

NEW HAVEN HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Wednesday, September 14, 2022, Regular Meeting, 7:00 PM

Location: Web-based meeting via Zoom

Chair Trina Learned calls to order the public hearing at 7:03pm.

In attendance: Laura Brown (City Plan Executive Director), Donna Hall (City Plan, Staff to the Historic District Commission, Planner II), John Ward (Special Counsel to Economic Development), Trina Learned (Commissioner and Chair), Susan Godshall (Commissioner), Tom Kimberly (Commissioner and Clerk), Karen Jenkins (Commissioner), Dylan Christopher (Commissioner), Richard Munday (Commissioner), Sarah Tisdale (New Haven Preservation Trust)

1. Chair Learned reviews New Haven's Zoom meeting HDC policies and procedures and the point of New Haven's Local Historic Districts and the Historic District Commission (HDC).

2. Public Hearing

2.1 22-12-CA 100 South Water Street (MBLU: 232/ 0002/ 02003) City Point Local Historic District. Owner: Pequonnock Yacht Club. Agent: Peter Maglaris. Seeking approval to install a 6,000 gal above ground fuel storage tank.

Peter Maglaris, 26 Lawncrest Road, West Haven

Mr. Maglaris explains that fuel has always been available for boaters' use in underground tanks that had to be removed in 2020 per the Department of Environment & Energy Protection requirements. The cost of installing a new underground tank is very expensive and hard to get insurance for. Their solution is an above ground tank that is located 65' behind their building in the parking lot and will not be visible from the street. It will be visible in the parking lot from the west and east. The location was chosen to tie into the existing lines. He shows map visuals to scale of where the tank will be located. The top of the tank will be about 15' above the water. He gives specifications of the tank and assures that it will not

move even in a strong storm. He shows a photo of what the tank will look like and a set of stairs for access that will be located on the east side. A standard guard rail will surround the tank.

Chair Learned asks for Commissioner questions. Commissioner Jenkins asks if the tank has already been purchased. Mr. Margalis replies that it has. She then asks if it can be seen from the street. Mr. Margalis replies that it cannot. Commissioner Jenkins asks why this application is before the Commission. Chair Learned says she believes it can be seen from the public right of way from South Water Street. Ms. Hall clarifies that the application was determined by staff to come before the Commission for a few reasons: the city owned beach (from which the tank will be visible) is an extension of Howard Avenue so it is a public right of way; public access easements through some of the nearby private properties which would have views; and water as a public way. Chair Learned asks for public comment.

Douglas Hausladen, 115 South Water Street, New Haven

Mr. Hausladen comments that he is in support of the application. He believes it is appropriate to be above ground. He explains that he is a member of the club and with no gas available for boaters to purchase in New Haven harbor, the would be important both for boaters and public safety.

Ms. Hall reads a letter in support of the application from Richard Fontana, Jr. (City of New Haven) into the record regarding the availability of gas as a benefit for public safety as it will allow emergency boats to get fuel conveniently.

Chair Learned closes public comment and asks for Commissioner discussion. Commissioner Kimberly raises that maybe bollards around the tank would be less intrusive than a guard rail. Commissioner Jenkins asks about the firefighting boat that needs to refuel at this location referred to in the letter. Chair Learned clarifies that it would be a benefit to have gas available. Commissioner Jenkins says there is a difference between a priority and a benefit, and she thinks it raises the level of necessity of the tank. Commissioner Christopher adds that it seems like a great addition for the business and community. He feels like it is piece of

equipment, not different from other equipment on site for the operation of the marina. Commissioner Munday feels like it is not easy to visualize but he understands the property is a working marina and it will serve a function one would expect to see in that environment. Chair Learned agrees and that since the property is a center of maritime activity, she sees it as another piece of equipment, innocuous as it can be.

Commissioner Kimberly makes a motion to approve the application as submitted.

Commissioner Godshall seconds.

Commissioner Godshall withdraws her voting status to achieve a five only vote.

All in favor at 7:40.

Motion passes.

2.2 22-14-CA 542 Chapel Street (MBLU: 207/ 0543/ 00900) Wooster Square Local Historic District. Owner: 524 Chapel Street LLC. Agent: Martin Deamonte. Seeking approval to construct a shared driveway and rear yard parking lot.

Martin Deamonte, 631 Middletown Avenue, New Haven

Abraham Meer, 1777 Ella T. Grasso Blvd, New Haven

These notes cover this item and 2.3 as the buildings would be on either side of the proposed driveway. Mr. Deamonte explains that this project is trying to make off street parking to take the cars off the street because of traffic, plowing, and for private spots for tenants. There would be greenery around the lot. The driveway would go in between the buildings and from the street, one would see the greenery down the center of the lot. Ms. Hall shows street view photos of between the buildings. The driveway would be concrete with an asphalt lot in back. The current width between the buildings is 8' 9".

Chair Learned clarifies what is in the Commission's purview for this application which would include potential damage to the buildings like cars driving near the foundations and edges. Commissioner Godshall asks if the landscaped island in the lot will make the four rear

spaces inaccessible. Mr. Deamonte replies that there is 24' to back out, and typically a parking lot would have 20'. It has been tested with a truck. Chair Learned reminds the Commission that the lot is not in their purview. Commissioner Godshall clarifies that she does not think the center landscaped area will end up being there because she believes that cars will run it over. She asks about a drainage plan. Mr. Deamonte replies that underneath the mulch beds are drainage gravel and it also slopes away from the buildings. Commissioner Munday agrees with Commissioner Godshall's concern because of the lack of dimensions on the site plan, the central landscaped area which will be vulnerable, and the drainage from an impervious surface. He suggests that vertical foliage instead down the center would last better. Commissioner Jenkins asks about making lots 4 & 5 bike racks, and if bikes are part of the proposal. Mr. Deamonte replies that there are no plans for bike racks and clarifies he is the contractor and not the owner. Mr. Meer explains that the drawn parking spots are larger than they really are making it look like there is less room to back up. He adds that landscaped areas could be adapted for bicycle parking. Chair Learned asks if he believes this is viable parking lot and he replies yes. Ms. Hall clarifies some dimensions from the site plan that she measured which is a standard spot determined by the city. Commissioner Godshall reiterates that the space behind the parking space is less than the length of a car. She adds that there is view from the parking lot of Pepes on Wooster Street. Mr. Deamonte clarifies that there is a chain link fence that separates the properties so you cannot see the proposed parking area from Wooster Street. Commissioner Christopher asks about if they will engage a civil engineer after Commission approval. Mr. Deamonte replies yes. Commissioner Christopher does not think it is in Commission's purview. Commissioner Kimberly asks about gas meters that stick out next to the building and if that would need to be moved. Mr. Deamonte replies that there is more than enough space at that point. Chair Learned opens it up to public comment.

Sarah Tisdale, 922 State Street, New Haven

Ms. Tisdale expresses concern over a couple parts of the application, like the narrow width of driveway and the impact on historic fabric with cars nicking sides of the buildings. She also reiterates the drainage question because water can creep up into the masonry of each building

causing cracking. She also raises the issue of maintaining the plantings and if they are not maintained the visual impact will change.

Anika Singh Lemar, 552 Chapel Street, New Haven

Ms. Lemar (a neighbor) commends the new owners but feels there is not enough information in the application about what can be seen from the street as much of that backyard can be seen. She adds a 10-car parking lot and driveway is completely unheard of in the neighborhood and inconsistent with the historic structures as the neighborhood was created before cars and that is still attractive to owners. She also says that the existing plantings are currently not maintained so she does not think that there is evidence that long term plantings will be cared for. She thinks the application should be denied.

Anstress Farwell, 37 Wooster Place, New Haven

Ms. Farwell has lived in the neighborhood for a long time. She thinks the drawings are unclear and the application is incomplete. However, she would object even if it was complete. She thinks it is unclear where snow would be stored. She adds that a previous parking lot was voted down to preserve a historic building and landscape which sets a precedent. If this is approved, she is not sure what it would mean for future applications.

Barbara Lamb, 538 Chapel Street, New Haven

Ms. Lamb reiterates what Ms. Farwell and Ms. Lemar said. She thinks the drawings do not give a full picture of what the current situation is. With frequent accidents around that area, she thinks cars coming in and out of a driveway would be an extra safety concern. She also would like to know more about the drainage plans as a neighbor since she gets water in her basement now and thinks a parking lot would add to that issue.

Levi Stone, 597 Chapel Street, New Haven (represents 546-548 Chapel St LLC)

Mr. Stone refers to the accidents Ms. Lamb mentioned. He thinks that taking the cars off the street will reduce the accidents. Ms. Lamb has a driveway and since this is one house over, it is consistent with Wooster Square that he would have a driveway. He adds that many tenants need a car to commute; people moving to the area ask about off street parking. Currently,

half the driveway is concrete, and the other half is gravel. Drainage for the water will be drip piping under the mulch where water will be collected. As to backing out of spots, many lots have a last spot that looks hard to get out of, but it will be easy with no car on one side and mulch behind.

Ms. Farwell speaks again about the 10 added spaces which will not eliminate or reduce the street parking. She adds that existing driveways predate the creation of the historic district.

Ms. Lemar agrees with Ms. Farwell and clarifies she does not have trouble finding parking in the neighborhood like the owner suggested. She suggests permeable pavers would be better than asphalt, even though she does not think it should be approved.

***Ms. Hall reads a letter from Ben Ledbetter, in support of the application, into the record.
Ms. Hall reads a letter from Chloe Woodhouse and Joseph Kruk, in support of the application, into the record.***

Chair Learned closes public comment. Commissioner Godshall thinks the rear view of the properties from Wooster Street is important for the Commission to see as she thinks the parking lot would be visible, even from Chapel Street. Commissioner Kimberly adds that there are no clear pictures of what is existing and that would help. He adds that other choices of materials that could be used, for at least the front portion, would be better but overall this is an incomplete application. Commissioner Munday agrees that is an incomplete application and raises important questions owners need to do more to come to terms with what the issues are as they extend beyond parking. Commissioner Godshall adds there are inconsistencies like one presenter said that mulch will have a gravel underlayment for drainage and another presenter said there was a piping system. Commissioner Jenkins points out that New Haven is bicycle friendly and the future of urban living is not in more paved areas for cars. Commissioner Christopher says the design of the parking would likely need to be approved by the city and the applicant has a lot of work to do. From the historic perspective, he does not agree that there is a view from Wooster Street, except maybe from gaps in a fence but that falls short of Commission purview. Chair Learned reiterates the mission of the

Commission and remarks on public comments about the historic character of the neighborhood which was not designed around the car and small spaces between the buildings were not meant for parking lots. The idea of inserting a driveway in narrow path between buildings feels like a violation of the historic district.

Mr. Deamonte explains that he was not aware that engineered drawings were needed. He adds that the rear property can see the buildings, not the parking lot with the 6' fence there. The graveled area in the front was done by the previous owner and that a car on the front lawn would be fixed if parking was available in the rear. Chair Learned clarifies that the questions being asked are a result of lack of detail in the application. She explains that the application needs to have enough detail to be field verifiable by a third party after completion. Commissioner Godshall asks about other approvals the proposal needs. Ms. Hall said that she checked and there are no other city reviews needed unless they are charging for parking in which case it would be considered commercial parking. Commissioner Godshall adds that normally the Commission would ask about plant materials since there is also no detail about plant type and survivability. Commissioner Kimberly says that the number of apartments between the two buildings and how that relates to parking spaces would be good for the Commission to know as well. More information is needed about the paving materials, plantings, drainage plan, and viability of a car's turn radius in the parking spots.

Commissioner Kimberly makes a motion to continue the application to the next regularly scheduled meeting with further information.

Commissioner Godshall seconds.

Commissioner Christopher asks about reaching out to zoning about lot coverage for parking and if they need to review.

Commissioner Learned withdraws her voting status to achieve a five only vote.

All in favor at 9:18.

Motion passes.

2.3 22-15-CA 546-548 Chapel Street (MBLU: 207/0543/00700) Wooster Square Local Historic District. Owner: 546-548 Chapel St LLC. Agent: Martin Deamonte. Seeking approval to construct a shared driveway and rear yard parking lot.

Commissioner Learned makes a motion to continue the application to the next regularly scheduled meeting with further information.

Commissioner Kimberly seconds.

Commissioner Munday withdraws his voting status to achieve a five only vote.

All in favor at 9:19.

Motion passes.

2.4 22-16-CA 98 South Water Street (MBLU: 232/ 0002/ 02000) City Point Local Historic District. Owner: Pequonnock Yacht Club. Agent: Bilian Chen & Lawrence Wang. Seeking approval to install new wood decks, doors, exterior lights, signs, rooftop HVAC unit, and repair vinyl siding.

Lawrence Wang, 100 Parrott Drive, Shelton

Mr. Wang explains they are looking to fix up small building attached to the yacht club for use as a restaurant. Ms. Hall shows photos of the street view. Mr. Wang explains the existing vinyl siding needs to be changed or repaired. A floor plan shows the proposed decks, which may have existed in some configuration in the past. Elevation drawings show the new proposed HVAC unit (due to no heating/cooling currently) on the roof with a louvered shield. He shows the proposed sign for the restaurant, doors and windows designs, and photos of the products for the deck and light fixtures.

Chair Learned asks for Commissioner questions. Commissioner Kimberly comments that a past owner wanted a deck out front but remembers there was an issue with structural. Mr. Wang replies that he believes the building permit for the deck was approved but it was flagged to come before the Commission. Chair Learned clarifies that it is likely a non-contributing structure to the district, but it is prominent. She appreciates the practicality of decks, but it is a lot of outside decking. She is also concerned about the HVAC equipment

location. She asks about repairing the vinyl siding because repairs are not in the Commission's purview but if the siding comes off, Mr. Wang would need to come back before the Commission. Mr. Wang confirms that it will only be repaired. She thinks the applicant's wish to make it a viable business is great. She asks about the door replacements, which are double doors in back and the single door in front. Mr. Wang shows the proposed products. She asks about the railing material. Mr. Wang confirms the railings would be wood. Chair Learned asks about the windows, which Mr. Wang thinks are steel but is willing to work with Commission.

Commissioner Christopher asks about the screening for the HVAC equipment. Mr. Wang replies that it needs to be heavy so it will not blow away, but he is willing to work with the Commission on material. Chair Learned asks if the louvers are fixed, which could mean that someone on the ground could see the HVAC unit. Mr. Wang is not sure. She says more information on the unit would be helpful, as well as more detail about the doors, windows, railings. Commissioner Godshall asks why if both decks are at grade a ramp is needed. Mr. Wang replies that the decks are elevated, so a ramp is needed for ADA compliance access to the restaurant. She asks about the location of the ramp and where it meets the driveway as that might be dangerous. Mr. Wang replies that it has been approved. Chair Learned asks about the rear elevation and all the penetrations the applicant proposes to repair, which is a lot. Mr. Wang confirms they will repair it and patch it in. Chair Learned asks for public comment.

Olivia Martson, no address provided

Ms. Martson comments that on the rear elevation, she likes the original size of the windows as opposed to the proposed smaller windows. She thinks the HVAC seems big for the size of the space. She wonders if it could be tucked in the rear corner instead. She is not in favor of the deck in front as it is too heavy for the front of the building.

Mr. Lang replies that the HVAC is a bit bigger than needed to accommodate air flow from doors opening with no vestibule.

Chair Learned closes public comment and asks for Commissioner discussion. Commissioner Kimberly feels this business will be an asset to the neighborhood but is concerned about the

lack of information about doors, windows, and the HVAC unit. Chair Learned agrees that there is not sufficient detail, also between what is being repaired or replaced. Commissioner Jenkins asks about the anticipated date for the restaurant to open. Mr. Wang replies that as soon as possible would be ideal. Ms. Hall will follow up with Mr. Lang about the specific things he needs for his next application.

Commissioner Learned makes a motion to continue the application to the next regularly scheduled meeting with further information.

Commissioner Kimberly seconds.

Commissioner Christopher withdraws his voting status to achieve a five only vote.

All in favor at 10:07.

Motion passes.

2.5 22-17-CA 138 Greenwich Avenue (MBLU: 233/ 0005/ 01100) City Point Local Historic District. Owner: Avraham Ben-Shabat. Seeking approval to construct a new porch.

R. Spencer Steenblich, 134 Greenwich Avenue, New Haven

Mr. Steenblich presents an updated application to remove the existing porch and construct a new wooden porch. He could not find a specific style for the house except for 20th century vernacular based on his research with the New Haven Preservation Trust resources. He shows photos of the street view from the past couple decades of the changes of the porch. The current deck received a stop work order from lack of a Certificate of Appropriateness. The proposed porch takes into consideration lowering costs for the owner while being in line with the district. The drawings show the porch with wood railings and small columns but based on community comments, that would change to an aluminum handrail and different 8” columns. The columns will sit on Simpson strong tie member. He would try to match the existing trim if possible but if not, he would do a simple profile. He shows examples of porches in the area.

Chair Learned asks for Commissioner questions. She asks about the columns and railings in the drawings compared to what is being used. Mr. Steenblich replies that that is why he showed the specific products because they are different than the drawings. He specifies the

columns will be set in 3” from the edge of the porch. Commissioner Kimberly asks about the lattice work material, the width of the trim and if the stairs are open or enclosed. Mr. Steenblich replies that it is wood lattice, the trim is 6” and the stairs are enclosed. Commissioner Godshall asks about the molding around the door. Mr. Steenblich replies it is simple wood molding and the existing door will remain. He wants to match the window trim but made it wider to highlight the door. Commissioner Godshall asks about pilaster and if it would encroach on the window trim. Mr. Steenblich says it will. Commissioner Godshall says it would be nice to abut the window but not encroach on it, to avoid removing historic fabric. Maybe offsetting the pilasters and columns a bit more would help. Mr. Steenblich thinks that removing the columns in the back would be the best solution. Chair Learned notices the windows have changed previously without Commission approval. She does not think the metal railing is keeping with the district. Mr. Steenblich explains that it is an off the shelf product which is available but is willing to change. Chair Learned adds that the balustrade is usually one to one and the columns are big, giving them a rustic look. Mr. Steenblich agrees the columns are big. Chair Learned also questions the 1910 date because the style was prevalent earlier. Mr. Steenblich will look into it as will Ms. Hall. Commissioner Christopher asks if there was a style he was trying to emulate. Mr. Steenblich replies that the guidance was not to emulate a style. Commissioner Christopher thinks using the existing porch base at that scale will be tough and not historically appropriate.

Avraham Ben-Shabat, (owner)

Mr. Ben-Shabat adds that there was a rush before the meeting with changes to the plan based on comments from the community. He feels it is unfair to wait another month because the new products were in the presentation, and he believes it is historically appropriate.

Chair Learned understands his situation and that the advice given was last minute.

Commissioner Godshall adds that the existing base issue and columns were not last-minute design details. Mr. Ben-Shabat asks about the rustic quality of the columns. Commissioner Godshall replies that the size is rustic. Mr. Ben-Shabat insists that the plans presented are the final ones which show smaller columns. Mr. Steenblich adds that Mr. Ben-Shabat is in a tough spot and wants to improve the property, but he understands that there may be changes that need more detail. Chair Learned thinks they are very close, and Commissioner

Christopher adds that the details are not documented enough and need to match the intentions of the owner. An example is the differing trim size compared to what has been verbally said. He adds that there are a lot of inconsistencies, like in the flashing. Chair Learned adds that they need the level of drawings that a contractor would need to go out to bid. Mr. Ben-Shabat agreed to come back at the next meeting with more information.

3. Minutes

Commissioner Godshall makes a motion to table accepting the minutes until the next meeting.

Commissioner Kimberly seconds.

Commissioner Munday abstains.

All in favor at 10:58.

Motion passes.

4. New Business

Commissioner Jenkins welcomes Commissioner Munday but asks about how the Commission is supposed to know new members are coming on. Ms. Hall said his official letter from the mayor was issued yesterday and it did not give a lot of time to notify. Commissioner Jenkins feels it is not welcoming to new Commissioners or to current ones for them to just show up at a meeting without notice. Commissioner Learned replies that they have been discussing trainings and other ideas to give the Commission a more common understanding of the goals, objectives, and guidelines. Ms. Brown explains that the feedback provided by Commissioner Jenkins has led to a staff-initiated orientation provided to Commissioner Munday but the schedule did not allow for notifying Commissioners in advance. Commissioner Munday expresses that he is honored to be on the Commission and is impressed with the level of dialogue with each other and the applicants.

Ms. Hall raises that she would like to coordinate an in person training special meeting and asks about timing that works best. She will pick out days to work on getting that pinned down. Mary Dunne from the State Historic Preservation office will do the training.

Commissioner Jenkins makes a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Kimberly seconds.

All in favor at 11:07.

Motion Passes.

Respectfully submitted by Jordan Sorensen, recorder.