

OXFORD PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 7, 2021

The regular monthly meeting of the Oxford Planning Commission was called to order by the Chairman, David Baker, on Tuesday, September 7, 2021, at 6:00 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 members Norman Bell, Edwin Miller, and Steve Mroczek. Also in attendance was Town Administrator Cheryl Lewis and Town Planner Maria Brophy.

The minutes of the meeting of July 6, 2021, were approved and accepted as distributed.

The following permit was reviewed by the commission:

- Permit #21-84, Bartley Eckhart and Bonnie Johnson, 102 East Strand, complete renovation of, and addition to, circa 1930 cottage, including stormwater management, concrete and brick terrace, concrete and brick wheel strip driveway; new electric, water, and sewer. Both Mr. Eckhart and Ms. Johnson were virtually present to discuss the application. Mr. Eckhart explained that he and Ms. Johnson bought the house, which was in poor condition, about two years ago. The couple had met with the HDC twice, on a preliminary basis, to discuss their plans to renovate the house. He noted that the main body of the house was stoutly built and that the plans call for that section of the house to remain as it except for raising the ridge of roof 3' so that the house would not look like a cracker box and to allow for steep dormers in the front and more height on the second floor. Other changes include removing an existing addition extension in the back of the house that was poorly built in the 1980's and replacing it with a new addition that would incorporate a telescoping feature, along with removing an existing front porch and replacing it with a new one which would extend 18" out further making it closer to the street but remaining 25' back from the front of the property. Mr. Eckhart further stated that they were also working to address the stormwater issue on the property as it had never been properly managed. He stated that the backyard consists of clay and silt and slopes down towards the property behind theirs and over towards 104 E. Strand. The overgrowth has been recently removed and the property provided with a temporary berm to the east and south with a small portion purposely graded out so that any stormwater would hang within the property until the stormwater plan gets sorted out. Mr. Eckhart explained that they had worked on a professional design calling for berming, landscaping on the east and south of the property, and the installation of a drywell in the center of the yard in the back to catch rainwater. Chairman Baker stated that the setbacks and overall height of the house looked good and conformed to the Oxford Zoning Ordinance requirements. However, the commission could not comment on the stormwater plan as that was something the Town Manager and town engineer would have to review. Mr. Mroczek spoke stating that though the setbacks looked good, the application itself was quite extensive and because it arrived so late, he had not had much time to look over it, especially because of the holiday weekend and the town office being closed because of COVID restrictions, and that he would feel uncomfortable voting on it at this night's meeting. Mr. Miller stated that he had walked the property and agreed that the backyard was a mess. He pointed out that though stormwater was something the Planning Commission could pass on, he felt by doing so the commission would not be acting in the best interest of the surrounding neighbors, especially if they were not sure the remedy being proposed was adequate and would last for a long time. Mr. Bell stated that in looking over the application it appeared that there was

a large amount of demolition that would be taking place and asked what the percentage of the demolition was going to be occurring. Mr. Eckhart responded that it would be around 40% or so. He also added that the property itself was at 40% coverage when they purchased the it and that the current proposal, even with the driveway and other features, would still be coming in at just under 40%. Mr. Eckhart asked for clarification with regards to the review process. Manager Lewis responded that she would have to review the application to see if it meets the critical area criteria because the property does lie within the critical area 100' buffer and the plans call for the porch to go out further towards the water. Though the town code does allow that, in some case, she stated that she would like the commission to come to some kind of conclusion as to what part of the code the town would be using to allow the couple to do this. She added that the application would need to contain a site plan showing the 50' buffer as well as the 100' buffer on the plan. Additionally, a stormwater review for the substantial amount of work being proposed for this property would have to be reviewed by the town's engineer, who, in turn, would work with the property owner's engineer, to make sure the criteria is sufficient. Both items would take some time to be properly reviewed. She added that the Planning Commission would be meeting again next month, so, should they decide not to the vote on the application at this night's meeting, by the time they come together for their next meeting, all the other reviews may be taken care of thus making it easier for the commission to vote. Manager Lewis also pointed out to Mr. Eckhart that he would have to submit his plan to Talbot County Soil for sediment review, a process that can take up to 2 to 3 weeks. She also mentioned that as far as the existing front porch on the house was concerned, it was not a problem because it pre-exists the formation of the Critical Area buffer, but the extension may or may not be allowed. Mr. Eckhart responded if it had to remain as is, so be it, but that the new plan would make it more functional. Chairman Baker addressed Manager Lewis stating that the commission recognized that what the owners have proposed agreed with what the code has in it but felt they couldn't make a final vote based on the other reviews that were needed and asked if they should treat this meeting as a consultation. Manager Lewis responded they should treat this as a permit and defer their vote until their next meeting as it can't be approved until the HDC has approved it and the stormwater plan reviewed. Mr. Mroczek made a motion to table the application until next month's meeting to see what the results are from the HDC and to give the town's professional engineer a chance to review the stormwater management plan. The motion was seconded by Mr. Miller and unanimously carried.

This concluded the review of the building permit.

Prior to adjourning, Mr. Miller asked about the status of the portable sign that the commission had disapproved but agreed to send to appeals with a favorable recommendation. Manager Lewis responded that the town hadn't put a lot of pressure on the owner and that she needed to get together with the Commissioners on the sign as the gap would be closing soon to put it in another location. Mr. Miller stated that he understood.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Willoughby

Assistant Clerk