

TOWN OF DURHAM
Historic District Commission
Monday, March 16, 2009, 8:00 PM
Durham Public Library Meeting Room
7 Maple Avenue, Durham, CT 06422
Special Meeting Minutes

Call to order, roll call, seating of alternates: The meeting was called to order at 8:00 PM by Chairman Duncan Milne at the Durham Public Library.

Roll Call: Members Present: Diana McCain, Duncan Milne and Sue Woodson. Alternates Present: Linda Bertelsen, Clay Howe (8:10) and Gordon Wolfgang. Trish Dynia.

Seating of Alternates: Linda Bertelsen, Clay Howe and Gordon Wolfgang were seated.

Approval of Agenda: *A motion was made by Linda Bertelsen, seconded by Diana McCain, to approve the agenda as written. The motion passed unanimously.*

Public Comment for Items Not on Agenda: None

PUBLIC HEARINGS

APCOA #345, Lauren Falanga, Postmaster, Durham Post Office, 103 Main Street, New Front Door: Bob Magi, contractor for the proposed project, distributed a drawing and catalog picture of the proposed aluminum framed glass door with side lights. Members noted that the building has no historic architectural significance and the applicant was required to apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness due to its location within the historic district. Additionally, the proposed door is similar to, but a vast improvement over, the existing door.

A motion was made by Sue Bertelsen, seconded by Diana McCain, to close the public hearing on APCOA # 345. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Sue Bertelsen, seconded by Diana McCain, to approve APCOA #345 as presented and described in the application. The motion passed with Clay Howe abstaining. (Mr. Howe arrived after the public hearing began.)

APCOA #346, Gary Grant, 40 Fowler Avenue, Shed Dormer: Mr. Grant distributed photographs of the property and a drawing of the proposed construction. The shed dormer would be constructed on the rear of the house to allow head room when climbing the stairs to the second floor. Materials to be used include wood clapboard siding, 25 year shingles to match the existing house, and a 3' x 4' true divided light wood case window. Members noted that the materials were appropriate and the dormer was not visible from the road.

A motion was made by Gordon Wolfgang, seconded by Diana McCain, to close the public hearing. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Gordon Wolfgang, seconded by Diana McCain, to approve APCOA #346 as presented and described in the application. The motion passed unanimously.

APCOA #347, Frank Urba, 71 Main Street, Barn Demolition: Chairman Milne noted that both he and Building Inspector Dick McManus had viewed the project on site and agreed with Mr. Urba's assessment that this two hundred year old, 15' x 20' barn was in deplorable condition. Mr. Urba had discovered while trying to fix the barn that it had not been constructed well in the first place. Mr. Milne agreed, noting that the barn at 71 Main Street was not an example of the fine craftsmanship the era was noted for. The applicant added that he plans to salvage beams of good quality for possible future construction, noting that he is aware that such construction would have to come before the Commission. Mr. Howe emphasized that although there appeared to be compelling reasons to tear down this barn, such action always represents a last resort. He further explained that there appears to be a dynamic in Durham to rip structures down and an approval of this application should not be seen as a green light/trend starter.

A motion was made by Linda Bertelsen, seconded by Sue Woodson, to close the public hearing. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Gordon Wolfgang, seconded by Diana McCain, to approve APCOA #347 as presented and described in the application. The motion passed unanimously with Clay Howe abstaining. (The applicant and member are acquaintances/neighbors.)

Review and Acceptance of Minutes: Members determined that the February "minutes" could not be approved as they were simply casual notes of a non-meeting due to the lack of a quorum. The secretary was advised that she should have instead provided copies of the January minutes which have yet to be approved.

Payment of Bills: *A motion was made by Linda Bertelsen, seconded by Sue Woodson, to authorize the Chairman to pay the latest Middletown Press bills as he deems appropriate. The motion passed unanimously.*

Review of Draft Letter by Chairman to Town Leaders and Residents Regarding Historic District in General and Compliance in Particular: Members reviewed the letter, made suggestions and Diana McCain was asked to present a revised edition at the April meeting.

Old Business: Diana McCain presented a letter she composed to a December, 2008 applicant highlighting the issues which caused the Commission to ask him to appear before the Commission regarding work done without a Certificate of Appropriateness. There was discussion as to the timing and appropriateness of the letter. It had been three months since the issue was disposed of in the applicant's favor and there was some sentiment that the issue should be left alone. Other members felt that reiterating the process to the applicant would serve to reinforce the importance of following established procedures.

A motion was made by Gordon Wolfgang, seconded by Clay Howe, to authorize Diana McCain to send the letter as written. The motion passed on a vote of 5 to 1 with Linda Bertelsen, Clay Howe, Diana McCain, Duncan Milne and Gordon Wolfgang voting in favor and Sue Woodson voting against the motion.

New Business: Chairman Milne announced that the Commission's January conference with the co-chairs of the Public Safety Facility Renovation Planning Committee was successful in that the co-chairs now fully understand the Commission's authority over the deteriorating, town-owned buildings located on either side of the fire department building. However, he also noted that many committee members continue to be in "tear down mentality."

Diana McCain announced that the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation had accepted the town's pre-application for a technical assistance grant. If accepted, the town could receive \$25,000 to be applied toward preparation work for the adaptive reuse of the two 19th century homes located on either side of the fire department building as office space for the planned emergency services complex. Technical assistance would include the services of an architect and engineer who would conduct a conditional assessment of the houses and prepare drawings and specifications for their restoration and renovation. Receipt of this grant could qualify the town for additional funding for actual improvements. The next application phase will be in May

Diana McCain congratulated Recording Secretary Trish Dynia on obtaining her BA in American History from Charter Oak State College.

Adjournment: Chairman Milne adjourned the meeting at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Dynia
Recording Secretary

cc: Town Clerk, Commission Members