



SOMERSWORTH HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Date: 28 October 2015
Place: City Hall, Somersworth, NH

Minutes of HDC Workshop Meeting: Adopted as
Amended on 11/24/2015

Present:

Madeline DeSantis, Chair
Albert Marotta, Vice-Chair
Martin Dumont, City Councilor
Laura Barry, Alternate
George Poulin, Commissioner
Tim Metivier, Building Inspector and City Representative
Pius Charles Murray, Commissioner/Secretary

Members Absent:

Arthur Hendrickson, Commissioner
Beth Poulin, Commissioner
Julie Rowe, Alternate

Agenda

I. Workshop Called to Order by the Chair at 6:08 P.M.

The Chair announced that the theme of this workshop would center on fences. It is a follow-up workshop to a previous one held on 22 April 2015.

Mr. Metivier introduced the discussion by stating that in Somersworth's Historic District there are a number of different architectural styles of fences, on Beacon Street in particular. Among the different types found may be included ornate gates, cedar stockade which today are more machine or commercially-produced than individually handcrafted, or an iron-wrought fence. Ms. Barry noted that she has noticed a lot of iron-wrought fences in the Historic District. The Chair inquired if all applications for fences are considered minimal impact, which do not come before the Commission. Mr. Metivier replied in the affirmative that all applications for fences are considered by policy to be projects of minimal

impact. To the question what would happen if an applicant wanted to install a chain-link fence as a new fence, Mr. Metivier replied that such an application would be denied, by policy.

Councilor Dumont asked if chain-link fences were by themselves not an approval issue. To which Mr. Metivier responded, what if a chain-link fence was already pre-existing on a property in the Historic District? Councilor Dumont then asked what the status of a chain-link fence would be if boards were put over it; Mr. Metivier replied that it would no longer be a chain-link fence.

Mr. Metivier read the definition of a fence to the Commission: "A fence encloses an area of land for the purpose of keeping something in, or something out." To demonstrate the vagueness of the description, Mr. Metivier replied that a decorative fence would not fit that description, neither would a temporary fence left standing for 180 days or less. Ms. Barry inquired if a fence had to be permanently located on property. Mr. Metivier responded that "permanently affixed" would be the preferred legal term. In that way, a dumpster would not be considered a fence.

Mr. Metivier stated that it is laborious to distinguish between a fence and a decorative fence. Although some direction from the Commission would always be welcome, the consensus was to continue to allow the professionals in the city's Planning Department to make certain decisions on fence applications within their professional judgment. Any applicant wishing to protest a decision would have recourse to the full Commission. Finally, the Commission wished to re-iterate current policy that disallows the erection of new chain-link fences in the Historic District.

II. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the Workshop at 6:53 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Pius Charles Murray

(Mr.) Pius Charles Murray, M.L.S., M.P.A.
Commissioner/Secretary