

OXFORD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES

FEBRUARY 12, 2024

The regular monthly meeting of the Oxford Historic District Commission was called to order by the Acting Chairperson, Terry Sullivan, who was filling in for Chairperson Jennifer Stanley, on Monday, February 12, at 5:00 p.m., in the meeting room of the Oxford Community Services Building.

Other commission members in attendance were Justin Werner, Margaret Morris, and James Wilcox, along with Town Manager, Cheryl Lewis.

The minutes of the meeting of January 8, 2024, were approved and accepted as distributed.

The following permits were reviewed by the commission:

- Permit #24-03, Mr. and Mrs. John Camp, 108 N. Morris Street, request for screening element. The Camps were represented by their residential designer, Timothy Kearns. Mr. Kearns explained that his clients have an existing a/c unit and are thinking about installing another unit alongside it. Because the existing unit is very visible on 3 sides of the property, the screening element being requested would be 48" tall and would attach itself to an existing outdoor shower that is located nearby the unit. Mr. Kearns added that the screening would be painted white, but he was not sure at this time as to whether the boards would run horizontally or vertically and that the main purpose of the screening would be to hide the units. Mr. Wilcox stated that he would prefer the screening to run vertically as it would be more in keeping with what is already in Oxford. Mr. Werner agreed, adding that it would also tie in with the outdoor shower and thought that style would be better. Mr. Kearns confirmed that the homeowners would be happy to go with either style. Mr. Werner made a motion that the commission approve the application for 108 N. Morris Street for a vertical style fence, with a height of 48", on the side of the house, to be painted white wood, as demonstrated. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wilcox and unanimously approved with all in favor.
- Permit #24-06, Richard Leggett, 103 S. Morris Street, solar array for Creamery. Michael Oliver, project manager with Paradise Energy Solutions, along with Richard Leggett, were present to discuss the application. Mr. Leggett explained that in restoring The Mews building and installing the addition, one of the objectives that he wanted to create was to have a more sustainable building and footprint. He noted that the electric costs were expensive in their ice cream business, so they were looking into the feasibility of solar energy and putting solar panels on the building. He directed the member's attention to the attachment to his permit which showed that the solar panels would not be visible. Manager Lewis pointed out that though the roofing is slightly slanted, nothing would be visible to the eye when one was walking on the sidewalk. Mr. Oliver spoke stating that they would be making a layout change from what was shown in the application whereby the solar panels would be 9 to 12 inches off the roof in the back and 3 to 4 inches off the roof on the front. Mr. Wilcox stated that visibility had been his only concern. Mr. Werner asked if there would be any outdoor equipment attached to the project. Mr. Oliver referenced the permit packet which showed 2 inverters, an a/c combiner, and safety disconnect

on the side of building that is 6' from the building next to it, which contains a fence that blocks the view. He added that that the equipment would stick out 6" from the wall. Town resident and curator of the Oxford Museum, Stuart Parnes, spoke stating that he thought it was an excellent idea and a great move for Oxford, that it would basically be invisible, and that he was supportive of the plan. Chairperson Sullivan made a motion that the commission approve the solar array for the Creamery and the apartments at 103 S. Morris Street as proposed with the understanding that the units, when installed, will not be visible from the street. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Morris and unanimously approved with all in favor.

Permit #24-05, Swallows 200, LLC, 200 Tred Avon Avenue, removal of non-historic kitchen addition; creation of rear deck and restoration of historic front porch; editing/extension of parapet and decorative cornice, extend rear bay to second floor, new wood windows to match existing historic windows with dual pane glass; restore shutters and front door system, replace existing fence to match historic wood picket fence, demolition of non-historic doghouse and shed. Property owner Thomas Caravythà, representing Swallows 200, LLC, and architect Nick Capella from Christine Dayton Architect, LLC, were present to discuss the application. Mr. Caravythà began his presentation of his proposed project but was stopped by Chairperson Sullivan who stated that the members would discuss each proposed item, one at a time. Before starting the review, Chairperson Sullivan stated that the committee members had seen the past minutes from the time in which Mr. Caravythà had met with the commission, two years prior, to discuss his permit request for changes very similar to what was being proposed at this night's meeting. He asked Mr. Caravythà if he could tell the commission if there had been any changes in the proposal or condition of the building that had happened in the past 2 ½ years. Mr. Caravythà responded that there were no changes and that his request at that time was the same as he request this time. Discussion began with the request for fencing. Chairperson Sullivan stated that the homeowner's request for white picket fencing seemed appropriate given that the applicant had provided an old photo of the house and property which showed that a picket fence had been there approximately 100 years ago. He added that there was also a white picket fence running the entire length of the neighboring property, in front of this property, along with 2 other white picket fences nearby Mr. Caravythà's property. Chairperson Sullivan added that the last time Mr. Caravythà was before the HDC, the commission at that time had stated it was OK for him to have white picket fencing but that they wanted him to keep the existing black fencing on the front of the property. Chairman Sullivan added that personally he would like to see all the fencing to be consistent and that he didn't see how the commission could deny the applicant the request. This was met with some opposition from others, including some members of the commission along with some members of the audience. Mrs. Morris stated that she liked the black wrought iron fencing but hadn't realized there was a white picket fence there originally and questioned where the wrought iron fencing came from. A member from the audience asked if the fencing would go all the way around the property. Mr. Caravythà responded that it would. Mr. Werner stated that he was more in favor of the wrought iron fencing, noting that there was not a lot of it in town and that it was historically accurate even though a photo had been presented which showed there was something there before the iron fencing. He added that the house is located on a prominent location, on the street corner, and that this was the only house of its kind that sits close to the side. He was of the opinion that the addition of the porch, along with a fence, would create a heavy screen along the north side and would create a lot of visible obstruction thus making it a little confining. He added that he believed that something would be lost from taking the iron fence away as there are only a

couple left in town and that it was serving its function of what a fence is supposed to do. Mr. Wilcox spoke stating that he realized that the commission was not bound by any decisions made by an earlier group of the HDC commission but that he was hesitant to change from what had been determined in the past. However, he added that in this case, it seemed to him, given the evidence, there was a fence like this and therefore he agreed with Chairperson Sullivan. He added that should the property owner decide to go with a fence that looked like the one in the picture provided, it looked like there was a lot of space between the vertical boards so it would not be a solid fence visually and therefore it did not concern him as much as Mr. Werner. Mr. Werner responded that when he first looked at this application, he had the town pull Swallows, LLC original application for this and found it to be basically word for word. The one thing that did not sit right with him was that this had already been ruled on by another committee and while the faces on the current commission have changed, it is a board that represents the town and decisions were made and now the current commission was tasked with going back to something that had already been done and already voted on. He asked the applicant what the purpose was of coming back to do this. Mr. Caravythà responded it was because the office told him he had to resubmit his application because the decisions made expire after 6 months and too much time had passed. Manager Lewis spoke stating that this was an issue with the building permit whereby if someone is issued a permit they have to start within a period of time, not years later and that this would apply to any permit. Mrs. Morris noted that maybe 2 ½ years ago the period photo of the house with its fence wasn't presented then and that the picture is a difficult one to fight. Chairman Sullivan pointed out that there were 2 past HDC members from the previous committee in the audience and felt it worthwhile to hear what they had to say, along with any other comments from members of the audience. James Deerin presented himself to the commission stating that he had been on the HDC when the original permit was submitted and that he was present at the meeting as a public citizen. He noted that he did like the original iron fence because it blended better with the style of architecture and look and feel of the house at 200 Tred Avon Avenue. He added that it is a unique hoop and spoke iron fence that has fleur de leis, is very solid, and that his recommendation would be to continue with that kind of fence and if extended, it should be used around the entire house. He added that just because there is a photo showing a picket fence in the past, it did not mean the one necessarily needs to have it used today. Thomas Costigan, town resident and past member of the HDC, stated that he agreed with Mr. Deerin and that he remembered the consensus of the committee at the time he was on the commission, was to retain, repair, and paint what was already in place because it was a period correct piece of fencing. Mr. Costigan added that he was also concerned about what the proposed pickets would be. From the historic photo provided, he stated that the pickets appear to be thin, almost like matchstick balusters, such as found on an indoor staircase. Continuing, he stated that most Oxford fences are 1 x 6 and that a 1 x 6 fence creates a much different barrier than an iron fence hoop spike or a fence with matchstick pickets would show. It was Mr. Costigan's opinion that putting in a white picket fence in this yard would create a barrier between the house and the street and would take away from the actual architectural uniqueness of the property. Member of the audience and curator of the Oxford Museum, Stuart Parnes, spoke stating that not every house has to go back to its origin. He noted that wrought iron is a great feature and unusual in Oxford and from an historical point of view, iron fencing has a lot going for it. He added that he would not like to see a brand new fence, with no historic value, replacing the iron fencing and that a new, manufactured fence would be a shame. Tred Avon Avenue resident Edwin Miller spoke stating that well known artist John Moll lived in the house at 200 Tred Avon Avenue for many years and that often visitors coming to Oxford wanted to see the house where the famous artist John Moll lived. He felt the application should be

viewed in aggregate to see what the impact would be on this very historic home. Chairman Sullivan questioned Mr. Deerin and Mr. Costigan about a decision they had made with regards to this permit when Swallows, LLC presented the application the first time, regarding their approval of the fencing along the side and back of the house. Mr. Deerin stated he just remembered talking about iron fencing. Mr. Costigan remembered that the concern at the time this application was presented back in 2021, was with the main street side façade and the preservation and repair of the hoop and spike fence. Residential designer and resident of Tred Avon Avenue Timothy Kearns spoke stating that this house was an assembly of pieces with each one contributing to the history of the house and property as a whole. Mr. Caravythà spoke stating that the back of house had a non-historic addition that he wished to remove and to create a deck in its place. He added that looking at the house from the back of West Street, there is a bay window which he wanted to extend to a second floor along with a parapet in the front of that house that doesn't continue that he would like to continue to the back of the house. Mr. Capella explained to the commission when they put a roof on the newly proposed bay they will have to meet the new energy code and in order to get the proper height, they will need to raise the parapet. In responding to the request to raise parapet, Mr. Wilcox was of the opinion that this would result in a streetscape issue and that it seemed to him the parapet, at its different heights, was a significant design feature of the current house and that he could understand why the past commission members felt it should remain the same. Mr. Werner agreed, adding that it was very visible from the intersection and if that parapet were to change, it would change the overall look of the house. Audience member James Deerin spoke stating that when this came up before, at the HDC meeting whereby he was a member at that time, he and the other members reviewing the application thought that the stepdown of the parapet was an element of the house that was important and a distinct architectural and historic characteristic and should be maintained. He added that the general principle of the guidelines is to obtain and maintain the overall form of details that are important. He thought that the step down of the parapet was actually one of those defining elements of the overall design of the building and should be maintained. Member of the audience, Thomas Costigan, addressed the commission members stating that what they had before them was a massing issue, and referred the members to page 7 of the Oxford HDC Guidelines, which, state in part, that Massing and Building Proportions of established structures should be reflected in new structures and renovations and that massing is the single most important characteristic to consider in the evaluation of proposed additions and new construction. He was of the opinion that the massing would completely and totally change the house (by raising the parapet as shown in the proposed drawings). Mr. Caravythà turned the attention over his request to replace the existing windows in the house with new ones that would look the same as they are now with the only change being that instead of having the simple glass that is there today, they would have double glass. He also added that he would like to remove an existing dog house and shed in the back of the property. Chairman Sullivan referred to a front porch that the applicant was also wanting to construct. He asked Mr. Caravythà if it would look the same as it did 100 years ago. Mr. Caravythà responded that it would. Neither the members nor the audience present had any concerns regarding the construction of a front porch. Residential designer Timothy Kearns spoke from out in the audience and stated that he had understood that the commission always wanted to be shown details on the proposed work for any historic structure. Manager Lewis responded that the members did have details on the porch but none with regards to fencing request. Chairman Sullivan addressed Mr. Caravythà and asked him if he was proposing the fence to look like it did 100 years ago. Mr. Caravythà responded by stating "or a regular picket fence", adding that "picture 6" (as presented in his permit application packet) was what they were proposing. It

was noted that it was close, but not similar to the historic fence photo presented. When this request had come before the commission back in 2021, it was noted that it was ruled at that time that there was to be no white picket fencing in the front of the house. It was also agreed at that time that the doghouse could be removed as well as the old kitchen addition. The present HDC members were also agreeable to the removal of those two items. The conversation turned around again to the request to replace the existing windows in the house. Chairman Sullivan noted that the application presented back in 2021 requested that the windows be renovated but now the applicant was asking to remove them and install new windows. Mr. Capella responded by stating that they had someone come out and look at restoring the windows as well as looking into the cost of making new windows. He stated that the cost to restore the existing windows was expensive but the cost to replace the windows to match, with insulated glass was about ½ the cost. Chairman Sullivan stated that the case of historic windows was a sensitive one and read aloud from the guidelines which mention that historic windows need to be maintained, if at all possible. Mr. Capella responded that the windows all had an enormous amount of damage. Chairman Sullivan suggested tabling the discussion of the windows for another meeting, until the applicant could get an expert to state that the existing windows were beyond repair. Mr. Wilcox pointed out that at a previous HDC meeting, the commission had a somewhat similar case before them and the members all agreed to stand by the principle that if the historic windows could be repaired, that was what was required. Mr. Kearns addressed the commission again stating that it had always been drilled to him that historic windows are to be retained but that the commission would allow exterior and interior energy panels. Mr. Werner stated that windows are a critical component of architectural interpretation of what the houses were and the HDC needs to do what they can to stick by the rules of what can and can't be done. Audience member Stuart Parnes addressed the commission and explained the history of the house at 200 Tred Avon Avenue. He stated that the home had originally been owned by the Berman family who owned a brick business. Mr. Berman was trying to develop an entire neighborhood based on row houses like those found at the time in Baltimore and Mr. Caravithà's house was the house Mr. Berman built as the model home. Mr. Parnes noted that this house was a unique part of Oxford's history and pointed out the uniqueness of the sashes on the windows. He added that it was not the typical Oxford house but that it was a contributing structure and that he had been given some notes from the past Chairmen of the HDC who had pointed out that the windows clearly contain historic, wavy glass with interesting decorative tops on each window frame. Audience member Tom Costigan also addressed the commission and presented an example of a low profile storm window that could be placed on historic buildings. Chairman Sullivan made a motion to approve demolition work at 200 Tred Avon Avenue that would include 3 items: the doghouse, the kitchen added later on, and a shed. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wilcox and unanimously carried with all in favor. Mr. Werner stated that he would want to see architectural drawings of the front porch before the commission voted on it but added that the members were fine with concept. Mr. Werner then made a motion that the commission conceptually approve the idea of adding a porch with the understanding that (the owner) will come back with a finalized design for approval. The motion was seconded by Chairperson Sullivan and unanimously carried with all in favor. Discussion moved back to the request to change the parapet with Chairperson Sullivan stating that he did not see how the commission could approve changing the roof line of the house. Mr. Werner made a motion that the commission deny the application for changing the profile of the parapet in any capacity and that it remain the way it is. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Morris and unanimously carried with all in favor. The members returned to request for the deck and new bay window. It was noted that these two items had previously been approved on the permit

submitted in 2021. Mr. Werner made a motion to approve the deck on the rear side of the house at 200 Tred Avon Avenue in addition to adding a second floor bay on top of the existing bay on the west, rear side of the property and (for the applicant) to come back (before the commission) with an architectural design and drawings so we (the commission members) are conditionally approving that, based on approval of what we (the commission members) approved the concept of. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wilcox and unanimously carried with all in favor. Mr. Werner then made a motion that the commission deny the request to replace the windows at 200 Tred Avon Avenue and to keep the existing windows, with any restoration and renovation as needed, including exterior or interior storm windows. Mr. Wilcox added to the motion the following: unless (the applicant) can prove to our (the commission's) satisfaction that the individual windows cannot be repaired. Mr. Werner voiced his disagreement with what Mr. Wilcox had wanted to add to the motion, stating that he did not want to leave the matter open ended. He stated that the guidelines state that one has to do what they can to repair the windows to existing conditions. Chairperson Sullivan agreed. Mrs. Morris seconded Mr. Werner's motion. The vote was carried by a vote of 3 to 1, with a nay vote from Mr. Wilcox. Discussion returned again to the matter of the proposed fencing for the property. Mr. Werner stated that given the public comments, along with concept that the metal fencing was historically accurate overall as a design element, he did not want it to be pulled out and replaced with another brand new fence when the one in place was functional and in good condition. Chairperson Sullivan agreed, adding that after listening to all the comments, he had changed his opinion as well and agreed with what Mr. Werner stated along with what Mr. Parnes had told the commission. He felt that the fence in the front of the house should be kept the way it was but that the commission could talk about the side and back fencing. Mr. Capella asked about the modern aluminum fence on the south side at the front of the property. Mr. Werner suggested that it be replaced with an iron fence that blended with what is already there. Mr. Wilcox stated that originally there had been a picket fence on the property and it seemed to him that it was consistent with the historical character of the building. He stated he is ok with it and that it was consistent with the picture. Mrs. Morris stated that if one takes into consideration the comments from the public, the public did not want the metal fencing removed. She commented that it was a tough call and that she wasn't entirely sure how she would vote on it. Chairperson Sullivan stated that he would like to defer the vote on the fencing until the commission had at least 5 members present so as not to have a divided vote. Manager Lewis suggested that the applicant remove the request for the fence off his application and write it up on a separate application. Mr. Werner made a motion to remove the fence portion off from the application, submit a separate permit for it, and reapply for that at the next meeting or whenever the applicant decides to return. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Morris. Manager Lewis asked that when Mr. Caravithà comes back again to meet with the commission, that he bring with him samples of the proposed colors for the house.

This concluded the review of the building permits.

CONSULTATION REQUEST

Robert and Barbara Ranson met with the commission to discuss their desire to rebuild their front porch at 206 E. Strand. Photos were presented of the current condition of the porch along with photos of porches in town with windows similar to those of what the Mr. and Mrs. Ranson would like to use on their porch. The plan is to replace the walls and windows of the porch and to keep it the same size. Mr. Werner pointed out the house was built in 1892 and suggested the couple look at old fire maps and/or

old pictures of houses on the Strand to see what the house had looked like originally. The couple explained that they were not looking to remove the porch but just wanted to repair it and replace the existing windows in it with 4 over 4 windows. Manager Lewis stated that she did not think the windows in the porch now were historic. Mr. Wilcox suggested the couple come back with more specifics on the house. Manager Lewis asked if the windows on the porch had wavy glass. Mr. Ranson responded that they did not and appeared to be salvaged windows with regular glass. He added that they needed to rebuild the porch and asked if the commission members were implying that they needed to keep it as it is or if they could rebuild it to make it look nicer in a more aesthetically, pleasing way. Mr. Wilcox responded that he would be interested in Chairperson Jennifer Stanley's view on the matter, who will be available at next month's meeting. Manager Lewis pointed out that the porch must have been an open one originally as the floor on the porch appears to be slanted as well as also noting that solid sheets of plywood were used to enclose the porch, which wouldn't have been used 100 years ago. Mrs. Morris stated that what the couple was proposing to do looked more in-line with the historic houses in Oxford.

OLD BUSINESS

Manager Lewis reported that a new planner had been hired and that she had spoken with the Planning Commission about changing their meeting times to start earlier. The Planning Commission had agreed to move their meetings to begin at 2 p.m. as opposed to 5:00 p.m. She stated that the HDC had an option to move their meeting time to begin earlier in the day if they so decided. Acting Chairperson Sullivan stated the commission will wait until Chairperson Stanley is back at next month's meeting.

Chairperson Sullivan mentioned that Architect Cameron MacTavish had read last month's minutes and did not think they were clear enough regarding the permit he submitted for the house at 103 Tred Avon Avenue and wanted to clarify that the HDC had given him full approval for the entire project, which Chairperson Sullivan thought they had. Mr. Werner spoke stating that his intention, when he had made the motion, was that the commission had approved it and that the owners were fine to go with what they had proposed and that as long as Cameron kept the corner board, he would not need to come back before the commission. He added that the commission had talked about the step back and requiring the keeping of the corner board, and that the addition to the house was part of that discussion.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Willoughby

Assistant Clerk