

OXFORD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES

MAY 3, 2021

The regular monthly meeting of the Oxford Historic District Commission was called to order by the Chairman, Thomas Costigan, on Monday, May 3, 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 Jennifer Stanley, Patricia Ingram, Suzanne Litty, James Deerin, and Julie Wells. Also present was Town Manager Cheryl Lewis.

The minutes of April 5, 2021 were approved and accepted as distributed.

The following building permits were reviewed by the commission:

1. Permit #21-37, Edward Crawford, 210 Factory Street, construction by homeowner of 48” picket fencing to run along the side backyard on north side of property. Mr. Craig, who was virtually present, explained that he was looking to install an Oxford style picket fence, similar to that of the kind in HDC member’s James Deerin’s yard, to be 46” tall, painted white, coming 2” up from the ground. The installation of the fencing will not result in any trees or plants being removed. Mr. Deerin made a motion to approve the permit for 210 Factory Street to install approximately 51’ of Oxford style fencing, based upon his (James Deerin) own fence, be approved. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Stanley and unanimously carried with all in favor.
2. Permit #21-38, Mr. and Mrs. James Bredar, 224 South Street, replacement of all windows in house including one bay/bow window. Both Mr. and Mrs. Bredar were present to discuss the application. Mr. Bredar explained that their house was a small ranch house, built in 1978 and that all the windows in the house were in need of replacement. Currently the house has double hung windows containing no panes. The replacement windows would reveal panes, not real, but in-between the glass, so as to create 4 panes of glass over 4 panes of glass. In addition, the house has a bay window in the front having individual window units that open up. Mr. Bredar explained that they were not able to replace that window exactly so they decided to go with the more traditional look of a bow shaped window, with panes, and two windows on either end that will be casement windows that will open. The middle, picture window section will have panes built in-between the sheets of glass. The change in all the windows will not result in any changes to the existing opening sizes so that the new windows can just be switched in to replace the old ones. The kitchen window, in the back of the house, would have the same size opening, but the number of panes in each window could increase. Mr. Deerin made a motion to approve the application of Mr. and Mrs. Bredar at 224 South Street for the replacement of all windows in the home as shown on the application. Prior to a second on the motion, there was some confusion as to the terminology used to describe the windows but eventually the commission and homeowners looked to the paperwork

provided by the contracting firm, Thompson Creek, for reference. The motion was second by Mrs. Stanley and unanimously carried with all in favor.

3. Permit #21-44, Robert and Jean Konopacz, 206 S. Morris St., home business sign. Both Mr. and Mrs. Konopacz were virtually present to discuss the application. Mrs. Konopacz explained she has a quilting studio/home based business with most of her business being custom work that is done on-line. She stated that she would like a sign 9 ½" x 15" sign to be placed on her front yard fence, made of white washed wood with black print. Mrs. Konopacz added that her desire was to educate and welcome the public to let them know they are welcome to visit her studio. Chairman Costigan stated that his only concern was with zoning and the prohibition of signs on fences. Mr. Deerin, along with Mrs. Konopacz, were quick to point out that there are other signs in town on fences and noted that she had included, in her permit packet presentation, examples of those signs. Mr. Konopacz spoke stating he had spoken with Town Manager Cheryl Lewis about the sign and that she did not have a problem with the request and had told the couple that they only would need to come before the HDC for review. Mr. Deerin questioned if the request would need to go before the Planning Commission. Manager Lewis spoke reminding the commission that they were to just look to see if what the couple wanted was appropriate and that there was other signage on fences around town. She added that she had suggested that the couple come 10' off from the property line, with the sign on a post to meet the code, and questioned if the commission had a preference for a low profile instead. She reminded the commission that the ordinance does not forbid the couple from having a sign and that one can have professional nameplates. She added that if the HDC was totally against the request, she could come up with a different plan for the couple and that she usually sends signs to historic for comment. Mrs. Wells felt this was a commercial sign promoting a business and wondered if the town had a commercial district just for that. Chairman Costigan responded that this was a home business with Mrs. Konopacz adding it was not a retail business. Chairman Costigan asked the couple if they really wanted to encourage and welcome visitors into their place. Mrs. Konopacz responded that was not the intent. Manager Lewis referred to the Oxford Zoning Ordinance, under Accessory Use – Home Occupation, in which one can have a home occupation and that signage was permitted, subject to the sign ordinance. She reminded the commission again that the couple was proposing a small sign that they were entitled to within the zoning and that just the placement of said sign, whether it be on a post or on the fence, was the only question. Chairman Costigan agreed. Mr. Deerin stated that he wanted to make it clear that the HDC's decision was not to set a precedent and that he thought the sign was fine as it was designed and that he would like to see it on the fence as opposed to a post. Mr. Deerin then made a motion that the appearance and size of the proposed sign for Mr. and Mrs. Konopacz be approved with the placement being up to the Planning Commission. The motion was seconded by Ms. Litty and unanimously carried with all in favor. Chairman Costigan added that the sign was approved in concept and the rest left to Planning and Zoning.
4. Permit #21-49, Ingrid Matuszewski, 216 South St., HVAC unit. Mrs. Matuszewski, who was virtually present, explained that she and her husband had recently purchased their new home at 216 South Street, and that they would like to install a new HVAC unit as the house currently does not have central air conditioning. The plan is to put in a ductless split on the right side of the property which would house an outside unit. Shrubbery or a

privacy fence will be used to hide the view of the unit from the street. A brief discuss ensued as to what the outside unit would look like. Manager Lewis spoke stating these types of units were slim and not the traditional square unit one normally would see. Mrs. Matuszewski added that the unit would sit back at least 8' from the side property line and would be on a platform at least a foot off the ground. Mrs. Stanley made a motion that the commission accept the proposal to put a HVAC unit in at 216 South Street, on the north side of the house, to be at least 8' from the property line with screening of either plants or fencing. The motion was seconded by Mr. Deerin and unanimously carried with all in favor.

5. Permit #21-46, Janice Gruber, 200 South Street, picket fencing. Both Janice Gruber and her real estate agent, Henry Hale, were present to discuss the application. Mrs. Gruber spoke stating that she wanted a fence for her property to keep her dog safe. The fencing would not go around the entire property. The fencing would be installed 12" from the property line with the pickets being close together. Gates would be added with one being on the far side of the garage, one in front of the house, along with one double gate facing High Street that would allow for a riding lawnmower to enter onto the property. When asked about the height, Mrs. Gruber responded that it would be 5'. Chairman Costigan responded that a 4' tall fence was the maximum height allowed throughout town. Mrs. Gruber responded she wasn't aware of the maximum height but that a 4' fence would be fine with her. She added that it would be a standard wooden picket fence, painted white, similar to that of her neighbor at 104 Jefferson Street. Ms. Litty made a motion that the commission approve the fence as presented by Janice Gruber and that the fence be 4', not 5'. The motion was seconded by Mr. Deerin and unanimously carried. Chairman Costigan addressed Mrs. Gruber and asked that she drop off a drawing or picture showing what the fencing would look like so that they could have it for the file which Mrs. Gruber agreed to do.
6. Permit #21-45, Thomas Costigan and Patricia Calvin, 212 Caroline St., replace 4 damaged kitchen windows on south/west façade; windows to match existing. Chairman Costigan recused himself in order to present his application with Mr. Deerin serving as Chairman. Mr. Costigan explained that on the SW corner of his house his 4 kitchen windows were falling apart. The replacement windows would be clad windows, identical in appearance to what currently exists now, with the same pattern, same white color, double paned Marvin windows, having the same exact size. Mrs. Stanley made a motion to accept the window proposal of Thomas Costigan and Patricia Calvin at 212 Caroline Street with exact replica replacement windows. The motion was seconded by Ms. Litty and unanimously approved with all in favor.

This concluded the review of permit application.

Mr. Costigan resumed his role of Chairman and announced he had 3 items which he wished to discuss with the members.

The first regarded a series of emails between Town Manager Lewis and the Tesla solar company regarding solar roofing panels for the accessory building project at 200 West Street. Manager Lewis spoke stating that she believed the HDC had granted the authority for the property owner at 200 West Street to use solar shingles on his accessory building. It was her belief that the panel box would be placed on the back side of the building but that the plan is to put it on the side of building making it easily visible from the street. She explained that currently there are other

electrical boxes and gear on that side of the building and that she wanted to make sure the HDC was aware of this and if they were agreeable to it or not. As a result, she had requested that the solar company provide her with elevation drawings so that she could present that to the HDC to review. Chairman Costigan agreed this was something the HDC should review and what it would look like attached to the building. Mr. Deerin expressed his concerns that the solar tiles were going to give the roof an appearance of a plastic roof, especially if it is used on the main house. Chairman Costigan responded that he did not believe the homeowner was planning on using solar shingles on his house – just the accessory building. Manager Lewis ended the conversation stating that she would let the shingle company know that they would need to submit a permit showing a sample tile along with elevations.

A brief discussion ensued concerning hedge heights around town. Manager Lewis explained to the members that hedge heights do not apply everywhere in town but the zoning code does address the issue under traffic safety, particularly intersections whereby one cannot block the view of someone trying to turn onto the road. A letter was sent to the property owner on the corner of N. Morris Street and Wilson Street about his hedges which the owner there has since taken care of by trimming them down to an acceptable size. Mrs. Stanley made a proposition that there should be a height limit (re. shrubbery) in the historic district and that the feeling in Oxford is one of a neighborhood whereby the streetscape is important. Manager Lewis responded that one cannot just make a proposition and can only propose an ordinance change to Planning and the Commissioners which would involve having to create another ordinance.

Chairman Costigan asked if there were any updates on The Mews. Manager Lewis responded that the building has been leased with a purchase agreement. The leasees/purchasers can come back to make changes as to how the building stands right now. However, the concept of the storefronts, upstairs apartments, addition of two wings, and elevator in the center are OK but anything beyond that would have to come back to the HDC for review. Manager Lewis noted that they are just trying to do what they can inside now by stabilizing the building and removing the old plaster and that no new permits have been issued.

Mrs. Wells expressed concern over the color of the awnings at 208 Factory Street noting that the HDC had approved wine colored awnings for the property, not bright, fire engine red color awnings. Chairman Costigan responded that the commission never actually received a fabric sample so the point was moot.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Willoughby

Assistant Clerk