

## OXFORD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

### MINUTES

NOVEMBER 6, 2023

The regular monthly meeting of the Oxford Historic District Commission was called to order by the Chairperson, Jennifer Stanley, on Monday, November 6, 2023, at 5:00 p.m., in the meeting room of the Oxford Community Services Building.

Other commission members in attendance were James Wilcox, Justin Werner, Suzanne Litty, Terry Sullivan, and Margaret Morris. Also in attendance was Oxford Town Planner Maria Brophy.

The minutes of the meeting of October 2, 2023, were approved and accepted as distributed.

The following building permits were reviewed by the commission:

- Permit #23-90, Robert and Jean Konopacz, 206 S. Morris Street, removal, and replacement of roofing tiles from house and attached rear screened-in porch. Mr. Konopacz explained that he was looking to remove the shingles from his house, along with the shingles on the attached rear porch. A sample of the color was provided. No significant changes were being made. Mr. Wilcox made a motion to approve the application at 206 S. Morris. It was noted that the metal roof on the front of the house would remain as is. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried with all in favor.
- Permit #23-91, David Donovan, 203 N. Morris Street, installation of ductless heat pump system attached to side of pool house. Mr. Donovan presented his application noting that the HDC had approved his pool house and that they were looking to install a mini-split system for that. Originally the plan was to install the unit on the north side of the building but for reasons having to do with the installation of the system, it will need to move to the east side, facing Morris Street. Mr. Donovan noted that the unit will be 3' high by 3' wide and would be completely invisible from the street as fencing for that area has already been approved by the HDC. Planner Brophy verified that the unit is a small one. Mr. Werner made a motion that the commission approve the HVAC exterior unit at 203 N. Morris Street for the Donovans, with the unit being placed on the east side of the pool house as opposed to the north side with the understanding that it will not be visible from the street without additional fencing. The motion was seconded by Ms. Litty and unanimously approved with all in favor.
- Permit #23-94, Christopher Rissmiller, 214 N. Morris Street, sign for commercial space. Mr. Rissmiller explained that he was looking to install a small sign for a private business coming into his building at 214 N. Morris Street. He explained that a metal hanger, which has been attached to the building for many years, is still in place and would be the area from which the new sign will hang. A color sample with verbiage of what would be on the sign was provided to the members. Mr. Sullivan made a motion that the commission approve the commercial sign, 12" x 18" across, for 214 N. Morris Street, as submitted with the application. The motion was seconded by Mr. Werner and unanimously carried with all in favor.
- Permit #23-61, Michael and Nancy Dean, 202 Market St., remove existing 1 story rear porch and storage closet; add new two story addition to rear of home; rebuild second floor roof and walls

between front gable and new rear gable. Both Mr. and Mrs. Dean were present to discuss their application. Mr. Dean explained that both he and his wife were unable to attend the HDC meeting back in July when their application was submitted by their architect, Pamela Gardner, and had heard that the commission thought the project was too large. Planner Brophy explained that a consultation regarding the project was held earlier in the year and then the application was submitted in July, reviewed by the HDC, and tabled. Mr. Werner added that according to the July minutes, the scale height was discussed and possibly bringing the roofline down in the back. Mr. Dean noted that he had read over those minutes and that with regards to the height, he noted that his house would be lower than the ones across the street, that it would be under the 30' height limit, and lower in height than the house scheduled to move next door to them, adding that he and his wife had purposefully tried not to change the streetscape. As such, he did not understand the objection. Mr. Werner responded that in terms of scale and the streetscape, as it is now, he was of the opinion that the previous comments made by the Chairperson at that time, James Deerin, with regards to the Deans having a bigger structure on the back of their house, would make the house become very visible from Pork Alley. He noted as well that the house directly behind the Dean's house is a small bungalow. This, in turn, gave him cause for concern as to how the Dean's proposed addition to the back of their house would appear with the small bungalow behind it. He added that because the Dean house is located in the historic district, the commission needed to consider the effect the project could have on the smaller spaces surrounded by it. In particular, he noted that a concern of his would be the addition of verticality to the streetscape and how that streetscape could change, especially if the two older homes located next to the Dean's home were to be redone. Mr. Werner spoke stating that his preference would be that the back part of the proposed addition be brought down possibly 2', as Chairman Deerin had discussed with Ms. Gardner back in July. Mr. Dean responded that if they were to bring it down 2', it would make the attic space difficult for the air handler unit. Mr. Dean again added that the house scheduled to be moved to the street corner next to their home was going to significantly higher from what had been there. He added that he and his wife were also trying to keep the roof pitch on the addition to match their existing roof pitch, which is 8/12. Mr. Werner again noted that he was concerned about the scale and the proposed addition being able to be seen from Pork Alley and High Street. Mr. Sullivan pointed out that the houses on the same street as the Dean's house already have that height. Chairperson Stanley acknowledged Mr. Werner's concerns but felt the commission had to look at the property as it is now, with the houses around it, as they are now. She noted that the commission had previously discussed the needs of the people in town now, as opposed to what they were in the past, with expectations being different, and that the commission can look at this project as having a small house with a proposed addition going straight back, with a step going up, to accommodate the modern life, which is not a prohibitive thing to do. Mr. Sullivan agreed, noting that the front of the house would remain the same. Mr. Sullivan made a motion to approve the back two story addition for 202 Market Street based on the plan submitted. The motion was seconded by Ms. Litty and carried with the vote as follows: Chairman Stanley - yay

- Terry Sullivan - yay
- Suzanne Litty - yay
- James Wilcox - yay
- Justin Werner - yay

- Permit #23-89, Al and Marty Sikes, 105 W. Division Street, swimming pool. Mr. Sikes spoke stating that his permit was a straightforward request for a 12' x 45' lap pool. Mr. Werner spoke stating that he assumed the request met the setbacks. Planner Brophy responded all setbacks will be reviewed under the Oxford Zoning Ordinance. It was also noted the pool equipment would be on a pad and screened as needed. Mr. Wilcox made a motion to approve the application of Al Sikes to build a swimming pool on his property at 105 W. Division Street. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sullivan and unanimously carried with all in favor.
- Permit #23-93, Michael and Denis Bloomfield, 103 Tred Avon Avenue, install new foundation, lift and move existing house, complete renovation of existing house, new fence, and deck. Architect Cameron MacTavish, representative for Mr. and Mrs. Bloomfield, presented the application explaining that this was a small house in which the plan is to remove the porch additions, which wrap around the east and south sides of the house, install a new foundation adjacent to the house as it exists now, lift the existing house up and move it onto the new foundation, dig a new foundation where the house used to sit and construction an additional bay. The core of the house is 16' wide by 30' deep. The plan is to slide it over and put it on a new foundation that will match the look of the pool house and the new addition would take place on the existing foundation of where the house had been. Samples were presented with Mr. MacTavish noting that he felt they were in keeping with the historic district. Mr. Wilcox asked about the fencing that was shown on the site plan. Mr. MacTavish stated that there is an existing 4' fence to the rear of the property, which is part of the neighbor's property, along with a 4' Oxford fence on north side, and 2 ½' wooden fence that the owners are proposing to extend and bring up to 4' in height, along with a new section of 4' wooden picket fencing, in the location as shown on a site plan labeled as "Phase 1". Mr. MacTavish added that when the project has been completed, the fencing will be reconfigured to come a little bit forward, as shown in the proposed site plan, which will have the addition of a gate. The fencing shown in "Phase 1" is needed to protect pool and pool house. Mr. Werner spoke on the changing of the façade of the house and the historical accuracy with the shingle hanging off from the house. His opinion was that this was a feature that should be celebrated instead of being eliminated, as the house is located in the historic district and the older houses do have these awkward characteristics. Mr. Werner suggested the possibility of keeping that line slightly across the front of the house so that it is still there as a way of maintaining the historical accuracy for what it is. Mr. MacTavish responded stating that the original interpretation of the Secretary of Interior Standards says new work should be clearly discernable and that he was glad Mr. Werner had brought up this discussion. He noted that the façade of this house is rather crude as it is based on just pine planks, but he too was thinking that they could preserve the corner board that is there now and leave it there to tell that story that that was the 1890 part of the house with the remainder being new, adding that he thought the owners would be able to accommodate that. Chairperson Stanely asked if what Mr. MacTavish was proposing was to use Mr. Werner's recommendation, with that corner board being the piece that would set off the addition. Mr. MacTavish responded that was correct and that they would just leave it there to add to the richness of the story of the house and to preserve the original siding as well and that it would be best to keep it subtle. Planner Brophy asked about the new windows to be used. Mr. MacTavish responded that the windows would be all wooden, and part of the Marvin Integrity line

of windows. Mr. Werner made a motion that the commission approve the design, as submitted, at 103 Tred Avon Avenue, to move the house, install a new foundation, lifting of the existing house, complete renovation of existing house, new fence and deck as illustrated, with the only modification to the drawings to include the keeping of the corner board to indicate the original façade of the street facing side of the house. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sullivan and unanimously carried with all in favor.

- Permit #23-92, Suzanne Litty, 222 S. Morris Street, lattice divider. Ms. Litty recused herself from the commission in order to present her application. Chairman Stanley spoke stating that Ms. Litty has a vernacular house with a backyard going back towards Sullivan's Alley and that what she already installed could not be seen from the back or the front of Morris Street. Ms. Litty confirmed that she had put up a small lattice frame without knowing if it needed a permit or not. Chairman Stanley added that there is a picket fence dividing her property and the property next to her at 220 S. Morris Street, and that the lattice is in front of the fence with columnar cedar trees on either side of it. Because she could not continue the line of cedar trees due to the roots of another tree nearby, she installed the lattice. Chairman Stanley stated that this was to be a discussion as to whether this should be looked at as a fence or a garden structure. Ms. Litty stated she had viewed this as a garden structure. Planner Brophy spoke stating that there were some zoning issues that needed to be addressed because the lattice was on the property line, that it was up against a fence, and that the maximum height is 4'. However, if the lattice is to be used as screening, screening structures usually have to meet the setbacks. She added that these items need to be addressed but that zoning will also need to look at this too, so the HDC's decision would have to be based on that. Mr. Sullivan spoke stating that the lattice fills the gap between 10 trees planted back in that area and that the trees are already larger than the lattice Ms. Litty had installed. He noted that the only way he could see the lattice was from inside her house and the only other person who would be able to see it would be her next door neighbor at 220 S. Morris Street. Mr. Sullivan added that the neighbor, who is the owner of the fence, said she didn't have a problem with it. When asked about the height of the lattice, the response was that it was thought to be 5 to 6 feet tall. Chairman Stanley remembered a time when there had been a large discussion about side yard fencing that had to do with plantings and it was determined by the (unknown) majority that one could plant whatever you wanted without height restrictions, unless you live on a corner lot. Planner Brophy pointed out that the Oxford Zoning Code gives a height restriction of 4'. Mr. Werner questioned that if it was, in fact, a garden structure, was Ms. Litty planning on planting anything on it. Ms. Litty responded that she was not and was just looking to screen her side yard all the way down the whole way. Chairman Stanley stated that her personal view was that it was a garden structure. Mrs. Morris asked that if it is considered a garden structure, would anyone else need to review it, especially if all agreed it was not a fence. Planner Brophy pointed out that it was still a structure and that she always sends screening requests to the HDC. Mr. Sullivan was of the opinion that the HDC could approve it and it could end up being disapproved by the Planning Commission. Chairman Stanley called for a motion. Mr. Sullivan made a motion that the HDC approve the lattice garden structure in the backyard of 222 S. Morris Street, that the only ones who can see it are the next door neighbors and they've approved it. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Morris. The motion was carried by Chairman Stanley, Mr. Sullivan, and Mrs. Morris all voting yay, and Mr. Wilcox and Mr. Werner abstaining from the vote.

This concluded the review of building permits and Ms. Litty returned to the group.

Prior to addressing a request for a consultation, member of the audience, Timothy Kearns, spoke stating that he would appreciate the commission getting a description of each of topics regarding garden structures. Chairman Stanley responded by stating that she agreed that the commission needed to revisit that and include with it fencing. Mr. Werner asked what the process was for defining what is a structure. Planner Brophy responded that a text amendment would involve draft legislation being needed along with it going for review before the Planning Commission, Commissioners, and the public through public hearings, and that it would be process that needed to be followed. She added that a change of this nature, if the commission were to define different kinds of structures, would be a change within the Oxford Zoning Ordinance and that anytime the HDC members were to meet to discuss this topic, it would have to be posted.

## **CONSULTATION**

A consultation was held with Gretchen Gorden, former owner of a restaurant in Oxford, and David Snyder, contract purchaser of the Robert Morris Inn. Mr. Snyder introduced himself to the members by stating that he was an historian of American history and that currently he holds a job with the National Security but is in the process of purchasing the Robert Morris Inn where he plans to be working full-time. He stated that history mattered to him deeply and that he would be trying to create the Robert Morris Inn (RMI) as an anchor of the community for tourists and locals. Old photos of the RMI were shown with one of the photos showing the RMI painted gray and red. Sample paint colors of blue were presented. Mr. Snyder stated that he wouldn't mind going back to the gray and red color adding that they were hoping that the building didn't have to go back to being painted yellow. Chairman Stanley asked if he had done a paint chip analysis or consulted with the Maryland Historic Trust. Mr. Snyder responded that he had not. Chairman Stanley offered that the historic trust be able to assist Mr. Snyder with his project. She added that in viewing the photo of the Robert Morris Inn that showed it as being red and gray, the commission members had determined that the photo was probably hand tinted and that she would recommend that Mr. Snyder involve himself with the MD Trust as they have helped with other jobs and surveys. Planner Brophy added that Mr. Snyder may be able to request that the Trust look at the building and that she knew that they have helped other communities and will need to look at the history of the building that the town has and review it. Mr. Snyder agreed to the suggestion. Mr. Snyder added that there are also structural things he would be looking into such as creating more green space and an outdoor deck. Mr. Werner pointed out that historic accuracy is important and that a lot of research will need to be done. He questioned as to who would be responsible when it came to color. Planner Brophy responded that the owner will have to prove what color(s) the building had been painted in the past. Mr. Snyder stated that it's not a legal standard that he be married to whatever colors are found under the paint that is on the building now and that he would challenge that. Mr. Werner responded by stating that it is an iconic building, that it has been there a long time, and that he is just suggesting he do the research if he wants to change the color. He closed by stating that the town people aren't afraid to speak their minds and that Mr. Snyder is going to be a part of the community of the Town of Oxford.

There being to further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Willoughby

Assistant Clerk





