

OXFORD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES

MARCH 4, 2009

The regular monthly meeting of the Oxford Historic District Commission was called to order by the chairman, George Gaffney, on Monday, March 4, 2009, at 5:00 p.m., in the meeting room of the Oxford Community Services Building.

Other commission members in attendance were David Baker and Suzanne Litty.

The minutes of the meeting of February 2, 2009 were approved and accepted as distributed.

The following building permits were reviewed by the committee:

1. Permit #09-14, Alexander von Bismarck, 202 Tred Avon Avenue, concrete 40' swimming pool constructed along side of home with 4' fence surrounding yard (Oxford white fence across house front and 20' down left side; commercial Carolina fence around rest of property). Mr. von Bismarck was represented by Celeste Pyper from Aqua Pool Co. Ms. Pyper explained to the commission that the applicant originally wanted to build a pool that was 50' long and in an "L" shape. However, after meeting with the Planning Commission and being advised that a pool longer than 40' in length would require going before the Board of Appeals, the pool length had been changed to 40' and as such, was approved by the Planning Commission. Currently there is a white picket fence in front of the house but the owners are planning to change that to an Oxford white picket style fence in the front and down along the side about 20', where the proposed pool is to be placed, and from there changing into a 4' black, commercial metal "Carolina" fence which would surround the rest of the property. The size of the pool would be 515 square feet. Mr. Baker pointed out that the pool filtering equipment was shown on the plat as being way in the back corner of the property. Mr. Baker made Ms. Pyper aware of the zoning setbacks in which the pool equipment would have to meet the setbacks of the principal structure. Mr. Baker also pointed out that the proposed metal fencing would be visible from the back of the house and questioned why the owner did not want to install the Oxford style picket fencing all the way around his house. Ms. Pyper responded that the owner wanted the metal fencing in the back in order to keep his slight view of the water from his back yard. Mr. Gaffney informed Ms. Pyper that the Oxford Historic District Commission was in charge of the streetscape and, as such, was concerned as to how the proposed pool would fit into the streetscape of Tred Avon Avenue and West Street. Ms. Pyper asked if it would work better if the owners were to enclose their entire property with the Oxford style picket fencing. Mr. Gaffney responded that he did not know if that would help because what the owners were asking for, in terms of the pool design, was not like anything else on the street so that it would be changing the historic look of the street. Ms. Pyper asked if the commission was just turning down the pool and not the fence. Ms. Litty responded that she did not know. Mr. Gaffney responded that he wanted to see how the pool was going to be screened so that it would fit in architecturally

with what was already there. He noted that the property was fairly bare and that from an eye appeal he did not think it was a very acceptable proposal, historically speaking. Alan Van Winkle, neighbor to Mr. von Bismarck spoke stating that both he and the neighbors on the other side of Mr. von Bismarck, the Parkers, were against the swimming pool based on the reasoning that it is not incumbent to the historic district and would have a big impact on the entire area. Al Smith, another neighbor of the von Bismarcks, spoke stating that he and another set of neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. John Troups, were also opposed to the swimming pool stating that the owners were never in the area and that it would be an unattended safety hazard. Mr. Gaffney again spoke stating that if the pool were to be concealed or properly screened that might be a matter for consideration. Mr. Van Winkle again spoke expressing concerns about the noise element. Mr. Baker stated that from an historic aspect, as an outside visual, he would feel uncomfortable turning the pool down strictly for that reason though he understood the neighbors as having a problem with it for the same reasons he himself had problems with it. Mr. Baker then made a motion that the historic commission accept the application with the change of the fence to a white Oxford picket style around the entire property and with the moving of the pumping structures so that they are within the building envelope. Ms. Litty commented that because this is a small, historic neighborhood and the neighbors were unhappy with the proposed pool, she was uncomfortable voting for it. As a result, the motion was not carried and the discussion ended.

2. Permit #09-12, Giovanni Salvo, 512 E. Strand, demolition of south and/or east wall to allow for removal of "Hod" from existing residence; restructure wood stud walls and replace existing aluminum clapboard to prior condition; raise house and put on new foundation. The applicants were represented by their architect, Jay Corvan and builder, Victor MacSorely. Mr. Corvan stated that on February 25th of last year the historic commission had approved the overall scheme of the two story project to this property and that this permit was just a small portion of what Mr. Corvan had previously presented which had been approved at the beginning. Mr. Baker interjected stating that the previous permit was not approved as that permit had expired and that it had never been appealed. Mr. Corvan stated that what he had presented last year was a design plan and that it had been approved. The applicants were now presenting an actual permit for two items. The first was for the removal of the "Hod" which is an historic piece of a ship that had been built into the front hall span of the house that was in the process of being donated to the Richardson Museum. The second item was for a request to lift the house up and put in a new foundation. In carefully looking over the house, Mr. MacSorely found that the house had no proper footings. A comment was made by Mr. Corvan that there would be no exterior changes taking place on the house. Mr. Gaffney questioned this because of the removal of the "Hod". Mr. Corvan corrected himself by stating that a portion of the outside would have to be removed in order to take out the "Hod" but that it would be replaced in the exact same manner as it currently exists. Mr. Baker asked Mr. Corvan if he understood that what was being reviewed at this night's meeting was a building permit, not a phase of a project. Mr. Corvan replied that he

understood that. Mr. Baker then asked Mr. Corvan why he was showing a two story house in his plans when the existing house was only one story and a second story was not being sought on the application. Mr. Corvan replied that the showing of a second story was only for informational purposes so that the commission could see where the applicants were going with their overall plan and that again, the purpose of this application was to seek permission for two items – raise up the house and put in a new foundation and to remove the “Hod” and replace it with a material similar to what currently exists on the house. Ms. Litty asked Mr. MacSorely what he would replace the “Hod” with once it had been taken out. Mr. MacSorely responded that because of the way the “Hod” was placed in the house, the only way to remove it would be to take out the outside wall. Once the “Hod” has been removed, a new wall would be installed and put back exactly like it was, with vinyl siding, and everything will look the same except for the new brick foundation. Mr. Gaffney noted that in looking over the plans he found a notation showing demolition of the south and/or east wall. Mr. MacSorely responded that when they go to remove the “Hod” they may find some overlapping of the outside walls that the “Hod” has been nailed into and as such, thought it would be safe if Mr. Corvan showed in his plans that they may have to rebuild two walls. He added that the house would “look exactly the same” as currently exists. Mr. Baker questioned whether or not it would look the same as the plans also showed new windows and a door in the area in which the outside wall would have to be removed. Mr. MacSorely proposed to just leave the wall alone and put it back the way it currently exists. Mr. Baker agreed to Mr. MacSorely’s proposal as “long as the Hod comes out and (one) never realized it was there.” Mr. Gaffney stated he was going to take photographs of how the house looks now so that the commission would have proof of what was there. Ms. Litty made a motion to approve the removal of the “Hod” and the replacing of it to look as the house looks now. The motion was seconded by Mr. Baker and unanimously carried with all in favor. The commission members next discussed the raising of the house and new foundation. Mr. Baker asked if the house would look the same after it had been raised up and set on the new foundation. The reason for his question was because the plans showed two chimneys on the house with the notation that they were to be removed for the house lifting but did not mention if they would be going back or not. Mr. Corvan responded the chimneys would have to be repaired. Mr. Baker then asked why the house would have to be lifted up 8" when other houses in the area are all of a standard height. Mr. Corvan responded that the owners wanted more headroom in the basement. Mr. Baker then questioned why the basement couldn’t be dug out instead. Mr. MacSorely responded that from a construction standpoint, the owner did not want a full basement and that by lifting the house 8" they would meet the building code under the floor joists and gain a barrier. Again Mr. Baker questioned why they could not excavate under the house. Mr. MacSorely responded that it was more economical to do what they were proposing to do. Mr. Baker next questioned the positioning of the stoop. Both Mr. Corvan and Mr. MacSorely told Mr. Baker that the house and stoop would be in exactly the same position and that the house would look the same, with the exception that it would be setting on a brick foundation. Ms. Litty made a motion to accept the

application for raising the house 8". The motion was seconded by Mr. Baker but he added that he thought Mr. Corvan was misleading the commission. The motion, however, was unanimously carried without further discussion.

This concluded the review of building permits.

A consultation was held with Timothy Kearns, architect for Mr. and Mrs. William Korab, property owners of 516 E. Strand. Mr. Kearns reminded the commission that he had met with them last year with an application of adding on to the Korab's existing house, often referred to as the "Oxford lighthouse." Though the application was approved, the Korabs began looking at the financial feasibility of the project and what they could do to reduce the overall footprint of the addition. The result of the new design that Mr. Kearns was presenting for comments would result in an increase to the home of only 2%. Mr. Baker stated that he liked the new design as well as the past design that had been approved. Both Mr. Gaffney and Ms. Litty stated they liked the new design better. Mr. Kearns stated that he wanted to get the commission's approval on the basic shape before moving further ahead on the project. Mr. Gaffney stated that the design looked good cosmetically and fit in with Oxford. Ms. Litty added that the new design was not as massive.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Willoughby
Assistant Clerk