

NEW HAVEN HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Wednesday, January 11, 2023, Regular Meeting, 7:00 PM
Location: Web-Based Meeting via Zoom

Acting Chair Karen Jenkins calls to order the public hearing at 7:16pm.

In Attendance: Laura Brown (City Plan Director), Fatima Cecunjanin (Staff to the Historic District Commission, Planner II), John Ward (Special Counsel to Economic Development), Karen Jenkins (Commissioner and Acting Chair), Susan Godshall (Commissioner), Richard Munday (Commissioner), Dylan Christopher (Commissioner), David Valentino (Commissioner), Sarah Tisdale (New Haven Preservation Trust)

Not In Attendance: *Trina Learned (Commissioner and Chair)*

1. Roll Call

Acting Chair Jenkins 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 23-01-CA 98 South Water Street (MBLU: 232/ 0002/ 02000) City Point Local Historic District. Owner: Garrett Grant. Seeking approval to fix alterations made to the barn without a CoA including: garage door, siding, and removed brickmould.

Garrett Grant, 555 Woodhouse Avenue, Wallingford

Mr. Grant introduced himself as the Commodore of the Pequonnock Yacht Club and carpenter by trade. The Pequonnock is not a private club. There was a break-in at the club into the barn in October 2022, in which emergency repairs were needed to secure the building. Mr. Grant is seeking approval for the Pequonnock Yacht Club to fix the alterations made to the barn without a CoA, including the garage door, the siding, and brickmould. Mr. Grant is prepared and willing to comply with all of the commission's requests, remembering the financial interests of the nonprivate yacht club. Ms. Cecunjanin asks Mr. Grant if he can elaborate on the presentation that he sent to her. Mr. Grant states that after the break-in, the damaged siding was covered with plywood and

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battens to match the existing siding. Mr. Grant states that there was also an issue with the overhead garage door. When PYC took over the property in 2008, the door was already there. They are prepared to cover the existing door with a more period appropriate barn door. The signage on the barn for the advertisement of restaurants will be removed, and Mr. Grant would like guidance on where to move them to. Commissioner Valentino states that he lives in the City Point Local Historic District and this barn is probably the most looked at structure in the whole neighborhood. He sees why there is concern with the building. Mr. Grant states that there are not too many barns left in New Haven, and since they have one, they want to protect it. Acting Chair Jenkins asks what a Commodore is. Mr. Grant responds that it is similar to a CEO or Chief Officer, leader of the board.

Commissioner Jenkins opens discussion to commissioners. Mr. Grant explains the photograph of the siding that will be replaced. His suggestion is to remove the plywood and repair the existing siding with four-inch tongue-and-groove siding. Ms. Cecunjanin asks if Mr. Grant can explain more about the window where there is incorrect molding. Mr. Grant says that he takes responsibility for this, as there is a hornet's nest and needed an expedient fix. The proposed fix is to remove the added trim and replicate the existing trim on the south side of the building. Mr. Grant moves on to discussing the overhead door and adds that he suggests installing barn doors to swing out and cover the existing door. He proposes installing doors that match the doors on the east side of the building and says that they will be painted white. Mr. Grant provides an example of the Thomas Oyster Company in Mystic for potential barn door replication. Commissioner Godshall says that it is admirable that the club is willing to do repairs, but the presentation seems to be presentation of intent. It seems like there are not enough details to follow the usual checklist of specifications that the commission is used to. Mr. Grant explains that the PYC is going to do anything that the commission says and restates his intentions for repairing the siding and windows, along with plans for the barn door. Chair Jenkins says that she believes that Commissioner Godshall is not questioning their intentions, she is questioning the specifications for the project, including timeline or materials, for

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example. Commissioner Godshall explains that in these public hearings, the commission often is provided with materials, cut sheets, and dimensions that describe the exact end result of the project in order for the building department to match the result. Mr. Grant states that in the narrative of the presentation, there is the description to replace the siding with four-inch tongue-and-groove siding. He states that you would be able to see a difference between the new siding and the original siding due to the weathering of the original siding that has been there for over one hundred years. Acting Chair Jenkins asks Mr. Grant if he has conferred with the New Haven Preservation Trust. Mr. Grant states that he has met with Sarah Tisdale and Fatima Cecunjanin on-site and explained their intention of using one-by-four planks of Douglas fir. Commissioner Godshall states that this is an important distinction and that while now the materials are specified for the siding, they do not have the same specification for the barn door or window molding. Mr. Grant asks if the commission feels like there is sufficient information regarding the siding and then they can move on to the rest of the issues. Acting Chair Jenkins responds that it is not appropriate for them to be considered one-by-one and that everything is considered to be one unit. Mr. Grant states that there is a drawing of their intentions for the barn door, which would be six-and-a-half by eight-and-a-half feet shiplap painted white. He believes that it would be better suited painted the same red as the rest of the barn. Commissioner Munday reinforces Commissioner Godshall's statement commending Mr. Grant's intent, but the commission has expectations of documentation that describes exactly what will be done to the structure. He states that the barn doors in the examples that Mr. Grant has provided are dissimilar to the plan that they have provided of their intentions. Commissioner Godshall states that at the Thomas Oyster Company, the Z-shaped bracing is wider than the PYC's proposal and that the commission would like to see the door on the barn to be more historically accurate and that they need proof and more accurate drawings on the true intent. Acting Chair Jenkins states that they are not questioning the intent of the project, just the details. As there is a field visit by the building department following the project, the proposal and execution must be matched. Commissioner Godshall says that the building department wants to see very specific drawings that they can match up, proving that the project that the commission approved

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is the same as the actual outcome. Commissioner Christopher states that he believes that there was enough information provided about the siding and window trim, but that if there was a little bit more information about the garage door, it would make it sufficient. He emphasizes to Mr. Grant that he does not want this to see confrontational.

Commissioner Munday states that the commission needs to see what is intended, and Mr. Grant is nearly there. The commission just wants to make sure that the new door will be stable, they want to be clear on intent, and want the color of the door to be correct. He does not think that white is appropriate. Commissioner Godshall suggests replicating z-bracing for the door, rather than what was proposed. Acting Chair Jenkins opens the discussion for public comment.

Vincent Amendola

Mr. Amendola is an attorney and member of Pequonnock Yacht Club. He asks to clarify the specifics of what the commission would like to see in order to move forward. He suggests clear drawings and prototypical materials for the door. Acting Chair Jenkins responds that clear design, specifically for the door, would be helpful, but also proof that the project would fit into the design of the surrounding neighborhood. Commissioner Godshall says that, for example, they would like to know how the door is hung, what types of hinges will be used, what handles will be used, and paint choice. They need to know exactly what will be on the building. Mr. Grant responds with stating that the club was served with a cease-and-desist order for the building department because of the siding on the building and met with the department within two days of that to discuss. Several days later, they were notified of the issues with the window. Weeks later, they were notified of the issue with the garage door. Following that, they were notified of the issues with the signage. Mr. Grant explains that they are trying to catch-up with all of these issues. He apologizes if it seemed like they were unprepared, but they were mainly focusing on the original issue of the siding. Mr. Grant hopes that the commission is willing to approve their application because of the siding plans that the commission is satisfied with. Acting Chair Jenkins thanks Mr. Grant and asks if there are any other public comments.

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Sarah Tisdale, 922 State Street, New Haven

Ms. Tisdale states that the New Haven Preservation Trust only has photos from the street side and another side of the building, not of the barn door. She recommends a further sketch of intentions to help with the application and is willing to help PYC with that.

Commissioner Valentino restates that multiple things have happened to this historic structure including the cease-and-desist and the vandalism. He emphasizes that the PYC is trying to preserve the structure that someone in the community harmed, and that since the garage door was grandfathered in, they technically do not have to do anything to it. They are prepared to make all of these changes on a volunteer basis. Commissioner Valentino asks if it is possible to approve part of the application and not all of it, so that PYC can start moving forward. Commissioner Godshall states that she has been on the commission for the longest and cannot recall a partial approval of an application, thinks it is a question for Attorney Ward. Attorney Ward states that he cannot remember a partial approval being done before, but policy-wise cannot see any reason why it cannot be done. Commissioner Christopher asks if they have issued conditional approvals before. Attorney Ward states that those are not the same thing. Mr. Grant restates all of the issues that have stopped their progression in this project and asks when they will stop and if more issues will come up. Commissioner Godshall states that the application that they submitted covers three things and the signage, which is what they are addressing. Attorney Ward states the commission can only address what PYC applied for. Mr. Amendola asks if they can withdraw two items from the application and only leave the siding point on the application, therefore the commission could just approve that if they felt it was right, and PYC could put in a new application for the rest. Attorney Ward asks what would happen if they did not put in a new application down the line. Mr. Amendola states that they could just make a good faith representation to appear in the future with a new application. Commissioner Godshall states that she does not see an issue with waiting four weeks, until the next meeting February 8th and that it does not seem unreasonable. Mr. Grant asks Commissioner Godshall if she foresees any other issues

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with the existing doors in the future. Commissioner Godshall responds that Mr. Grant is not in a position to ask about anything else that is not on the application. Commissioner Godshall states that she is not sure if it appropriate, but she would make a motion for this discussion to be tabled in order for more detail on the second and third parts of the application, until next month's meeting. Attorney Ward states that that is an option. Commissioner Valentino states that he does not see why they should wait another four weeks for additional information that the owners did not even know that they needed. Commissioner Valentino emphasizes that they are operating on a volunteer basis and are going above-and-beyond what they need to do to preserve PYC, and that he believes they should exclude the second and third projects from the application and just focus on the siding. Commissioner Godshall asks Commissioner Valentino why he is on the commission if he would support that. Commissioner Valentino responds that it is a lot to ask people to wait another four weeks for an answer. Acting Chair Jenkins states that she does not believe Commissioner Godshall's question was appropriate. Commissioner Munday states that this was a procedural question and the commission asked Attorney Ward if there was an issue with splitting the application, and he said that there was not. Acting Chair Jenkins asks Attorney Ward for clarification on the procedure again. Attorney Ward responds that he cannot see any reason why the commission cannot split the application up, but the only issue is that there is no way of making PYC come back for the rest of the application. He suggests that they split the application into three parts and approve or deny the first one and table the other two parts.

Commissioner Valentino motions to approve the siding issue from the cease-and-desist.

Commissioner Munday seconds.

Commissioner Godshall states that she believes the motion must be regarding the application and suggests that the wording of the motion is amended. Attorney Ward states that the application must first be split into three and then the commission can vote on the separate parts.

Commissioner Valentino withdraws motion to approve the siding issue from the cease-and-desist.

Commissioner Valentino motions to split the items on the Certificate of Appropriateness application into three parts.

Attorney Ward clarifies that the commission can either vote on all three up-and-down, and deny without prejudice if applicable. The commission may table items two and three after the first vote if they wish, as well. Ms. Cecunjanin asks if the applicants would have to pay for the additional applications. Commissioner Godshall responds that they would just defer to the next month's meeting and asks if Commissioner Valentino would split application into two parts for ease.

Commissioner Valentino restates withdraw of motion to approve the siding issue from the cease-and-desist.

Commissioner Valentino restates motion to split the items on the Certificate of Appropriateness application into two parts- item one and items two/three, to vote individually on each item.

Commissioner Christopher seconds.

All in favor at 8:24 PM.

Motion passes.

Commissioner Valentino motions to approve item one.

Commissioner Christopher seconds.

All in favor at 8:26 PM.

Motion passes.

Commissioner Godshall motions to table items two/three until February meeting.

Commissioner Valentino seconds.

All in favor at 8:27 PM.

Motion passes.

3. Discussion Items

3.1 Approve 2023 Calendar

Ms. Cecunjanin explains that the April meeting date originally fell during Passover, so it has been moved until the following week. Commissioner Godshall notes that the May submission deadline is before the April meeting and questions whether this is an issue or not. Ms. Cecunjanin responds that it is not an issue.

Commissioner Valentino motions to approve the 2023 calendar.

Commissioner Munday seconds.

All in favor at 8:31 PM.

Motion passes.

3.2 Brewery Square Gatehouse Update

Acting Chair Jenkins met with the Shoreline Corporation on January 11, 2023, and read a letter from them into the public record. Acting Chair Jenkins notes that the group is more than willing to testify in front of the commission, with their intention being to renovate the gatehouse. Commissioner Godshall mentioned that the New Haven Preservation Trust looked into the building and is confused why the commission is talking to Shoreline if it is a nonparty in the situation. Acting Chair Jenkins proposes that herself and Commissioner Godshall write a letter asking who owns the building. Commissioner Godshall would like to clarify the authority of the property manager, not the owner. Ms. Brown states that the commission must be clear with their roles as commissioners or individuals in this situation and to not assume the roles, even though this is being discussed. The commission must keep the letter writing separate, except if the commission is voting on it. Commissioner Godshall states that the Blight Ordinance is being violated and that the city needs to do something about it. Commissioner Godshall also adds that when the city contractors demolished the building on the corner, they broke apart the roof line of the remaining gatehouse building in December 2018 and that there is failure to maintain. The harm to the building can be seen on the Assessor's card for the property. Attorney Ward questions if anyone has contacted the building department about

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a blight order. Ms. Cecunjanin adds that she believes LCI issues the blight orders and will check to see if one has been issued. Attorney Ward says that we should find out whether there is any basis for a blight order to be issued and notes that demolition by neglect could be an issue. Acting Chair Jenkins says that she does not understand what the objective is, and questions whether it is to get the gatehouse repaired, and if so, who would it make the most sense to work with in order to get this done. Commissioner Munday asks what the purview of the Historic District Commission is in this issue. Commissioner Godshall responds that the commission does not have enforcement powers, but that someone in the city does and should be acting on it. Attorney Ward says that LCI and the building department need to be contacted in order to get anything done and to figure out what the best strategy to make that happen is. Commissioner Godshall restates that the only authority the commission has, is to raise questions. Commissioner Christopher questions what they are trying to decide if the commission does not have purview over this issue. Acting Chair Jenkins notes that she has a conflict of interest as both a commissioner and a resident of the building. Commissioner Valentino states that he thinks the commission agrees that they all want the tarp on the roof gone. Commissioner Godshall questions whether the city of New Haven can help put pressure on the owners to resolve this issue. Attorney Ward questions whether the tarp is actually protecting the building or if it is just slowing deterioration, and when they intend on taking the tarp off. Ms. Brown states that there are definitely people within the city of New Haven that have the authority to enforce the Blight Ordinance, but she is not sure that using the commission to compel them to do so is the most appropriate action. Ms. Brown suggests that sometimes asking nicely works a lot better than compelling. Acting Chair Jenkins states that she thinks the commission can agree that the objective is to get the gatehouse renovated, but questions how to continue the conversation on this topic. Commissioner Christopher mentions that he is confused about why there was a mechanism to stop the work on the project in the public hearing for tonight, but that there is no mechanism to fix the roof on the gatehouse. Attorney Ward responds that the HDC can only act on issues that come in front of them. In this case, demolition by neglect is an issue and whether this constitutes blight. Attorney Ward states that the HDC does not

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really have a roll in this issue, but it is up for discussion because of the difference that the HDC can have in getting the issue resolved. Acting Chair Jenkins asks if it is appropriate for someone on the commission to use their capacity as a citizen to invite the Shoreline Corporation to the next meeting. Commissioner Munday says that based on what Attorney Ward described, it is probably not appropriate for the commission to get involved unless something specifically comes before them. Attorney Ward states that there are other organizations that may make requests. Ms. Brown questions whether there is any precedent for the commission to be proactive if there is not an application in front of them, as the commission meets the certified local government status specified by the State Historic Preservation Office. Attorney Ward responds that it is a good question to ask and mentions that an organization that has some kind of authority behind it is probably the best way to go about handling this issue. Acting Chair Jenkins states that from her understanding, the reason why the gatehouse has not been repairs was due to a matter of finances. Commissioner Godshall says that she cannot think of any precedent, in response to Ms. Brown's question. Acting Chair Jenkins calls an end to the conversation and mentions that she will email Ms. Brown and Commissioner Godshall on how they should move forward. Ms. Brown says that for the good of procedure, she has a meeting with the State Historic Preservation Office on Monday (January 16) and will raise this as a question of procedure.

4. Minutes

Commissioner Godshall motions to approve the December 14, 2022 meeting minutes.

Commissioner Valentino seconds.

All in favor at 9:00 PM.

Motion passes.

5. New Business

Commissioner Valentino mentions that he does not have any new business, but that he thanks the commission for working with him, even though he might be shaking things up

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a little bit. Commissioner Valentino would like to change the tone of the meetings because people are discouraged when testifying, the commission should be working with the property owners and not against them. Acting Chair Jenkins thanks Commissioner Valentino for his input, and says she is not unaware of the unusual reputation that the commission has with the people of New Haven. Commissioner Christopher says that the biggest challenge is almost punishing the people who are trying to follow the rules and not being able to do anything to the people who are not following the rules, and that he is not sure how to fix it. Acting Chair Jenkins says that there are ways to fix it and that she is not unaware of the perception in the community.

Commissioner Valentino motions to adjourn.

Commissioner Munday seconds.

All in favor at 9:04 PM.

Motion passes.

Respectfully submitted by Amelia Mower, recorder.