

RIDGEFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Town Hall, 400 Main Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877
February 16, 2023

Policy: Historic District Commission meetings will be conducted under Roberts Rules of Order and all participants are expected to conduct themselves with dignity and treat all those present with respect, empathy and civility.

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, February 16, 2023, and beginning at 6:30 p.m.

The following members were present:

Dan O’Brien (Chair), Sean O’Kane, Kam Daughters, Mark Blandford (alternate for Rhys Moore), Harriet Hanlon and Sara Kaplan (Harriet Hanlon)

AGENDA

- 1) 27 Rockwell Road – Pool and Site Work**
- 2) 9 Branchville Road – Detached Garage / Barn in Front Yard and Dormer on Rear of House**
- 3) 74 High Ridge Avenue (Rear Lot) – Detached Two-Car Garage in Front Yard**
- 4) Approval of Meeting Minutes**

- **January 19, 2023 – Regular Meeting**
- **January 19, 2023 - Special Meeting**
- **February 5, 2023 – Site Visits**
- **February 5, 2023 – Site and Special Meeting**

MEETING

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Dan O’Brien at 6:30 p.m.

1) 27 Rockwell Road – Pool and Site Work

Mr. Alex Bellina of Doyle Coffin, Mr. Chris Santini of Santini Remodeling and Ms. Brook Clark of Brook Clark Landscape Architects were present, along with the homeowner Mr. Hossein Razavi.

Ms. Clark distributed large scale plans. She pointed out that they are keeping the cobble stone apron and general footprint of the driveway with a metal entry gate. The majority of the driveway as it curves around to the rear would be asphalt. Upon entering and to the right, the path will be oil and stone turning in to the front courtyard, accessible by a stone walkway. The courtyard would be surrounded by plantings, with a small central fountain. The existing patio on the west side would have

a more formal walkway with perhaps a garden enclosed by a wood fence with mesh. On the east side, a deck has been removed and an elevated fieldstone terrace with monolithic steps is planned. The steps would lead to a pool with a vanishing edge planned for a later phase. The stone wall would tie off to the garage. Mr. O'Brien asked if the wall was existing. Ms. Clark said the fieldstone yes, but not the wall. The new wall would be matched to the veneer at the front. Mr. O'Brien asked if this was a raised structure. Ms. Clark said there would be five steps down to the lower terrace. There would also be a retaining wall, which would be seen. The retaining wall would be the same grade as the pool surface. Mr. Blandford asked about the code on the pool fencing. Mr. Bellina said the pool needed a fence around it by code. Ms. Clark said a metal fence would be around it, along the side would be mesh. Mr. Santini said the pool codes were changing in the summer, whereby a solid pool cover would replace the necessity for a fence. Mr. O'Brien then asked, why they would need a fence. Ms. Clark said they needed a fence for the deer.

Mr. Blandford said he noticed the plans called for a 6 ft metal fence in front of the house. Ms. Clark said they were thinking 6 ft so the deer would not get through. Mr. Razavi said the fence would be on top of the existing stone wall and that it was also for security. The height would be a total of 6 ft. Mr. O'Kane said in his opinion, they should keep the stone wall as it was. Ms. Clark said the 6 ft fence would do a decent job of keeping the deer out. Mr. Blandford said overall, this was a tasteful plan. What type of metal fence? Where were the elevations? He wanted to understand each element. Ms. Clark said the metal fence would be steel, powder coated black. She asked if there was another preferred material, or if a taller wall was amenable. Ms. Daughters said while the material appeared appropriate for the house, her concern was the height of the fence. Its height seemed glaring as this was a quiet country road. Ms. Kaplan agreed. She said the fencing would cover a very long expanse at the front. Mr. O'Brien said open spaces were a historic preference. Within the Historic district, there weren't any 6 ft security fencing. Ms. Clark asked if there was another height preferred. Mr. Blandford said the HDC needed to see what they designed, keeping in mind they were on a country road. Ms. Kaplan said the look would be very unfriendly. Mr. Bellina said this was a black metal fence, that when you saw it would be fairly innocuous and would disappear into the background. Mr. O'Brien said the fence would be right on the road. Ms. Kaplan said this was a really quiet road and it would be obtrusive. Mr. O'Kane suggested they could put the fence on the other side of the evergreen planting. He would not change to wood as it would stand out more.

Mr. O'Kane stated that on the east side, the grade fell off dramatically. He wanted to know the height of the retaining wall. With the pool's invisible edge, and elevation from Rockwell, would the pool be visible from the next house. Ms. Clark said there were several 20 ft high arborvitaes that would screen the pool. The trough was 6 ft high at its highest. Ms. Clark stated the details weren't finalized. Mr. O'Kane said he wanted to see the updated plans showing the removal of the current courtyard, the stepping down to the pool along with the elevations and heights of the retaining walls and perimeter walls. Mr. Blandford said he didn't agree with a separate metal fence behind plantings. Mr. O'Kane asked if the current stone wall was 3 ft and followed the grade. Ms. Clark said yes. Mr. O'Brien said he was okay with a slightly higher stone wall. Ms. Kaplan said she liked the idea of a 3 ft visually permeable metal fence with a stone wall. Mr. Blandford said a rendering would be nice. He suggested they bring this along with elevations to the next HDC meeting.

Mr. O'Brien said the Commissioners could do another site visit in March. Mr. O'Kane said a sample from the fence company would be good. Also a cross section around the pool. He said if a sample would be put up on the property, he would be happy to go see it. Ms. Clark agreed.

Mr. Santini asked if the Commission could vote on the raised terrace on the east side. Mr. O'Kane asked about the height of the grade. Mr. Santini said it was 2 ½ ft above grade, similar to the house.

Mr. O’Kane said his overall concerns were 1) retaining wall heights and 2) the fence facing Rockwell Road. He wanted to see updated renderings along with elevations at the next meeting.

Ms. Hanlon moved and Mr. Blandford seconded a motion to approve the plan as presented for a raised terrace on the east side, material to be similar to fieldstone and approximately 2 ½ feet above grade as seen from Rockwell Road. Approval of all other site work applied for is pending revised plans for consideration at a future Commission hearing. Motion passed 5-0.

2) 9 Branchville Road – Detached Garage / Barn in Front Yard and Dormer on Rear of House

Mr. Alex Bellina of Doyle Coffin was present, along with the homeowner, Mr. Michael Weiss.

Mr. Bellina distributed large scale plans. He stated this was an interesting property which shared a driveway easement. They would like to build a Carriage House barn with an in-law suite above as an accessory structure. The barn builders did the original house years ago. Mr. O’Brien asked what material was the roof. Mr. Bellina said it was asphalt shingle.

Mr. Bellina said the barn roof would have a simpler cupola, not as ornate as the plans. Ms. Daughters asked about the setback. Mr. Bellina said it would be 26 ft set back. Facing Branchville, there would be a faux door. The car doors would face to the north, towards the house. There would be a walkout balcony. If the current planned location was not feasible, they could also attach it to the current house.

Mr. O’Kane said the grade on the west side was conducive to having the barn tucked in to the hill. It would have less of an impact. He asked what else had been explored. Mr. Weiss said that location would show the barn higher. Ms. Kaplan said it would be partly buried. Mr. O’Kane said it would be tucked into the grade, which would be less impactful. The current location was very imposing in his view. Mr. O’Kane asked if this was a two car garage. The drawing appeared to show a three-car garage. Mr. Bellina said the other opening was for an office and had an entry to the mudroom. So in effect, one door was filled in. Ms. Hanlon said having the barn in front appeared too imposing. Mr. O’Kane said he was concerned about them being up against both front and side setbacks. Mr. Bellina said he would do another rendering. He thought that it would be more visible to Main Street moving the barn to the west side. However, he did like the idea of burying it in the hill. Mr. Weiss thought it was less obtrusive in front.

Ms. Hanlon left at 7:14pm. Ms. Sara Kaplan stepped in as Alternate for Ms. Hanlon.

Mr. O’Kane asked about the fenestration. Would it be traditional to a barn? He thought it should be toned down. Mr. O’Kane said dormers instead of a gable would be preferable. Mr. Bellina said he would rework this and return to the next HDC meeting.

Mr. Bellina said they were also looking to add a shed dormer to the main house, west side. This would be required to expand the kitchen. The extension would be a small bump out that would have a minor look from Main Street. Ms. Daughters said the window above looked like a smaller scale of the barn rendering. Mr. O’Kane said smaller was preferable.

Ms. Daughters moved and Ms. Kaplan seconded a motion to approve the application as presented for the dormer on the rear of the house and kitchen expansion. Approval of all other site work applied for is pending revised plans for consideration at a future Commission hearing. Motion passed 5-0.

3) 74 High Ridge Avenue (Rear Lot)

Mr. Alex Bellina of Doyle Coffin was present.

Mr. Bellina said the proposed detached two-car garage would be one story with a gambrel roof. Location plans are not finalized. He was looking for a conversation with the HDC regarding their views. Mr. O'Brien said pushing it back south was more favorable. Mr. O'Kane asked about increasing the existing car garage. Mr. Bellina said that would impact the neighbor to the north.

Mr. O'Kane asked if the garage was 24 ft by 24 ft. Mr. Bellina agreed. Mr. O'Kane suggested the garage be parallel to the west side setback. He said it would be an easier egress and within setbacks eliminating the need for a variance.

Ms. Kaplan said if they pushed it back in the hill, it would hide it better. In her view, it would not be obstructive to the view from High Ridge Avenue.

Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Blandford said to come back with a design. Given the suggestions, they needed to see something more concrete.

3) Approval of the January 19, 2023 HDC minutes, January 19, 2023 HDC Special meeting minutes, February 5, 2023 HDC Site visits, February 5, 2023 HDC Site and Special meeting minutes

Mr. O'Kane moved and Ms. Kaplan seconded a motion to approve the January 19, 2023 HDC minutes, January 19 2023 HDC Special meeting minutes, February 5, 2023 HDC Site visits, February 5, 2023 HDC Site and Special meeting minutes. Motion passed 5-0.

Ms. Daughters moved and Mr. Blandford seconded a motion to adjourn the Historic District Commission Meeting at 8:01 p.m. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Fields
Recording Secretary