

OXFORD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES

FEBRUARY 4, 2008

The regular monthly meeting of the Oxford Historic District Commission was called to order by the chairman, George Gaffney, on Monday, February 4, 2008 at 7:00 p.m., in the meeting room of the Oxford Community Services Building.

Other commission members in attendance were David Baker, Dorothy Fenwick, Suzanne Litty, and Heinrich Schmitz.

The minutes of the meeting of January 7, 2008 were approved and accepted as distributed.

Mr. Gaffney welcomed Mr. Schmitz as the newest full time member and thanked Alfred "Al" Leszczynski for his years of service and dedication while serving on this commission.

Prior to the review of building permits, a presentation was made by architect Timothy Kearns of the renovation project of the Oxford firehouse. Even though this parcel of land lies outside the historic district, commission members were being asked questions regarding the scope and size of this project, particularly the construction of a tower. Mr. Kearns explained the tower was a necessary feature to be used for training purposes consisting of stair climbing along with being able to work on aerial operations involving the new ladder truck. One of the reasons for the overall size of the addition was the need to be able to get the larger fire trucks in and out of the building quickly and efficiently. It was also pointed out that though the firehouse tower is three stories high, the Oxford Inn, directly down the street from the firehouse, is also three stories. The audience and members present were reminded that the architectural drawings had been highly visible to anyone who was interested in seeing them and that the building was designed to have some value as one comes through town since this is one of the first things one sees upon entering Oxford. Mr. Gaffney noted that the commission just wanted to gather information in order to address those people who are confronting them with questions. Mr. Rick Schmitt, President of the Oxford Fire Company, reminded everyone that the fire company members are always available to answer any questions the public may have concerning the project.

The following building permits were then reviewed by the commission:

1. Permit #08-02, Simon Arnstein, 218 South St., install two 30" x 54" windows in rear wall; windows to be close visual modern counterparts to existing bedroom windows. Mr. Arnstein was represented by his builder. It was explained to the commission that the proposed windows would be in the rear portion of the house and that the windows would be the same size and scale as the two existing six over six windows in the back. A motion was made by Mr. Baker to accept the application as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Litty and unanimously carried with all in favor.

2. Permit # 07-47, Philip Logan and Barbara Paca, 101 W. Strand, revision to previously approved building permit involving minor modification in order to comply with maximum slopes for wheelchair access resulting in an extension of 3' at rear of the existing house on the section of the addition which is recessed from the face of the building. Mr. Logan was present to discuss the permit. Mr. Logan explained that as a result of reviewing the details of his plans, he found that he needed to extend the ramp within his house in order to get it to be a more easier slope. As a result, the need would be to push the rear portion of the house back away from the main existing portion by 3' so that the interior ramp could be extended. Mr. Logan explained that the interior floor of the main house is almost 2' above the ground. Because their son will always be in a wheelchair, he and his wife wanted the back part of their house at the garden level and the ramp would allow access from the higher section of the first floor to the back, lower section of the first floor. The back part of the house, containing a "garden room", would have a door that would be at the grade of the outside garden. Mr. Logan also was requesting an additional second floor window within the additional 3' expansion. Mr. Logan stated that the new window would be in keeping with the character of the building and would be located within a small bathroom that could be gained as a result of the requested expansion. Questions were raised by the commission concerning the mass. Mr. Schmitz expressed concern about the additional window and its symmetry and asked if the proposed new window could match the existing one below it. Mr. Logan stated he could do that. Mrs. Fenwick stated that she found it difficult to vote for a continued extension and Mr. Schmitz asked if Mr. Logan couldn't rearrange the kitchen because he too was concerned about the mass, even in small increments. Mr. Logan responded that he thought he could increase the ratio of the ramp if he were to pull it back.. Mr. Baker stated that he thought Mr. Logan was creating his own problems by changing the first floor from one level to the next. Mr. Logan countered that he did not want 9' of ramp in his backyard. Both Mr. Schmitz and Mr. Gaffney thought there might be other solutions and asked if Mr. Logan could examine some other alternatives. Ms. Litty made a motion to table the application to see if the applicant could come up with other alternatives and that the commission hold a special meeting for Mr. Logan pending his return with some other options. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried with all in favor.
3. Permit #08-01, Giovanni Salvo, 512 E. Strand, raise existing house, building new foundation, remove existing house roof, add second story and rebuild existing back porch. Both Mr. and Mrs. Salvo were present along with their architect, Jay Corvan, to discuss the permit application. The homeowners presented to the commission a 3-D model of what they wanted their house to look like. The commission was reminded by Mr. Corvan that at their meeting in December, the Salvos were told that the objections the commission had at that time involved the roof being too high, the introduction of a cupola, and the use of dormers designed into the roof. Those elements have now been removed with Mr. Salvo indicating that the design had been made more simpler. Mr. Gaffney pointed out that the bay window

had been raised to the second floor. Mr. Salvo responded that that element was there last time he had presented plans to the commission. Mrs. Fenwick asked if the house was going to be raised. Mr. Corvan responded that it would be 27' tall to the peak of the roof. Mr. Baker pointed out that the present roof does not have a peak, rather it is a hip roof and is flat across the top. Mr. Corvan responded that it is a function of the house size not being the same dimension on the four sides; two sides are a bit smaller than the other two sides. Mr. Baker stated that the house drawing now shows a much steeper pitch than the original. Mr. Corvan retorted that he wanted the house to have some character and that it really ought to have a 6 or 7 over 12 pitch. Mr. Baker thought in the past they had talked about bringing the pitch down. Mr. Corvan again replied that they had brought it down but that they had brought up the second floor to make it a full second floor. Mrs. Fenwick complained that the commission is being faced with the issue of people buying small houses and wanting to make them huge. She went on to say that this is the only contributing house on the National Register on this street. She reminded the Salvos that when they bought their house it was a tiny house and the only house in this area that was a one story reminder of what the town looked like at one time. Mrs. Fenwick noted that it was her job to try to look at the houses in Oxford and see how they can be preserved. Mr. Baker added that one problem he had was with the proposed porch and its closeness to the road. Mr. Corvan responded that he and his clients should have heard about this the last time they met with the commission with Mr. Salvo adding that they had been talking about a second floor. Mrs. Fenwick felt the proposed house changes were all mass. Mr. Schmitz spoke stating that his feeling was that the model was not very fortunate and appeared much bigger in size and dominance than on the drawing. He added that he liked the fact of having a bay window on one story instead of two stories and that the two story bay window was a new feature which also changes the roof line and makes the mass much bigger. The members also agreed that the drawings that have been presented have not been consistent and that there are discrepancies in them. Mr. Schmitz stated that he agreed the house is much smaller and traditional than others in the area but that the basic question for all concerned is should everything be restricted to the same mass or should the owners have a decent living space? For Mr. Schmitz, the two story bay window was taking the plan to a different direction that made the mass appear bigger though he felt the entrance area was nicely done. Mrs. Fenwick stated she had concerns about the house being raised. Mr. Corvan responded they wanted to raise the house 12" to make the basement more useful as it currently does not have a good crawl space. Mrs. Salvo noted that another reason why her model looked so massive is because part of what they were looking at was actually foundation, a lot of which would be buried. Mr. Salvo expressed his frustration regarding the issue over the two bay windows. He stated that when he first began talking to the commission about raising his house up one level they had talked about the use of what was originally referred to as "bump-outs" and now being referred to as bay windows and that no one had expressed any problems with that concept. He thought his plans would be received as making the house look more elegant by giving it movement and making it interesting. Mr. Salvo added that he did not want to create a box that did not mean anything.

Mr. Baker responded that was what he had now, a small cottage that is a box. Mr. Salvo countered that no one had told him that he could not do anything to the box and that for 8 months they had talked about possibilities of improving his house. Mr. Schmitz interjected stating that the style elements of the details of the house is what the commission and applicants are facing. He added that they had had a debate about the bay windows last time the house was discussed whereby the commission gave their reservations and that that was not what people particularly like to see. Mr. Schmitz questioned whether they could come to a compromise when it came to the details on the house. In going over the details, Mr. Schmitz pointed out that one of the problems for him involved the roof. Instead of a nice square roof that was present in the old design without any extension, Mr. Salvo was now presenting a roof unlike anything else in this area. Another item of concern was the two story bay window because it is an element that is not exactly prominent in Oxford, especially whereby one that goes all the way up to the roof and has a different shape. Mr. Schmitz also asked if anything could be done with the details such as in the basement area. Ms. Litty added that she liked the design itself but thought the second floor bedroom window was too much. Mr. Schmitz noted that the commission needed consistent plans, adding that the commission has drawings of the one story bay window and that that would be acceptable to him. Ms. Litty made a motion to table the application. The motion was seconded by Schmitz and unanimously carried with all in favor.

4. Permit #07-77, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Fronks, 104 W. Division St., revision to previously approved permit for skylights in roof of center wing of house to be replaced with a raise in the gable roof of the center wing of the house with windows in the walls instead of a sloping roof. The applicants were not present to discuss their proposed changes. Mrs. Fenwick stated the applicants were basically able to adjust their plans in order to remove the skylights. Mrs. Fenwick then made a motion to approved the modifications as presented. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried with all in favor.
5. Permit #07-56, Dennis Buttner, 110 N. Morris Street, revisions to previously approved building permit for an addition and renovations to the Ruffled Duck Bed and Breakfast. Mr. Buttner presented to the commission several "field changes" that he had made to the house prior to receiving approval from the historic commission. The main changes that were made included the following: 1) the replacement of the siding with new yellow pine Dutch lap siding with 5" exposure to replace old aluminum siding the owners were unable to reuse, 2) new 16" x 26" double hung window in the attic facing Wilson Street, 3) addition of skylight in roof area, 4) 20" +/- soffit returns, 5) extended gable, 6) metal roofing used in front and side porches, and 7) new door instead of window in master suite of owner's residence. Because of the many changes which had been made, the commission agreed to discuss and vote on each of the changes individually. The first change discussed concerned that of the siding. Mr. Buttner explained that when they took the aluminum siding off the bed and breakfast side of the house the Dutch lap siding was found to be in very poor condition. Mr.

Buttner began using new yellow pine Dutch siding with a 5" exposure to replace those areas in which the aluminum siding was removed. Ms. Litty asked how many sidings would be on the house. Mr. Buttner replied that there will be two types of siding used but at the present time there are three: aluminum, cedar, and Dutch. Mr. Baker asked if it was the owners intent to remove the aluminum and reveal the Dutch lap. Mr. Buttner responded that it was but that the old Dutch lap is in a bad state of repair so they are overlaying the existing and continuing it. The color of the lap siding would be as similar a match as possible to the color of the existing aluminum siding. This led to a discussion of the standing seam metal roofs and the color that was chosen for the metal roofing. Mrs. Fenwick stated she was having a problem with the standing seam metal roofs and could not find any color of that intensity in town. Mr. Buttner felt that the color had the characteristic of turned copper. Mr. Baker made a motion that the commission accept the siding revision. The motion was seconded by Mr. Schmitz with the understanding that it be done in a reasonable amount of time to which Mr. Buttner asked that he be given a year. The motion was carried without further discussion. The second item addressed was the small window added to the Wilson Street side of the house. It was explained that the window was being used as a small venting window. Mr. Baker made a motion that the commission accept the window. The motion was seconded by Ms. Litty and unanimously carried. The third item addressed was the addition of a skylight. Mr. Buttner was reminded that the guidelines do not allow skylights which Ms. Litty felt were very visible. Mr. Schmitz also agreed that it could be seen from Morris Street. Mr. Buttner, on the other hand, felt it could barely be seen and that when the trees were in bloom one would not be able to see it at all. Mr. Baker made a motion that the commission disapprove the replacement of the skylight. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Fenwick and unanimously carried. The fourth item discussed were the soffits. Mr. Schmitz stated he did not have a problem with the returns and thought it would look better than it did before. A motion was made by Mrs. Fenwick that the commission accept the soffits. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried with all in favor. The fifth item discussed was the extended gable. Mr. Schmitz expressed concern regarding the pitch in the roof. Mr. Buttner explained the problems they were having getting the roofs to line up. He had thought his metal roofing man could make it work but was told it couldn't and Mr. Buttner stated that he did not debate the issue. Mr. Schmitz thought it could have worked out and that this was a new architectural element being added which had nothing comparable to it on the front elevation, not to mention anywhere else on Morris Street. A motion was made that the field change of the extended gable not be approved. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried. The sixth item discussed was the roofing on the front and side porches. Mrs. Fenwick again mentioned that she had a problem with extending the color to the front of the house. Mr. Buttner pointed out that the color in question was going to be used on all the new shutters and that the color would be floating around the house. Mrs. Fenwick stated that she objected to the color feeling that it was not in context with the general look of Oxford "up and down the street." She added that she did not want to go on record as extending that particular color scheme to the front of the house. Mr. Baker made a motion to approve the

roofing. Mrs. Fenwick stated she voted for the seam roof but not the color. Mr. Schmitz seconded the motion. The motion was carried by a vote of 3 to 2 with Mr. Baker, Mr. Schmitz, and Mr. Gaffney in favor of the roofs and Ms. Litty and Mrs. Fenwick voting against them. The final item for review was the request for a door on back of the second story addition. Mrs. Fenwick made a motion to accept the change. The motion was seconded by Ms. Litty and unanimously carried. A brief discussion followed concerning the extended gable ending with Mr. Schmitz stating that if Mr. Buttner had done what he said he was going to do in the first drawings he did not think he would have had a technical problem and followed by Mr. Buttner agreeing with him.

This concluded the review of building permits.

A consultation was held with Tim Kearns, architect and agent for the property owners of the Oxford Mews and 103 S. Morris Street. Mr. Kearns informed the commission that the owners have decided to keep the front of the building the way it is and to just paint it. The side elevations would be very simple with just siding and windows. The stairwell, currently situated on the side of the building, would be removed and exchanged for a new two story staircase located in the center of the rear of the building. Presently there are two apartments upstairs, which the owners would like to keep, with the desire to have three businesses downstairs. The ceilings would be kept at the same height. The commission was agreeable to the changes as presented.

Mr. Logan returned again asking if the commission would accept a 1'6" extension as a compromise, noting that he could make his inside ramp work with this change. Mrs. Fenwick made a motion to accept the 1'6" extension as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Litty and unanimously carried without further discussion.

Mr. Gaffney stated that he had put together a memo to be sent to the Commissioners asking them what was going on regarding the original memo the Historic Commission had sent them in reference to the Vinzant property on Tilghman Street. He also noted that he and Mr. Schmitz had taken pictures around town of buildings that were in disrepair.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Willoughby
Assistant Clerk