

NORWICH HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Minutes of the September 16, 2020 Regular Meeting

The regular meeting of the Historic District Commission was held Wednesday September 16, 2020 at 5:31 PM via Zoom virtual meeting.

Members Present:

Regan Miner (Acting Chairwoman)

Richard Guidebeck

Nancy O'Neil

Gregory Johnson

Timothy Dowhan

Members Absent: None

Guests: Bryan Vasser

I. Public Meeting

The public meeting was convened at 5:33 pm. The order of COA presentations and discussions are at the discretion of the commission to accommodate all participants.

- COA 434 – 130 Union Street (Michael and Dianne Brown) *Preservation, Reconstruction, Roofing*

The applicant was not in attendance.

- COA 435 – 86 Town Street (BLCR) *Signage*

Bryan Vasser stated William Raveis is in the process of changing the freestanding and wall signage at their various locations because they are removing their tagline. Bryan Vasser noted the 86 Town Street property is allotted much more signage than requested, but they are trying to stay within reason for the historic district. Bryan Vasser stated William Raveis

typically utilizes individually mounted illuminated channel letters, but had toned down the design for their historic district locations. Bryan Vasser stated with the proposed design the light would project about one-half inch from the face of the reverse channel letters so that little light would be emitted and that the sign would only be illuminated at night. Gregory Johnson asked if the existing signage was illuminated. Bryan Vasser responded that nothing on the building was currently lit, but the monument sign does have evidence of external lighting. Gregory Johnson questioned why the signage would need to be illuminated at night if the business was closed. Bryan Vasser responded that the sign would only be lit until approximately 9:00 PM or 10:00 PM and they would not propose to keep the lights on longer than the neighboring businesses do. Timothy Dowhan questioned what was being removed from the sign design and Bryan Vasser clarified the real estate tagline was being removed which stated mortgage, insurance, their website, etc and that only the logo would remain. Timothy Dowhan asked if any lettering or signage would be put on the base of the monument sign. Bryan Vasser responded there would not be anything on the solid sign base. Richard Guidebeck asked if the new monument sign would be installed in the same fashion as the previous one as in the sketch it appears the sign is closer to the ground. Regan Miner noted she was concerned with the solid white base of the monument as it blocks the view of the building unlike the current monument sign. Discussion ensued regarding potentially obstruction caused by the monument and its setback from the road.

At approximately 7:03PM Regan Miner experienced audio and technical difficulties and left the meeting briefly.

Regan Miner asked what materials the signs would be made from to which Bryan Vasser responded the signs would be all aluminum with some steel structural components. Timothy Dowhan asked if the monument sign height was comparable to the previous sign and which parts would be illuminated. Bryan Vasser responded that the proposed sign is shorter than the previous and the sign would be internally illuminated with only the letters being lit during the night, not the background. Timothy Dowhan noted that the proposed design seemed to be more obtrusive due to the increased font size. Richard Guidebeck commented on the style of the existing signage in comparison to the proposed. Bryan Vasser noted that the property owners would not have an issue adjusting the sign sizes however they did want them to be illuminated in some fashion. Bryan Vasser stated there was an alternate design included in the original package for the monument sign that included an open bottom, but still had the illuminated letters. Bryan Vasser stated his customer was trying to be accommodating by avoiding standard forms of commercial lettering but they were unsure if the lighting was strictly prohibited by guidelines or was simply a preference. Timothy Dowhan questioned the new rectangular shape of the sign opposed to the previous style to which Bryan Vasser responded the customer did not want to continue with the arch style sign. Regan Miner asked if Bryan Vasser thought his customer would be open to

different signage material to which he responded it is difficult to use other materials for the style of sign as wood is too thick to hollow out and at a distance the painted aluminum and painted wood were visibly comparable. Regan Miner asked how the wall sign would be affixed to the building so it does not negatively impact the clapboards or other historical aspects of the building since it dates back to 1760. Bryan Vasser stated the new sign would likely be mounted the same way as the previous sign with the back lag bolted into the building. Bryan Vasser stated the sign would only be about 2 inches thick and covered completely with the wire hidden by the wire way. Richard Guidebeck asked if the monument sign was suspended and what pillars would be used, as in the alternative design. Bryan Vasser stated they would be very similar to the existing sign with a large portion at the bottom with rectangular trim and a smaller square pole in the center that wraps around to additional trim. Discussion ensued regarding the alternative sign option that included an open base for the monument with poles on either side. Timothy Dowhan questioned the height of the alternative option to which Bryan Vasser clarified that the poles would be similar to the existing monument sign, but that the sign itself would be elevated. Nancy O'Neil asked if both monument sign options were still perpendicular to the roadway to which Bryan Vasser responded they were.

- COA 436 – 20 Harland Road (Jason Largent) *Preservation, Restoration, Chimney*

The applicant was not in attendance.

II. Regular Meeting

The regular meeting was convened at 6:35 PM.

A. Action on COA's

- COA 434 – 130 Union Street (Michael and Dianne Brown) *Preservation, Reconstruction, Roofing*

Gregory Johnson made a motion to approve COA 434 for only roofing work as submitted. Timothy Dowhan seconded. Discussion ensued regarding specifying that the chimney and gutters on the building remain unchanged. Gregory Johnson, Timothy Dowhan, Richard Guidebeck, Nancy O'Neil, and Regan Miner voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

- COA 435 – 86 Town Street (BLCR) *Signage*

Richard Guidebeck made a motion to open the COA for discussion.

Nancy O'Neil seconded. Discussion ensued regarding existing historic district signage guidelines and the increased sign, font size, and design. Regan Miner stated that no other signs within the district had similar illumination and that a flood light would be preferred. Regan Miner agreed with Timothy Dowhan that the second option the applicant presented was preferred for the monument sign and stated her concerns regarding the sign materials. Regan Miner stated she would be comfortable with illumination for the monument sign and a flood light for the building sign. Richard Guidebeck stated he did not think the new building sign should exceed the current size. The other members agreed. Nancy O'Neil stated she felt the proposed building sign was too large and preferred the existing style of the monument sign. Discussion ensued regarding the sign lighting. Gregory Johnson reiterated that he did not see a need for the sign to be lit overnight. Timothy Dowhan made a motion to deny COA application 435 as submitted and to instruct Regan Miner to work with the applicant on a resolution that would be a more appropriate option, the motion was seconded by Gregory Johnson. Gregory Johnson, Timothy Dowhan, Richard Guidebeck, Nancy O'Neil, and Regan Miner voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

- COA 436 – 20 Harland Road (Jason Largent) *Preservation, Restoration, Chimney*

Gregory Johnson made a motion to accept COA 436 as submitted. Timothy Dowhan seconded. Regan Miner stated she received an email from the homeowner requesting to discuss the chimney so she requested Richard Guidebeck speak to the homeowner on behalf of the Commission. Richard Guidebeck stated the homeowners were very cognizant of the home's history and status of chimney. Richard Guidebeck stated the homeowners needed to reattach the chimney to the home and get it realigned since it's pulling away allowing water and wildlife to enter the home. Gregory Johnson asked if the work had already occurred to which Richard Guidebeck responded it had as it was an emergency repair. Richard Guidebeck stated the COA was submitted after the work was done and that he had not been to the home since the completion. Gregory Johnson, Timothy Dowhan, Richard Guidebeck, Nancy O'Neil, and Regan Miner voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Minutes of Wednesday August 19, 2020 Regular Meeting

- Nancy O'Neil made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Richard Guidebeck seconded. Nancy O'Neil, Richard Guidebeck, Gregory Johnson and Regan Miner voted in favor. Timothy Dowhan abstained. The motion carried.

C. Chairman Report

- Regan Miner reported two properties in the district were being painted and that she has been in contact with the property owners of the First Congregational Church and the David Greenleaf House at 2 Town Street.

D. Old Business: None.

E. New Business:

- Approval of 2021 Historic District Commission Meeting Calendar

Tim Dowhan made a motion to approve calendar. Gregory Johnson seconded. Gregory Johnson, Timothy Dowhan, Richard Guidebeck, Nancy O'Neil, and Regan Miner voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

F. Next Meeting Date:

- Scheduled for Wednesday October 21, 2020 at 5:30 PM.

G. Adjournment

- Gregory Johnson made a motion to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 7:18 PM. Richard Guidebeck seconded. Nancy O'Neil, Richard Guidebeck, Gregory Johnson, Timothy Dowhan and Regan Miner voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Katherine Rose
Recording Secretary