

1 APPROVED
2 HDC MEETING
3 SEPTEMBER 3, 2020
4

5 Members Chair Rodney Rowland, Vice Chair Jeff Hughes, Tom Maher, Kate Murray,
6 Present: Irene Bush and Judy Groppa
7
8

9 Due to Covid 19, the meeting was held via Zoom.
10

11 Chair Rowland called the meeting of the New Castle HDC to order at 6:30 pm. Rowland stated
12 there was one public hearing on the agenda and advised that the application was published, fees
13 paid and abutters notified. Rowland, Hughes, Maher, Murray, and Bush will be voting. It was
14 asked that guests state their name clearly and spell it.
15

16 Chair Rowland stated that Amy Dixon and Nadine Miller, from the Certified Local Government
17 ("CLG"), were joining the meeting to talk about the certified local government program and next
18 steps for New Castle.
19

20 1. Meeting with Amy Dixon and Nadine Miller, Certified Local Government
21 Program
22

23 Nadine Miller stated they check in with certified local government communities
24 every 4 years and report back to the Park Service. New Castle is new to the CLG
25 so this is the first time checking in. Miller had a list of questions and issues New
26 Castle may be facing, including questions about the survey project and how it is
27 moving forward. She stated that in the next month New Castle could submit a
28 Letter of Intent and apply for a grant for the next round of the survey.
29

30 Miller stated the first question deals with enforcing appropriate local and state
31 laws and whether New Castle is enforcing its local preservation ordinance; are the
32 Board's decisions fairly consistent and is the Board using Secretary of the Interior
33 Standards in their decision making? Miller asked if there were any glitches with
34 meetings and reviews.
35

36 The Chair stated that, as of late, the projects have been really small. During
37 Covid, there has not been a lot of activity. Today's hearing is for replacement of
38 a front door; another recent hearing was for a storage shed, so as of late, hearings
39 have not been controversial. One of the more difficult decisions was regarding
40 the tear down of a house. The Board walked the property and talked about the
41 condition of the property. The Board ultimately decided the property was so
42 deteriorated it should be torn down.
43

44 Rowland stated that more than two years ago, there was a very simple colonial on
45 Piscataqua Street which the owner wanted to put an addition twice the size of the
46 house. The Board hired a consultant, Steve Bedard, who did an assessment of the

1 structure and provided some guidance. Miller asked how that turned out. The
2 Chair stated the addition was built and it is quite an addition.

3
4 Miller asked what guidelines the Board used and whether it used the Secretary of
5 the Interior Standards. Rowland stated the Board has its own zoning codes, some
6 of which are specific and some are vague. The Board has developed solar voltaic
7 guidelines because several applications were being submitted for this. We have
8 also changed the application both for work sessions and public hearings and the
9 town has a new website which shows where the historic district is located, and has
10 a library of images the Board likes and doesn't like to see in the historic district.

11
12 Miller asked if the CLG had been provided the guidelines on solar voltaic and the
13 Chair stated he would provide them. Miller advised that in mid-October an
14 annual report is due and the guidelines should be attached to it.

15
16 The second question is regarding keeping an active and qualified commission,
17 having enough members on the commission, providing training and that the Board
18 meets at least four times a year.

19
20 The Chair advised Miller that the HDC Board is full except for one alternate and
21 it has been putting the word out, looking to fill the vacancy. Also, the Board
22 meets once a month but it has not done so during Covid. This is only our 4th
23 meeting this year and our first zoom meeting. The Board met in person in July in
24 the Recreation Hall.

25
26 Miller stated that if there are any new members, to please submit their resumes
27 with the annual report. She then asked how the survey is going from the first
28 grant obtained.

29
30 Rowland stated the survey company asked for an extension due to Covid and that
31 he has not had much interaction with them. The town historian, Jim Cerny, had
32 asked about the status and the survey company asked him to copy photos of
33 historic images from the collection. Cerny is willing to provide the photos but
34 would like to know how they want him to proceed and there has been no progress
35 in the last few months.

36
37 Miller stated they were wondering if New Castle was getting to the second phase
38 of the survey but the first phase needs to be completed. The Chair agreed as he
39 wants to see what the report provides before beginning the second phase.

40
41 Miller asked if there is an inventory in record form in the town hall and accessible
42 to folks. Rowland stated he is in the process of figuring out how to do the
43 inventory. The Chair received the last inventory from Jim Cerny, which was done
44 in the 1970s by someone in town who was very passionate but had no experience
45 in historic preservation. For instance, the Piscataqua Café, which the Board
46 considers a very important structure, is noted in the 1970's inventory as having no

1 historic significance other than some wicker furniture. An inventory is the kind of
2 tool wherein the Board can reference specific property and its attributes, etc.
3 Rowland is very much looking forward to getting this survey done so an
4 inventory is available.

5
6 Miller asked about a building in town that developers want to tear down and build
7 new on Wild Rose Lane. Rowland stated it's a sore subject for the woman doing
8 the survey. The property was owned by Thayer and before that by Harrington.
9 The current owners want to tear it down and it is an important structure but is not
10 in the district, so where does that leave us, as a town, in trying to preserve it. The
11 person who originally built and designed the home is very famous and the
12 designer for the later owner, the Harringtons, is also very famous. We are hoping
13 it can be documented if indeed it is going to be torn down.

14
15 Miller stated that unfortunately, the CLG is in the same predicament as they do
16 not have much regulatory basis except to ask for the inventory form. She added
17 that as part of the review process, the CLG has asked to hire a consultant. Lisa
18 Mossoff has the entire history and photos and it is on the CLG database which
19 Rowland should have access to.

20
21 Last question from Miller: since participating in the general historic preservation
22 program, has there been any recent activity in town with the national register?
23 Rowland advised that the town hall was added sometime in the last five years and
24 the church has been on the national historic register for years. Miller asked if
25 there was any interest in listing any other buildings in town.

26
27 Judy Groppa asked if the hotel is on the national register. The Chair stated he did
28 not think so and that it may not qualify after all the changes that were made.
29 Miller stated that it doesn't maintain enough integrity to be on the register and is
30 not able to use federal tax credits because much of it was torn down. However, it
31 is a very important building with a story to tell.

32
33 The Chair advised that the Historical Society's big project over the next few years
34 is fundraising for a book that chronicles the history of New Castle, authored by
35 Dennis Robinson. Rowland hopes the survey materials fit into that as well.

36
37 Miller asked if the Chair has utilized the CLG Emmet system and seen inventories
38 done in the past, and utilized their photos, stating that the system is added to
39 frequently. Rowland stated that Jim Cerny has used it and asked Amy Dixon if
40 that was the login she sent to him and Jim Cerny, which was affirmed.

41
42 Miller then asked if there were any other big issues going on in town or
43 something else the Board may be interested in. Chair Rowland's concern is the
44 town hall. A few years ago, an architect was hired and the town attempted to get
45 a bond to restore the town hall with the focus on the Knights of Pythias hall on
46 the second floor. The second floor is currently unusable due to fire code. It is a

1 significant structure as a whole and the 2nd floor is very important. The Chair
2 would like to see it restored and utilized, and the town wants to fix up the
3 building, but Rowland believes there is a right way and a wrong way to do it.
4 However, the town has to watch its budget because it is currently doing
5 infrastructure so he would rather wait and do it right.
6

7 Miller asked if a conditions assessment had been done and the Chair stated an
8 assessment was done through a planning study a few years ago. It was an item at
9 a town meeting that people voted on. Miller had wondered if it had been paid
10 through the LCHIP and Preservation Alliance and wanted to be sure the Board
11 was aware that the LCHIP program assists with an assessment conditions report
12 that prioritizes the condition of a building and gives direction on what should be
13 done. Also the Preservation Alliance has a matching grant program of \$9,000.00
14 of which \$4500.00 goes to the town and the other half is a match. The grant could
15 help with hiring someone like Steve Bedard to go through the building and
16 provide ideas of what will be needed to preserve the building, what the cost is
17 going to be, and help set the priorities of what should be done. She advised that
18 the Board should check that the assessment report done follows the format of the
19 Preservation Alliance. Then the Board can prioritize what needs to be done, take
20 the project in pieces and pursue LCHIP funding for smaller pieces.
21

22 The Chair stated that LCHIP is open to the concept of utilization of historic space
23 and that it is important to preserve that space, and to make it code compliant; they
24 have grants that add sprinkler systems, egress, etc. The big cost in historic
25 structures is meeting requirements to make the building handicap accessible and
26 install sprinkler systems and that is difficult on the second floor.
27

28 Miller stated that if you hire a developer that is not knowledgeable on historic
29 buildings, they may overbuild to comply with code and not realize that historic
30 buildings have some flexibility so you really have to hire someone knowledgeable
31 in historic buildings.
32

33 Rowland stated he is concerned with the tremendous amount of money moving
34 into New Castle and understands that many people want to make a house their
35 own. Having a tool such as the historic survey, that explains the house they are
36 purchasing is significant in its own right and why, can hopefully temper any
37 massive change or overbuilding. Miller agreed the goal is to educate people and
38 she would like to see the town get to the next phase and finalize the survey.
39

40 The Chair agreed that the Board needs to get to the second phase, do training, and
41 get people interested in the architecture in town. The quarterly newsletter and
42 Island magazine would be a good place to communicate an understanding of this.
43

44 Kate Murray stated the town also wants to appeal to people's desire to become
45 part of the community, maintaining a sense of neighborliness and preserving a
46 part of history. She hopes the survey can be used to that end also.

1
2 Miller confirmed that the town would not be applying to the CLG in the next
3 round of grants but if there was something smaller the Board may be interested in
4 pursuing, to reach out to her. The Chair stated this first piece of the survey is
5 very important to the Board and he would like to get it completed but he is also
6 interested in training. Miller stated they are hoping to get virtual training to
7 communities and that the Municipal Association Conference (also called the
8 Planners Conference) was rescheduled from spring to October 31st and she is
9 giving a presentation on design guidelines for HDCs. The conference is going to
10 be virtual through the Office of Strategic Initiatives.
11

12 Miller stated that if Rowland had any questions about the schedule on the existing
13 grant, she would see what can be done to push things along, adding that
14 Preservation Company gets busy and sometimes you have to redirect them to your
15 project. Nadine Miller and Amy Dixon then left the meeting.
16

17 The Board talked about the house on Wild Rose Lane that had just been sold for
18 about \$5 million. It is the last house on the left, a huge property with a tennis
19 court. The Chair stated that people want the view but don't want to deal with an
20 old stone structure. Kate Murray stated that it's a fabulous house and a big
21 enough property that they wouldn't have to go to any commission in town for
22 approvals. The Chair stated that depends on the setbacks and where they want to
23 build. One of the things affecting the property is that every storm goes over the
24 wall and devastates the property and perhaps they are thinking the building has to
25 go to address those issues.
26

27 2. Public Hearing Rebecca Rej Audet, 31 Oliver Street, for new front porch railing
28 (in kind replacement) and a new front door.
29

30 The Chair stated that the applicant wants to tie in the front door to the window
31 design. Kate Murray asked if the door would have four glass panels and the Chair
32 confirmed yes, it would.
33

34 The zoom link was shared with the applicant but the Board was not clear if they
35 were joining the zoom meeting. Tom Maher had the applicant's phone number so
36 he reached out via text to see if she would join the meeting.
37

38 The Board discussed how the application was sent and a couple members had not
39 seen the plans. Rowland showed the plan of the door with 4 lights and 3 panels as
40 well as the existing door. Audet is keeping the raised panel detail but changing
41 the light configuration on the door to match the windows. The railing is being
42 replaced in kind.
43

44 The Chair asked if the commission had any questions.
45

1 Rebecca Rej Audet joined the meeting via zoom. The Chair advised the applicant
2 that he had just walked through the docs submitted with the members of the Board
3 and confirmed with her that the plans submitted contained two pages with two
4 different door styles and that Audet wanted the four light.

5
6 Kate Murray asked what the railing was going to be made out of and Audet stated
7 it would be mahogany and will be painted. Murray thought it looked good.

8
9 M/S/P Jeff Hughes moved for approval of the application as submitted; Murray
10 seconded. All in favor including the Chair.

11
12 Rowland advised Audet he would sign the application and email it to town hall
13 and thanked her for joining the meeting.

14
15 3. Review of July minutes.

16
17 Jeff Hughes stated that given where some of our meetings are virtual, should the
18 minutes identify where it was held or that the meeting was virtual. It was added
19 to the July minutes that the meeting was held at the Rec Center. Kate Murray
20 thought “period worthy” required a hyphen.

21
22 M/S/P Hughes moved for approval of the July minutes with the addition of identifying
23 the location of the meeting and a hyphen; Irene Bush seconded. All in favor,
24 including the Chair.

25
26 The Board had some discussion on the CLG information that had been received
27 from Nadine Miller. The Chair stated the controversial property he had referred
28 to was 25 Piscataqua Street, across from Irene Bush’s driveway. There was also
29 the people who bought Bruce and Norma Smiths’ house and wanted a deck on the
30 second floor for a water view, and they ended up selling the house because the
31 Board would not give approval. Rowland stated he worries about more things
32 like that because people want their water view.

33
34 The Board had a short discussion on a recent Planning Board meeting with regard
35 to the boat house located at the entrance to town.

36
37 M/S/P Hughes moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Murray. All in favor
38 including the Chair.

39
40 Meeting adjourned at 7:25 pm.

41
42 Respectfully submitted,
43 Diane L. Cooley, Recording Secretary
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