

**Town of Durham**  
**Historic District Commission**  
Special Meeting Minutes  
*Wednesday, March 8, 2006*

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 8:00 PM by Chairman Duncan Milne at the Durham Public Library.

**Roll Call:** Members present: Trish Dynia, Norman Jason, Duncan Milne, Sue Woodson and George Zeeb. Alternates Present: Gordon Wolfgang. Absent: Linda Bertelsen and Clay Howe

**Others Present:** Applicants John Corona and John Jackson, Town Hall Project Architect Tom Arcari, and several members of the public.

**Seating of Alternates:** Gordon Wolfgang was seated.

**Approval of Agenda:** A motion was made by Trish Dynia, seconded by Gordon Wolfgang to approve the agenda as published. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **PUBLIC HEARING ONE**

**Legal Notice:** The Chairman read the call of the public hearing as published in the Middletown Press.

**APCOA #317: Resubmission by Town Hall to Review Elevator Tower. Applicant: Town Hall Building Committee:** Architect Tom Arcari presented revised drawings to incorporate a gable-ended cupola to house the vertical extension of the elevator shaft. (At the time the application was previously approved, the Town Hall Building Committee had applied for a zoning variance from the state building code to allow a 43” reduction in the elevator car clearance height. That variance has since been denied by the State of Connecticut). Mr. Arcari stated that the cupola was designed to replicate the roofline and building materials of the existing structure. In addition, a 30” clock has been added in order to give the new structure a secondary element and purpose typical of older town hall structures.

Vice-Chairman Trish Dynia read into the record a letter from First Selectman Jim McLaughlin urging the Commission to, “Work with all due speed to arrive at a timely conclusion of the matter at hand.” Mr. McLaughlin did not advocate a specific position on the application.

Resident and Zoning Board of Appeals member Chris Flanagan spoke on behalf of himself, and urged the Commission to not succumb to pressure regarding time frames and budget and to not accept as final the plans submitted this evening. Mr. Flanagan stated that he felt there was no historic precedent for a clock tower and suggested that a bell

tower would be more historically accurate. Further, he proposed that a tower be built on the ground, and if it met with Commission approval, the tower could then be hoisted in place.

Mr. Arcari replied that he felt a clock tower was as appropriate as a bell tower and that the current cupola plan, if approved, could be changed at a later date if interest and finance allowed.

Resident Susan Good stated that she too was concerned that prolonging the process would result in additional budget overruns for the project, but she understood that this was not within the Commission's purview.

The general consensus expressed by the membership was that the proposed cupola represented the best solution to a difficult situation created by the State's denial of the variance for elevator shaft clearance.

*A motion was made by George Zeeb, seconded by Norman Jason, to close the public hearing on APCOA #317. The motion passed unanimously.*

## **PUBLIC HEARING TWO**

**APCOA #316, John Jackson, 303 Main Street, New Siding and Trim on the Entire House. Applicant: John Jackson:** Mr. Jackson spoke on behalf of himself and expressed a desire to replace old aluminum siding and existing wood siding with gray colored vinyl siding throughout. Mr. Jackson stated that the front of the house consisted of wood siding, while the sides and rear were a combination of wood and aluminum. Additionally, he noted that vinyl windows had been installed throughout the house during the 1990's.

Main Street resident Gene Riotte stated that the vinyl windows had been installed in 1996 or 1997, subsequent to the Commission denying Mr. Jackson's application for vinyl windows. Mr. Riotte distributed information published by the US Department of the Interior regarding the placement of aluminum and vinyl siding on historic buildings. Mr. Riotte then stated that he is in the process of replacing the wood siding on his own home with new wood siding and felt it was inappropriate for his immediate next door neighbor to utilize vinyl. He stated, "This would detract from the historic district in my area as well as the historic district as a whole."

Main Street resident Connie Brown also spoke in opposition to allowing the use of vinyl siding to replace wood siding. She stated that an individual who purchases a house in the historic district has an obligation to protect the integrity of the building and the district. She stated that she felt most of the area's residents took that obligation seriously and she takes offense that someone did not.

Mr. Jackson replied that he has personally vinyl sided twelve buildings on Main Street, both before and after the creation of the district.

Main Street resident Chris Sewell spoke in opposition to the application, indicating that if the above statement were true (twelve vinyl sided houses) the integrity of the historic district had already been seriously compromised and he would like to see it stopped.

*A motion was made by Duncan Milne, seconded by George Zeeb, to close the public hearing on APCOA #316. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **REGULAR MEETING (Continued)**

**Call to Order/Seating of Alternates:** The Chairman noted that the same members were present and seated.

**APCOA #317:** *A motion was made by George Zeeb, seconded by Gordon Wolfgang, to approve the town hall revision plans as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.*

**APCOA #316:** Commission members expressed concerns regarding approval of this application for two specific reasons: 1. Members did not wish to set a new precedent for allowing vinyl siding throughout the district, and 2. Members were concerned regarding the current status of the house as non-conformant. Specifically, the applicant received approval in February for simulated, divided light windows as opposed to snap-ins to cover the south side screened porch. Chairman Milne stated that the following morning he observed that the applicant was preparing to install the snap-ins. Asked about this, Mr. Jackson replied that the windows approved by the Commission were not what he had planned to install and that the work was  $\frac{3}{4}$ 's done by the time the Commission made its decision.

Several members noted that work was not supposed to commence on any reviewable project in the Historic District prior to it being reviewed by the commission. Trish Dynia asked the applicant why he came to the Commission at all since it seemed clear that he had a history of installing what he wished to install, in spite of what the Commission had or had not approved. Mrs. Dynia stated that she was reluctant to approve a new application on a home which was currently seriously out of compliance with Historic District regulations. Additionally, no members were willing to depart with current regulations and approve vinyl siding to replace wood.

*A motion was made by Trish Dynia, seconded by Duncan Milne, to deny APCOA #316. The motion passed unanimously.*

**Note:** Due to the late hour, the rest of the agenda was deferred to the next meeting.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Dynia  
Acting Clerk

*Cc: Town Clerk, Building Inspector, First Selectman*