence. The driveway will be oil and stone. There will be a small patio between the Sports court and carriage house. The goal is working with the grade, making the revisions family friendly as there are four kids and a very active family and yet be respectful of the historical context.

E. Pashley asked if the front fence was 4' white Walpole fence. M. Mushak said the fence was 4' but with the post on top, the height might be a couple inches higher than 4'. M. Mushak stated the fence is more appealing than shrubbery.

R. Moore asked how high the south fence reached. M. Mushak said 6'. There are some views of the garage next door. It is hard to plant. The fence constructed would have a gate in-between to allow the kids access. The fence is 6' so the deer can't jump. With respect to the sight lines, the grade doesn't allow a view from Main Street. With the combination of hedge and plantings, the visibility from the road is not a concern. J. Gasperino asked if there were any pictures of the solid fence from the south side. M. Mushak said tongue and groove is what they had in mind. M. Mushak said he recommended the fence not be painted. Natural weathering would make it blend into its surroundings.

B. Tobin said the commission had to assume there was no shrubbery when taking into account sight lines. The property's site to Branchville is very prominent. B. Tobin asked if there was to be light at night. M. Mushak said the family had made a decision of no light at night in the Sports court. B. Tobin asked if that was specified in the application. P. Coffin stated that if the owners wanted lights, they had to have specified this in the application. And if the lights were added afterwards, it would be hard for the family to return to the commission for approval. J. Gasperino asked if there were going to be pool lights or additional lights around the pool. M. Mushak stated

there would be surface lighting, as a path to safety and yes there would be lights inside the pool itself.

M. Mushak said changes to the carriage house were the French doors and two dormers. E. Pashley on his visit to the property on Saturday, was surprised as to how pronounced the grade was from the pool to the Sports court. And even from Branchville, it was a pretty significant grade. M. Mushak said that the neighbor directly behind the Pruskos was ok with the structures as long as there was no wood fence on the north side.

J. Gasperino asked how the south side neighbor felt about the 6' fence. M. Mushak said it was the neighbor's suggestion to have a gate. E. Pashley said the south side neighbor was there on Saturday. R. Moore asked how much of the solid fence could be seen from Branchville. E. Pashley said you had to be looking for it. B. Tobin said the view from Branchville, the structure was more prominent than the fence. J. Gasperino did not agree. J. Gasperino said the 6' fence would get lost in the distance as it was at least 150 yards away. E. Pashley agreed with a blend of the two statements. H. Hanlon asked how much can be seen from the street. B. Tobin said he felt the fence was visible. M. Mushak asked if the commission could set a condition for painting the fence. D. O'Brien said a condition could not be set for the color.

B. Tobin asked if the soft corner of the north-east fence was mentioned previously. For the record, at the north east corner, the end of the fence was rounded.

H. Hanlon asked if the visibility of the fence was necessarily bad. B. Tobin said it was a personal view. The defining feature within the property was the lower stone walls.

B. Tobin is against constructing fences to mar the sight lines. If the south fence was solid, B. Tobin would request a lower than 6' high fence. J. Gasperino suggested 18" lattice fencing on top to comply with B. Tobin's point. This would soften the top to allow a softer sight line. M. Mushak said he had not thought about it but thinks that would work. J. Gasperino said the lattice should be consistent with the architecture of the house. E. Pashley said if the fence change was acceptable to the owners, there should be an amendment to show the commission what the revised fence would look like. J. Gasperino agreed the architect should come back with a revised design. M. Mushak said that would be fair as it would allow for the other elements of the proposal to move forward. E. Pashley said that was a potential compromise. R. Moore was encouraged by this concept. B. Tobin concurred. B. Tobin said these type of historical homes struggled with the sight line issue. Trying to convey an openness while keeping privacy. P. Coffin said the front yard is really open. And the owner's main concept is maintaining an open field too.

**J. Gasperino moved and Briggs seconded a motion to approve the pathways, driveway, patio, pool, sports court and other landscaping with an amendment for the applicant or their architect returning to provide the revised fence plans for approval. The north side fence should be 6' black wire mesh with no horizontal bar on top and the south side fence should be a total 6' high fence comprised of 1 1/2' type lattice on top and no more than 4 1/2' solid fence on the bottom. Motion passed 5-0.**

- 4) 188 Main Street – renovate existing Carriage House including proposed exterior changes  
The Carriage House architect for the Prusko family, Peter Coffin of Doyle Coffin Architecture was present. The owners of 188 Main Street were not present.

P. Coffin stated he is modifying the side of the Carriage House. Currently, there are two dormers with 70's type style easement windows. P. Coffin proposed joining the dormers into one, and adding two French doors with a pergola. The replacement windows would be more historically accurate than what is currently in place. E. Pashley asked if the windows would be in the same space. P. Coffin agreed they would remain in the same spots. E. Pashley asked if the shingles would be fixed. P. Coffin said not a whole lot to be done. They are not changing the Carriage House, just looking to repairing it a bit. Currently the basement is poured concrete. The foundation is stone. The brick wall will also remain. There is some copper which could be restored. J. Gasperino asked if any shingles would be changed. P. Coffin said if some were damaged, they usually do change them.

**H. Hanlon moved and J. Gasperino seconded a motion to approve the application to renovate the existing Carriage House including proposed exterior changes. Motion passed 5-0.**

D. O'Brien resumed the chair position and thanked E. Pashley.

- 5) Approval of HDC Meeting Minutes – January 21, 2016

D. O'Brien passed to all commission members copies of the January 21, 2016 HDC meeting minutes. D. O'Brien stated that since H. Hanlon was not a commission member at the time, she would not be able to vote.

**E. Pashley moved and R. Moore seconded a motion to approve the January 21, 2016 HDC meeting minutes. Motion passed 5-0.**

D. O'Brien stated the next HDC meeting would be on May 19, 2016. Possible agenda items would be:

- 188 Main Street – New fencing amendment relating to the North and South side fences
- 87 High Ridge Avenue – Changes to front courtyard entrance including resurfacing and movement of existing front pillars.
- Lounsbury House – Change in their permanent sign
- Chabad House on West Lane

**J. Gasperino moved and E. Pashley seconded a motion to adjourn the Historic District Commission meeting at 8:29 p.m. Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Fields