

OXFORD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES

AUGUST 1, 2022

The regular monthly meeting of the Oxford Historic District Commission was called to order by the Chairman, James Deerin, on Monday, August 1, 2022, at 5 p.m., in the meeting room of the Oxford Community Services Building.

Other commission members in attendance were Suzanne Litty, Julie Wells, Patricia Ingram, and Jennifer Stanley.

The minutes of the meeting of July 11, 2022 were approved and accepted as distributed.

Prior to the review of the applications, Chairman Deerin noted that there had been an appeal filed with regards to the HDC's approval of permit #22-53 for wire fencing at 213 South Street. The appeal includes a copy of a letter dated July 15, 2022 to the Commissioners from the appeal applicants, John and Susan Devlin, that includes a quote, that states, in part, "one sitting member who has the same style fencing – which apparently she voted to approve for herself at the time – voted on this case creating the appearance of questionable objectivity" which Chairman Deerin believed to be a reference to permit #19-07, which was issued to HDC member Jennifer Stanley back in 2019, to allow her to install wire fencing along her northern property line. Chairman Deerin stated that he had asked Town Manager Cheryl Lewis to pull the minutes of the HDC meeting of March 4, 2019, which read, in part, that "Ms. Stanley recused herself from the commission in order to present her application." He recommended that the HDC forward a copy of those minutes to the Board of Zoning Appeals along with a copy of the minutes of the July 11, 2022 meeting so that they could have an accurate record of what happened with respect to those meetings and that without any objection, he would work with Manager Lewis to put a letter together to send, along with those minutes, to the Board of Appeals.

The following building permits were reviewed by the commission:

1. Permit #22-59, Gail Steckler, 106 Benoni Street, replace 13 windows with new, same sized windows. Ms. Steckler explained that she was looking to replace her existing windows with new ones that would look the same but would be more energy efficient. Mrs. Stanley asked if the four windows in the front of the house would remain the same. Ms. Steckler responded that they would on the porch but that the windows above those would be replaced. She noted that the ones on the first floor were differently sized and that they would be much more cost prohibitive to replace. Only the ones on the second floor in the front of the house would be replaced, along with the additional windows on the side. Mrs. Stanley noted that the HDC's interest was in the historic nature of homes, particularly in the front of the home and that just looking at the front windows, including those on the second floor, they appeared to be quite unique in their narrowness. Ms. Steckler responded that the replacement windows on the second floor would be much more energy efficient and would look very much the same. Mrs. Stanley asked if the new windows would be custom made. Ms. Steckler responded that they would not but they would be a very similar replacement in-kind. Chairman Deerin stated that when he went over to the

property to look at the windows, he noticed that they were historic, and that they were probably the original windows of that house as they had the wavy glass found in homes of an historic nature. He further explained that though the windows in question do show some signs of wear, someone had put storm windows over them. Chairman Deerin noted this house has been deemed a contributing structure and that the guidelines state historic windows should be retained, if at all possible. Ms. Steckler countered that the windows no longer opened, and that the storm windows were in terrible shape, that they did not work, and that they had not been maintained at the time she purchased her house. Chairman Deerin asked about possibility of the homeowner looking into purchasing some good storm windows. Mrs. Wells added that she herself has an 1848 home with has its original windows with storm windows over them. At the time she and her husband purchased their home, they hired a contractor who fixed their windows and storm windows properly so that she and her husband were able to maintain their original windows. Chairman Deerin asked Ms. Steckler what she considered "as closely as possible." Ms. Steckler responded that they would be the same size, white, very much visibly similar, and the same size. Mrs. Stanley expressed doubt that the replacement windows would look the same given the uniqueness of the windows they would be replacing and suggested that the HDC see what the proposed window would look like as the image provided with the application did not look at all like the window it was replacing. She also added that she personally would like the lower and second story windows to remain the same on the front of the house. Ms. Litty agreed with Mrs. Stanley. Chairman Deerin suggested that it may be best if the commission defer approving this application pending the applicant providing a sample with more specifications with respect to the size and that she consider retaining the historic windows on the entire front of the house. Ms. Steckler asked if she could replace the side windows now and work on them and look into more details with regards to the windows in the front. Chairman Deerin responded she could as long as the replacement of those 9 windows on the side would be identical in shape and size, with true muntins and no storm windows. Mrs. Wells made a motion that the commission grant Gail Steckler at 106 Benoni approval to replace 9 windows, with the same size replacement windows as shown on the attachment and that this would not include the front windows of the house. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Ingram and unanimously carried.

2. Permit #22-61, Suzanne Beyda, 223 S. Morris Street, completion of the installation of hair pin fencing along back of property, total height 3'. Ms. Beyda explained that she had been granted a permit for wire fencing in March of 2014. This request is for new wire fencing that she recently had installed, in the back of her property, that she had not applied for when she should have. Chairman Deerin pointed out that the applicant has wire fencing on the north and south sides of her property that has been there since 2014. He asked if fencing in the back, on the east side, had ever been there before. Ms. Beyda responded that there had been a fence there that was wooden and in terrible disrepair which she removed and replaced with the wire fencing to match and abut to the garden fencing on the north and south sides of her property. Chairman Deerin asked Ms. Beyda if she recalled back in 2014, when she was making a number of renovations to her home, if the fencing in the backyard had been discussed. Ms. Beyda responded that she did, but because the restoration of the house got larger and larger and more expensive, some plans had to be cut, and because the wooden fence in the back was keeping her dogs inside her yard at that time, she figured it would hold up for a few years. As a result, she put it off and just forgot about it, but that the existing fence had been wooden. Chairman Deerin stated that he had looked

at the property and one could see that the wire fencing on the side had been there a long time and that the fencing in the rear was new and that it matched the other fencing that is there now. Mrs. Wells reminded the members as to what the guidelines say about fencing and that she was of the opinion that the wire fencing was not attractive nor pleasing to the eye. She shared with the members photos she had taken, offering her objection to this request. Mrs. Ingram stated that she felt the same way. Chairman Deerin noted that the application has an existing majority of fencing on the property that is wire hoop fencing and that it did not make sense to him to install a picket fence or some kind of iron hoop fence, and that his thoughts were that the guidelines were more geared towards the front yard streetscape fencing rather than backyard places. Mrs. Stanley stated she would encourage people to understand how the town was laid out, where properties were long and narrow and yards were fenced in, and that wire fencing was a part of that history as it was placed around gardens and used to keep animals from running loose onto neighboring properties. She added that though she loved the picket fencing, she felt it was quite expensive to make homeowners extend it all the way around their property and that it can give the yards a stockade appearance in doing so. She suggested that this may be something that the HDC would want to look into this further at some point. Neighbor to Ms. Beyda's rear yard property, Maddie Yates at 228 South Street, addressed the commission stating that she thought a different kind of fencing was going to be installed in the back of Ms. Beyda's property but found that during the time she and her husband were out of town, her neighbor had already installed a double hoop fence. She added that the properties in town are no longer farms and asked why the town should have fencing that dated back to the early 1900's. She noted that she had asked her neighbor Ms. Beyda to talk with her and her husband about the rear fencing replacement but that Ms. Beyda just went forward and had it installed. Ms. Beyda responded by asking Mrs. Yates if there would be anything prohibiting her (Mrs. Yates) from installing a picket fence of her own in her own yard. Mrs. Wells interjected stating that the HDC needed to get back to the guidelines because this was what the HDC went by and that wire fencing is not mentioned nor was it permissible to put up a fence without a permit. Mrs. Yates offered to help her neighbor financially with the cost of installing a picket fence in place of the wire fencing. A member of the audience suggested that flowers be planted along the new wire fencing to cover it from view. Chairman Deerin suggested that if Ms. Beyda was agreeable, consideration of this application could be tabled until the next meeting to give she and Mr. and Mrs. Yates a chance to come up with a solution that would be more amicable to them and would also work for her. Ms. Beyda agreed that would be fine. Chairman Deerin therefore made a motion to the commission to defer consideration of the Suzanne Beyda's application for the installation of a fence along the rear of her property until the next meeting of the commission. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Wells and unanimously carried with all in favor.

3. Permit #22-62, Analipsi, LLC, 200 West Street, request for satellite dish for internet service. Owner Thomas Caravythà shared with the members an actual sample of what his proposed satellite dish would look like along with photographs of the side gable of his home where the dish would be attached. He noted that he had planted a series of fast growing trees that would eventually grow tall enough to camouflage the dish. Chairman Deerin asked if the dish could be placed further back on the property. Mr. Caravythà responded the area chosen would have the best reception according to his service carrier, Starlink. Following a brief discussion, Chairman Deerin made a motion that the commission approve the application of Analipsi, LLC, at 200 West

Street, for the installation of a Starlink internet receiver dish as shown on the drawing submitted along with the application papers. The motion was seconded by Ms. Litty and unanimously carried with all in favor.

4. Permit #22-01, Margaret Litschert and Barbara Litschert, 212 South Street, gravel driveway on side of house. John Litschert, trustee, and son of the deceased property owner, Margaret Litschert, presented the application. He began by explaining that there is a natural entrance onto the property where he and his sister would like to install a driveway. Since last meeting with the commission, they invested in a site plan where they showed the area in which they would like the new driveway to be placed. It would be approximately 905 sq. ft. and have blue type gravel. The existing brick leading up to the driveway would remain and the gravel would be placed behind it. Mrs. Stanley made a motion to accept the proposal at 212 South Street to create a gravel driveway on the southside of the house as shown on the plat and mockup drawing. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Ingram and unanimously carried by all in favor.
5. Permit #22-60, Margaret Litschert and Barbara Litschert, 212 South Street, mini-split unit and lattice screening. Mr. Litschert presented the application explaining that the heat condenser needed to be located within a certain distance from the house and that it would not work properly if located in the rear of the property. The south side of the property, though wider, would not work because that is the area where the proposed new driveway will be located. Mr. Litschert verified that the unit had been installed without a permit and that its location does not meet the zoning setbacks and will require review by the Planning Commission as well as a variance from the Board of Appeals. He noted that his plans also call for the unit to be less visible by having white, plastic lattice surround it, that will be about 4" taller than the unit itself. Mrs. Stanley made a motion that the commission accept the heat condenser location at 212 South Street with the proposed white lattice surround. The motion was seconded by Ms. Litty and unanimously carried with all in favor.

This concluded the review of building permit application.

CONSULTATIONS

A consultation was held with Dani Racine from Lane Engineering who was representing her clients, Kevin Wagstaff and Mary Cerrone, the contract purchasers of 100 Stewart Avenue. She presented the members with elevation plans for a new house to be built on the property which will require a setback variance. Ms. Racine noted that the contract purchasers were looking to get preliminary feedback from the commission members on their conceptual design. Most of the members agreed it was a nice design that fit the streetscape well though there was concern about the windows as shown in the back and side of the house, as they pertained to the size, shape, and configuration. Mrs. Wells voiced her concern over the one roofline on the west side of the house as well. Chairman Deerin stated that he thought it was a good design but that the commission encouraged people to have the main entrance to their home facing the street. Manager Lewis spoke stating that in this case, she asked that the commission think about giving preference to the design as shown of its location within the floodplain and because of the height the house will have to be in order to meet the proper flood elevation height. She added that she thought that what was shown might be the best place for the entrance, with its staircase, to be located and made to look like a front entrance. Mrs. Stanley stated that she thought the entrance worked as shown but that she too had concerns about the windows, especially with the combination as presented. Overall, the

members liked the design and thought it would fit into the streetscape but all had concerns with regards to the windows.

A second consultation was held with Arthur and Denise Murr, property owners at 202 E. Strand. The Murrs discussed with the members their desire to replace their vinyl shutters with new vinyl shutters, to be either louvered or paneled, as well as replacing their front porch floor with a composite wood product such as Azek or Trek, in a dark gray color. The commission members were agreeable with what Mr. and Mrs. Murr were proposing to do.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Willoughby

Assistant Clerk