

Warwick Historic District Commission

Warwick City Hall
3275 Post Road
Warwick, Rhode Island 02886

Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 15, 2014
Warwick City Hall
Planning Department

The following Commission members and staff were in attendance.

Ms. Donna Tobin, Chair
Ms. Ginny Leslie, Vice Chair
Mr. William McQuade
Mr. Barry O'Brien
Mr. Maxwell Pounder
Ms. Carol Pratt

The following Commission member was absent:

Ms. Jennifer Siciliano

The Following staff members were present:

Trish Reynolds, Warwick Planning Department
Sue Baker, Warwick Planning Department

The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson at 6:05 p.m.

Review of Petition #14-381-1-7 (Petition #09-381-1,2,3,5,6,7,8,72)

Stone Wall alterations
Warwick Neck Avenue
The Cottages at Aldrich

Commissioner Tobin announced that the Petitioner had requested that the hearing be continued to the November 19, 2014 meeting.

Commissioner O'Brien made a motion to continue the hearing.

Commissioner McQuade seconded the motion. All voted in favor; none were opposed.

Petition #14-292-309

Residential/Multi Family Dwelling
30 Fair Street
Pawtuxet Village

This petition was continued from the September 17, 2014 meeting.

The Petitioners, Mary and Stephen Sacchetti, and their legal counsel, Michael Robinson, were present for the hearing. Russ Clark, from Window World, a manufacturer of custom windows, was also present on behalf of the Petitioners.

Mr. Robinson explained that they hoped to have a decision this evening. Mr. Clark was present with a sample to demonstrate what the new window would look like and how it would fit into the existing woodwork and architecture and to answer any questions the Commission had. Mr. Robinson noted that Commissioner Pounder had also done some measurements and spoken independently with Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark demonstrated how the custom windows would be installed. The glass pane is the same size as the existing windows, all grid configurations stay the same and the new window will look almost identical to the existing window.

Mr. Robinson reported that, as the Commission had requested, the Petitioners looked into the cost of wooden windows, and the quote for Anderson windows from Home Depot was \$80,000 – too cost prohibitive for his clients.

Ms. Reynolds reminded the Commission that context is important relative to Historic District properties, and presented photos of the abutting property and a home two doors down, both of which have vinyl siding and windows. She explained that, while there are many significant houses in the district, and, primarily the direct abutter, Remington House, many homes within the 200-foot radius had been significantly altered. She referred the Commission to the Planning staff recommendations, and, specifically, number 8 on the listed findings of fact, which was read into the record.

(It was noted for the record that Commissioner Leslie arrived at 6:10 p.m.)

Mr. Robinson referred to a September 20, 2014 article in the *Providence Journal* about renovations to the Chamber of Commerce building in Apponaug Village. He noted that the Chamber wanted to make energy-saving updates and were using architectural vinyl siding that was hard to distinguish from clapboard. Similarly, his clients want to make energy-saving improvements using materials that would be hard to distinguish from the original. The \$60,000 it would otherwise cost the Chamber was cost prohibitive, just as the \$80,000 wooden window replacements were cost-prohibitive for his clients. Ms. Reynolds made a point of clarification that the area had been rezoned and the building was no longer in the historic district. Mr. Robinson said the correlation he was making is that it makes good sense to work within products that exist today within a district without penalizing people who are trying to do the right thing.

Mr. Pounder presented the Commission with three drawings of the proposed and existing windows he prepared and the Commission and Petitioners discussed his findings. During the conversation, Mr. Clark said that, according to his engineers, from the street the new windows will look as close as humanly possible to the existing windows.

Commissioner Pounder said he had a motion he had prepared for discussion.

Commissioner Tobin noted the Planning Department recommendation that windows on the front façade and two each on the north and south sides comprised the Colonial core and should be repaired or replaced, and that vinyl be used for the remainder.

Ms. Reynolds said it was the Commission's choice to follow the recommendation of the 14 windows, or could choose the prior proposal that only the 10 on the front be repaired/replaced.

Commissioner Pounder made a motion, noting that, that because of the importance of this issue, his motion contained context.

Commissioner Pratt seconded.

Commissioners Leslie and Tobin did not agree with proposed language that stated the property did not contribute to the architectural significance of the district, noting its placement and size and that historic districts are historic over time. Commissioner Pounder explained that he felt the language was necessary to gain leverage in the event of future applications. It was agreed that the word "significantly" would be added.

A discussion took place relative to the original Colonial core. The Petitioner was also asked if there were enough good windows remaining for replacement of the 14 within the core; he replied that he was unsure but would make it work.

It was agreed that the motion would be amended to exclude the front façade in order to give the Petitioners more time to assess existing window conditions for repair/replacement.

Commissioner Pounder withdrew his motion and a new motion was introduced that contained the amendment. Commissioner Pratt seconded the motion, which read:

"The Commission finds: 1. That the street façade of the existing structure retains the massing, but not the materials of the original historic structure that was destroyed by fire; 2. That a significant addition was added, resulting in brick cladding of all four elevations, and a modified wood detailed entrance; 3. The existing structure does not significantly contribute to the architectural significance of the district

"In the interest of maintaining a wide choice of housing choices and moderate income choices in the District, we approve the installation of the proposed vinyl windows on the North, East, and South elevations of the structure. However, the West-facing street façade shall be resubmitted to the Historic District Commission, but for minor repairs and/or restoration."

Commissioner Tobin expressed concern that the four additional windows were not included in the motion. Commissioner Pounder was concerned if they were included it might adversely affect the building's appearance, and Mr. Robinson agreed. Questions were again raised if there were enough existing windows in good enough condition to replace all 14.

Commissioner Leslie made a motion to amend the motion to include the four windows, two each on the north and south sides, as recommended by the Planning staff.

Commissioner Pratt seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5-0-1, with Commissioner Pounder abstaining.

The vote on the amended motion passed 6-0; no one objected.

Commissioner Tobin thanked the Petitioners for their persistence and cooperation. She noted that it has been difficult in the past couple of years to follow the required Secretary of Interior Standards, while balancing the fact that some cases merit special consideration without setting a precedent.

Commissioner Pounder was thanked by his colleagues for his work on this issue.

Petition #14-274-225

Residential

207 North Street

Pontiac Village

The petition was introduced and it was explained that the applicant, Ashley Hahn, on behalf of her mother, the homeowner, is seeking approval to remove an existing 16' x 16' covered porch, construct a 16' x 20' addition (to include a master bedroom, bathroom and closet) and install vinyl siding on the entire building.

The property is located on the very northern limit of the Historic District. Like most of the homes on the street, it is a one-story ranch house constructed in the early 1960s; there is a two-story home across the street of relatively new construction.

Ms. Hahn explained that the back of the house is covered in T-111 and the rest of the home is wood shingled. The porch contains corrugated plastic and its roofline is offset. Neither the siding nor the shingles are in good condition. She believes the project will significantly improve the property.

Commissioner Tobin explained that the Commission does not have within its purview to allow vinyl siding and suggested that the petition be separated. Ms. Hahn said her concern with that would be she would then not know what materials she would use on the home, and pointed out that there are homes that have been vinyl sided since the Historic District zoning was implemented.

Commissioner Leslie explained that if the petition were not divided the Commission would say yes to the demolition and construction but no to the vinyl, thereby denying the entire petition. Commissioner Pounder offered that if Ms. Hahn were willing to change the material the entire petition could be approved that evening.

Ms. Hahn said she would like to use vinyl, as it would further the energy efficiencies they have made to the home, including central air conditioning and a high-efficiency heating system.

Commissioner Tobin again recommended separating the petition; if it were denied, Ms. Hahn could not come back for another year.

A discussion took place relative to the fact that roughly 50 percent of homes in the area are vinyl-sided and that there was some question as to why North Street had even been included in the District. It was explained that the Commission only has the purview to approve vinyl siding if there is a proven, documented economic hardship.

Commissioners O'Brien and Tobin also raised points regarding the safety of vinyl and its effectiveness when it is used over existing materials.

Ms. Hahn said she would look into these concerns and said she would like permission to explore other alternatives because she needs the project to begin. She also questioned whether she can obtain a building permit without knowing what siding material will be used.

Ms. Reynolds pointed out that because the addition is strictly new construction, vinyl could be permitted. It was discussed whether the Commission would entertain vinyl on the sides of the building but not the front, and if cement board would be an option the Commission would entertain. Ms. Hahn said that her final decision would be based on cost and energy efficiency and inquired about the economic hardship provision criteria.

Commissioner Leslie moved to separate the petitions: Petition #14-274-225-A is to remove the existing 16' x 16' structure and construct a 16'x 20' addition. Petition #14-274-225-B is to install vinyl siding on the entire building.

Commissioner McQuade seconded the motion. All voted in favor; none opposed.

Commissioner McQuade made a motion to approve Petition #14-274-225-A, to remove the existing 16' x 16' foot porch and construct a 16' x 20' addition with an extended roofline. Commissioner Pratt seconded the motion. All voted in favor; none opposed.

Commissioner Tobin explained to Ms. Hahn that she could withdraw Petition #14-274-225-B and resubmit it, or postpone it as written. Ms. Hahn said she would like to postpone as long as the language would not preclude her from changing the siding material if necessary.

Commissioner Leslie moved to continue Petition #14-274-225-B to the November 19, 2014 meeting. Commissioner McQuade seconded the motion. All were in favor; none opposed.

Minutes of the September 2014 meeting were approved. The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.