

**RIDGEFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**  
**Town Hall, 400 Main Street**  
**Ridgefield, CT 06877**  
**March 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, March 16, 2023, and beginning at 6:30 p.m.

The following members were present:

Dan O’Brien (Chair), Sean O’Kane (Vice Chair, via Zoom), Kam Daughters (via Zoom), Harriet Hanlon, Rhys Moore, Mark Blandford (alternate), Sara Kaplan (alternate) and Michael Mitchell (alternate)

**AGENDA**

- 1) Aldrich Museum – 258 Main Street – Development Work on the Campus**
- 2) 9 Branchville Road – Detached Garage / Barn in Front Yard**
- 3) 74 High Ridge Avenue (Rear Lot) – Detached Two-Car Garage in Front Yard**
- 4) Approval of Meeting Minutes**

- **February 16, 2023 – Regular Meeting**
- **February 27, 2023 Site Visit and Special Meeting – 114 Main Street**
- **March 12, 2023 – Site Visit – Aldrich Museum, 258 Main Street**
- **March 12, 2023 Site Visit and Special Meeting – 351 Main Street**

**MEETING**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Dan O’Brien at 6:32 p.m.

**1) Aldrich Museum – 258 Main Street – Development Work on the Campus**

Ms. Cybele Maylone, Executive Director at the Aldrich Museum was present along with Mr. Edward Marshall of Stimson Studio, a landscape architect firm from MA.

Mr. Marshall walked through the plan outlining the landscape transformation. An object of the project is to make the entire property more accessible to the public. At the entrance off Main Street, the current slate stone will become a new ramp with handrails and continuing down to the current passenger drop off point, the curb would be flush. A series of bollards would be installed and

removable to allow for sculptural access. Along the Museum's northside, the area would have a series of sidewalk switchbacks with both sides being landscaped. In the middle of this switchback, would be another drop off point to allow additional access from the parking lot. The end of the switchback would lead to the current loading dock which would have a tighter radius and the pavement would be replaced with permeable pavers. An ADA compliant walkway would encircle the Museum's property. At the rear of the building, the undeveloped area would be a rain garden. This area would be reinforced with various plant types that provide good drainage. An ADA compliant ramp would lead to a gathering place, the amphitheater. The walkway would lead to the back lawn and the area would be regraded as a sculpture lawn. A boardwalk section of the walkway would be by the wetlands. Mr. Marshall said they would have a raised boardwalk. Ms. Kaplan asked about the lawn maintenance program. Mr. Marshall said that it will have a soil foundation to make the grass resilient. Ms. Kaplan asked what composed the existing soil. Mr. Marshall said throughout the Northeast, the soil was plagued by what the glacier had left behind. Soil compaction was a huge problem.

Mr. Marshall presented various site images:

**Original drop-off area** - Wouldn't be any significant change.

**Off Main Street** – There would be an ADA compliant railing.

**Rear terrace** - Would be improved to make it more active.

**Existing ramp (in back)** – Additionally, there would be a new ADA compliant accessible ramp from the east gallery to the lawn in back, at the northeast.

**Amphitheater** – Low stone benches would have a wood cap and be nestled in and wide enough to have various plantings. Grass seating would also be available. Mr. O'Kane said about 60% of the low benches had wood caps. Why? Mr. Marshall said it was to break up the seating. More caps could always be added.

**Monolithic stone area** - Mr. O'Kane asked (drawing W4) why these stones had no wood caps. Mr. Marshall said they were shorter in nature to build and at 18 inches didn't have the stability. Monolithic stone didn't need concrete foundation. They were driven by size and landing area. Mr. O'Kane said these stones looked different than the other stones. Mr. Marshall said these were only 10 to 12 weeks from the quarry. And over time, the stone would weather, uniting over time.

**Materials** – There will be permeable pavers, fieldstone wall stones, earth and berm and stone taken down and reused in the back.

**Stone Wall in back** - Mr. O'Brien asked about the stone wall height. Mr. Marshall said it was about 22 to 30 inches. They would have a second entry in the back after the stone wall. Ms. Maylone said the existing wall height varied. Mr. Marshall said the current stone in the wall would be salvageable. They plan to reuse the stone.

**Mechanicals** – The a/c unit was currently hidden behind the stone wall. They would move it a bit further, still behind the stone wall and add more plants. The dumpster would also be moved from its current site. Mr. O'Kane agreed on reducing this entrance area.

**Handrails Off Main Street** - Mr. O'Kane asked if the material was stainless steel or galvanized. Mr. Marshall said galvanized. He said it had a pewter look and felt more rustic like Ridgefield.

Mr. Blandford asked if the railing had to have a double rail. Mr. Marshall said that was an ADA requirement. The top rail was 36 inches high and the lower grab rail was 18 inches. These heights were dictated by code. Mr. Blandford asked where the rail would begin. Mr. Marshall said it depended on the grade. A handrail was a requirement for an ADA sidewalk. With regards to Main Street, it may be possible to begin a bit further down, sliding close to the Museum so that the railing may be less visible from Main Street. Mr. Blandford asked if they could zigzag the walk. Mr. Marshall said to make it ADA compliant would require a longer run from the front of the museum. He was trying not to compromise the gallery space since that is how the Museum used that front space. Mr. Marshall said they could explore having the ramp begin 20 feet back and that might help the view. Mr. O’Kane asked if the grading plan would change. Mr. Marshall said yes. Mr. O’Kane suggested they put this area aside to study later.

**Bike Racks** – Mr. Marshall said this was an existing structure. Material was stainless steel.

**Bollards** – New removable bollards would be added to the drop off area. Mr. O’Kane asked about the end of the walkway landing, south, there was a bollard. Mr. Marshall said that it will be removed from the plans.

**Plants** – Mr. Marshall said he was partial to perennials that begin flowering from July thru September. Also, grasses that flourished as it got warmer in the season like Switch and Indian grass. Mr. O’Kane asked about the northeast corner planting, if there were hedges. Mr. Marshall said no hedges.

**Signs** – Ms. Maylone said there weren’t any signs on the property that indicated the other areas behind the Museum. They would consider doing directional signs at a later date.

**Boardwalk** – It would be thermally treated ash covering. At install, they were a warm tone. The color would weather to a grey. As the ramp connected with the boardwalk, they were proposing a stone veneer only on the back side, to tie in with the amphitheater. Mr. Marshall said the wood would be placed in steps, then shimmed to be level. The wood was field adjusted.

**Lighting** – Pathway lighting would be 18 inches in height, with a wide throw, spaced out 25 to 30 feet. These lights could also be tucked in the garden areas. Buffer planting would be using perennial plants on the northeast boardwalk. They would put lighting in trees that were dark sky compliant. These tree mounted lights depended on existing trees and how it would tie in. Mr. O’Kane asked about the post lights and their brightness. Mr. O’Brien said the post lights were existing and on Church property. Mr. Marshall said the post lights were not new.

Mr. O’Kane asked if there would be dramatic regrading of the northeast quarter. Mr. Marshall said there would be some. Mr. O’Kane asked if the parking lot was part of the project. Mr. Blandford said the Church owned the parking lot. Ms. Maylone said they had approached the Church with the plans. The Church had decided not to make any changes at this time.

**Mr. Moore moved and Ms. Hanlon seconded a motion to approve the plans dated March 16, 2023 as presented for the development work on the Aldrich campus except for the plans for the entrance walkway with handrail from Main Street which is subject to the submission of final plans for consideration by the Commission. Motion passed 5-0.**

## **2) 9 Branchville Road- Detached Garage / Barn**

Mr. Peter Coffin and Mr. Alex Bellina of Doyle|Coffin Architecture were present, representing the homeowner.

Mr. Bellina said the proposed site change to the property's westside by the HDC members at the last meeting was occupied by 50-year old mature gardens. In addition, that site would require the garage to be lifted five feet and wouldn't work with the existing driveway. Further, it had a more impactful view from Main Street. They were proposing to keep the original plans and presented the renderings to the HDC members. Mr. Blandford said what about building the structure into the earth as had been discussed. Mr. Coffin said it couldn't be lowered because they would then have to create a retaining wall. Then, drive around to get into the garage. Further, the new location would block the house.

Mr. Coffin said the northwest move would damage the mature trees on the neighbor's property and a branch was in the way. The current 50-year old gardens were documented as historic gardens. Mr. Mitchell asked if they will need Planning & Zoning approval for the proposed location backing close to Branchville Road. Mr. Coffin said yes.

Mr. O'Kane said the issue was scale. The concern for him was the view from Main Street. He asked if they had any thoughts to making it one story. He thought by pushing it up against the setback on Branchville Road, the structure on the northwest side could work better. But if it couldn't work, to go back to the client to ask for a 1 ½ story structure and tuck it into the landscape and it may work in either location. This was a very sensitive site. Mr. Coffin said this was not a full 2 stories. Mr. O'Kane suggested they reduce the scale to remove the two bay garage and make it a one-story structure. The issue was the scale because it was overpowering. Mr. Coffin said there were several barns on Main Street with different setbacks.

Mr. Blandford said he walked Branchville every day. The elevation was already 7 feet. Adding the garage would add another 21 feet to the peak. And from the road, it would look like 35 feet. He thought it would look perched high up. Ms. Kaplan said from Main Street it would look huge, as well as from Branchville. Mr. Coffin said from the original angle, they had dropped a foot. Mr. Blandford said the addition looked larger than the main house. Ms. Kaplan said the addition was blockier than the house. It had a massive quality.

Mr. Coffin said there were not a lot of workable options on this property. However, if they removed a bay, maybe it could work. It wouldn't be the same barn, but he would certainly ask his client. Mr. O'Kane said not having a second floor might be easier for the applicant's relative to access.

**Ms. Hanlon moved and Mr. Moore seconded a motion to deny the application as presented without prejudice on the basis that the Applicant continues to be in the process of considering revised plans and will require additional time beyond the statutory timeline for the Commission's consideration of such application. Applicant is welcome to submit plans on a second application. Motion passed 5-0.**

**3) 74 High Ridge Avenue (Rear Lot) – Detached Two-Car Garage in Front Yard**

Mr. Peter Coffin and Mr. Alex Bellina of Doyle|Coffin Architecture were present, representing the homeowner.

Mr. Bellina distributed renderings to the commission members. He stated both renderings would require Zoning Board of Appeals approval. He also distributed a letter from the neighbor to the south, that showed support for their client's project.

Mr. Mitchell asked how far from the edge of the garage to the house. Mr. Bellina said 29 feet.

Mr. O'Kane asked if this was a two tier garage. Mr. Coffin said it was not. The second floor would be for storage and yard items.

Mr. O'Kane said alternative option B (Angle) opened up the view of the house. Mr. Coffin said that made sense, because it was tucked against the property line. Mr. O'Brien agreed the angle would be better. Mr. O'Kane asked if the garage could be slid further south 5 feet with a 10 foot setback. Mr. Coffin said that could work, tucked in the hill. Mr. Coffin said he could slide it back.

**Ms. Hanlon moved and Mr. Moore seconded a motion to approve the plans titled Site Plan Alternate dated March 16, 2023 as presented on the condition that the planned angled structure be sited five feet further to the southeast than shown in the current plans. Motion passed 5-0.**

**4) Approval of the February 16, 2023 Regular meeting, February 27, 2023 Site Visit and Special Meeting – 114 Main Street, March 12, 2023 Site Visit – Aldrich Museum, 258 Main Street and March 12, 2023 – Site Visit and Special Meeting – 351 Main Street**

**Mr. Moore moved and Ms. Hanlon seconded a motion to approve the February 16, 2023 Regular meeting, February 27, 2023 Site Visit and Special Meeting – 114 Main Street, March 12, 2023 Site Visit – Aldrich Museum, 258 Main Street and March 12, 2023 – Site Visit and Special Meeting – 351 Main Street. Motion passed 5-0.**

Mr. Blandford left the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Mr. O'Brien mentioned he had received notification from the homeowner at 27 Rockwell. They were withdrawing their application on the additional items still pending revised plans. When they were ready to continue with the project, they would notify the commission.

**Ms. Hanlon moved and Mr. Moore seconded a motion to adjourn the Historic District Commission Meeting at 8:25 p.m. Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Fields  
Recording Secretary