

OXFORD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES

NOVEMBER 2, 2009

The regular monthly meeting of the Oxford Historic District Commission was called to order by the chairman, George Gaffney, on Monday, November 2, 2009 at 5:00 p.m., in the meeting room of the Oxford Community Services Building.

Other commission members in attendance were David Baker, Heinrich Schmitz, Suzanne Litty, and Jennifer Stanley.

The minutes of the meeting of October 5, 2009 were approved and accepted as distributed with the following correction: Page 3, line 4, the word "he" should be changed to "this."

The minutes of the special meeting of October 16, 2009 were approved and accepted as distributed.

The following permit was reviewed by the commission:

1. Permit #09-63, Simon Cooper, 319 N. Morris Street, construct a blue stone patio. Mr. Cooper was represented by his contracting firm, Strong Company, LLC. The contractor explained to the commission that the owner was proposing to build a blue stone patio with a sitting wall around it. Two steps would be built off the back of the house leading down to the new patio. The sitting wall would be about 16" up from the patio except for one end, in which there is a slope, where the wall would come up about 24". The owners have asked for a blue stone veneer on the wall and have asked that a little bit of the exposed wall have some field stone as to match the old foundation found on the house. There were some questions raised to whether or not two or three treads would be needed to get from the house to patio and whether or not handrails would be needed. Mr. Schmitz made a motion to accept the application provided that the owners understand that if some changes are needed concerning railings, that they would inform the commission. The motion was seconded by Mr. Baker and unanimously carried without further discussion.

This concluded the review of building permit applications.

Mr. William Fowler and his builder, Greg Bray, met with the commission as a result of a letter received by Mr. Fowler from the town office with regards to shutters that Mr. Fowler had installed without filing a request to the Historic District Commission. Mr. Fowler submitted to the commission a photo from about 25 years ago indicating that there had been black vinyl shutters on the building. Mr. Fowler assumed that because the vinyl shutters had been on the building they had already been approved at some point and as such decided to put them back in place. He apologized to the commission for putting them up without approval but did not realize he would have to seek permission since the vinyl shutters were originally on his building and also given the fact that his neighbors across the street had vinyl shutters on their building as well. Mr. Fowler stated that he had come before the commission at this night's meeting seeking

approval of his shutters and change to his front window. Mr. Gaffney informed Mr. Fowler that one of the rules of the commission is that the applicant needs to have his or her permit in a week ahead of time. Mr. Fowler stated he did not know he needed to do that and that was why he was here at this meeting this evening. Mr. Bray told the commission that the owner was planning on filing for a building permit for the original layout of the building but that they were not planning on altering the interior design. Mr. Gaffney responded that the commission was just concerned with what was happening to the outside of the building. He further stated that even though the owner originally had vinyl shutters things have changed. The commission is now asking that hardware be installed to simulate what use to be used "in the good old days." Mr. Fowler responded that originally the building did not have shutters and that it had awnings instead and that old pictures that he has of the building do not show brackets anywhere. He added that another reason they wanted the vinyl shutters is because they are maintenance free and that they have had a lot of trouble in the past, when Mr. Fowler's father owned the property, with people leaning against the wooden shutters, breaking the shutter slats, and stuffing cups and such into the shutters themselves. He felt that if he were made to put the shutter hardware on, people going by the property were going to snag themselves on the hardware because of close proximity of the building as it sits right on the sidewalk. Mr. Fowler then addressed the main picture window in front of the building stating that he had tried to save it but someone had come along and broken the glass out of it. Mr. Bray, the builder, added that the commission had already approved other new windows for the building and that the store front window they were discussing would have the same type of windows as were previously approved elsewhere in the building. He added that they had to put in a new transom at the top of the window due to structural necessity. Ms. Litty commented that she thought the building looked a lot better than it did and made a motion to approve the store front window as described. The motion was seconded by Mr. Baker and carried with one nay vote from Mr. Schmitz who felt there was not information given on the window. Discussion came back around again to the shutters. Mr. Fowler stated that if his vinyl shutters did not pass the commission's approval he was going to have them taken off and leave them off adding that there would be much more expense in having wooden shutters with hardware installed. Mr. Gaffney stated that the commission could not approve anything else at this night's meeting without a complete permit. He added the commission understood what the owner wanted to do but that he needed to get it on paper with pictures of all four sides of the building. Mr. Fowler stated that basically everything that had been done to the building was put back the way it had been. Mr. Schmitz asked about the little shed roof on the back which had changed and a set of stairs located at the back of the building. He asked the owner to bring in old photos of the building and new so that comparisons could be made along with writing down all the changes that had occurred so that the commission would not have any questions with regards to the exterior of this property. Mr. Gaffney concluded the discussion by adding that he expected the owner to have a complete file next time.

CONSULTATION

A consultation was held with Timothy Kearns, architect, on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. Giovanni Salvo, property owners of 512 E. Strand. Mr. Kearns explained to the commission that he had

been working to design a house for the Salvos using the strengths of the property. The purpose of this consultation was to show the commission what the Salvos were planning in order for them to feel confident about moving forward with their project. Mr. Kearns presented streetscape model images based on plats he had acquired at the town office to establish the size and scale of the houses nearby. The preliminary plans showed taking the square footage from the first floor and applying it to the second floor in order to make a two story element on top of the existing house. Some new square footage was added in order to create some new bay windows but existing footage was also deleted by removing an existing stoop and stairs that had accessed the front door and had crossed over the front property line. Two of the existing four hips of the existing house have been maintained in the new plan. The plans show for the creation of a single element on the second floor. The image that Mr. Kearns presented to the group was the one in which he was hoping to get approval for from both Planning and preliminary approval from the historic commission. Mr. Baker questioned the look of the pickets surrounding the balconies on the second floor. Mr. Kearns responded that at this time the owners were not sure what the pickets would actually look like but thought there would be some kind of picketed or maybe even a balustered element. Mr. Schmitz commented that the whole design made a lot of sense to him and that it was a very nice solution headed in the right direction. However, one thing that was of concern to him was the proposed north elevation; of particular the fact that there was basically no wrap around of the roof. Mr. Kearns responded that it was still there to which Mr. Schmitz retorted that it was minimalized to the point that it was non-existent in the middle. He also questioned that part of the upper section which looked very traditional but then changing to another part which included the balconies that had a very contemporary look to it. Mr. Schmitz added that the shown elevations did not go with the flow of the other houses in the area. It was the northern elevation that Mr. Schmitz expressed the most concern over, particularly the balconies. He suggested that Mr. Kearns move the balconies back so they would have a piece of roof showing thus softening the look of that particular elevation. He also suggested finding a way to bring out a little section of roof that could run around the bay window in order to have the same element going all the way around the house thus making it much more consistent with the remaining elevations. Mr. Kearns pointed out reasons why the dormers could not be moved due to structural issues within the interior of the home. He added that there were contemporary elements to part of the house but that they were within the limits as proposed by the Planning Commission providing the plans don't show the house going past the existing roof overhangs. Mr. Schmitz added that the preliminary plans were showing a special design of having the balconies set into the roof and suggested moving the balconies over. Mr. Kearns stated he would take a look at that and again stressed that he was looking for conceptual approval of the overall shape of what he was proposing. Mr. Schmitz stated that he thought the overall shape was "one of the best solutions you could have" and that the only issue for him was that one particular elevation. He suggested trying to show some movement in that elevation. Mr. Kearns responded he would have to change the pitch because he could not go outside the overall dimension. It was also noted that on the north façade there would be a vent for a woodstove. Mr. Schmitz stated that the commission has had that kind of issue before and suggested that Mr. Kearns check the guidelines and that the commission did not want to see the use of just a metal pipe.

Ray Stevens, local real estate agent in Oxford, came before the commission to announce that the former Mill Street Grill, located at 101 Mill Street, would soon be reopening under new management as a restaurant. The new restaurateurs, a married couple of Venezuelan descent, would be serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner to be of a Latin American fare. Because the husband does not speak English, Mr. Stevens wanted to make sure everything goes forward smoothly for the couple by informing the commission what is being planned. When asked if any renovation work was to be done, Mr. Stevens replied that there would be some but nothing that should have to come before the historic commission.

Old Business

Mr. Gaffney reported that work has been done to locate houses in town that have hardware on their buildings without shutters. He stated that what he would like to do is to contact people by letter and tell them that they cannot take their hardware off and that the commission would encourage them to put up shutters, if they can, so that the integrity of the building could be protected. Mrs. Stanley added that if owners decide to put up shutters they should be mindful of the guidelines. Ms. Litty suggested sending a letter to everyone in town via the quarterly town newsletter. Mr. Baker reminded the commission members that in general the Historic District Commission has a bad reputation and that by putting out a letter to all Oxford town residents, including those not in the historic district, would probably not be a good idea. Mr. Gaffney volunteered to put together a draft letter

Mr. Gaffney reminded the commission that he had asked them all to review the guidelines on satellite dishes, solar panels, and skylights. Mr. Schmitz suggested that thought should be given to facades as well as new technology is coming out for wrap around solar panels. Also, thought should be given to gas tanks. Mr. Gaffney volunteered to work on that as well. Mrs. Stanley suggested adding something to the guidelines under the heading of Modern Equipment. Modern equipment, according to a source that Mrs. Stanley had found, should be as small and inconspicuous as possible. Mr. Gaffney again volunteered to put together a draft for the group to look over.

Mr. Gaffney stated that some questions had been raised concerning the installation of a new fence at 215 S. Morris Street. The diagram that the owners had provided showed the new metal fencing as being squared off on the sides but was installed as rounded off on the sides. In looking over the minutes and reviewing the tape recording of that meeting, it was found that the commission had agreed to the request that the fence be curved in on the sides. This led to a discussion about the location of the fence and whether or not it was on town property. Mr. Schmitz expressed concern that the neighboring fences were lined up except for this one which "pops out." He asked if the fence was on the property owner's property or the town's property. Mr. Gaffney stated that he would find out the answer to that question.

Mr. Gaffney then brought up the matter of changes which occur after permits have been approved and building permit cards issued. Mr. Gaffney stated that the commission needed to

put people on notice by either stamping their applications or putting in writing something that states that no additions, changes, or alterations can be made without coming before the Historic District Commission and that anyone not following that order be fined heavily with a \$1,000 fine. The commission members thought that was a good idea. Mr. Gaffney again volunteered to take care of that as well.

New Business

Mr. Gaffney announced that there was a magazine in the commission's drawer that they may be of interest to them.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Willoughby
Assistant Clerk