



Somersworth Historic District Commission

One Government Way
Somersworth, NH 03878

Regular Meeting, 28 September 2016: Adopted as Amended

In Attendance:

Albert Marotta, Chair
Martin Dumont, City Councilor and Representative to HDC
Laura Barry, Alternate
Richard Brooks, Commissioner
Arthur Hendrickson, Vice-Chair and Commissioner
Jenna Higgins, Alternate
George Poulin, Commissioner
Tim Metivier, Code Inspector
Charles Murray, Commissioner and Secretary

In Absentia:

Beth Poulin, Commissioner

Petitioners Present:

Roger Carter (on behalf of HDC #17-2016)

Agenda

I. *Call to Order*: The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

II. *Approval of Minutes:* Motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of 24 August 2016 as amended was made by Mr. Murray and seconded by Councilor Dumont. Motion passed unanimously.

III. *Projects of Minimal Impact:* Mr. Metivier reported one project of minimal impact approved:

John & Linda Chaston, 37 Page Street, Assessor's Map 11, Lot 168, HDC #15-2016.
Approved to erect a new shed.

IV. *Public Comment:* There was none.

V. *Old Business:*

A. Mark Davenport is seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness to frame in the garage doors and replace the front and side porches on property located at 16 Lincoln Street, in the Residential Single Family-A, with a Historic Overlay (RIAH) District, Assessor's Map 11, Lot 127, HDC #16-2016.

No one showed up at the HDC meeting to describe the project of HDC #16-2016. Mr. Metivier informed the Commission that Mr. Davenport had withdrawn his application for HDC #16-2016. According to Mr. Metivier, because of the 50' between both decks, no architectural changes are necessary. Furthermore according to Mr. Metivier, Mr. Davenport informed him that he would paint them in a timely manner.

B. Any additional Old Business that might come before the Commission.

VI. *New Business:*

A. 2nd Green Property Management, LLC is seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior repair and replacement on property located at 19 High Street, in the Business Historic (BH) District, Assessor's Map 11, Lot 68, HDC #17-2016.

Mr. Roger Carter was present to discuss HDC #17-2016. Mr. Metivier informed the Commission that a Notice of Violation for property maintenance violations had been issued. After receiving the Notice, Mr. Carter inquired if the repair from corrugated metal to asphalt could be considered a project of minimal impact, to which inquiry Mr. Metivier replied no.

Both Ms. Barry and Ms Higgins stated that they did not like replacing wooden windows with vinyl ones, as that compromises the building's historic integrity.

Councilor Dumont asked if there was any lead in the structure; Mr. Carter responded that there is. Mr. Metivier informed the Commission that if the windows were not egresses for fire, then the current windows are acceptable. Mr. Hendrickson stated that he has seen some types of vinyl that can be made to look like wood. Councilor Dumont stated that this is an ideal home to have listed on the historic register with a plaque indicating such.

Motion to approve HDC #17-2017 with conditions to repair the roof, shales, and porch as described in the application, and to replace the 4/1 and 2/1 windows on the porch with wood windows, and to return to the HDC with a window plan for the remaining windows was made by Councilor Dumont and seconded by Mr. Poulin. Motion was adopted unanimously.

B. Any other New Business that might come before the Commission.

VII. *Public Comments by Visitors:* There were none.

VIII. *Workshop Business:*

A. The HDC discussed Mr. Brooks's recommendation for changing language regarding retaining walls. The Chair thought that Mr. Brooks's language might be too restrictive; he furthermore thought that a rock expert should be brought in to assist the HDC in adopting correct language. Mr. Metivier brought to the HDC's attention that this discussion was part of City Ordinance 19.14.3b. The existing language allows natural and cut stone; what is needed according to Mr. Metivier is language listing what types of material are not allowed. At the next workshop, the HDC would continue this discussion to make it ready for inclusion in the code.

B. Any other Workshop Business that might come before the Commission.

IX. *Communications and Miscellaneous:*

A. Mr. Metivier reported that he had successfully contacted Mr. Bard concerning the issues with the trim and porch of his property. In order to assist Mr. Bard obtain the necessary financing for the repairs. Mr. Metivier steered him to the Somersworth Housing Authority which assisted Mr. Bard obtain a loan to complete the work. Councilor Dumont praised Mr. Bard as very attentive to detail in moving this project forward.

B. Mr. Hendrickson asked Mr. Metivier to take a look at potential property maintenance violations (e.g. broken doors, windows, etc.) at the Lydia's House of Hope,

21 Grand Street.

C. The Chair informed the HDC that he had sold his Somersworth property and would be relocating soon to Portsmouth; thus he could not continue as Chair. In fact he reported that he had already submitted his resignation in writing. He asked if the HDC wished to elect new Chair at this current meeting. The Commission agreed. Motion to nominate Ms. Barry as the new Chair was made by Mr. Hendrickson and seconded by Mr. Poulin. Motion to close nominations was made by Councilor Dumont and seconded by Mr. Murray; motion to close nominations passed unanimously. Motion to elect Ms. Barry as the new Chair passed unanimously.

D. Motion to thank Commissioner Marotta for his service both as a member and as Chair was made by Councilor Dumont and seconded by Mr. Poulin. Motion passed unanimously.

E. Any other Communications and Miscellaneous that might come before the HDC.

X. *Adjournment:*

Motion to adjourn at 8:11 pm was made by Councilor Dumont and seconded by Mr. Hendrickson. Motion was adopted unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Pius Charles Murray

(Mr.) Pius Charles Murray, Secretary

Enclosure (1)

Retaining walls

We all know the Historic District here in Somersworth has very little flat land. High Street is an obvious example, next time you travel that street, take a moment and look up hill. Whether you're looking up a side street or between buildings you will likely see some form of retaining wall, most of which are natural stone and have stood for decades if not well over a century. Whether it is rubble walls, cut granite or stacked slate, take a moment to appreciate them before they are gone.

Due to the steep hills and dense construction within the District retaining walls are found on almost every piece of property. They range from simple low walls similar to curbs to large retaining walls much taller than a person. One purpose of the historic districts is to help keep the historic look, feel, and aesthetic appearance of the district. To do this Historic Districts oversee more than just buildings. They can also address bridges, cemeteries, fences, and even open spaces to name a few.

Somersworth's HDC Guidelines include a section titled Streetscape Features. That section addresses parking areas, vegetation, fencing, and terracing. Fences are subject to HDC approval. Retaining walls create terracing and often mark boundaries and are essentially the same as a fence by definition. Now with the city actively acting on safety and code violations, I'm sure any walls that are leaning or in disrepair will be appearing before us. In the last few years several walls have been replaced and apparently now the only option ever used is modern landscape blocks such as the walls built along High St between Hamilton and Noble Streets. These modern mass produced block walls can already be found on streets such as Emery, Beacon, Maple, and Prospect, Each time a wall is built with that sort of modern uniform block another piece of Historic Somersworth is lost forever. We need to consider updating this guideline to protect the integrity of the historic landscape features. Is there anyone on this board that would disagree with allowing only natural stone would be a simple and sensible guideline? That would not be overly restrictive, allowing property owners many options ranging from rubble rock to cut granite. Not sure if it is true, but I have heard that Portsmouth's Historic District allows only "Portland Granite". We should never be that overly restrictive, but if we do not address this soon we will miss out on the one opportunity that will effectively help protect historic landscape features.

May I make a motion to adjust the Streetscape Features section to officially allow only natural rock on any hardscape features within the Historic District?

GUIDELINE: Retaining walls or stone walls shall be constructed of cut or uncut natural stone only. Standard Red Brick is the only exception allowed. Any other uniform mass produced block is discouraged and will need approval by the HDC and should only be allowed if it appears to have no repeating pattern when finished.

Signed Richard Brooks

Dated: 08-24-16

