

Somersworth Historic District Commission

February 26, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Members Present; Mrs. Barry, Mr. Brooks, Mr. Levasseur, Mr. Poulin, Mr. Gerding, Mr. Metivier.

Members Absent; Mr. Murray

Mrs. Barry called the meeting to order at 7:00pm

APPROVAL OF PAST MINUTES

Mr. Gerding made a motion to approve the minutes of Jan 23, 2019.

Mr. Brooks seconded the motion.

Motion passed 5-0

PROJECTS OF MINIMAL IMPACT

Mr. Metivier reported that 25 Lincoln St. was approved for reroofing.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There was none.

OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

NEW BUSINESS

A) Sai Real Estate LLC, 103 Main St, HDC #05-2019

Mr. Metivier noted that property received a stop work order and provided a brief description of the proposed work.

Mr. Onkaram introduced himself as the manager and stated that he did not know the building was in the Historic District, the old owner did not tell him it was. He had obtained a building permit for work inside the building. During replacement of window found rot under the front window. During that work Mr. Metivier had told them they would need approval for the outside work.

Mr. Metivier offered the past permit history of the property.

Mrs. Barry asked if tempered glass was required.

Mr. Metivier replied that it was required.

Mrs. Barry asked if the red siding was aluminum and if it had been removed.

Mr. Onkaram noted that it was not aluminum, but metal that had begun rusting.

Mrs. Barry and Mr. Metivier asked a few questions about the wood material used for siding.

Mr. Onkaram stated that it was all wood materials.

Mr. Brooks asked if the current wood siding was found when the metal siding was removed or has it already been replaced?

Mr. Onkaram stated that they had constructed the current siding and they tried to have it look as the older look. It was not the original.

Mr. Poulin stated that he had drove by and thought it looked good.

Mr. Onkaram noted that when they purchased the building and found a stop work order on the window, but they wanted to have the two windows like the left and right side buildings, so they look uniform.

Mrs. Barry mentioned that she was not disappointed with the work and removing more of the metal siding would be favored but reminded applicant that any future exterior work needs prior approval.

Mr. Levasseur asked details about the brackets under the bay window.

Mr. Onkaram explained that the Insurance Company requested the brackets be installed.

Mr. Gerding asked if the window trim boards are wood, the applicant noted they are wood.

Mrs. Barry asked if the white exterior was painted or just primed, the applicant noted that it was just primer. Mrs. Barry noted that it may be painted whatever colors they would like, but reminded the applicant that approved projects must be painted within a reasonable time.

Mr. Brooks noted that the project looks good even though it was constructed before it was approved. The applicant not being informed the building is in a HD is an ongoing problem and something should be done, maybe there should be a requirement that realtors provide a zoning discloser, similar to the lead paint discloser, among others that are already required by law.

Mr. Onkaram agreed that they should be informed better.

Mr. Metivier stated that the previous owner installed 1/1 windows but was approved as 2/2 windows and the property has standing violation order due to that.

Mrs. Barry asked if the applicant would be planning more work, the applicant stated most of the work is done for now. He would be opening an IT business there soon.

Mrs. Barry reminded the applicant that any future work will need approval before work starts.

Mr. Metivier gave a more detailed history of the violation circumstances.

Mr. Levasseur pointed out the historic survey noted that original windows added to the integrity and now they have been removed.

Mr. Metivier read some of the minutes from the 2017 meeting to provide details of that approval.

Mrs. Barry suggested having a grille added to the windows making them 2 over 2 rather than replacing the windows to resolve that standing violation.

Mr. Onkaram noted that with the 1 over 1 windows, the building now matched the buildings to the left and right.

Mrs. Barry noted that we can only discuss his building and the approval in question the other buildings may have been altered prior to the HDC existing, or without approval, or may originally be 1 over 1, or for several other possible reasons.

Mr. Levasseur made a motion to approve the project as presented with the stipulation that the trim be wood and it be painted.

Mr. Brooks second the motion.

Mr. Metivier asked for clarity, would the 4 by 4 window brackets would be included as wood, Mr. Levasseur stated yes.

The motion passed 5-0

Mr. Levasseur offered a window decal to the applicant.

B) Walter Unger, 18 Highland St, HDC #06-2019

Mr. Metivier provided a brief description of the proposed project.

No one was present on behalf of the applicant.

Mrs. Barry opened the discussion

Mr. Brooks asked Mr. Metivier if the applicant was replacing the structure with the same exact style.

Mr. Metivier explained the stairs between the second and third floors were not to code and they were intending to bring that into code compliance. Otherwise it seemed to be basically the same style and size.

Mrs. Barry asked if this was considered a fire escape.

Mr. Metivier noted there are other fire escapes on the building but was not familiar with the interior layout of the building. Without knowing where the bedrooms are situated he can't answer that question.

Mr. Gerding asked how much of the structure was being actually being pulled out and replaced.

Mr. Metivier explained this was flagged as dire need of replacement through code compliance.

Mrs. Barry asked about the larger diameter dimensions shown in the plans. Mr. Metivier explained that the current 4 by 4 posts are smaller than code requires.

Mrs. Barry asked if any work included the roof structure.

Mr. Metivier noted that the application mentions temporary supports in the plans, so it appears the roof is not being replaced.

Mr. Gerding asked if this is the only entrances for the apartments and if the tenants would have access during construction.

Mr. Metivier noted the accessibility is a land lord tenant issue.

Mrs. Barry stated that she didn't want to hold up the project due to the poor condition, but wished the applicant was here to answer some questions. Because the proposal is like kind with beefier supports, maybe we could approve this with conditions. My concern is the roof structure, if they touch that, then the applicant should need to reappear for approval.

Mr. Metivier offered photos to share with the board

Mr. Poulin asked if they were going to piecemeal this project by only replacing portions of it.

Mr. Metivier stated that discussions with the applicant indicate that they wanted to replace the rotted joists, so it may not be replaced entirely.

Mr. Poulin did not feel that was a wise decision.

Mr. Brooks agreed with Mrs. Barry that we could possibly approve this with some conditions and offered a motion to approve the proposal with several conditions; no change to the foot print, no change to the roof, railings would be uniform, if the work progresses into the building or roof or expands the foot print of the decks the applicant would need to reappear before the HDC, and the structure needs to be painted before winter.

Mr. Levasseur second the motion

Mrs Barry asked Mr. Metivier if the lattice work would be kept.

Mr. Metivier stated he did not know the answer.

Mr. Metivier asked for clarity about the no change to the roof.

Mr. Brooks stated that reroofing would be acceptable, but any other work on the roof structure would need further approval.

Motion passed 5-0.

NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

CLOSING COMMENTS

There was none.

WORKSHOP BUSINESS

Mr. Brooks noted that the current HDC featured house has been posted for three months and it is time to replace with another featured building. He handed out a rough draft with a picture of the next house to be featured with a write up about it.

Mr. Gerding asked if the photo was an older survey photo.

Mr. Brooks stated that it was a relatively current photo provided by the homeowner that is actually color, not black and white as the paper copy shows.

Mr. Levasseur suggested posting a second older picture to accompany the current photo.

Mr. Brooks stated he would try to make that happen.

Mr. Poulin complemented the house as being beautiful and well kept.

Mrs. Barry agreed with Mr. Poulin.

Mrs. Barry mentioned that she believes the City Council and HDC workshop is scheduled for March 18th prior to the City Council meeting, but could not confirm that. She noted that during discussion at the recent Mayor's Forum involved concerns about the trees, fences, and the retaining walls portion of the ordinance.

COMMUNICATIONS AND MISC

Mr. Metivier stated that he was creating a report of the properties that have been issued violation notices either expired, current, and addressed and will email that to the HDC members next week. He also explained that this meeting was being held on a Tuesday due to the current staffing shortage in the Planning Office and he was not available for the regularly scheduled meeting on the 27th.

Mrs. Barry asked if the violation notice had been sent out to the mill building known as the S Building.

Mr. Metivier asked superiors and there was a violation notice drafted, but it was not sent, it warrants further discussion.

Mrs. Barry stated that she would check in with city staff.

Mr. Poulin asked if a new Code Compliance officer had been hired.

Mr. Metivier noted that he started a couple weeks ago. He lives in town and he is actively taking on the role.

Mrs. Barry thanked the staff workers that have helped fill in for the vacant staff positions.

Mr. Metivier said a fill in is helping the city planner until the new hire starts in April and the position of my assistant was filled, Brianna Belley started last Tuesday and they are all working to get them up to speed on how things work.

Mrs. Barry made the motion to adjourn.

Mr. Brooks second the motion.

Motion passed 5-0

Meeting adjourned at 7:42.

Submitted by

Richard Brooks, HDC Vice-Chair