

TOWN OF DURHAM
Historic District Commission
Monday, August 3, 2009, 8:00 PM
Durham Public Library Meeting Room
7 Maple Avenue, Durham, CT 06422
Regular Meeting Minutes

Call to Order, Roll Call, Seating of Alternates: The meeting was called to order at 8:05 PM by Chairman Duncan Milne at the Durham Public Library.

Roll Call: Members Present: Diana McCain and Duncan Milne. Alternates Present: Linda Bertelsen and Clay Howe. Staff Present: Trish Dynia.

Seating of Alternates: Linda Bertelsen and Clay Howe 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 HEARING (Continued) – 8:15 PM

APCOA #349, Frank DeFelice, 46 Main Street, Siding and Window Replacement: Frank DeFelice displayed a sample of Craneboard 7, Period Correct 7” Solid Core Siding, which he would like to place on the building. He stated that this is a premium product with no fake wood grain that up close and at a distance looks like wood with brush strokes. He then presented a booklet containing photographs of the building (taken on Saturday, July 31, 2009). The photographs depict areas of the wood siding which have cracked, bowed or split, and noted that nailing bowed boards would create cracks in the siding and filling gaps with putty and repainting would be unsightly.

Chairman Milne stated that he and fellow HDC member Gordon Wolfgang recently inspected the exterior of the building and found it to be 95% sound. The tongue and groove sheathing behind the boards appears to be intact, therefore the building would not be exposed to the weather if the siding was removed, as was stated by the applicant at the June meeting. Chairman Milne further opined that although it might not be easy to obtain milled replacement pieces, he felt that replacing the bad pieces would cost less than placing vinyl siding on the entire structure. He stated, “Other buildings with far worse conditions, including my own, have been repaired. Chairman Milne then noted that Mr. DeFelice’s plan to apply a foam layer between the siding layers would cause irreparable damage to the older siding.

Jim McLaughlin of 308 Main Street stated that the building at 46 Main Street is one of only two examples of arts and crafts style in the historic district and the applicant should be careful when doing anything to this building that would alter its unique appearance. It has been his experience

that the applicant can find wood to replace the bad sections and the older wood was superior to any product out there now, synthetic or wood.

Linda Bertelsen asked if the applicant wishes to place siding on the entire structure, and if so, would foam be used. Mr. DeFelice replied that the ¾" tongue and groove does not cover the entire structure, as noted by Chairman Milne. Therefore, he was concerned about exposing the interior to weather. He further stated that he would not, nor had he ever stated, that he would be using foam. Mr. DeFelice would prefer to use wood strips rather than foam because the underlying wood shingles would be undamaged if years down the road a new owner wished to bring the siding back to the original. Using wood strips rather than foam would provide ventilation which is the main cause of underlying damage to older wood shingles.

Mr. DeFelice further stated that as someone who has been in the building trade for twenty plus years, in his opinion there is rot over 35% to 45% of the house, contradicting the Chairman's earlier statement that 95% of the siding is intact. In addition, the siding company would like to cover the cost of placing sidewalks from 46 to 58 Main Street. Chairman Milne stated that a sidewalk discussion was not pertinent to the application.

Chairman Milne stated that the solid core vinyl siding the applicant wishes to place on the structure is actually 1/16" thick, whereas the siding he had alluded to at the June meeting was a higher quality product at 3/8" thick.

Mr. McLaughlin added that placing vinyl siding over wood, whether the inner material was foam or wood, would still cause damage to the wood siding. Mr. DeFelice replied that would only be true if the siding were installed incorrectly.

A motion was made by Diana McCain, seconded by Linda Bertelsen, to close the public hearing on APCOA #349. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and Action, APCOA #349: Ms. McCain stated that though there are differences in opinion as to how damaged the existing siding is, to her the proposed replacement product looked like vinyl up close and at a distance.

Clay Howe stated that it was important to emphasize long term over short term value, and homes in the historic district retained their value by retaining their original materials.

Chairman Milne stated that as an architect and lover of old buildings, he could not endorse vinyl siding in the Historic District. Doing so would set a monumental precedent which would "Open the barn door very wide." He reiterated that it was economically feasible to replace bad siding pieces with milled wood siding. Mr. Milne added that he would be willing to look into the 3/8" product again, "But vinyl is still vinyl."

Linda Bertelsen stated that the Commission's objective is historic preservation and approving this application would not forward this objective.

A motion was made by Duncan Milne, seconded by Diana McCain, to approve the installation of insulated exterior windows with simulated true divided lights, permanently applied mullions inside and out, with surrounds to be traditional 5/4" Azec or cedar, or equivalent. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Diana McCain, seconded by Clay Howe, to approve installation of Craneboard 7, Period Correct, seven inch solid core siding at 46 Main Street. The motion was denied unanimously.

Discussion with Library Board about Proposed Exterior Lighting: Chairman Milne stated that the Commission is not necessarily opposed to the exterior lighting plan but procedurally any such proposal should come before the HDC.

Library Board Chairwoman Jane Eriksen explained that once the library was able to improve and restore the gardens surrounding the building, resident Bob Isleib came to the board with a proposal to provide ambient lighting to the exterior so the grounds and architectural features of the building could be highlighted from dusk to midnight. Mr. Isleib generously proposed that the library would have to purchase the materials but he would install them himself at no cost. Mr. Isleib then temporarily installed the lights for the board to see and they found the subtle lighting to be very appropriate. At no time did the Library Board or Mr. Isleib realize that such a proposal should come before the HDC.

Chairman Milne noted that the Commission is not looking for a legal battle but simply asking that proper procedures be followed. He added that the discussion this evening was simply to determine whether or not an application to the HDC is warranted.

Mr. Isleib spoke next and briefly described the plan to install twenty in-ground fixtures which would 'up-light' the architectural angles of the building.

Mr. Howe stated that he would not be in favor of having the library lit until midnight and cited already existing light pollution emanating from Town Hall. He also expressed concerns regarding interference with his short wave radio, which is already compromised by the sidewalk lighting along Main Street.

In response to questions by the Library Board as to whether or not an application to the HDC was appropriate, Mr. McLaughlin replied that all of the town's boards are volunteer and applying to the HDC was a sign of respect for the contributions of that Commission. He further stated that as First Selectman he had dealt with the town hall lighting issue and, although there were Main Street neighbors who objected to the brightness of the lighting, many more objected to the cost, which as it turned out was minimal. Therefore, to avoid similar criticism it would behoove the Library Board to have a public hearing via the HDC to air these issues..

Linda Bertelsen noted that there is a precedent because less than a year ago the Commission reviewed a project at the corner of Main Street and Maiden Lane which included a lighting plan.

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Ms. McCain cited a portion of the document *Powers of the Commission* which indicates that such lighting is within the Commission's purview. She added that if the HDC did not require the library to come before this Commission for its exterior lighting plan, six months down the road someone else could come up with an obnoxious lighting proposal, and site the HDC's lack of action on the library as a green light to complete the project without approval.

Mrs. Eriksen stated that the Library Board would file an application with the HDC.

Ona McLaughlin of 308 Main Street noted that no one in town can blame the HDC for lighting problems along Main Street if property owners don't come before them.

Review and Acceptance of Previous Minutes: A motion was made by Diana McCain, seconded by Duncan Milne, to approve the July 13, 2009 minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

Payment of Bills: None

Old Business: None

New Business: None

Payment of Bills: None.

Adjournment: *A motion was made by Diana McCain, seconded by Clay Howe, to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 PM. The motion passed unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Dynia
Recording Secretary
cc: Town Clerk, Commission Members