

Somersworth Historic District Commission Meeting
Wednesday, March 27th, 2019

1st Draft

In attendance:

Laura Barry, Chair
Richard Brooks, Vice-Chair
Edward Levasseur, City Councilor
Matthew Gerding, Commissioner
George Poulin, Commissioner
Tim Metivier, Building Inspector

In Absentia:

Pius Charles Murray, Secretary

Petitioners Present:

Paula Tsiorbas

Members of the Public Present:

Fabian Flanagan

- I. Call to Order
At 7:00pm by Chair

- II. Approval of Minutes
Table minutes from prior meeting since Secretary Murray was not present.
Motion to table made by Ms. Barry
Seconded by Mr. Levasseur
Approved

- III. Projects of Minimal Impact
Mr. Metivier reported that he was unable to provide minimal impact reports due to staff shortages. Tabled until next month's meeting.

- IV. Public Comments by Visitors
Fabian Flanagan, property owner from 64 Winter Street came to report that the previously approved fence had one up on her property. She asked the commission how long she needed to keep her building permit in the window of the property. Mr. Metivier said that the code enforcement office would be notified and they will come by to collect the permit. Ms. Flanagan also asked whether there were restrictions on landscaping. Ms. Barry told her that there were no restrictions. Ms. Flanagan also asked whether tree houses were allowed. Mr. Metivier said that they qualified as accessory structures and,

depending on their size, would likely not require a permit. Ms. Flanagan also asked whether there were known sewer problem on Maple Street because there is a sewer pipe that runs directly under her pool through the middle of her property, and a clog in the pipe was sent from Maple Street got clogged where her home connects to the sewage pipe. This subsequently caused her basement to flood. Because her house is within the district, and there was damage to the interior of her property, she was wondering whether she would need to return to the HDC for any interior renovations. Ms. Barry told her that she would not need to come to the HDC for any interior renovations, and that she would need to communicate and work with the city about the connection and clog issues with the pipe. Mr. Brooks mentioned that if any retaining walls or foundations were to be renovated, that she would need to come before the HDC. Ms. Flanagan's final question was whether lawn ornaments were under the purview of the HDC, to which Ms. Barry told her that they were not.

V. Old Business

None

VI. New Business

- a) Paula Tsiorbias sought a certificate of appropriateness to hang a composite sign on property located at 60 B High Street, in the Business Historic Moderate {BH} District, Assessor's Map 11, Lot 214 HDC #08-2019.

Mr. Metivier explained the plans of the certificate, and mentioned that the sign had been previously hung at the business' old location. Ms. Tsiorbias explained that the sign will be hung on a black metal sign holder that is currently up at and approved for the 60 B High Street location. Mr. Poulin said that he saw the sign in the window of the business and that it seemed fine and thanked Ms. Tsiorbias for coming to Somersworth. Mr. Brooks asked whether it was a two-sided sign, to which Ms. Tsiorbias responded that it was. Mr. Brooks then explained that the HDC is currently redoing their ordinances that will help address the issue of having to come to both the sign committee and to the HDC. Mr. Metivier explained that the composite material in the sign would have prevented this sign for qualifying as minimal impact. Ms. Barry explained that this carbon composite seems to fit with the standards of the district, however explained that all are not pre-approved due to variability in the materials. A motion was then made by Mr. Poulin to approve the certificate a written, to which Mr. Brooks seconded. The motion was approved as written.

- b) Other new business:

Mr. Levasseur mentioned that work was being done on a building without HDC approval and wanted to alert Mr. Metivier about this. Mr. Levasseur explained that the property located at 1 Beacon Street had installed a fire escape in the rear of the building, when they were only approved to remove a deck, replace a roof, and change a door and a window. Mr. Levasseur also noticed that the property originally had glass panes on the front door, however these had been replaced with wood.

Mr. Metivier also presented the HDC with the first report of code compliance issues in the district, and explained the properties reported in the document, and the set up of the report to the board.

Mr. Gerding mentioned that there was a missing property from the code compliance document. The property located at 154 High Street has been hanging a sign that is not compliant with the certificate of approval that was granted by the HDC.

VII. Closing Comments By Visitors

None

VIII. Workshop Business

Ms. Barry began a discussion on edits to the proposed ordinance changes from the Ordinance Sub-Committee. These edits were proposed for HDC ordinance changes 19:14.D.3.a and 19:14.D.3.b – one to edit the way signs are handled by the HDC, and one to change how fences are handled by the HDC. The suggested ordinance changes were read and discussed by the committee. The commission was unable to make decisions on changes to the ordinance's language on signage, due to legal and procedural questions that the committee had for city staff. These edits were tabled until the next meeting. The commission was able to approve an amendment to the ordinance language on fences. Mr. Levasseur made the motion for approval with edits, and Mr. Gerding seconded the motion.

IX. Communications/Miscellaneous

Mr. Metivier explained that 64 High Street had been given a stop work order for tearing down and replacing a pressure treated fire escape. Mr. Poulin mentioned that the railings on 149 High Street did not appear to be to code, to which Mr. Metivier said that the city did give the property owners a notice. Ms. Barry asked about the S Building owned by Aclara. Mr. Metivier mentioned that there may be some new coming in the future about this building, but could not yet say.

X. Adjournment
Motion to Adjourn: Mr. Brooks
Seconded: Mr. Poulin

Respectfully submitted,
Matthew Gerding