

Somersworth HDC Meeting Minutes

Oct 28, 2020

Lindsey (Vice-Chair) called the meeting to order at 7:05pm, noting that Laura (Chair) was absent due to work commitments.

Lindsey read the NH State Covid-19 electronic meeting authorization.

Lindsey called the roll,

Name	Present	Location
Charles	Not Present	N/A
George	Yes/Arrived Later	Video/Alone
Laura	Not Present	N/A
Lindsey	Yes	Council Chambers
Matt	Yes	Video/Alone
Richard	Yes	Council Chambers
William	Yes	Video/Alone

Other Meeting Attendees	Location
Mr. Metivier (Building Inspector)	Council Chambers
Marshall Lebel	Video/Alone

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Richard made a motion to amend the minutes. On page 4 “brick” wall should say “back” wall.

Matt seconded the motion.

Lindsey conducted a roll call vote,

Name	Vote
Lindsey	Yes
Matt	Yes
Richard	Yes
William	Yes

Motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

Projects of Minimal Impact

139 High St, HDC# 38-2020 Application was approved.

40 Winter St, HDC# 39-2020 Repair of the building wall facing Winter St damaged from a car crash into the building, he noted that the approval required all construction repair match the pre accident condition of the building.

Public Comments by Visitors

Lindsey read an email sent to the HDC by a Resident abutting 7 Grove St.

Matt informed the Commission that George was attempting to enter the meeting electronically by video. After resolving a brief technical glitch, George joined the meeting and was recorded as present.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

A) 7 Grove St, HDC #29-2020

Marshall Lebel attended electronically by video.

Mr. Metivier provided a summary of the project and noted that the driveway would be considered part 1 of the project and part 2 would consist of the siding, windows, and roof. Mr. Metivier also provided a brief history of the property noting that the driveway had been applied for in 2005. The application was never approved or denied but had notes about the possible rental of parking spaces from a nearby property. In 2008 a second application was submitted for a driveway. That application was denied citing then current ordinances.

Marshall Lebel noted the building is currently a 2 unit building and he is not planning to change the number of units. He is asking to install off street parking for tenants.

Matt asked for Mr. Metivier to read the ordinance that prevented the earlier driveway approval.

Mr. Metivier read the old ordinance that was recently revised and no longer contains that ordinance section. The current Standards for Review are now in place and must be considered while reviewing applications.

Lindsey read comments provided by Laura in her absence.

Lindsey asked how many cars would fit in the proposed driveway.

Marshall answered 2 cars, side by side.

Richard asked Mr. Metivier if there was a general ordinance speaking to screening of parking areas.

Mr. Metivier replied that only multi unit had requirements.

Richard asked if there would be walls built along either side of the driveway.

Marshall stated the opening would be 10 feet wide.

Richard asked if there would be a wall on the left or the right along either side of the proposed driveway.

Lindsey helped clarify Richard's question.

Marshall stated that the slope is minor and there would be minimal grading and did not foresee needing walls on either side of the driveway.

Richard noted that he understands that parking in front is not restricted by ordinance, but concerned that if the driveway is approved with the narrow one car entrance, the applicant would likely be back to enlarge the opening shortly after. This house is also one of the last houses built before the zoning ordinances were enacted. This same lot has less than half the area required to build now. The house and lot configuration would not be allowed under current zoning and wouldn't be surprised if this driveway would exceed the impervious coverage allowances. The neighboring property down the hill is part of the recently enacted downtown parking overlay district. That district eliminates the need for any minimum parking space requirements and shows that the current opinion of the City Council does not require off street parking for a large portion of the downtown. Removing the wall would alter the historic streetscape and dismantle a historically accurate wall and result in an overcrowded lot.

George stated that he would not be in favor of the application. This property has a large wall on the downhill side with overgrown vegetation that has prevented the downhill abutter from repairing some deterioration that has developed on that wall. Drainage could also be a consideration. Squeezing cars onto the front lawn area does not appeal to him.

Matt asked if the applicant had an engineer look at this driveway to verify the requirement for a retaining wall along the sides of the driveway. Looking at the photo of the front of the house it appears that the slope seems to be far more than a foot and a half and estimated that a difference may be three or three and a half feet of difference from one side of the house to the other noting that the slope is significant and would likely require a wall beyond what already exists.

Marshall stated he had only spoken to the paving company. The paving company did not believe that a retaining wall would be needed. He noted that he does see the slope difference that Matt mentioned. He plans to trim back the growth along the wall and repair the exterior of the building to upkeep the property and would be agreeable to one parking space.

Richard noted that the house does not meet the current side set back requirement of 15 feet and has only 10 feet of side setback. It is another example of how nonconforming this lot is and wouldn't be allowed under current zoning. This driveway would also cover much of the lot with impervious surfaces and at the same time dismantle a historic rock wall. This application does not help to preserve the historic nature of the neighborhood even if it is only for one parking space.

Lindsey asked Mr. Metivier if the City is still providing parking spaces at a cost for residents.

Mr. Metivier noted the plaza has spots for the plaza terrace residents but there may be other spaces that he is not aware of. Public Works or the Police Dept may be able to better answer that question.

Lindsey asked what abuts the back of the property, it seems like it may be a parking lot, but was not sure looking at the map.

Marshall stated that a parking lot servicing an apartment complex is directly behind it.

Richard stated that the GAR buildings parking lot is located directly behind this property. Could this that parking area be extended with a right of way allowing for 2 or even maybe 3 spots in the back of the property. This option would be far more appealing and would appreciate the owner inquiring about that possibility.

Mr. Metivier described the lot in more detail noting the cars have to turn 90 degrees into a parking space and the dumpster is located there as well. He also noted the owners could discuss this but the HDC could not force the two owners to discuss that topic.

Richard agreed that it is only a suggestion with the hope it could be considered.

Matt asked if there was a standard width for a single lane driveway.

Mr. Metivier replied 12 feet with 10 feet doable and not unheard of, but standard width is 12.

Matt was hoping that maybe the driveway could pass along the side of the house, but there is not enough room.

Mr. Metivier stated that the City has a setback for driveways and that would also prohibit that option and did not know if the ZBA would grant such. We have a sitting ZBA member (Richard) that may have knowledge of such variances.

Richard replied he does not recall an application for such.

Lindsey asked if anyone had further questions or a motion.

Matt stated that he would not be in favor of the application and hoped that the possibility of adding parking at the rear from the GAR building lot could be explored.

Mr. Metivier stated that the only reason this is before the HDC is because of the retaining wall being altered, otherwise it would only go before Public Works.

Richard made the motion to deny the application based on the discussion tonight and agreed with Matt about exploring the possibility of parking accessed from the rear.

Lindsey asked if this was only for Part 1 of the application.

Richard replied yes.

George seconded the motion.

Lindsey conducted a roll call vote,

Name	Vote
George	Yes
Lindsey	Yes
Matt	Yes
Richard	Yes
William	Yes

Motion to deny passed unanimously, 5-0.

Mr. Metivier noted that all present HDC members must sign the application denial in person and asked that members come to City Hall in the next several days to sign the denial.

A) 7 Grove St, HDC #29-2020 (Part 2)

Mr. Metivier read Part 2 of the application.

Lindsey asked the applicant for any additional info.

Marshall stated that he is just repairing several deteriorating aspects of the building's exterior.

Richard pointed out the fact the building is much newer than most of the district and is considered a nonconforming building and quoted the historic district resource form that describes the building as a modern infill with no contributing features for the district. The applicant is asking to simply replace the exterior siding and roofing with in kind material such as the vinyl siding.

Mr. Metivier pointed out the siding is currently aluminum and would be replaced by vinyl, then asked the applicant if that was correct.

Marshall stated that it is aluminum siding.

Richard noted that the two materials look almost identical and it is hard to tell apart and does not have a problem with the proposed application.

Matt agreed with Richard and thanked the applicant for investing in and fixing up the property.

George stated that he did not have much problem with the application, but asked if the windows would be 6 over 1 and asked for more details about the siding and the use of J-channels.

Marshall stated the windows to be used would have integrated J-channel.

George asked if they would remain 6 over 1.

Lindsey stated that the application appears to show 1 over 1 windows.

Marshall stated he had selected 1 over 1. He could also get 6 over 6 but did not see an option for 6 over 1.

Mr. Metivier noted the Pella brand he plans to use does offer any combination of window configurations including the 6 over 1.

Lindsey asked if there were any other questions or comments.

Mr. Metivier asked for clarification of what size corner boards would be used with the vinyl siding.

Marshall stated he would use 4 inch corners.

George asked if the roof trim would be painted.

Marshall was not sure of the state of them, but would paint them.

Mr. Metivier asked for clarity, will the roof trim be wrapped in metal?

Marshall said no.

George made a motion to approve the application for siding, windows, roof, and shutters with the condition J-channels will not be exposed.

Matt seconded the motion.

Lindsey conducted a roll call vote for Part 2 of the application.

Name	Vote
George	Yes
Lindsey	Yes
Matt	Yes
Richard	Yes
William	Yes

The motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Workshop Business

Lindsey noted that we normally conduct elections at this time of the year.

Richard suggested that we wait until next month with the hope that we have a full board in attendance.

Mr. Metivier asked if all the officer's terms expire at the same time or at different times.

It was determined that they all run the same start to finish.

Communications and Miscellaneous

Mr. Metivier provided an update to the recently approved Winter St application. The construction project has not been completed as approved and he has not been able to communicate with the property owners but will continue to try to contact them.

Richard made the motion to adjourn.

George seconded the motion.

Lindsey conducted a roll call vote.

Name	Vote
George	Yes
Lindsey	Yes
Matt	Yes
Richard	Yes
William	Yes

Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:03pm.