

RIDGEFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Lower Level Small Conference Room
Town Hall, 400 Main Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877
April 11, 2019

APPROVED MINUTES – SPECIAL MEETING

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 Thursday, April 11, 2019, and beginning at 7:30 p.m.

The following members were present:

Dan O’Brien, Chair
Briggs Tobin, Vice Chair
Joseph Gasperino
Sean O’Kane
Kam Daughters (Alternate for Rhys Moore)
Harriet Hanlon (Alternate)

AGENDA

- 1) **17 Main Street – New garage construction**
- 2) **2 Parley Lane – Extension of existing fence along West Lane**
- 3) **57 Rockwell Road – Installation of wood bilco door and a well door**
- 4) **Approval of the Special HDC Meeting Minutes and HDC Meeting Minutes – March 21, 2019**

MEETING

The meeting was called to order by Mr. O’Brien at 7:31 p.m.

1) **17 Main Street – New garage construction**

The homeowners, Rob and Jill Raye were present along with Gary Doski of Doski Building & Remodeling. G. Doski distributed revised building plans.

D. O’Brien stated he need to address a serious issue. He read the following summary statement:

“In order to bring the Commission members up to date on this matter and for the record, this is a summary:

The issue here is that the nearly completed structure is 2.8 feet higher above grade level than that provided for in the plans dated as of December 2, 2018 which were submitted to and approved by the HDC on December 13, 2018. At a meeting with Mr. Doski on April 8, 2019 by Mr. O’Kane and myself, Mr. Doski agreed that the structure was 2.8 feet higher based upon (1) a raised slab by 1.3 feet higher than the slab level in the approved plans; and (2) a higher building height by approximately 1.5 feet for a total 2.8 feet higher than approved by the HDC. Accordingly, the approved plans dated December 2, 2018 show a proposed garage roof ridge of 21.6 feet in height while the plans dated January 5, 2019

show a proposed garage ridge of 24.4 feet in height upon which the structure appears to have been built. The result is a structure approximately 13% higher than that which was approved. In addition to the change in height, other unapproved changes include the raising of the transom windows on the front of the garage and the eliminating of a French door on the breezeway.

The existence of the January 5, 2019 plans was unknown to HDC representatives until Messrs. O’Kane and O’Brien visited the construction site with Mr. Doski on March 28, 2019 at which time we were shown the Building Permit with attached plans dated January 5, 2019, a date after the HDC December 13, 2018 approval date. Upon being provided with copies of the January 5, 2019 plans, Messrs. O’Kane and O’Brien determined that the January 5, 2019 plans were different from those that were approved by the HDC and did, in fact, show a building height above grade of 2.8 feet higher than what was approved by the HDC.

Mr. Doski stated to Messrs. O’Kane and O’Brien at their meeting that he made a mistake of not informing the HDC of the plan changes and in not obtaining the HDC’s review and approval thereof. Mr. O’Brien informed Mr. Doski that the structure as built is in violation of the Certificate of Appropriateness issued on December 13, 2018.

The following is a summary of events leading to where we are today:

1. On October 9, 2018, Mr. Doski filed a Certificate of Appropriateness Application with the Town Clerk. A letter from Robert Rae, the homeowner, dated October 17, 2018 stated that Mr. Doski was acting on his behalf.
2. On October 18, 2018, Messrs. Doski and Rae appeared before this Commission and presented their plans for the replacement of the existing two-car garage with a three-car garage with a second floor and the addition of a breezeway connection from the house to the garage. At this initial meeting, Commission members expressed concern about the scale of the proposed new garage relative to the existing historic house. Specifically, at this meeting, as reflected in the minutes, the following statements were made:

“S. O’Kane said he would be interested in reducing the scale of the garage, relative to the house. Perhaps reducing the eaves/dormers. G. Doski said they did lower to 2 feet. S. O’Kane said the garage looked large relative to the house. If the eaves were lowered, there would still be a lot of space. D. O’Brien asked if the elevation of the house was higher than the garage. G. Doski said yes. The property sloped in the back. S. O’Kane said that helped.”

“H. Hanlon said the plan were heading in the right direction. S. O’Kane said he was concerned with the scale. G. Doski said they could reduce the roof line and redo the dormers. The slab is 3 ½ feet lower than the grade. S. O’Kane said he would definitely like to see that.”

3. The Commission made a site visit to the property on October 21, 2018. Mr. Doski walked the Commission members through the proposed site.
4. On November 28, 2018, Mr. Doski together with Mr. and Mrs. Robert Rae appeared before the Commission and presented revised plans based upon discussions with the Commission. After deliberation, the Commission conditionally approved the construction of the new garage based upon the following motion which passed 5-0:

“Approve the application to remove the existing garage and replace with a new three-car garage with a breezeway addition connecting the house to the garage; addition of a new patio, all on the condition that the Applicant present revised plans to the Commission with the following plan changes which have been agreed to: (1) transom windows to be added on the front of garage roof; (2) shed window running along rear of the garage roof to be added; and (3) top of garage doors to be shown without rounded corners. In addition, Applicant will present to the Commission details supporting the type of materials to be used for such items as wood, windows, roofing and any other materials to be employed on the exterior. The Applicant is scheduled to meet with the Commission on Thursday, December 13, 2018, at 6:30 p.m. to present this information and revised plans.”

5. On December 13, 2018, Mr. Doski and Mrs. Rae appeared before the Commission and presented plans dated December 2, 2018 showing the changes previously discussed along with a discussion of materials to be used. The Commission then voted 5-0 to accept the revised plans and to remove the conditions of the prior conditional approval as they were believed satisfied. The Certificate of Appropriateness issued contained the following standard language:

“If there are any changes to your approved plans or should the work extend beyond one year from the date hereof, the Commission requires that you return for a review.”

6. Recently, two Commission members Mr. Joseph Gasperino and Mr. Mark Blandford separately informed Mr. O’Brien of their respective concerns regarding the scale of the garage being constructed based upon their passing by the site. Mr. Blandford also indicated that the transom windows on the front of the garage appeared to be moved higher than approved and thought this may be indicative of a higher structure than what was approved. These inquiries led to the visit by Messrs. O’Kane and O’Brien to the work site to meet with Mr. Doski on March 28, 2019 as previously referred to.”

G. Doski agreed the building height was 2.8” ft higher. The original dormers permitted the view out the front. Lowering the windows prevented that. G. Doski said Mrs. Rae asked if it was ok to raise the windows. G. Doski said he did that but forgot to advise the HDC. He apologized, but the slab was raised for water drainage reasons. The window was raised so that the homeowners wouldn’t have to duck to see out. He eliminated the cupola, to reduce the height appearance. D. O’Brien said the issue was that the structure appeared more massive. The 3’ made a big difference. It looked out of kilter. G. Doski agreed it was higher than before. But in his opinion, it didn’t look out of kilter. He definitely saw the point of having made the change without notifying the HDC. D. O’Brien said there were four changes made: raised slab; transom windows raised; garage roof ridge higher; and breezeway door eliminated. G. Doski said the breezeway was changed last week. S. O’Kane said the slab was changed to a net effect of raising it 1.3’ ft. With the change of the garage ridge, G. Doski agreed the overall net result was at 2.8” ft increase in height above grade.

B. Tobin said that the HDC could not have the work done without HDC approval. D. O’Brien said the revised plans presented tonight would have to be submitted as ‘new’ plans and as such would be a new application because the structure was already constructed. G. Doski said he would do the process. D. O’Brien said that was fine, but the issue of the violation had to be addressed. G. Doski said to throw the material in the dumpster would be an environmental waste, not to mention the cost factor and a blatant waste of material. D. O’Brien said it was the Applicant’s and Mr. and Mrs. Rae’s decision on how they would come back to compliance, not the issue of what constituted waste. The HDC had to bear in mind that the built structure would be around for at least 100 years or so. S. O’Kane said this sets a bad precedent. A plan was presented to the HDC, approved, and what was built was 2.8” feet higher. This was very disappointing. D. O’Brien said they could do a new application, but the HDC had to vote on the violation.

B. Tobin moved and read the following motion:

“The Historic District Commission finds that the garage structure under construction at 17 Main Street in Ridgefield is in violation of the Certificate of Appropriateness approved on December 13, 2018 in that the Applicant modified construction plans (including the addition of approximately 2.8 feet in structure height over that which was approved) on or about January 5, 2019 and did not obtain this Commission’s review or approval thereof as provided for by the terms of the issued Certificate of Appropriateness. Other unapproved changes include the raising of the transom windows on the front of the garage and eliminating a French door on the breezeway. Such exterior changes are changed conditions resulting in violation under Section 7-147d of the Connecticut State Statutes. Accordingly, Mr. Gary Doski, the Applicant, and the property owners Robert and Julian Rae, are directed to take action for the structure to be in compliance with plans approved with respect to the previously issued Certificate of Appropriateness.”

J. Gasperino seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0.

G. Doski asked when the next HDC meeting was being held. D. O’Brien confirmed it was on May 16, 2019. He said G. Doski could call him to schedule a site visit prior to the meeting if he wished. Revised plans brought today should be added to the new application.

J. Raye said having a historic home was something they really wanted. R. Raye said they were sorry for this situation. They have a lot of respect for the town.

2) 2 Parley Lane – Extension of existing fence along West Lane

The homeowner, Dino Trevisani, was present via cell phone. D. O’Brien distributed pictures of the side property, where there would be the proposed new fence.

Dino said he was trying to maintain the historic character of the home. When he purchased the home, the front was overgrown. He replaced in the fence in the front which has opened the front completely. There is no more mess of trees. However, he only put the fence on one side, in front of the house.

On the other side and in the past year, he had salvaged the hemlock trees and cleaned the area. He had considered some additional plantings because he wanted to create a buffer. Looking from the street, he wanted the new fence to go behind the hemlocks. The fence would continue to the big oak tree. D. O’Brien asked going east, how far? Dino said to the large oak tree. The fence would be aesthetically pleasing and he was looking for it to buffer the car noise. The fence would not extend to Parley Lane, only to end of the large oak tree. S. O’Kane suggested they take a look onsite. B. Tobin agreed a site visit would be a good idea. Dino said the fence would not extend to the road. Looking at the picture, he said you could actually see that the fence would continue in a straight line. The fence would be the same design as the front of the house. He was thinking of planting large rhododendrons and large boxwoods along the High Ridge portion of the fence.

Dino said he was not looking to block the property around. Because of the elevation, he can easily greet his neighbors. The road is very busy. Because of the loud car noise going up the hill, he was looking to buffer the noise with greenery.

Dino said his property is almost like a pie. The Parley Lane side remains open. There is low traffic there. On the High Ridge side, he wants it clean, with grass growing. He was thinking of having stepping stones in front of the fence so that people could walk along High Ridge instead of walking on twigs and branches. S. O’Kane proposed a site visit. D. O’Brien suggested the areas be staked. Dino said he would also stake out the proposed garden fence area. He wants to do a vegetable garden. He was having a professional garden company present him plans.

Dino said he was also considering a light post. D. O'Brien asked if Dino had selected a design. Dino said he was using Walpole again. Ever since the address changed to 2 Parley Lane, people can't find his house. He was sending pictures to Dan's email. Dino said the light was at the top, with the address sign hanging below. D. O'Brien said the proposed fence should be staked out, along with the garden fence and he would share the light post pictures when he received them. D. O'Brien said he was concerned that more research should be done on the type of garden fence proposed, as deer could easily jump over a 4 ft fence. Dino said he wanted to get the front fence going. The other items could wait a bit.

Dino said since the HDC was doing a site visit, he was interested in their thoughts on what other renovations could be done to make it more historic in nature. B. Tobin said a site visit was important. Sometimes pictures can be misleading. The height of the fence is important, how it looks on both sides and how it relates to the trees. The pictures are great, but seeing the fence line in situ is helpful. D. O'Brien briefly discussed possible dates/times and it was agreed by all that a site visit would be held on Monday, April 15 2019 at 5:00pm. Dino said he would 1) stake the proposed fence, 2) stake the garden area and 3) stake the proposed light post site.

3) 57 Rockwell Road – Installation of wood bilco door and a well door

D. O'Brien distributed pictures of the bilco doors. He stated both doors were made of wood. The bulkhead door was painted grey. The well door was, flat on the ground for the well and on the other side of the driveway.

H. Hanlon moved and B. Tobin seconded a motion to approve the application for the installation of wood bilco door and a well door. Motion passed 5-0.

4) Approval of the Special HDC Meeting Minutes and HDC Meeting Minutes– March 21, 2019

B. Tobin moved and S. O'Kane seconded a motion to approve the March 21, 2019 Special HDC meeting minutes and HDC Meeting Minutes, with Commission members who did not attend such meetings abstaining. Motion passed 5-0.

J. Gasperino moved and H. Hanlon seconded a motion to adjourn the Historic District Commission meeting at 9:01 p.m. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Fields
Recording Secretary