

NEW HAVEN HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Thursday, July 29, 2021, Special Meeting, 7:00 PM

Location: Web-based meeting via Zoom

Commissioner Trina Learned calls to order the public hearing at 7:00.

In attendance: William Long (Deputy Director of Zoning), Maya Vardi (City Plan), Aicha Wood (City Plan), John Ward (Special Counsel to Economic Development Administrator), Trina Learned (Commissioner and Chair), Tom Kimberly (Commissioner and Clerk), Susan Godshall (Commissioner), Doug Royalty (Commissioner), Karen Jenkins (Commissioner), Elizabeth Holt (New Haven Preservation Trust)

1. Commissioner 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.

2. Continued Public Hearing

2.1 21-02-CA Owner: Sarah Jepsen, Agent: Richard Freeman. Seeking approval for replacement of 10 existing windows at 593 Chapel Street (MBLU:208 054901802), Wooster Square Local Historic District.

Ms. Vardi explained that applicant requested this item to be tabled until the next meeting. Commissioner Learned stated that this item, which was a continued public hearing, will be continued at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Historic District Commission.

3. New Public Hearing

3.1 21-03-CA Owner: Jacqueline Hyde LLC, Agent: Russ Ekstrom. Seeking approval for roof replacement on the first-floor addition, repair or replacement of soffits, and replacement of gutters and downspouts at 19 Howard Avenue (MBLU: 232 0001 02000), City Point Local Historic District.

Russ Ekstrom & William DeBonis 19 Howard Avenue, New Haven

Mr. Ekstrom presents information about their house located at 19 Howard Avenue, which is at the corner of South Water Street and Howard Avenue and was built c. 1850 by Eber Kelsey. He describes the architecture including the wrap around one-story addition that is not original to the house. He proposes replacement of the roof on this addition due to extensive disrepair and leaking in three rooms. It is also not visible from either street. He proposes using new roofing with architectural HDZ shingles (Charcoal color), restoring rotting woodwork, like repairing the soffits with wood, and replacing the aluminum gutters with seamless gutters of the same profile (6-inch gutters and downspouts). Mr. Ekstrom stresses that nothing will be done to the original structure, and everything removed will be replaced in kind. He shows an aerial view of the house to explain the location of the roof, elevations of the view from Howard Avenue and South Water Street, and present conditions of the disrepair. For comparison, Mr. Ekstrom shows a photo of 27 Howard Avenue which already has the proposed gutters as an example. The contractor is Henry Guzman from Connecticut Masonry and Waterproofing.

Commissioner Learned thanks Mr. Ekstrom for a comprehensive presentation. She explains that the Commission does not have jurisdiction for work that is not visible from the public right of way and repairing in kind. Although those examples do not require a Certificate of Appropriateness, she had decided with staff that there is enough complexity in the work that it was good to include it all in the application for discussion with the Commission. They will sort out if a Certificate of Appropriateness is needed. She asks if there are comments for clarification from Commissioners.

Commissioner Godshall asks to clarify if the addition is the one in the presented photo of the street view. Mr. Ekstrom replies that you can see the corner of the addition, as that is the only part that fronts the street. The roof is not visible from the street due to its low pitch.

Commissioner Royalty asks about the phrase used in the application, “repair or replace soffits as necessary,” as those are two different methods. Mr. Ekstrom clarifies that if wood is rotten, he will have to replace. Commissioner Royalty asks about some darkness on the roofline in the Howard Street elevation photo. Mr. Ekstrom replies that that is where molding

had rotted, and the gutter fell off. Commissioner Royalty also asks about if they considered restoring the Yankee gutters. Mr. Ekstrom explains that it would be a substantial reconstruction for that addition as they have already been roofed over.

Commissioner Learned closes the Commissioner clarification part of the hearing and opens it to the public. There is no public comment.

Commissioner Learned closes testimony and the Commissioners discuss. Commissioner Kimberly comments that replacing in kind does not fall under the Commission's purview and reiterates that the gutters are existing, and the downspout is just a different diameter. Commissioner Learned comments that everything proposed is compatible and sensitive to the historic structure. Commissioner Godshall agree that there may not be much here that falls into the Commission's purview. She reminds the Commission about their approval of a Certificate at 601 Chapel Street which became a baseline example for future work.

Commissioner Godshall makes a motion to approve as submitted.

Commissioner Kimberly seconds the motion.

All in favor at 7:35.

3.2 1-04-CA Owner: 141 Greenwich Avenue LLC, Agent: Jason Sobocinski. Seeking Approval for siding replacement at 141 Greenwich Avenue (MBLU: 233 0007 01000), City Point Local Historic District.

Ms. Vardi explained that this item was placed on the agenda as a courtesy to the owner after they received a stop order from the building department as a result of starting to install vinyl siding without a permit or Commission approval. Staff did not receive an application in time for this meeting, but the work has stopped, and they began repainting again rather than applying vinyl siding.

4. Administrative Action

4.1 Owner: Real Estate Group XIV, LLC. Agent: Andrew Rizzo. In accordance to the Historic District Commission's Role of Procedures, page 2, Sec. C(2) the

Commission must determine whether pertinent changes were made to the design considering a similar application was previously denied at 515 Quinnipiac Avenue. (MBLU: 092 1002 01500), Quinnipiac River Local Historic District.

Andrew Rizzo (487 Fort Hale Road, New Haven)

Ms. Vardi explained that staff have received two new letters and they have had internal discussion with the building department. The building department confirmed that the structure they are asking to remove is not posing a hazard to the public or pedestrians, and they will ensure it is fenced properly. Commissioner Godshall asks if John Ward has found any comparisons. Mr. Ward replies that they could not find any precedent for whether the deterioration would constitute a different application, especially since the structure has not deteriorated much more than previous application. Commissioner Godshall says the New Haven Preservation Trust has photos from 2019 if needed. Commissioner Learned confirms that right now they are not entertaining a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness because there are no substantial differences from the previous application. Mr. Long clarifies for the Commission that the applicant wants to file a new application, but the discussion now is just whether there is a significant change enough to submit a new application. Mr. Ward adds that the issue is of letting a building deteriorate enough to make it a new application.

Mr. Long later asks at the end of the meeting for clarification about how staff should handle this situation and if the Commission need to vote. Commissioner Learned confirms that the application is not accepted because there is not significant difference. Mr. Ward replies to send a letter saying it has been ruled on that the Commission does not think there is a change for an application.

5. Discussion

5.1 90-Day Demolition Delay Application:

- **352 Saint Ronan Street- Garage (MBLU: 219 0458 01900) Expires 11/22/2021**

Ms. Vardi reached out to the State Historic Preservation Office since this property's garage was listed in the Historic Resource Inventory but not in the Prospect Hill National Register listing. Marena Wisniewski responded by email that if the National Register nomination were to be updated, the garage would be considered a contributing resource. Ms. Vardi shows the

property map and location of the garage. She explains that the owners propose to demolish garage and build a new larger structure in same area, possibly making it an office.

Commissioner Learned reminds everyone that the Commission does not have jurisdiction over a National Register district but under Certified Local Government rules they can render an opinion as the presiding government authority on preservation issues.

Commissioner Godshall asks if the structure would be residential. Ms. Vardi confirms it is intended for office use. Commissioner Godshall reminds the Commission that 313 Humphrey Street had a residential use but the new construction that replaced the garage was problematic. Commissioner Learned replies that it is not in the Commission's purview as to what is replacing the garage, just reacting to the demolition delay. Commissioner Godshall thinks the proposed use should be provided in a discussion of this nature.

Commissioner Kimberly asks about the option of repurposing the garage somewhere else. Commissioner Learned replies that she is not sure if it is architecturally significant enough for moving or reconstruction because the photographs are not clear.

Commissioner Learned asks the Commission if they want to develop a statement to send to the State Historic Preservation Office regarding this structure and its demolition.

Commissioner Godshall replies no. Commissioner Royalty replies that it is a regrettable loss but does not think it rises to the level of a statement. He explains how at the time the National Register nomination was written historians just did not describe outbuildings as much but agrees with Ms. Wisniewski that today it would have been included.

Commissioner Learned also comments that the garage does not face the street and is a small size, neither of which will unfortunately be true for what replaces it. Nevertheless, she does not feel the Commission has substantial grounds to write a strong letter expressing disagreement with the demolition. She asks if there is a member of the public would like to comment.

Anstress Farwell, 37 Wooster Place, New Haven

Ms. Farwell comments that the size of the replacement structure may need to come before zoning because side and rear yard variation issues. There could be a point in the future to make comments on the new construction. There is no other public comment.

Commissioner Learned deems the consensus of the Commission to not submit a letter.

5.2 St. Martin de Porres Academy

Commissioner Godshall explains that the academy had proposed a master plan for future recreation fields on Columbus Avenue. This plan was reviewed by the New Haven Preservation Trust and received site plan approval in December 2019. The demolition of three contributing structures in the Trowbridge Square National Register district were not brought up at that time because that is not a requirement of site plan review. One of the buildings is a brick garage and the State Historic Preservation Office is willing to compromise on that, but there is also the former rectory and former convent. The New Haven Preservation Trust feels the convent is most important to the streetscape. For this Commission, she would like to highlight that in cases of special permits, the applicant is required to notify City Planning Commission if buildings have historic listings. However, it is not required for site plan review which she feels is a short coming. She recounts three examples in the last year and a half of the same situation when National Register buildings have been ignored in the site plan approval process. Section 64 has twenty-eight requirements for site plan review, none of which talk about historic buildings. She would like the Commission to consider and take the position that historic building designation is just as important to site review as it is to other processes. There is no way for the public to know there is a historic building there.

Commissioner Learned clarifies that this situation illuminates an issue that should be rectified, not that the St. Martin site plan review should or could be undone. She also asks if St. Martin will still be required to get a demolition permit. Commissioner Godshall replies that they will need to apply for a demolition permit. She adds that they are close to applying and are unwilling to talk about alternatives.

Commissioner Learned asks if the Commission feels that they want to propose ways to avoid the demolition or establish advocacy for planning ahead about a response for a delay of

demolition notice as there are no other alternatives to this situation. Commissioner Godshall reiterates that she just wants to make a recommendation to staff to ask the question about historic buildings during site plan review.

Ms. Wood clarifies that during the site plan meeting there was discussion of the historic buildings, but site plan reports do not address those issues, as per ordinance. She says that it would require a text change to add that to the ordinance.

Commissioner Learned asks the Commission if they want to move forward to another meeting to continue discussion and recommendations. Commissioner Godshall asks staff members if there are other text changes planned to Section 64. Ms. Wood replies that they are looking more broadly at the ordinance but have not been considering any specific examples. Commissioner Godshall asks if it would be possible to add historic buildings to the site plan review requirements in Section 64. Ms. Wood says it is something to study and talk about with counsel as she is supportive of adding some protections. Commissioner Learned summarizes that this is not the work of this Commission because it is not in the local historic district. However, under the Certified Local Government role they can opine on preservation issues, but she does not think that extends to authorizing changes to the ordinance. She feels the New Haven Preservation Trust is in a good position to do that. The Commission may have a role in supporting, disagreeing, or supplementing, a statement made by another organization. She would advocate that the Commission not move further on this matter but rather stay in dialogue with another organization who has a direct advocacy role for historic structures outside of local historic districts. Commissioner Godshall respectfully disagrees and reiterates her point. Mr. Long adds that he attends all three commission meetings and will look out for this issue. Commissioner Learned also adds that they can continue to put this on subsequent meeting agendas for further discussion and that all Commissioners try to learn more about the issue.

5.3 Enforcement:

- **83 Howard Avenue (MBLU: 233 0003 02000)**

Ms. Vardi explains that since it was discussed at the June meeting, she wanted to inform the Commission that staff sent a letter notifying the owner that he should apply for the satellite dishes installed. Staff has not yet received an application. Commissioner Kimberly asks about what kind of outreach the Commission has to the companies installing. He thinks the Commission should talk to them about it because the residents have no knowledge of the requirements. Commissioner Learned agrees and asks about the process for notifying residents what their responsibilities are in a local historic district. Mr. Long says when people move into a neighborhood, staff sends the guidelines about what to do when they want to do a project. He adds that staff will reach out to the satellite companies and get a point of contact. Commissioner Kimberly thinks it would be helpful as many are renters, as well as the removal of dishes. Commissioner Learned agrees. Ms. Vardi explains that the owner contacted her and said the renter put it up and since there are so many other satellite dishes in the neighborhood already, he is not sure what to do. Ms. Vardi agrees that a wholistic approach would be helpful. Commissioner Learned suggests that landlords could require certain placement requirements or restrictions as part of their tenant's lease.

5.4 Section 106:

- **153 Forbes Avenue (MBLU: 078 0954 00800)- Collocate antennas at approximately 75 feet above ground level on an approximately 100-foot-tall church tower. Deadline for comments August 2, 2021**

Ms. Vardi explains that the owners are proposing to add antennas on top of the church steeple with no height change. Existing antennas would be repointed or removed.

Commissioner Learned comments on the beauty of a building and that this would be continuing the misuse of the building. She asks the Commission if they should make a statement about the antenna structures. Commissioner Royalty asks about seeking guidance from the State Historic Preservation Office about determinations from 106 review for these issues, like how many of these items is too many. Commissioner Learned agrees and comments that this tower especially is highly visible because of the highway.

Ms. Wood replies to Commissioner Royalty's point and says the Commission is being invited into the 106 process but it is a State process through PURA. She adds that in the past

the Commission has sent a letter that would go back to the Siting Council as it is a process not in local jurisdiction. She agrees with establishing design guidelines, as they are seeing a lot more of these kind of applications with 5G installations. Commissioner Royalty thinks the commission's role would be to raise an alarm about an adverse effect of the communication items. He is just unsure about where to draw the line. He is not recommending taking a stand on this instance but is concerned about how many of the items are appearing.

Commissioner Learned comments that given the tight deadline and the complexity of this one particular installation, they will not draft an opinion to the state. However, she thinks the Commission would like to consult with the State Historic Preservation Office to develop guidelines for future consideration for these types of issues.

6. Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes- 6/9//2021

Commissioner Learned asks for a couple corrections: top of page 2, change "awkward" and "neither of which are present" should be "is"; page 4, "moves to ask the applicant to come back" should have consistent language like "continuing items to next scheduled hearing" or "tabling an item"; page 9, Pirelli building approved language confusing. Commission Royalty asks to eliminate confusing phrasing after "pleased with the listing".

Commissioner Kimberly moves to accept minutes as amended.

Commissioner Godshall seconds the motion.

All in favor 8:41.

7. New Business

Commissioner Learned confirms that the next meeting is August 11th. There will be a tabled application from this meeting and a new one on Qunnipiac Avenue.

Commissioner Kimberly moves to adjourn.

Commissioner Godshall seconds.

All in favor 8:45.

Respectfully submitted by Jordan Sorensen, recorder.