

OXFORD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES

MARCH 1, 2021

The regular monthly meeting of the Oxford Historic District Commission was called to order by the Chairman, Thomas Costigan, on Monday, March 1, 2021, 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 Suzanne Litty, Jennifer Stanley, Patricia Ingram, and Julie Wells. Also present was Town Manager Cheryl Lewis.

The minutes of February 1, 2021 were approved and accepted as distributed.

The following building permits were reviewed by the commission:

1. Permit #21-15, Megan Beyer, 105 N. Morris Street, new 4’ picket fence to replace existing fence around the perimeter of the front yard. Mrs. Beyer, who was virtually present at the meeting, explained to the commission that she has existing fencing in the location in which she plans to install her new fencing that has fallen down and needs replacement. The replacement fencing would be wooden, cedar picket fencing with points on top to be consistent with the fencing in her side and back yards. Mrs. Beyer further stated that the fencing would be painted white. Mrs. Litty made a motion to approve the requested fencing as presented. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Ingram and unanimously carried with all in favor.
2. Permit #21-17, Phyllis Gaiti, 408 S. Morris St., replace 2nd floor windows with white vinyl, 6 over 6 windows; replace 1st floor windows with white vinyl windows, 6 over 6; replace 1 window in rear of house with a casement window; remove all storm windows on all new windows. Ms. Gaiti was virtually present to discuss the application. She explained that her replacement windows would look identical to the windows that she has in her house now and that she would only be replacing her second story windows along with two (2) picture windows. She noted that the front of the house would look identical to the way in which it looks now except that the storm windows that currently cover the existing windows would be gone. She also stated that she also intended to replace a kitchen window located in the back of the house that was not visible from the street with casement type windows. Chairman Costigan asked Ms. Gaiti to clarify that the existing windows were not historical. She responded that that were not and that they were in poor condition and needed to be replaced. Ms. Gaiti added that the replacement windows would be white vinyl replacement windows, 6 over 6, except for the kitchen window. No window sizes would change. Mrs. Wells made a motion to approve the application as presented by Ms. Gaiti. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Ingram and unanimously carried with all in favor.
3. Permit #21-18, Claudia Kraft (Bay Vanguard Bank), 104 Factory St., replacement of building sign and installation of new faces to existing post and panel sign. Jonathan Herrera from Signarama was virtually present as a representative for Bay VanGuard Bank. He explained that basically his company would be putting in new overlays over the existing signs with all the sign sizes remaining the same. Mrs. Wells made a motion to approve the application as described. The motion was seconded by Ms. Litty and unanimously carried with all in favor.
4. Permit #21-19, Oxford Museum, 101 S. Morris St., restore rear of museum building to original condition; install 115’ of Oxford picket fence to extend to Pork Alley; install 30’ of trellis on south side along with landscaping and hardscaping. As President of the Oxford Museum, Mrs.

Wells recused herself from the discussion. Cameron MacTavish, who was virtually present, presented the application. He explained that the museum was looking to connect the exterior of their building with their outside garden and that there had been an old door on the back of the building that had been covered over sometime in the past. The plans called for restoring that door thus creating a way in which to enter the garden. A new awning would be placed over it. The plans also called for the creation of didactic panels to be placed along the south side property line, in the backyard of the museum property. The panels would be placed on trellises constructed of cedar, with 16" grid openings, allowing display panels to be attached to it. The plans as shown also included a new garden area where people could gather. The overall plan would be to open up the rear of the existing building and visually connect it to the garden by opening up the back door, constructing an awning supported on a bracket that would be similar to the awning in the front of the building, erecting the trellis along the south property line that would support changing panels, and installing a traditional Oxford fence along Market Street and Pork Alley to match the height of the museum's existing 30" fencing. Mrs. Wells commented that the museum was working to bring more things outside and improve the space in the back that is ragged and underused with the hopes of making it an informational space. Chairman Costigan spoke stating that he noticed that in the alleyway between the museum building and Oxford Mews there were 2 propane tanks. He asked if they and an HVAC unit would remain in place. Mr. MacTavish responded that the tanks would and that the museum would want to put a gate up in order to hide the propane tanks. The HVAC unit would be relocated but it wasn't clear at this time as to where that would be. Chairman Costigan asked how much of the alleyway the museum owned. Mrs. Wells responded that the museum owned all of it. Mr. MacTavish added that the Oxford Mews was built right on the property line. Chairman Costigan expressed concerns regarding the proposed 6' trellis height and how it would relate to the Oxford Zoning maximum fence height of 4'. Town Manager Lewis spoke stating she would have to make sure there were no water pipes running down between the two buildings, and technically, the HVAC unit would have to have the same setbacks as the principal structure. She added that she would look at the application more carefully after it had gotten through the HDC review, including the trellis and its height. Member of the Oxford Museum, Stuart Parnes, who was also virtually present, spoke stating the museum was just looking to find some kind of support to hang an exhibit on. Chairman Costigan stated he thought it was a wonderful plan especially the plan to make what was once wasted space into useable space. He added that the commission was flexible and would take their leads from the town as to what would work. Chairman Costigan made a motion to approve the application of the museum by restoring the rear of the museum building to its original condition by uncovering the transom windows and back door, installing a rear awning to match the front (as seen on the plan), installing 115' of Oxford picket fencing to extend to Pork Alley, installing 30' of trellis on the south side subject to zoning and what the Town Manager felt about it, along with hardscaping and landscaping as shown on the attached plan. The motion was seconded by Ms. Litty and unanimously carried with all in favor.

This concluded the review of building permits.

CONSULTATIONS

A virtual consultation was held with Bart Eckhardt and Bonnie Johnson, property owners of 102 E. Strand. Mr. Eckhardt explained to the members that he and his wife had been investigating further into the use of 3 over 1 sash windows for their home and had located several cottage houses in the Easton and Cambridge areas, similar to their own, that contained 3 over 1 style windows. Since last meeting with the

commission in a consultation setting, the couple stated that the only architectural change they were looking into make would be to give their house a telescoping look in the back along with asking the commission to give consideration for moving the front façade of the porch on the Strand side possibly 18” closer to the street. They added that they were also looking into raising the main ridge of the house 3’ so that they could give their house the same steep dormer roof look of the historical Barnaby house located at 212 N. Morris Street and make their own house look less squatty. Mr. Eckhardt explained that the main problem in their house was that the main stairway was dangerously steep and that the only way to dissolve that was to add out the back but that they still wanted to preserve the dormer look to it. Mrs. Wells stated she thought what the couple was proposing would be a tremendous improvement. She asked where the steps would be in relation to the sidewalk out front, if the porch was to be brought out 18”. Mr. Eckhardt responded that since there was no sidewalk, their plans were to run a front walkway over toward the driveway instead of the street. Mrs. Wells pointed out that there was no style of window in Oxford like the kind the couple wanted to use. Ms. Johnson responded that the window type was found in The Mews but that she hadn’t seen it anywhere else in Oxford proper. However, she pointed out that their house was not historically significant and that it was different but that they were trying to capture the essence of the Barnaby house. Chairman Costigan stated that the direction the couple was taking sounded positive and that the commission was interested in seeing exterior elevations.

The next virtual consultation was held with residential designer, Timothy Kearns, representing the owners of 301 N. Morris Street. Mr. Kearns explained that the owners were looking at taking the similar features of their 1st floor glassed in room and making a second story conservatory above it. Mr. Kearns noted that he had taken the architectural elements on the first floor and repeated them on the second floor as well as applying a telescoping gable roof and filling the ends with additional glass. A low pitch would be found on 2 sides of the addition with a gable in the center. Mr. Kearns pointed out that the desire was to emulate a full conservatory but because of the house located within the historic district, the plans were drawn in such a way as to maintain more of a roof than the glass roof of a traditional conservatory. He went on to say that above each of the bays on either side would be 3 fixed skylights, hidden behind the roof as it comes up in a raised parapet – with inches to hide them. The material would match currently what is there. The roof would be standing seam of a color not yet determined. The second piece of this proposed project would be the installation of an exterior elevator. It would have 2 over 2 windows on three sides – one facing the street, one facing the side, and one facing the west/water side. It would be located on the narrow side of the lot with minimal visibility from the public way. Chairman Costigan stated the commission would need to see more details on the elevator later. Mrs. Stanley questioned the use the use of the skylights in the conservatory. Mr. Kearns explained how they would not be visible because of the high roof and their location behind a slight parapet. Chairman Costigan stated that the plan looked to be quite nice and no negative comments were made. Chairman Costigan reminded Mr. Kearns that when it came time to submit the application, he would need to provide more details with regards to the elevator.

The third virtual consultation was again held with residential designer Timothy Kearns, who was representing Mr. and Mrs. Michael Muller, new property owners of 210 Tilghman Street. Since their last consultation meeting with the HDC, the couple had revised their building plans for a new home to be 23’ wide and 40’ long. Mr. Kearns explained that because this property lies within the flood zone, in order to have habitable space, the home would start with 4’ of foundation out of the ground plus an additional 3’ or 4’, depending if the couple decide to have useable space under the house. The main entrance into the house would be on the east side with a man door entrance facing Tilghman Street. Mr. Kearns verified that the main entrance would be on the east side with brick steps leading up to a landing half way up along with a staircase that would wind around an interior elevator. One element that had yet to be determined would be a screened porch on the water side which would be terraced so as not to appear so

tall. Mr. Kearns noted that the shape of the house emulated that of the “sail loft” home next door while still having a modern plan on the inside. Mrs. Wells spoke stating that she was having difficulty in relating to the bay window, shown on the proposed plans facing Tilghman Street, surrounded by a series of smaller windows, along with the orientation of a big window shown on the east side, above the main entrance into the home. She expressed her concern as to how those windows would fit in historically with Tilghman Street. Ms. Litty asked about the front door as she had thought originally that the plan called for the front door to face onto Tilghman Street. Mr. Kearns responded that was correct but he had changed it because the plan worked better with the main entrance door on the side and the couple had wanted to keep the garage doors from facing the street. Chairman Costigan asked if any consideration was made to putting the front door on the Tilghman Street façade with a covered porch. Mr. Kearns responded that was a typical Oxford look but the couple was on a budget and a door and porch facing the street wouldn’t work because the house was so efficient and small. Chairman Costigan noted that it might be strange to take a look out your front door to face a view with a thicket of wood. Mr. Kearns countered that one would also see the water and/or Tilghman Street as well. Mrs. Wells spoke stating she thought if all the windows were to match the house would look a lot nicer and more symmetrical, adding that the plan as shown didn’t aesthetically appeal to her. Ms. Litty echoed Mrs. Wells’ sentiments. Chairman Costigan added that the interior layout of the home and diminutive size of the property seemed to be driving the exterior of the property which was a concern of the HDC. He acknowledged that it was an interesting design but wished it could be turned 90 degrees. Mrs. Stanley added her opinion in stating that from the front of the street the house did not look very attractive. Chairman Costigan summed up the conversation by stating he was not sure all the HDC members were on board with the design, orientation, or architectural elements and that his biggest concern was the view of the house from Tilghman Street which he saw himself as being odd. Mr. Mueller, who was also virtually present at the meeting, spoke stating that he appreciated the feedback and acknowledged the concerns that the HDC members had with regards to the bay window and man door facing onto Tilghman Street as well as the opinions regarding the side entrance into the home. He asked what he should do with the feedback given. Chairman Costigan responded that these were just opinions given to guide the architect so that the members can come to an agreement. He ended the discussion by adding that the streetscape was an issue and thought should be given as to how well the house would fit into the location in which it is sited.

The final consultation was with Town Manager Cheryl Lewis who was representing Safe Harbor Marina. Manager Lewis stated she wanted to make the members aware that the marina at 502 E. Strand has a swimming pool close to the entrance into their property. The pool is elevated and currently has a wooden fence around it which has not passed the requirements handed out by the county. The requirement calls for the need of a 6’ fence and so the marina would like to install something similar to the black aluminum fencing the town recently installed around the pumping station at the Causeway. The fencing would have to be 6’ above the deck of the pool. Manager Lewis pointed out this property is zoned maritime and therefore does not require HDC review or approval but that she wanted to keep the HDC Commission informed and aware that the fencing was needed to be done to meet the requirements of the Talbot Co. Health Department. Mrs. Stanley made a motion to approve the proposed aluminum fencing to replace the existing fencing around the swimming pool at 502 E. Strand. The motion was seconded by Ms. Litty and unanimously carried.

NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Costigan addressed the members in informing them that he had recently received a call from an angry lady at the Oxford Museum. The lady told Chairman Costigan that she had someone new to Oxford at the museum asking how they could access the guidelines. Chairman Costigan stated that he

thought was the guidelines were on the town website but when he went to find them he found it tricky to do so. He added that in checking over the informational yellow cards that the town had printed up with HDC information on them, the web address given on the cards was wrong. Manager Lewis spoke stating that the info on the card may not have been the same because the website had crashed during the outbreak of the COVID pandemic. Mrs. Wells agreed with Chairman Costigan that the guidelines were difficult to find on-line. Manager Lewis responded that it could easily be found under "Zoning and Building Codes" on the town website. Mrs. Wells asked if the idea of providing new homeowners in the historic district a copy of the guidelines when they purchase their home was something that could be done. Manager Lewis responded that it was a large document, containing 31 pages, and that she was not sure about providing the entire document to everyone who bought a home in town. Chairman Costigan agreed adding that the simple yellow card was fine provided it had the correct address on it. Manager Lewis also noted that the town office did not receive immediate notification when a property changed hands and therefore immediate notification to the new owner(s) was complicated, especially given the large influx of new people moving into town. She agreed to redoing the yellow the cards and working to get them out to the public.

Chairman Costigan reminded the members that the next meeting would be held on Monday, April 5, 2021.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Willoughby

Assistant Clerk