

RIDGEFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Town Hall, 400 Main Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877
March 12, 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 SITE VISIT MINUTES

A Site Visit of the Ridgefield Historic District Commission (“HDC”) was held at The Aldrich Museum, located at 258 Main St, Ridgefield, CT 06877, on Sunday, March 12, 2023 and beginning at 11:00 a.m.

The following members were present:

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

AGENDA

258 Main Street – Development work at the Aldrich Museum Campus

The site visit was called to order by Mr. O’Brien at 10:59 a.m. Ms. Cybele Maylone, Executive Director at the Aldrich Museum, presented the proposed plans.

Ms. Maylone said campus site access was not ADA compliant and functionality constrained due to current masonry and landscaping. The proposed project is viewed as a completion of their original project years ago.

Renderings showed where there were stairs, there would be a sloping pathway. Where there were grass drainage issues, would be paving stones with a recessed drain from the back of the building. In the back, there was a grade change which would be an amphitheater looking southeast. Also, a new informal garden section.

Mr. O’Brien asked how steep the grading was in the back. Ms. Maylone said it was quite significant. Ms. Maylone said there was a big expanse of grass to the Northeast that would be accessible by pathways. Ms. Daughters asked the size of the property. Ms. Maylone said about three acres.

Ms. Maylone said the existing sidewalk from Main Street towards the museum was a series of slate stones, which connected to the existing concrete sidewalk system. The existing concrete sidewalk curved. They would be taking that curve out, and replace it with permeable concrete pavers to continue to use it as a drop off point. They would be putting removable stainless steel bollards further down. Ms. Daughters asked if pavers would be heated. Ms. Maylone said no. Mr. O’Brien encouraged the Commission members to review the lighting schematics.

Mr. Blandford asked if the public had been notified. Ms. Maylone said the immediate neighbors had been informed and were positive. Ms. Kaplan said she had been in attendance at the last public showing on February 27th which was 100% positive.

Ms. Maylone said they wanted to encourage people to use spaces that have been underutilized by making them more accessible. By opening up these spaces, they will be able put more work of arts outside for the public to enjoy.

Mr. Blandford asked if there were set hours. Ms. Maylone said yes. The current path lighting was on a timer that changed with the seasons. The pathway was open from dawn to dusk. Ms. Maylone said they also had security cameras which mostly saw wildlife. Ms. Kaplan asked if the handrails were painted steel. Ms. Maylone said they were just steel, not painted. Ms. Daughters said they look galvanized. Ms. Maylone said they picked steel so it would disappear from view, to avoid visual clutter. They only wanted to highlight the artwork.

Commission members began the site walk around the property, beginning at Main Street. Mr. Blandford asked if the current slate walkway was only on one side. Ms. Maylone said yes, they were only on the one side. She said some slates were broken and the pathway was not straight. Ms. Blandford asked if there was a pitch issue. Ms. Maylone said there was quite an elevation change. A lot of the stonework had settled and it was not ideal.

Walking toward the Museum on the north side, Ms. Maylone said she was most excited about the proposed Pollinator pathway. The concrete walkway would zigzag along the museum to the end, with various plantings along the way. There would also be another bit of pedestrian access from the parking lot. Mr. Blandford asked if there would be handrails. Ms. Maylone said yes. Mr. O'Brien asked if the church owned the parking lot. Ms. Maylone said yes. They had spoken with the church to add plantings around the parking area but they declined. They were aware of the proposed plans.

Ms. Maylone said there would be some work done in the loading dock area. Namely permeable concrete pavers would replace the current paving.

Walking South from the loading ramp, Ms. Maylone said they would be building an amphitheater using the natural slope in the back. The current stairs would be replaced by a new ramp, which would come down and connect to the pathway. On the farther side to the South, was an existing ramp with a painted rail. Mr. O'Brien asked if it would remain. Ms. Maylone said yes, that existing painted ramp would remain.

Walking East, Ms. Daughters asked how the steeper slope would be treated. Ms. Maylone said some of the slope would be adjusted. In this area, there would be a Secret Garden. A more intimate area with human scale sculpture. A few discrete pieces.

Walking North, Mr. Blandford asked about the trees. Ms. Maylone said some would be removed and more would be planted. Ms. Maylone said the pathway would continue along the perimeter and reconnect to the parking. So there was access from the parking lot. From this side, the entrance would be wide enough to allow access for bigger sculptural pieces.

Ms. Daughters said the proposed plans allowed the public more accessibility. Mr. Blandford said he thought this was great. The Aldrich was a bookend with Main Street in the middle and Ballard Park to the North. Mr. O'Brien agreed.

Ms. Maylone said they would be formally presenting the proposed plans at the next HDC meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 16th at 6:30p.m.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:51 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Fields
Recording Secretary