

SOMERSWORTH HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
August 23, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT: Laura Barry-Chair, Richard Brooks, George Poulin, Kimberly Shoen, Timothy Metivier-Alternate and Elizabeth Nguyen-Alternate

EXCUSED MEMBERS: Timothy Monahan-Alternate, Matt Gerding, Adam Young

STAFF PRESENT: Michelle Mears, Director of Planning and Community Development

The meeting was called to order at 7pm.

1. Approval of the minutes of the meetings:

a. **May 24, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes**

b. **July 26, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes**

Richard Brooks MOVED to APPROVE the meeting minutes of 5/24/2023 and 7/26/2023 as presented.

The MOTION was SECONDED by members of the committee.

The MOTION CARRIED.

2. Projects of Minimal Impact Report.

Ms. Mears stated the following were approved as projects of minimal impact:

- 38 Highland Street in the Historic Moderate Density (HMD) District, Assessor's Map 11, Lot 46 HDC#25-2023. Application to install solar panels on an existing roof was **approved**.

3. Public comments by visitors.

No comments by visitors.

4. OLD BUSINESS

a. Any old business to come before the Board

No old business was presented.

5. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Top Roofers LLC sought a certificate of appropriateness to remove and replace an existing deck at a property located at 2-4 Lords Court in the Historic Moderate Density (HMD) District, Assessor's Map 11 Lot 59, HDC#24-2023.**

Applicant is proposing to remove the existing deck and replace with a deck that is the same in size and color of the previous deck. The deck proposed is to be constructed with pressure treated lumber. Two-by-four and two-by-six handrails, stringers and treads and concrete footing. This application is complete.

Luke Braun from Real Property Management manages the property on behalf of the owner. The goal is to replace the existing deck as described due to some safety concerns with it and to rebuild it in the like image of what's currently there.

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Tim Metivier asked "Is your railing going to consist of the lattice work? Is that your intent?"

Luke Braun answered "Yes, that is correct".

Tim Metivier asked how lattice work is currently fastened as the lattice will need to support 50 pounds of horizontal force on it and he was not sure if lattice can take that. I don't know when the existing deck and railing system was built. So as long as it can do that, then that's fine.

Tim Metivier also questioned the railing showing no handrail. "Do you propose to install a handrail? Right now, there's a guard that goes all the way up the stairs but there's no graspable rail. That will be required."

Luke Braun answered, "Yes, that is correct, we'll make it to code."

Tim Metivier asked if that rail will go from the very bottom uninterrupted all the way to the top, at least on one side:

Luke Braun answered "Yes, sir."

George Poulin asked if the rail will be painted.

Luke Braun answered "Yes, it will be painted to match the color it currently is."

George Poulin asked, "Not a year or two years or three years down the road, rather soon?"

Luke Braun answered "Correct. Once the pressure treated dries as it needs to, then we can take care of painting it."

Laura Barry asked if there were any other questions.

Tim Metivier asked a follow up question: "The posts that are there now are four-by-four that extend from the top of the footing and hold the platform at the top of the stairs. Are those going to be four-by-fours as well?"

Luke Braun: "I believe those will be four-by-sixes or."

Tim Metivier states "Or six-by-six because four-by-four over eight feet isn't allowed, not for this but by code."

Tim Metivier responded "Thank you. So, if it needs to be something other than four-by-four, I wouldn't have a problem with this decision or if he used six-by-six."

Luke Braun: "Yes. I can confirm with the vendor, but we would build it to the code and if six-by-six, then we would do it that way. Correct."

Laura Barry: "Any other questions for the applicant and do we have any motions?"

MOTION: Shoen MOVED that the request of Top Roofers LLC for a certificate of appropriateness to remove and replace an existing deck at a property located at 2-4 Lords Court be APPROVED

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WITH THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

1. That the deck must be painted within 12 months.

The MOTION was SECONDED by Poulin.

The MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0.

- b. **Plano Builders LLC sought a certificate of appropriateness to remove two windows and reroof at a property located at 5 Noble Street in the Residential Multi-Family with Historic Overlay (R-3H) District, Assessor's Map 10 Lot 142. HDC#26-2023.**

Ms. Mears: "The applicant is proposing to re-roof one side of the roof in-kind and remove two windows on the side of the building. This application is ready for the Historic District Commission to review."

Scott Gordon: "One of the co-owners of the property addressed the Board. "I'm looking to take out two windows. There was one located in the kitchen which I'd like to do to rearrange the kitchen. The other one was in the bathroom, which I'm rearranging in the bathroom too, to kind of bring it up to more modern standards. In order to do that I'd like to remove those two windows and then also have permission to fix any rot that was up on that side and to re-roof that section too."

Laura Barry: "I believe we got the pictures that came with the application. So, I don't think so, but just in case the board might ask to see them."

Scott Gordon: "OK."

Laura Barry: "Do we have any questions for the applicant tonight?"

Kimberly Shoen: "The first picture says two windows are proposed to be removed. No replacements. But it's unclear, are you trying to take the windows out of the bottom presumably? Can you show me which windows you're trying to get rid of?"

Scott Gordon walked over to Kimberly and showed pictures of two windows on the bottom floor. Discussion occurred while looking at pictures provided by the applicant confirming that it was the third and fourth windows on the bottom floor of the house that are proposed to be removed.

Kimberly Shoen notes that the windows appear to have been added after the fact because they don't match anywhere and that she is more supportive of the request as a result.

Scott Gordon confirmed that the windows in question were added at a later date.

Laura Barry: "All right. Do we have any other questions or comments for the applicant?"

Scott Gordon: "I have one more request. There is that tree that everybody sees that is blocking all that. I'd like to have permission to cut that down too, if I need that."

Laura Barry. "If you would like to add the removal of that tree to your

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application, can you tell us the tree species?

Scott Gordon: "I don't know its name."

Laura Barry: "Can you tell us roughly how big or round it is in diameter?"

Scott Gordon: "It is 3 inches around the bottom. It's getting bigger though. It's going up to the fence. It's tricky."

Richard Brooks: "You wouldn't actually need to have permission to cut that down. Only when they get to a certain size, such as over 12 inches, then we want try to keep them."

Laura Barry: "All right. So, establishing that tree would not need our permission with the dimension you gave us. I believe our Standards of Review state that if a tree is over 12 inches in diameter that you would have to come before the Historic District Commission. As long as it's not above that, you're fine. Do we have any other questions or comments about the roof or the windows?"

Richard Brooks: "Obviously there's no windows going in place of these. You're just going to install matching siding to match what is existing, the cedar shake style."

Scott Gordon: "Yes."

Scott Gordon: "There's a little bit of rot on that side of the home in the bottom. So, I'd like to fix all that too and it would all match in-kind. I'm not going to paint it; I'm going to stain it."

MOTION: Richard MOVED that the request of Plano Builders LLC for a certificate of appropriateness to remove two windows and reroof at a property located at 5 Noble Street be APPROVED as presented. The MOTION was SECONDED by Shoen. The MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0.

- c. **George Poulin sought a certificate of appropriateness to remove a maple tree from a property located at 12 Grove Street in the Historic Moderate Density (HMD) District, Assessor's Map 11 Lot 28, HDC#27-2023.**

Ms. Mears: "The applicant is proposing to remove one maple tree. It's greater than 12 inches in diameter. That's why it needs to come before the Historic District Commission. This application is complete and ready for the Board to take action."

Laura Barry: "I think you've covered pretty much what I would ask. How big is the tree and what is the reason for its removal?"

George Poulin: "I want to cut that tree down. It's probably about eight to 10 feet around and a bit under 150 feet high. I've had a tree company visit the property and it looks as if the tree got hit by lightning some time ago and it actually has about a 10-to-12-foot stretch on the left side of the tree that goes about a foot in that's cut out and rotted. The roots appear hollow under the ground. I get limbs falling down all the time. If I don't take it down soon, nature's going to take it down. You can see that the tree is actually leaning on my roof which has become a highway for squirrels. I need to get this cut down. I have notified my abutters and they have no problem with the project. I hate to lose

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any significant trees within our District because they're part of our history too. However, we don't want liabilities that are going to cause damage.”

Laura Barry: “I don't have any further questions and I'm fine with this.:

Tim Metivier: “Would you say that that tree is healthy and undamaged?”

George Poulin: “No.”

Tim Metivier: “I would believe that according to 19:14D.2D, this project would be exempt from Historic District Commission approval. He read the section of the Historic District Commission’s Standards of Review that exemption from review of *planting or removing vegetation, except in the cases of removing a healthy or undamaged tree with a diameter of larger than 12 inches a circumference and excess of 36 inches when measured four feet above the grade.* This paragraph is under exemptions. It is not a healthy tree. It is definitely damaged. Therefore, I move that this application is exempt.”

Richard: “I'll second that.”

Laura Barry: “I will say I didn't approve the proposal as minimal because it did not meet the Minimal Impact Criteria, but you make a good point.”

Kimberly Shoen: “Can I ask a couple questions?”

George Poulin: Absolutely.

Kimberly Shoen: “Did you have a Forester look at the tree or a tree company?”

George Poulin: “Burke’s Tree Service.”

Kimberly Shoen: “Did they give you an estimate of the percentage of crown foliage that was still alive or did they have any conversations with you about that?”

George Poulin: “The company determined the tree is rotted from the inside. And if you look on the left side of the tree, it looks like it. I can't say that it did, but it looks like it was hit by lightning.”

Kimberly Shoen: “Yes, I noticed that.”

George Poulin: “About a foot into the tree at an angle of about 10 to 12 feet, the tree is black, rotted, and peeling and the roots are hollow near the ground. There are animals crawling in and out of them.”

Kimberly Shoen: “The crown foliage looks pretty good on it. I'm trying to figure out if you've got a Maple tree or if it's an Oak tree, but it looks like it's a Maple tree. I'm not going to stand in the way, although Maples can live a long time with damage. If your crown foliage is looking healthy, you could actually cut the tree in half and the tree will still continue to grow and be healthy.”

George Poulin: “Well, I don't know. It's pretty rotted at the bottom.”

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Kimberly Shoen: "It's okay. I'm not going to stand in the way. It's a sad thing to see it go."

George Poulin: He pointed out where the limbs are starting to fall off the tree. "I hate to lose it, but I'm really not going to miss picking up after it."

Laura Barry: "Tim, you have a motion to consider this an exempt application."

MOTION: Metivier MOVED that the request of George Poulin for a certificate of appropriateness to remove a maple tree from a property located at 12 Grove Street is an exempt activity under Chapter 19 Section 14 Historic District *19:14.d.2.d*.

The MOTION was SECONDED by Richard Brooks.

The MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0.

- d. **Meghan Metropolis sought a certificate of appropriateness to add vinyl and dibond signage to the front of the building at a property located at 4 Main Street in the Business with Historic Overlay (BH) District, Assessor's Map 11 Lot 202, HDC#28-2023.**

Ms. Mears provided an overview of the proposal.

Megan Metropolis: "I would like to get appropriate signage for my business. The tenants who were previously in the space had existing mounts that were suspending their wooden sign which are still attached to the building. I wouldn't need to remount anything to attach the sign to, however. Dibond is the material that I hope to use. I brought some samples."

Laura Barry: "Yes, that would be great."

Megan Metropolis: "Thank you. Before I hand this over, there was a second material given to me by the company. It's a little bit thicker, but they're labeled in the dibond form. The one that is not labeled is also dibond. It's just the six millimeters instead of the three. I was told that they could also give the signs a matte finish as well. If you see any shine on the samples, that can be matte instead."

Tim Metivier: "Part of the application indicates a proposal for vinyl siding. Could you point out that location that you're predicting it to be?"

Megan Metropolis: "Yes, the vinyl is actually like a window cling sign that would be adhered to just the inside of the glass on the door."

Tim Metivier: "So, it's not vinyl siding that you're talking about."

Megan Metropolis: "No, it would just be on the glass on the front entryway."

Kimberly Shoen: "Sounds like it's a cling sign."

Megan Metropolis: "Yes."

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Elizabeth Nguyen: “Thank you for including representation of what the sign would look like on the building. Is that the width you expect it will be or a best guess?”

Megan Metropolis: “That was a guesstimate based off of the company that would be doing the installation. I believe they quoted me for the three-millimeters in width sign, which is the sample that is being passed around.”

Elizabeth Nguyen clarified she meant the length of it.

Megan Metropolis: “Yes, I believe so. That can be subject to change depending on your preference.”

Elizabeth Nguyen: “It's a tricky situation with it being centered on the building, which is nice but then it has an asymmetrical facade below it. I was thinking it'd be nice if it could go all the way to the edges of the glass below. I don't know if the existing cleats would support that.”

Megan Metropolis: “That's a good question that I can get you an answer to, I can't answer you now unfortunately.”

Elizabeth Nguyen: “I'm not sure it's critical but I would be curious to hear what other Board members have to say about it.”

Kimberly Shoen: “It does balance it out though to do it that way.”

Megan Metropolis: “Yes, I think it's minimal impact to the building itself. I think the goal was to use the existing mounts and I believe that's where the former business had theirs positioned, but I agree. It would look really pretty.”

Richard Brooks. “The sign wouldn't extend above the next, because it's similar to a band that it fits in. It's just going to fit in that band. It's not going to extend above or below that?”

Megan Metropolis: “Correct.”

Laura Barry: “Thank you for the samples. If this was a sign that was projecting like a swinging sign, I would definitely be more in favor of the thicker sign. But considering this is going to be mounted flush to the building, I don't necessarily want to approve it. I would be in favor of the matte because we want it to look as authentic to what is possible and if it's super shiny, that obviously takes away from the authenticity. I'm in agreement where I'm happy that you're using the banding there. I would be okay with how it is, but I'd also be okay if it does extend out further, as long as it doesn't start covering that brick. I think you have that clearly defined space with the darker color. Any other questions or comments?”

Tim Metivier: “I would support what you just said about the sign in that location. Based on the proposal for the vinyl clinging in the windows, that falls under an allowable use and as a window sign, it's under exempt activities as long as it doesn't exceed 50%. If that material follows what the Chair's feedback and it's within the preexisting band above the window lenti and underneath the crown, I'd be acceptable to that. It follows the Historic District guidelines.”

Megan Metropolis: “Thank you.”

Laura Barry: “To clarify, a lot of our applicants came before us today because they had exemptions, but

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also non-exemptions, to your point, Tim. It's just nice to clarify. Do we have any other comments, questions, or motions?"

MOTION: Richard Brooks MOVED that the request of Meghan Metropolis for a certificate of appropriateness to add a vinyl window sign and a dibond wall mounted sign to the front of the building at a property located at 4 Main Street be APPROVED. The MOTION was SECONDED by Shoen.
The MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0.

6. NEW BUSINESS

None at this time.

7. ADDRESS NEW SECRETARY

Need to appoint new secretary tonight as the current secretary has to relinquish their role.

Tim Metivier stated he is an alternate and has two jobs so he would not have time.

Kimberly Shoen stated she is trying to figure out how to devote doing this as she would have staff doing it.

Laura Barry stated members don't usually hold 2 positions on the board, so if Kimberly would accept the secretary position, the Commission would then make a vote to fill the Vice President role unless she feels like she can do both.

Kimberly Shoen stated the Vice President position comes more logically to her than the Secretary position does. She stated she will take on the role through January as her full-time staff would complete the minutes.

MOTION: Barry MOVED that the request for Kim to become Secretary (AKA staff members) at Kim's disposal through January is APPROVED and to be revisited in January.

The MOTION was approved by all board members.

The MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0.

8. ANY COMMENTS FROM VISITORS:

Jacob Kowski: "Sorry for the tardiness. I'm here with the Top Roofers project on 2-4 Lord's Court. I was told to be here but thought the meeting was at 7:30pm."

Laura Barry: "The motion passed with the caveat that it needed to be painted within a year."

Jacob Kowski: "Ok awesome. Thank you."

9. WORKSHOP BUSINESS

- a. Any workshop business that may come before the Commission.

Laura Barry noted that she will be asking City Hall to plan an open forum for the conversation around the historic plaques.

Tim Metivier: "Do we know where things stand with the historic signs that the City was working on?"

Ms. Mears responded that the signs have been approved by City Council. She said the Planning Office is waiting to hear from the sign company now.

10. COMMUNICATIONS AND MISCELLANEOUS

Ms. Mears stated that Planning staff received an Appeal of Administrative Decision Application from the applicant of the 85 Elm Street project for the Historic District Commission's decision in June. That application will be going before the Zoning Board of Adjustment on September 6th at 7PM. If any members want to attend, we will send out copies of the application to HDC members. She noted it is likely the applicants are going to ask for the application to be continued to the October 4th ZBA meeting.

She stated the Planning Office is working with Strafford Regional Planning Commission to update the Housing Chapter within the Master Plan. The City is hosting a Housing Forum on September 14th at the Blackbox Theater from 5:30 to 8:30pm. She stated Nick Taylor from the Seacoast Workforce Housing Coalition and Strafford Regional Planning Commission will be there, among other organizations. She said the Recreation Department will provide childcare and food will be provided. It will also be filmed on Channel 22. She asked whether a member would be willing to set up a booth for the Historic District Commission to have representation at the event.

Laura: "I agree, I think we should represent if we can. I will be tentative as I might be travelling to work."

Kimberly: "I'm going to the event so I'm willing to work it."

Tim Metivier: "I am going to try to attend. We should probably communicate something via email as to what this table should contain and what are we presenting."

Ms. Mears: "Regional planning has offered to make a poster board for to display successful 79E projects. We are going to showcase projects at 8 Government Way, The Pray building, and the Hilltop School, and provide a map of the Historic Overlay District, the Commercial District, and the Hilltop District. I could have Strafford Regional Planning Commission work on some material for the Historic District."

Tim Metivier: "We'll come up with some ideas in the next few days."

Kimberly Shoen: "I like the map so people can see where the Historic District is. We could consider having some pictures about what we're trying to preserve in terms of our character and some of the houses that we have featured on the Historic District Commission page on the website."

Laura Barry: "If you have any ideas, just send me emails about what you want and then I can relay them to City Staff."

Ms. Mears: "Some noteworthy applications could also be featured, like the barn."

Laura Barry: "I like the idea of the featured houses and having the form that explains why they're so significant."

George Poulin: "I could get some pictures of the older houses on the hill."

Kimberly Shoen: "I will be there and can help set up. At the last meeting, Tim had brought up some violations at the last meeting for us to discuss."

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Ms. Mears: “The Code Compliance Officer is working on 20 Market Street to address issues with too much window signage. He has sent out a Notice of Violation for that. Also, he's working on a Notice of Violation for the retaining wall at 16 Winter Street. It was supposed to be of natural stone and looks like there's some concrete masonry blocks. Regarding the houses downtown with the shutters on Market Street, staff had looked into this issue. We can't find in the Condition of Approval if that was required to be put back on. If anyone has any information on that, we can't find that as a requirement in the conditions within the Notice of Decision. Staff also looked in the 2014 meeting minutes.

Laura Barry: “I think the problem was they said they would go back to how it looked before which means that the shutters would be put back.”

Tim Metivier: “I listened to that meeting. It may not have made it into the conditions, but it was presented that yes, they would put the shutters back so we didn't bring it up. I will assist with that research.”

Ms. Mears: “That would be good because it's from almost a decade ago. We should have enforced that a lot sooner.” The Hall at great falls. She referenced an approved sign at The Hall at Great Falls.

Tim Metivier asked when the sign was approved.

Ms. Mears stated the sign was approved in 2019 and referenced a picture of it.

Tim Metivier: “This is from Google maps. There's a different piece there that I recall so I will follow up on that.”

George: “What about Lydia House of Hope regarding the window?”

Laura Barry: “The window that they have not done the casing around.”

Ms. Mears: “We will reach out as we have not yet followed up with them.”

Tim Metivier: He stated he recently granted the Certificate of Occupancy for Aclara. Therefore, that means that they will be vacating the structure, so, there's some interest in that building.

Laura Barry: “I look forward to an application for some apartments.”

MOTION: Metivier MOVED to adjourn the meeting.

The MOTION was SECONDED by Brooks.

The MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly Shoen, Secretary
