

Warwick Historic District Commission

Warwick City Hall
3275 Post Road
Warwick, Rhode Island 02886

Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, November 19, 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. Maxwell Pounder
Ms. Carol Pratt

The following Commission members were absent:

Mr. William McQuade
Mr. Barry O'Brien
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 6:10 p.m.

Commissioner Tobin noted for the petitioners present that, because only four Commissioners were in attendance, a vote must be passed unanimously or it fails.

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 introduced the Petition. Ms. Reynolds said the Petitioner had requested that the hearing be continued again, to the December 17, 2014 meeting.

Commissioner Leslie made a motion to continue the hearing.

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

Petition #14-292-470

Residential

14 North Fair Street

Pawtuxet Village

The Petition was introduced. Ms. Reynolds explained that the Petitioners had not yet arrived. Commissioner Leslie made a motion to move the item to the end of the agenda. Commissioner Pratt seconded. All voted in favor; none were opposed.

(It should be noted that the Petitioners did not arrive by the close of the meeting.)

Petition #14-357-34

Stone Wall Alterations

96 Warwick Neck Avenue

Commissioner Tobin introduced the Petition, which is to close openings in an existing stone wall and open the wall in a different location to provide for a roadway for a new subdivision. The Petitioner, Hugh Fisher, explained that he always likes to save features when possible when developing real estate.

He has owned the back portion of the property since 1978 and the remainder of the property was recently purchased as part of the final estate.

Mr. Fisher said he had two options for the subdivision: cut lots off the existing street, which would require a number of things, including cutting four holes in the wall to accommodate driveways, or to move the existing house and create one roadway off Warwick Neck Avenue. The latter was the preferred option. He explained that the project recently received Master Plan approval from the Planning Board.

Mr. Fisher showed the Commissioners a map to explain how he would close the existing openings – a walkway and driveway – and make an opening to the north for the new road. Existing stones would be used to take the wall and arch it into the new roadway. He anticipates there will be enough stones to construct pillars to recreate the existing look. The width of the new road will likely be 24 feet of asphalt, with curbs on either side, for a total of 26 feet.

The Commissioners expressed admiration for the existing home; Mr. Fisher explained that, unfortunately, the house had fallen into extensive disrepair and needed to be demolished. A discussion took place about his plans to retain a number of existing trees where possible.

The Planning Department's recommendations were read into the record:

1. That the developer shall construct the driveway opening to the minimum size acceptable to the Warwick Fire Marshall.
2. That all stones removed as part of creating the new opening shall be reused on the site to address any necessary repairs in the wall.

3. The developer shall provide a detail for addressing the newly created wall ends, either by providing for piers to match the existing, or wall returns.
4. That if concrete is used in the wall repairs, it shall be tinted to match any existing concrete.

A discussion took place generally regarding recommendation Number 4. Ms. Reynolds explained that that was included subsequent to a different project some years ago where concrete had not been tinted and its effect was noticeable. Mr. Fisher explained that the walls were dry walls, but that his goal with stone walls is to make them look like they've been in that condition forever.

Commissioner Pratt made a motion that the petition be approved to include recommendations from the Planning Department: To close the existing wall openings that are the driveway and walkway and open the wall at a different location to provide for a new roadway. Recommendation Number 3 was amended to remove the words "or wall returns."

Commissioner Leslie seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Petition #14-274-225
Residential
207 North Street
Pontiac Village

The petition was introduced and it was explained that the petition had been continued from the previous month. The Petitioner, Ashley Hahn, had been granted approval last month to remove an existing porch and construct a new addition. Her request to install vinyl siding on the entire building had been continued to this meeting.

Ms. Hahn explained that she had received an incomplete Economic Hardship application and will fill it out and submit it as soon as she has the missing paperwork. She gave to the Commission estimates from her contractor for vinyl siding and cement board as well as red cedar and white cedar shingles.

The Planning Department's recommendation was discussed. Ms. Hahn said at this point, she was seeking conditional approval: if the Economic Hardship application is approved, she would like to use vinyl siding, as requested; if not, she would like permission to vinyl the back and the new addition and perhaps paint and repair the front.

Commissioner Pratt questioned if the Economic Hardship application were approved, why would vinyl be used? Ms. Hahn replied that that is what she can afford and her first choice would be to vinyl side the whole house.

The quotes provided Ms. Hahn by her contractor are as follows: work performed using vinyl was quoted for \$9,800; red cedar, \$21,300; cement siding, \$14,500; and white cedar, \$13,200. A discussion took place relative to the fact that the format of the quotes was not consistent; the quote for white cedar was for only three sides of the house and repairs, while quotes for the other materials involved covering the entire

house. Commission members noted that all quotes should be consistent, or a notation should be made to make it clear to them and the Community Development Office that the quote for white cedar was different. Commissioner Pratt noted that she was hoping the contractor erred when formulating the quotes, because perhaps Ms. Hahn would save money and suggested that Ms. Hahn clarify with her contractor.

Commissioner Tobin asked if Community Development did not grant the hardship application, would Ms. Hahn find a way to do the house all in white cedar. Ms. Hahn replied that she didn't believe she'd have a choice, as the house needs to be repaired.

Commissioner Tobin noted that the commission was being very cautious with the issue because whatever motion came to the floor needed to be approved unanimously or it would fail and Ms. Hahn would not be able to come back for a year. Ms. Hahn inquired as to the appeal process. Ms. Reynolds noted that Ms. Hahn could come back to the Commission with a modified application.

Further discussion took place relative to Commissioners' concerns about building materials, whether allowing vinyl would be violating Commission standards and what Commissioners would be comfortable with. It was noted that vinyl would not be placed over rotting material and that shingles on the front façade would be painted the same color as vinyl siding. The overall character of the neighborhood was also discussed, and commissioners noted the homes are largely in the same style, same size and constructed the same year. It was also noted that there was only one contributing structure on the street.

Further discussion took place regarding the economic hardship application. Commissioner Tobin noted that if Ms. Hahn were to meet the hardship criteria and requested vinyl for the whole house, the commission would allow that. Ms. Hahn said she would not be opposed to keeping wood on the front façade if it is economically feasible, but wanted to leave some wiggle room in the event it was cost-prohibitive.

Commissioner Tobin said if a motion were to be constructed for two cases, one if economic hardship is approved, and one if it isn't, that intent needed to be clear. Similarly, if a motion would be made that would be acceptable in either case, that would also need to be clear.

Commissioner Pounder ultimately put forth a motion to approve vinyl siding on the sides and rear portions of the house, with front and side cornerboards of a minimum of 3 ½ inches, and that the front façade and porch be retained in wood and repaired as such, as necessary, in the future.

It was discussed that Ms. Hahn, if approved for economic hardship, could appear before the Commission again to discuss further the front façade and porch, but that this approval would allow her to begin work on the back and sides of the house.

Commissioner Pounder's motion was seconded by Commissioner Leslie and approved unanimously.

Other Business

Commissioner Tobin asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the October 15, 2014 meeting. Commissioner Pratt made the motion, which Commissioner Pounder seconded.

The motion passed unanimously; none were opposed.

New Business

Commissioner Pounder commented that when he visited North Street to view the neighborhood and Hahn property, it raised the question whether that street, should even be part of the district.

He suggested that the commission needs to review its standards and configuration of districts.

The other commissioners agreed, and it was decided that a committee will be formed after the first of the year to work on elements and configuration of districts.

Commissioner Leslie made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Pratt seconded. The vote passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.