



# HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

## Town of Ridgefield, Connecticut

### SITE VISIT

**Wednesday, May 1, 2019, at 6:30 p.m.**

#### **HDC Attendees:**

Dan O'Brien, Chair  
Briggs Tobin, Vice Chair  
Mark Blandford  
Kam Daughters  
Joe Gasperino  
Sean O'Kane  
Rhys Moore

#### **17 Main Street – New garage construction**

The homeowners, Rob and Jill Rae were present, along with Gary Doski of Doski Building & Remodeling.

D. O'Brien stated that revised plans dated 4/20/19 were distributed to the HDC members on Wednesday April 24, 2019. G. Doski confirmed those were the most recent plans.

G. Doski said on the plans it is proposed that the garage shed roof be steeper to help diminish the sight of the height of the building. The cupola was removed to take off about 4' of the height. The driveway was also proposed to curve a bit. G. Doski agreed the foundation was raised due to water drainage issues. When the survey and other work was done, the grade was too low so they raised the base. D. O'Brien said raising the base along with also raising the structure as a result of moving the transom windows higher had the effect of raising the structure 2.8' and changing the profile of the structure. G. Doski said he didn't know he had to raise it when he presented the original plans to the HDC. He did not believe that it was a concern to raise it. D. O'Brien said the concern of the Commission, as reflected in the minutes, from the beginning was the scale of the garage as compared to the house, particularly when viewed from the road. G. Doski said the problem is that the garage structure is taller than before. He took 4' off by removing the cupola.

G. Doski said there were two issues – 1) the height of the garage wall and 2) the pitch of the roof. S. O'Kane said the height of the cupola was never an issue. Rather the ridge height of the structure was the issue. G. Doski said he got rid of the cupola to help with the height issue. B. Tobin said he agreed with S. O'Kane, the cupola is not the issue. J. Gasperino said the pitch of the shed roof would be really steep. G. Doski said it looked acceptable in the drawings. S. O'Kane said the sections still looked the same as the current condition in the drawings and side elevations. In raising the garage overhang shed ridge line, it should be the same pitch as the roof or it would look odd. S. O'Kane asked about the exposure on the clapboards under the

transom windows. G. Doski said 5". S. O'Kane suggested adding brackets in between the garage doors overhang. S. O'Kane said the proposed steeper roof shed change would not relate to anything else in the house. He suggested that G. Doski think about that.

The HDC members then entered into the garage structure and proceeded to the second floor. M. Blandford asked about the ceiling height. G. Doski said it was 9' ceilings. K. Daughters asked if the windows were lower before. G. Doski said they were, which is why they raised them so that one only had to bend gently to see out. M. Blandford said due to the changes in the structure height not approved by the HDC, the volume of the structure increased by 13% over that which was approved. He reiterated that the principal concern was the structure's ridge line height. G. Doski said that couldn't be changed without tearing the roof or structure down. M. Blandford said that was a tough conversation. However, G. Doski had to figure it out. J. Gasperino said what the HDC approved was not what was built. G. Doski said a 13% volume change was small and 2.8' height change was minor. B. Tobin asked the purpose of the second floor. G. Doski said he thought it was an office. The members then stepped down to discuss further outside.

S. O'Kane roughly measured the garage overhang and said the pitch was steeper than 6 x 12. D. O'Brien said the unapproved changes were significant. B. Tobin said that G. Doski's actions created an untenable position in that the commission was now being asked to approve a structure that was built in violation of what the commission had originally approved. R. Moore agreed with B. Tobin's point that these unapproved changes have created an untenable position.

D. O'Brien said one of the purposes of the site visit was to give the homeowners and G. Doski feedback so that they may have a chance to explore alternatives for a resolution. M. Blandford said a lot of care and thought went thru in reviewing and approving the plans. 2.8" ft higher was a significant difference. G. Doski said from the road, the 2.8' height was not disproportionate. M. Blandford said the ridgeline of the roof made the structure almost look like a second house rather than an accessory structure. D. O'Brien asked if other HDC members had further comment. J. Gasperino said no further comment. K. Daughters said no further comment. S. O'Kane said this was a tough situation which needed acceptable alternative approaches to resolve.

D. O'Brien asked G. Doski to explore possible alternative solutions. He said that if G. Doski came to the HDC meeting on May 16<sup>th</sup> with the same plans, he was less than optimistic they would be approved based upon the sentiments expressed by the various HDC members tonight. The HDC's role is not to prescribe solutions. The HDC's main issue was the building height. G. Doski asked if ripping off the entire roof was the solution and said that would be a huge material waste. He said people have said they loved the structure. If it were 2' shorter, there wouldn't be a difference. D. O'Brien said that this structure could last for perhaps 100 years or more and that the structure had to be appropriate for its lot and scale to the main house. S. O'Kane said that at the point when the plans were for the height to become almost 3' higher than approved was when G. Doski should have returned to the HDC for approval of the changes. At almost 3', the height difference was significant. S. O'Kane agreed site conditions can change but when they occur, you work to find a solution and obtain required approvals in advance. D. O'Brien suggested to G. Doski and Mr. and Mrs. Rae that they may want to consult with an architect in order to get "fresh ideas" on possible ways forward. S. O'Kane said making the garage roof steeper and changing the driveway did not diminish the height. B. Tobin said with the higher roof height, the entire façade looked larger and the increased height made the structure look more like a house rather than an ancillary structure. It looked very substantial to him.

The site visit concluded at 7:00 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Nancy Fields

Recording Secretary