

NEW HAVEN HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Wednesday, October 12, 2022, Regular Meeting, 7:00 PM

Location: Web-based meeting via Zoom

Chair Trina Learned calls to order the public hearing at 7:13pm.

In attendance: Laura Brown (City Plan Executive Director), Donna Hall (City Plan, Staff to the Historic District Commission, Planner II), Fatima Cecunjanin (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), Doug Royalty (Commissioner), Richard Munday (Commissioner), Sarah Tisdale (New Haven Preservation Trust)

1. Roll Call

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 22-14-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

These notes cover 2.1 and 2.2 as the buildings would be on either side of the proposed driveway. This is a continued item from the September meeting and was the second item discussed in the agenda as the applicant had trouble signing into the meeting.

Mr. Deamonte explains changes made since the last application including removing the parking island in the rear parking lot with 42' in between parking spaces. 2' tall bushes will be planted on the perimeter of the lot. At the front of the building, the gravel will be

removed, grass planted, and the same bushes will line the perimeter going back on the driveway. The space between the buildings is 10' except where the bollards are where it is 9' wide. Mr. Deamonte presents views from Chapel Street (street view) straight back showing the gravel area and space between buildings. Another view near the bollards shows the space between buildings and the rear chain link fence that is adjacent to Frank Pepe's parking lot and dumpsters. A view from Wooster Street through the parking lot shows the chain link fence from the other side. The property next to 542 Chapel will have a view of the lot from the neighbor's second floor over the wood fence. He also shows the existing rear views of the properties looking towards the buildings and looking towards the rear fence. He shares a photo of his truck in the proposed driveway space and in the proposed lot space to show why they chose to eliminate the island (too tight for parking).

Chair Learned asks about snow removal. Mr. Deamonte replies that they are looking to do heated driveway to eliminate the need to plow snow. If not, the two back parking spaces would be used for snow. Chair Learned asks about drainage. Mr. Deamonte replies that a 2% grade difference and 3' buffer around the perimeter would drain the water. Chair Learned asks if the plantings may get damaged by accumulated snow to which Mr. Deamonte replies that it is a possibility. Commissioner Munday asks about amount of asphalt and if the width of the lot could be reduced for more planting and runoff space. Mr. Deamonte replies that the most they could reduce the lot would be 3' to give another 1.5' on each end for plantings. Commissioner Munday asks if the requirement is 24' as he thinks it is. Mr. Deamonte replies that the buildings have two separate owners so keeping it larger would retain the 21-22' on each side if one building was sold. Commissioner Munday adds that a common driveway indicates the owners are in agreement. He also asks where the trash containers will be located. Mr. Deamonte replies that at the end of the driveway entrance behind 542 Chapel will be for trash containers. Commissioner Godshall comments there is a shed in that place currently. Mr. Deamonte explains that it would be on the side of that shed next to the current walkway, not where the door opens out. Commissioner Godshall asks if there is an agreement or deed restriction that the driveway would continue to be shared even if parcels were sold. Mr. Deamonte replies there is no agreement between the owners. Commissioner Godshall says that with an agreement, there could an overall narrower plan to reduce the

impermeable surface because it would continue to be jointly managed. She also raises the concern about existing historic fabric, like the side walls of properties which would be at risk of car damage. She asks if there is some other protection for foundations and brick. Mr. Deamonte replies that he looked into some type of buffer on the walls like glued on rubber. Commissioner Godshall says that clear material not visible from street but that would protect the surface might exist. Mr. Deamonte replies that poly carbonate attached to the side would have to be drilled. Chair Learned adds that the concern is historic fabric and neighborhood character so it would be best not put it at risk to begin with. Commissioner Godshall adds that the rear chain link fence does not block the view full so Wooster Street should factor in and that the measurements in the application for the shrubs vary. Mr. Deamonte clarifies that they are 36” on center and will go all around the perimeter. Commissioner Godshall asks about the zoning regulations for the impermeable surface requirements. Mr. Deamonte and Ms. Hall reply that there are not regulations for this case. Commissioner Godshall says that according to her research, the max impermeable surface is 70% in residential zones, but she is not sure about this particular zone. Mr. Ward will get back to the Commission with the answer. Mr. Deamonte says that narrowing the width is feasible. Chair Learned asks for public comment.

Anika Singh Lemar, 552 Chapel Street

Ms. Lemar comments that the owner is allowing someone to park in front gravel area. She thinks the presented photos show how much pavement is visible from the sidewalk in the rear lot which she thinks is not historic. She does not see necessity of the parking. But, she is unsure why the applicant is not proposing other surfaces like pavers that could be more compatible historically. She thinks narrowing the driveway and alternate materials would be in the Commission’s purview but ultimately does not think it should be approved.

Anstress Farwell, 37 Wooster Place

Ms. Farwell asks about the gutter along the ground at 546-548 Chapel for moving water to the back of the property and what would be done with it. She adds that inconsistencies in application make it hard to discuss. She agrees with Ms. Lemar that there is no compelling reason to consider this application even with better materials as it would reduce the historic

character of the buildings as well as the function and use of the landscape. Freezing and thawing on sides of driveway against the base of buildings, and salt rising through masonry, will lead to degradation. She adds that there have been no new driveways since the district was established so it is not a good precedent to allow them now.

Barbara Lamb, 538 Chapel Street

Ms. Lamb reiterates what other people have said about drainage which she raised at the last meeting because of drainage problems in her basement (next door). She recognizes that it is not in the purview of the Commission, but she is concerned that city engineering did not consider piling snow before their approval. She endorses the idea of alternate materials like permeable pavers. She also thinks the owner should be required to remove the gravel section in the front of the building so no one will be able to park there.

Sarah Tisdale, New Haven Preservation Trust, 922 State Street

Ms. Tisdale reiterates comments by Commissioners about the historic fabric on both sides of driveways being in danger as well as the drainage concerns and visibility from the rear of the property.

Chair Learned closes public comment. She asks Mr. Deamonte about the gutter downspout question from Ms. Farwell. Mr. Deamonte explains the downspout will be moved higher and attached to another downspout in the rear. To guide the commissioner discussion, Chair Learned asks the Commission if the parking lot and driveway as a new structure is appropriate. If yes, then what are conditions that would be it suitable to maintain the integrity of the district. Commissioner Royalty comments that he thinks there is not a significant view from Wooster Street through the large parking lot and chain link fence but there is a very significant view from Chapel Street side. He also thinks that the character of district results from development through 19th century, a period which did not have automobiles. So, taking a yard and paving it over is a fundamental preservation problem for this district because it diminishes the historic character. Paving over a yard would also be a bad precedent to set. Also, this project comes into conflict with the Secretary of the Interior Standards. He adds

that sustainability should be taken into consideration for preserving neighborhoods, like the ability to absorb storm water.

Commissioner Godshall comments that the fundamentals Commissioner Royalty raises are important, and it is worth noting that the application still does not meet normal standards (varying measurements, no plant material named, piping for drainage mentioned last month which has not been discussed, narrow buffer zones for runoff risks damage to buildings, and non-impermeable zoning requirement unanswered). Chair Learned summarizes that the commissioners are commenting that the proposed project has problems in that it is contrary to historic features of the neighborhood, sustainability issues with drainage, incomplete information in application, has possible zone requirement discrepancies, and a past proposal for a new driveway did not succeed (as precedent). Commissioner Munday concurs with everything that has been said. Commissioner Kimberly references the Secretary of the Interior Standards which talk about new driveways and recommendations, like that it be as unobtrusive as possible, thus minimizing the effect on the historic character of the setting. Chair Learned adds that the application's presenter is the asphalt paving contractor which makes a decision more difficult without the property owners being present. Commissioner Jenkins asks that if the application is incomplete, how did it come before the Commission especially with the precedent of the Commission not approving driveways. She adds that bike racks are not in proposal even though they were suggested by Commissioner Jenkins at the previous meeting and the owner agreed. Ms. Hall replies that staff was advised that for all regulatory bodies, there was a recent case law that staff cannot reject applications. They must take the application, work with the applicants, some of whom are more responsive than others, so they can go before the Commission for a vote. Commissioner Royalty asks if they should offer the applicant a chance to withdraw. Mr. Deamonte does not want to withdraw the application.

Commissioner Learned makes a motion to deny a certificate of appropriateness for this application.

Commissioner Royalty seconds.

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

All in favor at 9:16.

Motion passes.

2.2 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 deny a certificate of appropriateness for this application.

Commissioner Royalty seconds.

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

All in favor at 9:16.

Motion passes.

2.3 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.

Antonio Maiuolo, 76 Virginia Road, White Plains, NY

Mr. Maiuolo explains the scope of work proposed including replacing exterior siding to match the existing, adding a new wood deck on the front and rear, replacing the entry and patio doors, replacing a casement window in place of an existing double hung window, removing air conditioning units and patching openings, and installing a new HVAC unit on the front roof with screens around it. He shows revised drawings including a map of the location and existing photos shown at the previous meeting. He explains that access to the rear ramp has been changed to the parking lot instead of from the driveway. He shows the proposed screening around the HVAC unit of horizontal 4” wide boards placed 2” apart and standing 4’ tall. The railing on the decks will be less modern than the previous proposal with a traditional railing and post caps on 4”x 4” posts and 1.25” x 1.25” balusters spaced 4” apart. Existing kitchen ducting is located on the rear roof, and it will also be screened. The

doors and windows will be made by Andersen. Exterior lighting will be wall mounted fixtures. Yew shrubs will be planted along the front deck for screening and are expected to grow more than 5' tall to shield the front deck. He shows the vinyl siding chosen as well as the explanation from the structural engineer for choosing the HVAC unit.

Chair Learned asks for clarifying questions from the Commission. She asks about repairing versus replacing materials because materials like vinyl siding or Azek railings are not typically approved. Even though the building is non-conforming, it could be more compatible with materials like wood siding, railings and wood windows. She asks if the architect has considered materials that do conform with the district. Mr. Maiuolo says that it came down to cost, especially with the siding, along with the what the landlord wants. Commissioner Kimberly asks about the vinyl siding and if it is just being repaired. Mr. Maiuolo said the initial intent was to repair but his client decided to replace it. Chair Learned asks about access to the front entry and framing details for windows or doors. Mr. Maiuolo shows in the photos how many steps will access the entries; 2 in back and 1 in front. Chair Learned asks about the steps remaining in back. Mr. Maiuolo says one will be removed. Chair Learned asks about windows. Mr. Maiuolo replies that they are Andersen 400 series casement wood windows and patio doors clad with aluminum for durability with no proposed divided lights on the windows or doors. Chair Learned asks if the casement windows open into the ramp. Mr. Maiuolo replies that the ramp is further away from the building. No further commissioner questions. Chair Learned asks for public comment. No public comment.

Chair Learned asks for commissioner discussion. Commissioner Godshall comments that moving the ramp so that it opens from parking lot is an improvement due to safety concerns. Commissioner Kimberly comments that he walked by, and the roof equipment is not visible from the sidewalk. It is only visible across the street and from other viewsheds it is obscured by the roof. He does not think the front deck will be a problem and the rear elevation is only visible from the parking lot. He recommends a bollard at the front corner because the vinyl siding is damaged because plows or cars are hitting it. Commissioner Munday comments that the siding material is not consistent with the district, but it could be with wood siding. Casement windows not consistent either. Commissioner Royalty agrees with the other commissioners that preservation concerns are less than for a contributing building, but it

would feel compatible if the materials used were consistent with the district. Chair Learned adds that the cost difference is anecdotal so it's hard to consider that. Commissioner Kimberly asks if the applicant would be willing to repair the vinyl siding rather than remove. Mr. Maiuolo replies that yes it can be repaired in-kind and cleaned. Chair Learned explains that repairs do not come under the Commission's purview but re-siding the building does. Commissioner Kimberly asks about considering wood for the railings. Mr. Maiuolo explains that originally the design had a wood rail, but it was considered too modern, so he changed it to a traditional design. The proposed profiles would be expensive to create but they would be open to change to a wood rail. Chair Learned reiterates that the applicant would be willing to repair the vinyl siding and substitute wood for the proposed railing with the same profile. Mr. Maiuolo confirms. Commissioner Kimberly adds that the applicant should add a bollard in front. Mr. Maiuolo says he would discuss that with the landlord.

Commissioner Kimberly makes a motion to accept the application as submitted with the exception of the siding being repaired not replaced, railings on both decks be wood with a similar proposed profile, and a bollard on the corner.

Commissioner Royalty seconds.

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

All in favor at 8:01.

Motion passes.

2.4 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 Steenblick, 134 Greenwich Avenue

Avraham Ben-Shabat, 134 Greenwich Avenue

Mr. Steenblick presents an updated application from last month to remove the existing porch and construct a new wooden porch and railing. He has reduced the scale of the porch, chosen proportional columns, and designed a wood railing system using 1"x 4" boards. He shows the section elevation of the roofline with the fascia profile and aluminum flashing. The balusters are 2" x 2" spaced 5" on center and the drawings show the design profile of the railing. The

trim around the door will match the existing trim of windows. Chair Learned comments that she appreciates the effort put into the application and the thought put into the design resulting from the Commission's comments. She adds that the spacing on the balustrade, normally a 2:1 ratio, make them feel very modern. By making the balusters closer together it would make them more traditional. Mr. Steenblich says he is willing to make them closer. Commissioner Kimberly concurs with Chair Learned about baluster spacing. Commissioner Munday comments that the shed roof architrave return around the side is unusual. Mr. Steenblich explains that it covers a structural member returning to house. Commissioner Munday suggests adding trim. Mr. Steenblich replies that he can make that revision. Chair Learned opens it up to public comment.

Sarah Tisdale, New Haven Preservation Trust, 922 State Street

Ms. Tisdale comments that the architect did a great job working back and forth with her, especially without historic imagery for reference. She feels the design follows the Secretary of the Interior Standards working with the historic character of the neighborhood while not trying to recreate something that was not there. She asks for the newell post dimensions to which Mr. Steenblich replies that it is a 4"x 4" post.

Chair Learned opens it up to Commissioner discussion.

Commissioner Godshall makes a motion to approve subject to two revisions; balusters close to 4" on center and for the side wall of porch roof express the structure underneath with horizontal trim piece return.

Commissioner Kimberly seconds.

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

All in favor at 9:41.

Motion passes.

3. Discussion Items

3.1 90 Day Demolition Delay Applications

- **Dixwell Plaza Redevelopment. Demolition of:**

- **87 Webster Street**
- **220 Dixwell Avenue**
- **224-226 Dixwell Avenue, a/k/a 230 Dixwell Avenue**
- **172 Dixwell Avenue, 176 Dixwell Avenue, 180-184 Dixwell Avenue, 190 Dixwell Avenue, 192 Dixwell Avenue, 206-208 Dixwell Avenue, 210-212 Dixwell Avenue**
- **156-158 Dixwell Avenue**

Ms. Hall reminds the Commission of the demolition review period. All of the buildings (except one) are on the modernist inventory. The application includes a narrative and renderings of the new development. The Commission can voice an opinion but there is no vote. The attorney representing the properties is present.

Carolyn Kone, 131 West Park Avenue

Attorney Kone explains that the nonprofit developer, ConnCorp, for years has worked with Newhallville and Dixwell Avenue residents for what they would like to see in the Dixwell Avenue plaza, currently a rundown strip mall with vacant stores. They have gone through approval process with City Plan public hearings. ConnCorp trains adults and has programs for children. In the center of the large public plaza, there will be space for leisure, theater and a farmers' market. Behind it is a supermarket and food hall with space for local businesses. In the rear will be an apartment building with an affordable housing component. There will also be retail space, a performing arts center and office space with parking structure plus a greenhouse and green space. Townhouses will be added on an adjacent street. To accommodate all this, the current buildings need to be demolished. Commissioner Godshall adds that Ms. Tisdale has been in touch with State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and it was determined the Elks Lodge is eligible for designation. SHPO will reach an agreement for mitigation measures with the developer.

Chair Learned asks for a consensus on any concerns about the applications. Commissioner Godshall asks that follow-up on the mitigation come to the Commission. Ms. Hall asks if there is state funding. Attorney Kone says the developer has applied for state funding. Ms. Hall says if it should get that funding the project would trigger SHPO review.

- **79 Lawrence Street**

Ms. Hall explains that since the draft agenda, there was a meeting with the applicant and while the notice indicated it was only removal of the roof, it was pointed out they were taking down everything above the first floor. This is a church building, and it was determined they needed to withdraw the application because it was inaccurately represented. It will come back next month with a broader scope of demolition.

3.2 Small Cell Antenna Installation Standards

Ms. Hall explains that throughout many cities in the state there is a rollout of 5G antennas, and the urban centers have come together to create a set of standards. Chair Learned would like to defer this item to next month if there is an expert that will be able to speak to the Commission. Ms. Brown recommends circulating a draft of the standards before the next meeting for review.

4. Minutes

4.1 Approval of August 10, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Chair Learned asks to table the approval of the minutes until the next meeting to verify a proposed change by Commissioner Godshall.

4.2 Approval of September 14, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Learned makes a motion to approve minutes as amended by Commissioners Godshall and Learned.

Commissioner Kimberly seconds.

Commissioner Royalty abstains.

All in favor at 10:07.

Motion passes.

5. New Business

Ms. Hall reminds the Commission of upcoming training on Tuesday, October 18, 2022 at 6:00pm.

Commissioner Learned makes a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Kimberly seconds.

All in favor at 10:09.

Motion Passes.

Respectfully submitted by Jordan Sorensen, recorder.