

MAYOR
David R. Martin



DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
Mark McGrath

LAND USE BUREAU CHIEF
Ralph Blessing
(203) 977-4714

CITY OF STAMFORD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
888 WASHINGTON BOULEVARD
STAMFORD, CT 06904-2152

(FINAL) Minutes of the Historic Preservation Advisory Commission (HPAC)

Date: Regular meeting held: October 13, 2020 (Rescheduled from October 6, 2020)
Location: Via Zoom
Present: Anne Goslin, David Woods, Barry Hersh, Elena Kalman and Rebecca Shannonhouse.
Alternate: Dee Davis Oberwetter.

REGULAR MEETING

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order 7:04 p.m. Anne Goslin is the Chair for the current meeting.

II. Approval of the August 4, 2020 Meeting Minutes.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the August 4, 2020 meeting. Anne asked that the following be inserted: Anne also requested suggestions for properties that are not on the National and State Registers or the 1966-67 Inventory.

(The motion was moved by B. Hersh and seconded by A. Goslin and carried unanimously)

III. New Business

A. Review of Proposed Changes to Section 7.3 of the Zoning Regulations.

Participants: Ralph Blessing, Land Use Bureau Chief, City of Stamford

Presented: A. Goslin provided a brief update. She noted Ralph submitted the proposed changes via email in mid-August. He is here today to present the changes and get HPAC's comments. Anne received feedback in advance: Elena requested there be a review of projects that are built at the end of construction; a suggestion the CRI process be added to the Regulations; and concern about exterior alterations review.

Ralph started with a bit of history. They had originally proposed changes to Section 7.3 last year. There were significant corrections from the Law Department. They withdrew the old application and submitted the draft in front of us.



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There were a number of concerns. It is not only bonuses for historic structures, it is also bonuses. It is intended to protect historic properties as well. Definitions were updated. There are a few new terms. HPAC came into existence after the first version. There is a requirement for Site & Plan Review. That applies to all historic buildings. This established a site and architectural review for districts. The next section is the standards for bonuses. They want to create incentives for restoration. More uses As-of-Right. More uses will be allowed with reduced parking requirements for historic structures. That is ½ space per unit. No requirements if within 500 ft. of a garage. There will also be density bonuses.

The last part is development limitations for demolishing historic buildings. The Development Rights are frozen to those on the site; unless a Special Permit is obtained from the Zoning Board. The White List was added. The idea is that a building can be listed there which can be demolished without repercussions.

Ralph said he will touch on the questions. As far as review after construction, they want to have an easement recorded. They normally contact Renee Kahn and verify the work was done accordingly. As far as getting a building listed on the White List or Cultural Resources List, an application process will need to be established. They have been doing similar requirements for drainage in the City. He suggests a similar method. There are the main requirements and then there will be a hearing. The manual for the process might be attached to the Zoning Regulations.

B. Hersh asked about the provision for review of new construction in a historic district. Is that a change or is that new? Ralph said it is new. They tried with the B&S Carting site to take that into account. They have reviewed materials for instance. They want brick. They made the buildings step back. The idea is to make new work contextual with the historic districts in the area.

Barry also asked if someone applies under Section 7.3, can they use a historic architect or a member of the staff? Ralph says they need to work with a qualified historic expert. There is a list of qualifications. They do not want to preclude experts. He and HPAC can vet these persons. The applicant has to pay for the expert.

D. Woods asked about demolition ordinance. He is concerned the important section about demolition was removed from the previous draft. He also looked to see if there are references to the demolition ordinance in other areas of the Zoning Code and could not find any. There is also a new section at the end which references demolition and limits development of those properties. Thank you for that. Can there be a reference to the demolition ordinance? The review with the Law Department said that it was not appropriate to have the demolition section when it is also an ordinance. Understood. Ralph noted a reference can be made to the demolition ordinance. It is a good thing to do so developers or owners take notice.

D. Davis said this it is much clearer now. Good not to put too much procedure in this section.



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R. Shannonhouse had just a few questions. She agrees it is so much easier to understand and reference. She understands the need for input from HPAC. If also asked when replacing windows that are not in kind, how would the process play out. Her concern is working in the Hubbard Heights neighborhood. The biggest concern is if a homeowner needs to get permission to make improvements. It is a concern she has heard repeatedly. **Rebecca stated that designation on the State or National Register Historic District has always been considered as "honorific," and it does not impose any restrictions on a homeowner's ability to make changes to his/her home but promotes pride of ownership. Based on information from the federal government and the State of Connecticut, homeowners in historic districts were told the designation would have no impact on their ability to make any alterations to their homes. Her concern is the new Section 7.3 language change requiring a review process by HPAC for certain alterations, including some that are as-of-right.** (Added as per February 2, 2021 meeting.)

Another concern is that some persons have put their homes up for sale. There was some discussion about the listing and not wanting to have a statement that it is in a historic district. She also asked if SHPO could review the new language. Anne sent it to SHPO and Brad Schide, of Preservation Connecticut, who said it is excellent.

SHPO had not responded to the request for review. (Added as per February 2, 2021 meeting.)

Ralph said the City would not normally review smaller improvements. That is under No. 2 of the Review Procedures, Item No. 4. Ralph says the goal is to strengthen the historic restoration. Ralph also says the review item only comes up where it is in public view. They are not concerned with improvements in the back for instance.

Rebecca also expressed concern that the Section 7.3 review process for developers provides a "carrot" by offering bonus incentives, while this new review requirement uses a "stick" without providing a "carrot" to homeowners. She prefers that education efforts be made to inform homeowners of the benefits of being listed on a State or National Register Historic District. (Added as per February 2, 2021 meeting.)

Rebecca suggests there should be better education or a brochure to help homeowners. Ralph said this has to work itself out. The general policies are up to us (HPAC).

E. Kalman had a couple of items. She noted it is very hard to make the contractor do the correct job. Does HPAC have some review standards of the final project? Maybe there needs to be a more thorough review. If a building is in a very bad condition, then there might be a need to have a replicated construction. Ralph said they have taken that into account. The big stick the City has is with the Certificate of Occupancy at the end of the project. They will not sign off if it is not done properly. He said Renee has been somewhat flexible in the past.



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A. Goslin asked if bonuses can be extended to Cultural Resources and the Cultural Inventory. Ralph said they all are treated the same. In most Section 7.3 applications, Renee is the consultant. Anne also asked, can you clarify the architectural historian role? Ralph said they only need to be hired for “bonus” applications. They want to be sure they only give a bonus to bon-a-fide historic buildings. Will Renee still be hired for such reviews? There is no mention of who can apply for the bonuses.

Anne asked for comments from the public. Sue Halpern questioned how this (Section 7.3) will protect the South End? Realtors and/or developers are trying to accumulate properties. There seems to be a loss of control. Ralph said they could demolish but the proposed Regulations will not allow an owner to rebuild any larger than what is allowed now. There is no economic incentive to demolish a structure. Ralph said he cannot go back in time. The new Regulations will allow better protection.

J. Norinsky said she has submitted some language for process. Ralph said he will look it over. She also had a suggestion for definitions she will send. He will have a look. Judy asked about BLT. Do we need to have some description or definition from SHPO about structures over 50-years-old? There is an example recently where BLT claimed a structure was not 50-years-old and there was a question about the start date for the timeline. Is it at the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy or when the permit is filed? Ralph also said HPAC can ask SHPO to add a structure to a list.

Elizabeth McCauley had a hand up. There was a question about non-contributing buildings. Will they be treated as historic buildings? Ralph added there is now a review process for non-contributing buildings if on the CRI.

Resolution:

Anne asked Ralph: what do you need? He said he will look at recommendations. They will be presented to the Zoning Board. Our recommendations should be sent to Ralph. There will be a Public Hearing in November.

Anne asked for a Resolution. There a few items or suggestions. Put steps in the Regulations that describe the process or procedure for review. The group favors an architectural review that includes as-built conditions. It was requested to make a reference to the demolition ordinance. Make review stronger at the end before a Certificate of Occupancy is issued.

(The motion was moved by A. Goslin and seconded by D. Woods and carried by a vote of 4-1-0) (A. Goslin, D. Woods, B. Hersh, E. Kalman - In Favor / R. Shannonhouse - Against)

B. Review of Proposed Changes to 1114 Hope Street - United Methodist Church Garden Homes Fund (Contract Purchaser).

Participants: Brian Daley, for Garden Homes and Nils Kerschus, Architectural Historian.



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Presented: A. Goslin provided a brief update of the project submission. She clarified there is a 1954 Church, a 1906 Parsonage and a 1969/70 Community Center on the site now. This is a potential Section 7.3 application and a formal application has not been filed yet; this is an early review for HPAC.

Brian Daley said they are waiting for the new Section 7.3 Regulations. It affects the rear setback and the overall height of the new building. They plan to have 17 deeply affordable units using the funds from the City for “fee-in-lieu” from BLT projects. One Hundred (100%) percent of the units will be deed restricted. They will retain the Church structure and retain the Community Center. They want to build a new residential structure toward the back of the site for the other eleven (11) units. They will not be able to retain the old Parsonage. There are five (5) spaces proposed for the Parsonage site. There is a great need for these units in Springdale. They cannot lose two (2) units if they cannot have the parking on the Parsonage site. He also said, to retain the Parsonage, they would need to bring it up to code. He further said the ability to retain the Church building is of some value. Another builder may not maintain the Church. There is a historic consultant attending.

E. Kalman asked if the Parsonage is on the street? Yes. Elena said they should take down the Community Center rather than the Parsonage. It is ugly. Mr. Daley said this solution will not work. He added the new apartment building is in the back. It will be 3 stories. In the R-M District they would have been limited to 2.5 stories; they need the 3 stories that is allowed under Section 7.3

R. Shannonhouse asked if an architect reviewed the property to see if the Parsonage can be saved? Brian said, yes. They have looked at it and cannot save the Parsonage.

D. Davis asked about the historic significance. He said the Parsonage is the oldest building there. She understands the need to have these be affordable. There are other significant structures in the area that relate to this Parsonage. Losing this building is really bothersome.

B. Hersh asked about the new building. Brian showed the first version of the proposed elevations. There was general agreement these design concepts were not great. The group asked the owners to restudy these elevations.

D. Woods said he agrees with Dee. The Parsonage should be saved and asked for new options.

E. Kalman said there may be more ways to figure out the site. She does not like the new building. This is singularly not acceptable. She would not vote to approve this.

A. Goslin said the buildings at the Church are nice in context. She would like to see drawings that can save the Parsonage.

Anne asked for public comments. Judy Norinsky agrees with Dee and Elena. Barry asked, who will own the project? It will be Garden Homes.



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Nils, the historic consultant, will be happy to comment as the project develops.

Resolution:

Anne said there is no formal application yet. Anne asked for a motion. Elena would like to make a motion to have the Owners return to HPAC, with alternatives that can save the Parsonage. She asked they consider the style of the existing building and the neighborhood context.

(The motion was moved by and seconded by D. Woods and carried unanimously.)

IV. Old Business.

A. Connecticut Historic Preservation Hearing.

SHPO request for Attorney General assistance to prevent unreasonable destruction of historic properties at 130 Henry Street, 79 Garden Street and 650 Atlantic Street.

Participants: Anne Goslin

Presented: A. Goslin provided a brief update. She said the project has been turned over to the Attorney General for review. Todd Levine of SHPO is handling the case.

(The item was **Tabled** without further decision. Review of status will be on going)

B. Grant Survey of Shippan Point Neighborhood.

Participants: Anne Goslin

Presented: A. Goslin noted she is discussing the survey with a number of parties and will report back at the next meeting. She noted Jenny Scofield of SHPO is in favor. Wes Haynes requested there be a community meeting with Shippan.

(The item was **Tabled** without further decision. Review of status will be on going)

C. Cultural Resources Inventory.

Participants: Anne Goslin

Presented: A. Goslin provided a brief update. She reported Ralph Blessing and Judy Norinsky will have a meeting next week to continue work.

She noted the First Presbyterian Church Landmark Nomination Hearing took place and the application is in the process of approval. David noted he listened to the review and it was voted unanimously to send it to the full Board for final approval.

The item was **Tabled** without further decision. Review of status will be on going)



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D. Election.

Presented: Anne said Lynn Drobbin resigned in February of last year. Elections were not held because there was not a full Commission. Elena and Rebecca have since been named Commissioners. The pandemic delayed voting, then a storm and meeting cancellations. It is time to formalize the new officers.

Anne added she may be selling her house and would not like to be the Chair going forward. She further said she will stay on as long as she is in Stamford. She asked for volunteers.

David said he can take on the Chair role, but he will not be able to be Secretary or do the meeting notes. He also said he would like another person to handle survey, cultural inventories, etc. Anne said she is willing to do that role, as a Committee head.

Barry Hersh said he is happy to be the Vice Chair. He cannot commit the time to full Chair.

Dee Davis said she is happy to take the meeting minutes. It was also asked if she can be Secretary. There is a question about that as she is an alternate. Rebecca Shannonhouse said she is happy to become an alternate so Dee can be Secretary.

David said we should talk to Marty Levine about a note taker- Secretary.

Resolution:

After some discussion, a Resolution was formed to have a new slate of officers as follows:

David Woods - Chair of the Commission

Barry Hersh - Vice Chair of the Commission

Dee Davis to take the meeting notes until it is determined if she can be Secretary.

(The motion was moved by and seconded by E. Kalman and carried unanimously.)

E. Demolition Applications.

237 & 239 Henry Streets

Anne brought up new issues with 237 & 239 Henry Streets. A chain link fence and a bulldozer have appeared at the properties. HPAC spoke to the owners in late 2018 or early 2019 to inform them the properties are in the South End NRHD and encouraged them to speak to Renee Kahn about potential Section 7.3 Regulations. HPAC submitted a demolition delay when the application was made. Anne asked Sue Halpern to comment. She called the Building Department. Henry Street, LLC that is on a demolition request is BLT. They noticed some demolition is taking place. A permit for plumbing removal may have been applied for. There is a chain link fence on the property.



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Sue also noted that Bharat Gami (City of Stamford Building Department) sent her a note that says there was a demolition request that was posted in November of 2018. The delay that was filed has ran its course. There were many questions about that. David said he did not understand why the demolition request was still in effect. Does the demolition request expire after a certain time? David agreed to contact Mr. Gami.

Anne contacted Todd and will follow up.

(The item was **Tabled** without further decision. Review of status will be on going)

VI. Adjournment

A. Goslin adjourned the meeting at 9:34 p.m. (There was no further discussion)

Drafted by David W. Woods, AIA: October 16, 2020,
Secretary, Historic Preservation Advisory Commission

Meetings are normally on the first Tuesday of the month starting at 7:00 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for November 10, 2020 via Zoom. (Scheduling due to Election Day on November 3, 2020)