

HDC MEETING
APRIL 1, 2021

Members Chair Rodney Rowland, Vice Chair Hughes, Tom Maher, Kate Murray,
Present: Irene Bush, Elaine Nollet, Judy Groppa and Ruth Zikaras

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

Chair Rowland called the meeting of the New Castle Historic District Commission to order at 7:00 pm. Rowland stated there were two continued public hearings on the agenda and a work session and advised that the applications had been published, fees paid and abutters notified. The Chair, Vice Chair, Maher, Murray, and Bush would be voting. Chair Rowland asked everyone to mute their computers if not speaking.

1. Continued Public Hearing for Jacqueline Heard, 5 Atkinson Street, for a few changes to previous approval

Guests: Michael Burns, Jacqueline Heard's husband.

Chair Rowland shared his screen to show the drawings received from the applicant which Burns stated were looking at the North side of 5 Atkinson Street. They tore off the siding in hopes of saving it but are unable to do so because of what was underneath. The new siding will be double dipped stained cedar shingles as opposed to replacing it with clapboard. The color is similar to the existing siding. The North side is a view from the street and when they tore out the little shed on the back of the house that enclosed the oil tank, the Building Inspector, Russ Bookholz asked if the vent and feed pipes could be switched from the driveway side to the back side of the house. The existing pipes extend 6" to 12" from the house out to the driveway and Bookholz feels it is a hazard because it is a tight space.

Also, to turn the oil tank and have the vent and pipe exit away from the driveway, Bookholz suggested raising the height of the shed two feet. The Chair states that it looks like it dovetails with the roof better; Kate Murray thought the roofline looked better also. Burns said the second photo shows the shed from the back side of the house and shows the exit points of the vents and fill pipes. Burns advised that the footing was poured inside the old shed as they are putting a footing under the shed and it may be 2" to 3" difference. It is very tight to pull cars in and out so they cannot add anything to the shed. The roofline is raised so the front of the shed's height will accommodate the tank.

The Chair confirmed that the two changes are the redesign of the shed and the change in siding to cedar shingles and asked if anyone had any questions.

Maher asked if instead of clapboard there will be shingles and asked if there are currently shingles on any other part of the house. Burns stated they never found any and that the siding currently on the house is only the second siding that had ever been put on the house. Burns added that taking off clapboards has revealed quite a bit of repair needed. They are using all wood products but have changed the types of wood because of the costs of other repairs.

Rowland asked if there were any other questions and opened the hearing to the public at 7:11 p.m. asking if there was anyone to speak to, for or against. There was no one so the Chair closed the public hearing to await a motion.

Jeff Hughes moved to approve the two amendments to the project as presented; Murray seconded. Roll call: Hughes voted Aye, Bush voted Aye, Maher voted Aye, Murray voted Aye and the Chair voted Aye.

2. Continued Public Hearing for Colin Haupt, 86 Main Street, Map 18, Lot 6 for new windows and roof line change.

Guests: Colin Haupt and Pat Driscoll

Chair Rowland stated that at last month's meeting he invited members to walk by 86 Main Street to view the house as there was quite a bit of debate over the roof change. Rowland shared documents on his screen and stated the intent is to keep the roof design the same and accommodate the skylight.

Colin Haupt stated that there was much discussion about the roof facing Atkinson Street and originally the idea was to have a slanted roof and the consensus was that it was probably a funky spot to put a skylight.

Haupt and Driscoll discussed the rooflines and asked the architect to create drawings keeping the skylight on the flat part of the roof and moving the skylight in toward the center of the home so you won't see it from the street as much as you currently see it. The roofline is raised to accommodate the additional height at the top of the stairs. The skylight has a bow to accommodate rainwater to avoid leak issues as you cannot have a flat roof and a flat skylight. So the design has changed from a slanted roof to the flat roof.

Haupt stated the window change is an upgrade of the windows from Anderson 200 to 400 series which is better quality with better insulation.

Jeff Hughes stated the elevation shows the skylight protrudes above the roofline, but that Haupt indicated it will be more difficult to see from the road. Yes that is correct; Driscoll submitted elevation drawings with a viewpoint angle from the street (Page C1.0).

Kate Murray asked about the drawing showing the skylight on top and below that what looked like a window or a skylight on a slanted roof . Haupt stated that is the old design showing the skylight proposed at the last meeting on the slanted roof, and also showing the skylight on top but assured Murray there will not be two of them. The concern with the skylight on top of a flat roof is whether they can build something structurally sound which will shed water and it is possible, so it is a better option. If the Board approves the skylight on top of the flat roof, the skylight on the slanted roof will be deleted.

Maier asked if the roofline will remain the same or if there would be modifications which were presented at last month's meeting. Driscoll advised the roofline will differ from the current structure because the ceiling at the top of the stairs is only 6' and needs to be increased. They talked to the Building Inspector about raising the ceiling height to 6'8" even though it doesn't meet ceiling height code but it gets it closer. Murray stated it's an improvement over what the Board viewed last month. Irene Bush asked if this was Plan B and was informed that yes, it's the same roofline proposed last month.

Tom Maier told the applicant he appreciated the fact that he chose the path which was preferable to the board and was pleased they were not trying to put the skylight on the face or slant of the roofline. Maier stated the board all expressed concern that if on the slant it would be at eye level and directly in view, adding that once we open the door to people putting skylights in an area that close, it sets a precedent. Maier thanked Haupt for problem solving and making it less visible.

Haupt stated it addresses the natural light issue for the staircase and the Chair agreed with Maier's comment and asked if the board had any more questions. Groppa stated it's a real improvement and thanked the applicant for working with the board. The Chair opened the hearing to the public at 7:24 pm but there was no one to speak and the hearing was closed.

Jeff Hughes moved for approval of the application as submitted with the changes to the roof as flat with a skylight on top; Murray seconded. There was no further discussion. Roll call: Hughes voted Aye, Bush voted Aye, Maier voted Aye, Murray voted Aye, the Chair voted Aye.

3. Work session for Christopher and Kelli Barrett, 40 Riverview Road for removal of existing garage and addition, with new additions and windows and doors.

Guest: Ann Whitney, Architect

Whitney started with the original submission and the site plan noting the highlighted new additions. There is an existing garage and one-story shed that have a wooden floor and are deteriorating. The owners are looking at creating a two-story addition, but the rear of the proposed second story is too close to the

property line. The Barretts are removing a wooden deck and one-story in the back and replacing with a more usable one-story and small wooden deck. On the left side or North elevation, there is a one-story room with no foundation and they are proposing building two stories. The front of the house will have a new landing and steps and a roof supported by brackets. The next sheet shows the side elevation which is currently a one-story garage with a narrow 3' breezeway. The Barretts propose to match the existing gable of the house and shift the garage forward a bit and create a two-story space. The part that drops back was originally also two stories but it has changed to one-story because it was going to block the neighbor's view. So, the addition will shift forward from the existing garage but will still sit back from the existing house, and create a bedroom on the second floor.

The next sheet of the plans shows the view from the river side, and at the bottom of the page, the left side elevation shows how they are trying to match the roofline on the street side and the dormer on the rear elevation.

The changes on the garage on the right are, rather than going into the breezeway, you will be going into the garage and there will be steps to go into the house. Again, on the left is the two-story addition matching the roofline of the existing house.

Chair Rowland clarified things on the drawings with Whitney particularly what was replacing the existing one-story at the rear elevation. Jeff Hughes asked if the addition on the garage would have the same footprint. Whitney stated it's the same width as the existing garage but it comes forward a bit and the current garage and shed are in a direct line and overlaps the property line; so the addition will go back 22 feet and then will jog in 15" for the one-story, to stay off the property line.

The revised drawings show the rear elevation of the shed and what is getting removed. The property behind them is the concern because the addition has windows and after speaking with the neighbors, it was decided to drop down to a lower roof and have just one story. It will be a garage that accommodates two cars with a little storage area behind. The new proposed garage is 1 foot higher than the existing garage roof and 6" higher than the existing shed.

The Barretts and Whitney decided to start with a work session; a variance is also needed from the ZBA. They thought a work session was a good place to start to see what the HDC thought of the changes. The Chair asked if board members had any questions.

Maher asked if there was a chimney on the back and Whitney confirmed there is and she is hoping it can be removed in the course of the renovation. It's possible it could stay but the Barretts are upgrading the heating system so it would be nice

to have a cement block chimney. There is a propane source so if the heating system is propane, the vent can be directed to the back.

The Chair asked Whitney to confirm the area that was lowered to one-story as he wanted to clarify the height. Murray asked if it is two-story and then goes down to one-story. Whitney confirmed that yes, and stated the 22'6" section mimicking the gable of the main house is two-story and from 17'5" is the roofline that is lowered. There will be a guest bedroom above the garage.

Murray asked if there is a guest bedroom above the garage and if the studio and storage is another garage. The studio and storage are not going to exist with the new plan. The dashed roofline is the current roofline and the newer one is highlighted in color.

Whitney explained that the property that is adjacent is quite a bit higher as Riverview is a sloped road so the neighbor is higher. In fact, the neighbor's first floor is 3 1/2' to 4' higher than this house. The survey plan has the footprint of the neighbor's house; she is trying to keep the view open.

Maher assumed this home is 1950 or 1960 as there are a number of similar homes on that side of the street of similar size and style. Whitney confirmed the vintage and that it is a Cape with a dormer inset, adding that a lot of the houses on the street have been expanded to the rear with similar streetscapes. Murray opined that this house fills the width of the lot and is worried about massing with the addition of a second story. Whitney stated that many of the other houses go back so it doesn't affect the frontscape. Murray stated the two stories seem disproportionately big compared to other houses and to the lot and asked Whitney to provide comparisons.

Whitney stated the lot continues as there's a second parcel, with a bit of land to the north. Maher established that the garage side is on the property line and asked whether on the other side, the North side, they were keeping to the footprint of the sunroom. Whitney stated there is more space on the lot line on the North side and there is actually a second parcel that is part of this lot, an unbuildable parcel, so there is quite a bit of space, and this house is set back 25' from the street. Maher asked how big the second parcel is. The unbuildable parcel is 15' x 78' so from the 12' x 14' room, it's another 6 feet to the dash line on the plan so there's at least another 21' to the other property line.

Murray asked if that's why there are orange markers, to define the site and Whitney confirmed that a survey had recently been done. The front elevation seems flat but it does step back and the garage steps back 4 1/2'; the sunroom addition will be about 2' closer to the existing window on the side toward the front of the house.

Groppa asked if they thought about making the garage a driveway and putting a garage behind the house, stating that a parcel two houses up has done that and has a much better look; it's not heavy in the front and would not impact the neighbors on the right side. Groppa stated she doesn't mind the two-story addition as you face the house on the left because there's a feeling of space there; but on the garage side it's very heavy and tight. Groppa again suggested making a driveway and renovations around the back. Whitney stated that part of the issue is the property slopes down and there is not enough room because they cannot build on the second parcel. It would have to be a one car garage and the grading makes it really awkward. There's also a stone retaining wall and then it drops down about 7' difference. Whitney doesn't believe they can build anything on that second parcel, so a garage in the back would be hard to access because of the slope change and room would also be needed to turn vehicles.

The Chair stated they received a letter from an abutter, Joan Nickel, who lives in the house on the right, who is concerned about the massing. Nickel asked board members to please go by the house and bring the illustrations to try and envision the impact on neighboring properties and what it will look like with the additions relative to neighbors.

The Chair asked Whitney whether she said the addition will not be coming closer to the property line but is just going vertically. Yes, the one-story is actually going to come in a bit to be sure it is not on the property line.

The Chair asked if the façade materials were changing. Whitney stated the existing siding is vinyl shingles which will remain because it is very well done. It's not her material of choice but the house is in good condition. Whitney was hoping for feedback on the size and massing adding that she will get into more detail at the hearing.

Maher stated he will walk by to get a better feeling for what is being proposed. The Chair pointed out that the addition does not get closer to the neighbor but the height increases, however the neighbor's house is also higher and both properties slope toward the rear. On the other side, there seems to be quite a bit of space. Whitney stated her main concern is along the property line at the garage.

Rowland asked if there were other questions and opened it up to the public but no one had any questions or comments. Hughes asked when the applicant was going to zoning; Whitney stated they are still in discussion with the abutters and will go to zoning soon and asked the Chair whether they should do another work session with HDC or go to zoning, adding that she was hoping to do this work session and get a comfort level from the HDC on the lower roofline before going to zoning for the side setback variance. The Chair stated he would like to do a walk by and that an opportunity for another work session may be helpful but that he preferred the Barretts and Whitney go to ZBA before coming to HDC.

Murray stated it is hard to visualize how this will look in relation to other houses. The neighborhood has a particular look to it and asked if Whitney could do a schematic in relation to other houses. Whitney said she will try to provide photos because many houses have expansions on the side and rear.

4. Approve minutes from March 4, 2021

Jeff Hughes moved to approve the minutes of March 4, 2021 as amended; Maher seconded; Jeff Hughes voted Aye, Irene Bush voted Aye, Tom Maher voted Aye, Kate Murray voted Aye, and the Chair voted Aye.

5. Any New Business

Kate Murray stated she walked by Riverview Road and Sara Flause at 46 Piscataqua Street has two solar panels on the garage which can be seen clearly from the road. Irene Bush, Judy Groppa and Tom Maher saw it also. Bush says it's a workshop, not a garage. The Chair said he will drive by. Bush said they have also done something to the roof and if the solar panels are permanent, they need to come before the HDC.

The Chair stated that he and the Building Inspector, Russ Bookholz, had a conversation about fees charged by the town for work sessions and public hearings. The fees are pretty much the same though requirements for the work session are much less; applicants are asked to notify abutters via mail but the request for work session doesn't have to be posted. Work sessions are a tool to help the board and the applicants so the Chair would like to try to encourage them. Someone asked the Chair if they need a work session because they didn't want to pay twice. Bookholz asked the Chair if he was open to a flat fee for work sessions which would cover costs rather than estimated on the value of the work being done which is how public hearing application fees are gauged.

Murray stated the Planning Board recently looked at fees and made changes also. The Chair stated both fees are based on the value of the work being done and applicants pay twice, he would like a flat fee for the work session. Portsmouth has a flat fee for work sessions of \$100. The Vice Chair agreed a flat fee would help to encourage work sessions. Murray believes the Planning Board addressed all fees but it was questioned whether the Planning Board Chair can change HDC fees. The Chair stated he will get some idea as to what town expenses are for work sessions.

Groppa had a question about the 180 Portsmouth Ave boathouse. She stated that when the HDC approved it, the applicant was told he could not put up white paneling on the side because the board didn't want it to look suburban but the applicant wanted to match their house. Groppa stated the board approved without

the paneling but the paneling is there on the boathouse. She asked members to please drive by and take a look as she thinks it's too much; it's supposed to be a boathouse and not a fancy guest house. The Chair will check with the Building Inspector. Murray was glad Groppa noticed it because she couldn't discern what was wrong.

Jeff Hughes moved to adjourn; Tom Maher seconded. All approved.

Meeting adjourned at 8:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Diane L. Cooley
Recording Secretary