

OXFORD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES

AUGUST 6, 2007

The regular monthly meeting of the Oxford Historic District Commission was called to order by the chairperson, Suzanne Litty, on Monday, August 6, 2007 at 5:00 p.m., in the meeting room of the Oxford Community Services Building.

Also in attendance were Dorothy Baker, Alfred Leszczynski, and David Baker.

Prior to the onset of the review of the building permits, Mrs. Fenwick moved that the application of Anthony Passarella be the first permit to be reviewed at this night's meeting as Mr. Passarella had some personal matters to address that required him to leave early from the meeting.

The following building permits were then reviewed as follows:

1. Permit #07-46, A. H. Passarella, 103 Jefferson Street, upgrade garage by replacing siding, windows and roof; installing new garage door and entrance door; expand brick patio and deck. Mr. Passarella explained to the commission that he just wanted to clean up his garage and make it more tighter and attractive. The changes desired would not change the footprint of the garage. Mr. Passarella also noted that he wanted to expand his existing brick patio and add on a deck. The commission had very little comments. A motion was made by Mr. Baker to approve the application as presented. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried without further discussion.
2. Permit #07-40, Simon Cooper, 319 N. Morris St., renovation of existing kitchen area and demolition of existing roof area covering patio area and convert to living space. Mr. Cooper, along with his architect and contractor, met with the commission to discuss Mr. Cooper's plans which were originally discussed at the commission's meeting on July 2, 2007. Following a brief discussion, the commission approved the renovation plans to the existing kitchen area and the demolition of the roof area. However, with regards to the second floor balcony railing, Mrs. Fenwick questioned weather the balcony would look right in this area or not. Mrs. Fenwick made the motion to approve the plans as presented but asked that the applicant bring back the plans for the balcony once the balcony has been started so that the commission could reconsider the balcony once they had something physically to view that was in place. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried without further discussion.
3. Permit #07-43, James Simpson, 302 N. Morris Street, tear off all siding and replace it; tear off anything damaged or rotten and replace with same materials; close in rear porch to extend kitchen. Both Mr. Simpson and his contractor, Carl Wooters, were present at this night's meeting. Mr. Wooters explained that he was working to get the house ready for Mr. Simpson to paint and had uncovered most of the exterior studs, exposing the inside of the existing

siding. The siding had gaps allowing light to enter and several pieces were rotten. Mr. Wooters said that up to 90% of the siding along with some of the studs were rotten. When he had exposed the window frames he found that most of the top halves were rotten and falling out. Mr. Simpson stated that he had scheduled July to paint but because they could not replace all the siding he was unable to do so and he was anxious to get started on the project.

Mr. Wooters suggested he could paint the siding under the porches as they were still in fairly good shape. Mr. Baker expressed concern about allowing blanket approval for the applicant to decide what to save and what to demolish and replace. He mentioned a recent case whereby the applicant had taken it upon himself to do that and had decided a large section of the structure was beyond repair and had demolished this portion without coming back to the town for permission. Ms. Litty suggested that the commission send in Victor MacSorely to go over the structure with Mr. Wooters and come up with a recommendation for preservation or partial demolition. Oxford resident and neighbor John Pagenstecher expressed the opinion that the Historic District Commission had already granted approval for re-roofing with asphalt shingles, which were not historic, and that it would be better to tear off all the siding and put up sheathing and new siding. Dr. Leszczynski asked about the chimneys and were they going to be repaired. Mr. Wooters responded that they were waiting for approval from the town to do that. Mr. Baker read the historic minutes of March 12, 2007 whereby permission was granted. Mr. Wooters responded that he would therefore get started on that project as well. Ms. Litty suggested that the permit be tabled until the commission can get Victor MacSorely in to look at the house but that in the meantime Mr. Simpson could paint whatever he wanted to paint. Mrs. Fenwick added that the commission could hold a special meeting for Mr. Simpson once Mr. MacSorely got back to them. Mr. Simpson asked the commission where they stood on the issue of his windows. Ms. Litty responded that the commission would have Mr. MacSorely look over the windows as well.

4. Permit #07-45, Stuart Parnes, 111 Tilghman Street, replace wooden gate with Oxford style pickets; same size and color. Mr. Parnes explained that he wanted to replace the small white picket gate between the hedges in the front of his house with a traditional Oxford style fence of the same height and color. Mr. Baker made a motion to approve the permit as submitted. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved without further discussion.
5. Permit #07-44, Jane McCarthy, 310 N. Morris Street, new pickets to replace rotten pickets; posts to remain same; rails replacing rotten rails; old rotten pickets are plain and pointed to be replaced with Oxford style fencing. Ms. McCarthy explained to the commission that she was not aware she needed a permit and apologized for the fact that she had already replaced the rotten pickets of her fence with Oxford style fencing. Mr. Baker made a motion that the commission accept what she had done and thanked her so for doing it because the fence looked better. The motion was seconded by Dr. Leszczynski and was unanimously carried without further discussion.

6. Permit #07-13, Mr. and Mrs. VinZant, 102 Tilghman Street, demolition of cottage partially destroyed by fire and subsequent water and smoke damage. Real estate agent Ray Stevens was present at the meeting representing Mr. and Mrs. VinZant. Mr. Stevens explained to the commission that prior to the fire at the VinZant's house, the house was built around 1900 and had a new addition placed on it. The west side of the house was damaged and the house has been abandoned since the fire which has been over a year ago. Mr. Stevens presented photos showing the extent of the fire damage noting that the property owners want to demolish the house as they have been trying to sell it for over a year and that the damage seems significant enough to the house to warrant its coming down. The home inspectors that the owners have had look at the house agree that it should be demolished because they did not know the extent of the plumbing, electrical utilities, roof structure, and smoke damage. Ms. Litty asked if the owners would object to the commission sending someone in to look the house over to give their recommendation, at the owner's expense. Mr. Stevens responded that would be fine and in fact, they had been waiting for the list of recommended inspectors for quite some time. Ms. Litty noted that the commission was using restoration inspectors with Mrs. Fenwick adding that the list also contains structural engineers. Mr. Stevens stated that he would be more inclined to use a structural engineers as he knew Mr. MacSorely and knew he did wonderful work but that he was prone to salvage something no matter how poor its condition. Ms. Litty notified Mr. Stevens that the town office has the list of inspectors and Mrs. Fenwick stated that maybe the commission would have a written report to review at the next meeting.

7. Permit #'s 07-47/ 07-48/07-49, Philip Logan and Barbara Paca, 101 W. Strand, addition to existing house, swimming pool, and accessory structure. Ms. Paca explained to the commission that her husband was an architect and that she was a landscape architect. She presented the commission with various layouts of the property as it is today and what they would like the property to look like which would include an addition of a studio to the rear of the existing house, a swimming pool, carport, and guest quarters. Concern was expressed about the carport. Ms. Paca explained that the carport would be very modest and the purpose of it would be to get a child into the house in bad weather with minimal affects from the weather. Neighboring resident Jane McCarthy asked about what affect the proposed work to be done to the house would have on a large existing tree in the backyard. Ms. Paca responded that tree, by definition, is a hazardous, invasive tree. She and her husband would like to remove that tree completely and replace it with long term, worthy safe trees that are good for the environment. When questioned about the proposed swimming pool Ms. Paca explained that the pool would be 11' x 32' and that it would be built for someone who has epilepsy and cerebral palsy who does not walk and is confined to a wheelchair. Mr. Baker questioned how deep the pool would be. Ms. Paca responded that it would run from 3'6" down to 8' deep with only 14" of coping surrounding it. Mr. Baker asked about the filtration system of the pool which was not shown on the plans. Ms. Paca then presented the

commission with various pictures showing the feel and look of things she and her husband wished to incorporate into their house. Ms. Litty read aloud a memo (see Attachment A with these minutes) from George Gaffney, member of the historic commission who was not able to attend this night's meeting, who had looked at the plans and expressed concerns over the impact this project would have on the streetscape, the large maple tree being called invasive and the accuracy of this designation, the concern over the wrap-around porch over the proposed garage/carport, and the impact of the proposed swimming pool. Dr. Leszczynski felt that a therapeutic pool would not have much in the way of any impact though Mr. Baker tended to disagree stating that the next buyer would do with it what he/she wanted. Ms. Paca offered to make the pool a shallow pool in order to avoid any future problems. Neighbor and owner of the Robert Morris Inn's "Sandaway" residence, Wendy Gibson, expressed her displeasure and concern about the pool and its possibility of being subject to a different use. Dr. Leszczynski reminded those present that many people within the historic district have swimming pools and that the size of the pool limits what one can do with it. A pool of this size would very much limit what activity would take place in it. John Pagenstecher, neighbor to this property, asked about the guest cottage. Ms. Paca explained that it would be a two story building but would not exceed 18' in height. Mr. Baker noted that this was a very historic house and that he would like to see the additions in keeping in character with the house. He was especially concerned about the windows the owners were planning to use on the house that are not atypical for Oxford. Ms. Paca responded that she was trying to work back to the 18th century and within the greater context of the era. Mr. Baker asked if these type windows were in Oxford in the 18th century. Audience member Bob Shannahan responded that he lived 3 miles outside of Oxford and that in his house, built in the 1830's, it had windows like those the applicants wanted that were original to the house. Ms. Litty pointed out that Mr. Shannahan did not live within the limits of the Town of Oxford and that the town has guidelines that the commission must stick to. Mrs. Fenwick mentioned that the commission has turned down other applications having attached garages. Usually what you find in the historic district are little garages in the back yard having a long driveway down to them. Mrs. Fenwick did not know how the commission would deal with this request seeing as how they are caught between a need and a precedent and that this request would change the streetscape. Mr. Baker stated that the owners bought this house knowing they were in the historic district and that they had a copy of the guidelines. The guidelines mention nothing about the type of windows the owners are requesting. Ms. Paca responded that she was under the impression that the commission was not as concerned with that which could not be seen from the street. Ms. Fenwick responded that if one goes down to the end of Lover's Lane (E. Strand) and looks up towards the house, the windows in question would be visible. She added that she understood the owners were sympathetic to the house but the reality is the proposed work would change the porch, create a carport, remove some vegetation and would create another building in the back. It would change the property a great deal and Mrs. Fenwick added that she thought it would change the mass on such a little

street. Ms. Paca responded that their drawings pay attention to the integrity and tell an earlier story because they suggest a period of architecture that she personally liked and that one felt that one had the opportunity to make that gesture. Mrs. Fenwick responded that she did not see that gesture in the carport, etc., and that the house she bought is not the house she wanted. Kenneth Gibson, owner of the Robert Morris Inn and "Sandaway", spoke concerning the extent of what the applicants were trying to do. Even though Mr. Gibson realized they were within the guidelines, he thought the plans went way beyond the property and that the historic commission should keep the integrity of the community compatible. He felt that what Ms. Paca and her husband were trying to present was very aggressive. Mrs. Gibson echoed her husband's concerns that she felt like the proposed project was an invasion and would be such an adjustment for them to get use to. Ms. Litty stated that the commission was not going to act on this permit at this night's meeting since there are some changes they want to see. She felt that the commission was going to have to rethink this permit and that the applicants were going to have to rethink some things to see if they could come up with a better solution for the garage and overall mass. It was agreed by those members present to table the permit. Ms. Paca asked for a recap of what the commission was looking to see changed. Mrs. Fenwick responded the windows on the side of the new addition, the issue of the garage, the second floor screened porches, the issue of the pool (noting that is was not the commission's purview), and the caretaker's cottage. Mr. Baker added that the commission did not discuss the design on the caretaker's cottage at all because it was said that it would not be visible from the street.

This concluded the review of building permits.

A motion was made by Mr. Baker to accept and approve the minutes of the special meeting of June 27, 2007. The motion was seconded and carried with all in favor.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Willoughby
Assistant Clerk