

# Warwick Historic District Commission

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Warwick City Hall  
3275 Post Road  
Warwick, Rhode Island 02886

## **Meeting Minutes Wednesday, September 16, 2015 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  
Ms. Carol Pratt  
Mr. Maxwell Pounder  
Mr. Barry O'Brien

The following Commission member was absent:

Ms. Jennifer Sicilliano

The following staff members were present:

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

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Tobin at 6:02 p.m.

### **Petition #15-274-086**

Single family Dwelling  
Eight Central Street  
Pontiac Village

This petition was continued from the August 2015 meeting in order for the Petitioner's contractor to be present.

The Petitioner, Ms. Evelyn Mackenzie, is requesting permission to install vinyl siding on her home, which is not considered to be a contributing structure within the District, constructed circa 1949. It is a Cape-style dwelling.

Jeff Palumbo, owner of Atlantic Exteriors, was present to explain the project and materials that would be used. He told the Commission that he is in his 40<sup>th</sup> year in building materials and remodeling, has completed numerous projects in the City of Warwick, and is very sensitive to the need for a project such as this to look authentic. He explained that homes he worked on in the 1990s still look like new.

He presented several types of materials to the Commission and explained that most manufacturers make the keyways (gaps) too wide, resulting in an unauthentic look. The type of shingle he uses is a red cedar-type of shingle, which provides the most authentic look. A seven-inch exposure shingle enables him to get as close as possible in terms of authenticity. For insulation, Greenguard is used. It has the highest permeability rating. The shingles are solid vinyl. Mr. Palumbo also explained that he often recommends that customers choose to make the corner pieces the same color as the vinyl as it tends to make the structure appear larger, but that decision rests with Ms. Mackenzie.

Commissioner Tobin expressed concern about covering over old and/or rotting wood. Mr. Palumbo explained that that is a concern, but all carpentry work is addressed first so there are no issues. Further, once the wood is encapsulated, it is protected from the elements. Mr. Palumbo also explained that he guarantees his work for life and inspects properties annually.

Commissioner Tobin explained that, generally speaking, the Historic District Commission abides by the Secretary of the Interior's standards, which do not technically permit replacement except in kind. Traditionally, they do not accept any type of vinyl siding. Commissioner Leslie noted that, while the materials presented were much better than most, it is still vinyl.

Discussion took place regarding the fact that the property is on the outskirts of the district and not in the historic part of the village itself. Commissioner Pounder noted that distinctions are not made among the districts, so something allowed in one village could be used as a precedent in either of the other two villages. There was general agreement that it was important not to set a precedent and the impact on the surrounding neighborhood should be part of the decision-making process. Commissioner McQuade noted that it appeared when the Pontiac district lines were drawn they appeared somewhat arbitrary. Ms. Reynolds told the Commission that there has been talk of redrawing the Pontiac lines. It was generally agreed, however, that the home was still in the district and a precedent is a precedent.

Ms. Reynolds told the Commission that the Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission had previously advised the City that, where vinyl siding is concerned, it is allowed within a historic district if it is done appropriately and the structure is not contributing and not part of the historic fabric. The house is not considered contributing and many homes in the surrounding area had been vinyl-sided even before the district was created.

Commissioner Tobin read the Planning Department staff report:

“According to Preservation Brief #8, Aluminum and Vinyl Siding of Historic Buildings, subtitled, The Appropriateness of Substitute Materials for Resurfacing Historic Wood Frame Buildings, issued by the US Department of the Interior, the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and accompanying Guidelines never recommend resurfacing frame buildings with any new material that does not duplicate the historic material because of the strong potential of altering the character of the historic building. However, the appropriate preservation

decision on the use of substitute material in the rehabilitation of a historic building must always center on 2 principal concerns:

1. The possible damage or destruction of historic materials; and,
2. The possible negative impact on the historic character of historic district or setting in which the building is located.

In the block on Central Street, where this dwelling is located, there are 13 single and multi-family dwellings. Of the 13 dwelling, there are 10 dwellings that are considered to be contributing structures. Of these 10 contributing structures, 7 have been substantially altered, 5 with the addition of vinyl (or asbestos) siding.

The Planning Department finds that, at this time, the subject parcel is not considered to be a contributing, historic building, and is located within in an area where the majority of the contributing structures have been substantially and inappropriately altered."

Commissioner McQuade ultimately made a motion to approve Petition #15-274-086, and further moved that, "given that the house is not a contributing structure and is located on the outer edge of the historic district, surrounded by houses that have been significantly altered, some with vinyl. This property has no connection to the specific historic village located two streets away. And, given that altering this structure will not impact Pontiac in general, and that this type of alteration will be completed using a high-quality material that replicates the original material so the appearance and quality of the original house will be maintained. This is also the recommendation of the Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission, which states that houses that are not contributing can use vinyl shingles as a replacement siding. And, given that the house is in Pontiac, located in a diverse assortment of houses, the Commission would therefore grant this approval. This approval is not a precedent for any other district or any other condition short of Eight Central Street, Pontiac Village."

Commissioners Leslie and Pratt seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-1, with Commissioner Pounder voting against. He explained that he did not want the vote to be unanimous. Commissioner Leslie noted that approval was granted somewhat reluctantly.

Mr. Palumbo invited the Commissioners to visit the property after completion of the project so they can see the precision and attention to detail that will be used. He feels the property will be enhanced historically.

Commissioners Pratt and McQuade thanked Mr. Palumbo for his detailed presentation.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

The minutes of the February 2015 meeting were approved, as amended, by Commissioners Leslie, Tobin, Pounder, O'Brien, and McQuade. Commissioner Leslie noted an error on page 3 of the minutes; language will be amended to

reflect that she made a motion to deny the petition and the motion was approved, meaning the petition was denied. Commissioner Pratt was not present at the meeting and did not vote on these minutes.

The minutes of the March 2015 meeting were approved by Commissioners Tobin, Leslie, McQuade, and Pratt. Commissioners Pounder and O'Brien did not vote as they were not present at that meeting.

Commissioner Pratt motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Pounder seconded the motion. All voted in favor; none were opposed.

The meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.