

OXFORD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES

AUGUST 3, 2020

The regular monthly meeting of the Oxford Historic District Commission was called to order by the Chairman, Thomas Costigan, on Monday, August 3, 2020, at 5:00 p.m., via “Zoom” due to the on-going pandemic of a virus known as Covid-19.

Other members participating in the virtual meeting included James Deerin, Suzanne Litty, Jennifer Stanley, Patricia Ingram, and Julie Wells. Also in attendance was Town Administrator Cheryl Lewis.

The minutes of the meeting of July 6, 2020 were approved and accepted as distributed.

The following building permits were reviewed by the Commission:

1. Permit #20-27, Tom Skowron, 103 Tred Avon Avenue, remove and replace roofing structure (lean-to roofs on back and side of house; demolish roof, if necessary, and demo walls to ensure they are up to current building code; main roof line will not change. Mr. Skowron was virtually represented by builder Brock Morris. The permit had been tabled at last month’s meeting with the request that Mr. Morris return with more detailed plans. In speaking with the commission, Mr. Morris noted that he had drawn to scale a site layout of what he would like to perform in lieu of the lean-to roof. Chairman Costigan noted that he was aware that Assistant Clerk Lisa Willoughby had sent Mr. Morris an email on July 29 requesting some additional information. Mr. Morris responded that was correct but he wanted more clarification from the Historic District Commission. Chairman Costigan responded that from his perspective, just looking at the new documents Mr. Morris had presented, he found them to be difficult to determine what it was that Mr. Morris wanted to do and that the commission needed elevation drawings, not 3-D drawings. He added that if Mr. Morris would again look at the email Mrs. Willoughby had sent him, he would see that it tells him exactly what the commission would need along with the site plans and elevations from the side and the rear of the house, with particular attention as to what is originally there now and what Mr. Morris wants to build. Mr. Morris responded that was going to take a lot of time to put together. Chairman Costigan stressed that the key phrase is “getting things done properly” and again added that the commission wants an elevation of what the building is going to look like – not any 3-D representations, which are unlabeled, void of any direction (north or south), and do not show where the street is located. Mrs. Wells added that details, such as what elements will be added to make the house look like the historic building that is, need to be addressed and that what was given to the commission gives no idea as to any details or even where the windows and doors will be. Mr. Morris responded that he would be removing all the sliding glass doors on the house. Mr. Deerin addressed Mr. Morris by summarizing that basically the plan was to rebuild the existing structure on the back of the house. Mr. Morris responded that was correct as there was nothing worth salvaging. Mr. Deerin reiterated to Mr. Morris that the commission needed to see representation of more details, placement of the windows and doors, along with more traditional elevations. The permit was therefore tabled until the requested details are submitted for review.

2. Permit # 20-43, George and Margaret Morris, 200 N. Morris Street, four (4) 2' x 22' brick paths set in concrete with poly-sand for driveway lanes with grass in between. Mr. George Morris spoke explaining that the dimensions of the driveway would remain constant and that the plan is to remove the existing blue stone, and replace it with brick lanes with grass in between them to make the driveway more aesthetic since there are already brick paths on the property. Two lanes would come off each of the garage doors and end at the pavement with grass in between the brick lanes. Mr. Deerin made a motion that the commission approve the removal of the existing stone drive and pads leading up to the garage and replace it with four 2' x 22' brick paths set in concrete with grass in between. The motion was seconded by Ms. Litty and unanimously approved without further discussion.
3. Permit #20-46, Maryanne and Joe Feyder, 110 Tilghman St., replace sash on 12 double-hung windows and replace 1 casement window; all replacements to match existing window sash. Mr. Feyder was virtually present to discuss the application. Mr. Feyder explained to the commission that he had replaced some of the existing windows on his house last year, all of which were 16 years old, and wanted to replace the remaining 12 double hung windows and one casement window. They would be replaced with in-kind replacement windows. Mr. Deerin made a motion to approve the application to replace the sash on 12 double-hung windows and replace 1 casement window as described in the application. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Ingram and unanimously approved with all in favor.
4. Permit #20-45, Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Murphy, 108 N. Morris Street, replace existing, decrepit 8' x 10' enclosure with new structure; work to include new footings, flooring, and walls. Both Mr. and Mrs. Murphy were virtually present to discuss the application. Mr. Murphy addressed the commission members offering his and his wife's apologies for beginning the project without approval as they were not aware that they needed a permit to replace an existing enclosure. He explained that the old enclosure had a side door entrance with a staircase that was totally rotted. The replacement would be the same size as that which had been removed. Photos were provided of what the new enclosure would look like. Mrs. Murphy explained that there had previously been an outdoor shower in this location and that she and her husband were replacing it with a new outdoor shower addition, to be the same size, but with some modifications. Chairman Costigan asked where the water from the shower would drain. Mr. Murphy responded that the water would drain onto the ground and that the house itself sits up a bit on piers. Mrs. Murphy added that from Morris Street one would see a solid wall about 12-16 feet back from the street. Though the wall would be solid, one would be able to see the feet of the person using the shower. There would be no roof. Mrs. Murphy directed the members to view Picture 2 of the attachments to the application to see what the finished project would look like. Entrance to the shower would be on the south side of the structure. A wall on the west side would be solid. Chairman Costigan noted that outdoor showers are popular but usually one finds them on the back of the house. He added, however, that the owners were doing a good job to disguise what was being built. Mrs. Wells added that she was unaware that an outdoor shower ever existed on the house. Chairman Costigan made a motion to approve the replacement of the existing enclosure with a new structure, 8' x 10', to include new footings, flooring, and walls, as shown on the renderings included with the application with respect to 108 N. Morris Street. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Wells and unanimously carried with all in favor.
5. Permit #20-44, Jennifer Stanley, 221 South St., garden arbor on pathway leading from front yard to backyard, 11" high border fence on South Street to protect plantings; new shutters for addition at 221 South Street for 7 windows facing west and north. Mrs. Stanley recused herself from the meeting in order to present her application. Mrs. Stanley stated that prior to Mrs.

Ingram bringing up before the commission her desire to relocate an arbor on her property at their last meeting in July, she was unaware that the HDC reviewed that kind of thing and had inadvertently erected an arbor on her own property. In looking over the guidelines, she noted that arbors aren't addressed and that she still did not know if it was necessary, but that since Mrs. Ingram had asked, she felt that she should too. Mrs. Stanley also reported that she had put up some small border edging fencing. Chairman Costigan pointed out that the edging fencing Mrs. Stanley had erected was on town property and therefore he did not believe the commission could approve or disapprove that as they did not have jurisdiction on town property. Chairman Costigan added that he remembered a conversation with Mrs. Stanley whereby she mentioned that the border fencing was a temporary element. Therefore, the request for the border fencing was struck from the discussion. In going over the request for shutters, Mrs. Stanley reminded the commission members that they had asked her to install shutters on her recent new addition once that project had been completed. A sample of the type of shutter and color she would be painting the shutters had been provided to each commission member for review. The color chosen was Forest Green and the shutters would be louvered, colonial stands with traditional hardware. Ms. Litting made a motion to approve the shutter and arbor. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Ingram. Prior to the final vote, Mrs. Stanley asked the members if they really thought they should be approving arbors and garden elements as neither were mentioned in the guidelines. Chairman Costigan stated that it was a tough call. In the case of Mrs. Stanley's arbor, it was more like a visible structure and in Mrs. Ingram's case, it was going to be attached to a fence making it more of an accessory structure. His feeling was to err on the side of caution and for the HDC to have some small say on it adding that that was just his thought on the matter but that it could be revisited at a later time. The motion was carried.

This concluded the review of building permits.

CONSULTATION

Timothy Kearns, local residential designer, was virtually present to discuss some preliminary revisions and additions to 216 South Street in order to receive some form of approval or positive feelings relative to the sale of this property. In looking over the existing conditions, the property contains a 2-story house with an enclosed porch and detached garage. The plan is to relocate the garage on the property and to concentrate on the house. The one story section of the existing house will be rebuilt to a 2-story element while the front, the original section of the house, will remain somewhat as it is today so as to keep the streetscape the same. The rear space, in front of the porch area, will become two (2) off-street parking spaces. The rear section of the house will have a modified "L" configuration. The current ceiling heights are at 7'6". The prospective new owners would like to lift the entire house and replace the foundations. In order to get code approved ceiling heights, the plans would call for the extension of the length of the front windows so that ceiling height could be added without changing the proportion of the house. The overall height of the house would increase by about 16 inches. The house itself is located outside the of the floodplain so the plan is to simply lift the house off its foundation, reconfigure it, and set it back down on the same elevation along with raising the ceilings to increase ceiling height. Mr. Kearns again stated that the over height would only change by about 16" with the house staying well below the maximum allowable height of 30'. Mr. Deerin summarized the proposed changes by stating that the new owners would be preserving the box portion of the house as it exists today, raising the ceiling height to meet code, and adding a significant addition onto the rear portion of the house. Mr. Deerin added that though this house is listed as a contributing structure, the existing rear portion of

it does look to be newer. Mrs. Wells commented that the proposed changes seemed to her to be huge changes to the house and questioned how many new square feet would be added. Mr. Kearns responded he was not sure but that it would not over 40%. Chairman Costigan pointed out that it followed the game plans of what was done to the houses at 214 and 218 South Street and how the commission had worked with those homeowners to preserve the front box portion of their houses facing the street by keeping them in their original form with their additions following the lot lines in the back. He added that the lots on South Street are difficult to work with as they tend to go straight back and then jog off in one direction but that he thought what Mr. Kearns was proposing seemed like a good approach to what could be done with this property. Discussion took place concerning a second floor porch facing the front that Chairman Costigan viewed as something that reminded him of a “sleeping porch” that one usually finds in the back of houses adding that he was not totally against it, but that it was different. Mrs. Stanley stated that she had a problem with the roofline and that there was no roofing stepdown features that other neighbors had been asked to construct in the past. Chairman Costigan acknowledged that Mrs. Stanley was referencing a connection element and agreed it did help to break down the mass of a building. Mr. Kearns responded that he didn’t think the prospective homeowners would have trouble with him modifying the roofline and reminded the members that everything was preliminary to see if the overall concept was agreeable to the members. Neighboring homeowner at 215 South Street, Cynthia Egan, was present virtually and stated she was supportive of the project. She commented that it would be helpful for the direct neighbors to see what the proposed project was going to look like so that they could comment on it. She also expressed concerns as to how the building project would be managed; especially with regards to construction vehicles and how they would be parked on South Street along. She also worried about possible fire issues and how a fire truck would be able to get down South Street if the need should arise. Chairman Costigan responded to the first point stating that under normal circumstances one would be able to go to the town office and look at the plans. However, the office is not currently open to the public with the pandemic still in existence. He noted that construction trucks on South Street do make parking difficult and that the parking situation on that street is crazy. In this case, the property at 216 South Street does have some room for parking on it. Mr. Kearns spoke stating that as the President of the Oxford Fire Company he would make sure South Street is open and that the Oxford Police do a pretty good job of keeping an eye on that street as well. Administrator Lewis also spoke stating that going forward, she could look into a shared screen concept for some of the plans and that if they can be presented to her electronically, she could share them with others. However, in this case, an actual permit has not been submitted and only a consultation is taking place. Neighbor Joan Levy at 218 South Street, also present virtually, spoke stating that she and her husband would help any way they could and were supportive of the project. Mr. Kearns finalized the discussion by noting that if the commission was agreeable to stretching the height of the house, he could work with the suggestions offered by the HDC. Mr. Deerin responded by stating that the coverage and the increase in ceiling height were not troubling to him, but as far as the remainder of the project, that was up in the air. Mr. Kearns responded that he and the buyers could handle that.

The HDC revisited commission member Patricia Ingram’s request to move her existing arbor from the back of her yard to the front side of her yard by removing the lattice on the left side of her front porch and placing the arbor next to that side. The change will not occur until the neighbor at 207 South Street paints her new fence white. Mrs. Ingram’s arbor will be rebuilt using Azek. Everything will remain the same except for the section of lattice that will be removed. There will be one brick step coming down off the porch on top of the brick that is already there. Mrs. Ingram noted that the arbor should blend it with the neighbor’s fencing once that fencing is painted white. Mrs. Stanley voted to give permission to

Mrs. Ingram allowing her to move her arbor to the front of her house on the south side of her porch. The vote was seconded by Ms. Litty and agreed upon by the other members.

This concluded the review of building permits.

Prior to ending the meeting, Chairman Costigan noted that the first Monday in September was Labor Day and that therefore the meeting would be rescheduled to the second Monday in September (the 14th).

Mrs. Stanley asked if there was anything the HDC could do to help Brock Morris to better understand what the commission wanted from him in order to move his permit along. Chairman Costigan responded that the house needed a more holistic approach instead of a piece by piece approach and that what the HDC required is already clearly spelled out in their guidelines as well as the Oxford Zoning Ordinance.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Willoughby
Assistant Clerk

Surprise