

**WELLESLEY HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
CALLED MEETING & PUBLIC HEARING
APRIL 4, 2019, 6:30 PM
NATURAL RESOURCES OFFICE – WELLESLEY TOWN HALL**

Members Present: Chair David Smith and others. **Absent:** Emily Maitin.

Staff: Claudia Zarazua, Planner

Others Present: Mandy Hore (transcribed), Peter Litman, and others

Call to Order: David Smith called the meeting to order.

Public Hearing HDC 19-02 - 30 Cottage Street - Certificate of Appropriateness, Continued. Mr. Smith invited the applicants for 30 Cottage Street to come before the Commission for the continuation of the Public Hearing from a previous HDC meeting.

All documents from the Commission meeting are on file in the Planning Department.

Owner Brian Menna and the project architect walked the HDC through the process starting with an overview of what was being affected on the house for the proposed addition and changes. They had previously gotten a Certificate of Appropriateness to change the windows on the house.

The applicants are proposing a new addition and changing the plan because their family is growing and need more space including an additional bedroom. They are aiming to utilize the existing footprint to the fullest extent, and the addition to the rear is barely visible from the street. This seemed more in balance with the site.

There was a lot of discussion about the windows. The applicant and the architect conducted a price comparison for many window options, and the cost as well as the aesthetics are high concerns for them. The current drawings do not have all of the details needed either due to a computer problem. The HDC indicated that they would need to come back with full drawings that show all of the details they are concerned about; namely the sills, casements, shutters, etc. Current windows on the house are a Marvin product that had previously been approved by the HDC.

The HDC further stated that it was very clear what the scope of this project is, but they want to know about more of the details. The applicants are eager to improve the building but also to not break their bank doing so. Ms. Abeles suggested that perhaps the thing to do is then to discuss where it is important to have shutters and historical windows but not to put them on the entire house. She asked if it would be a reasonable approach to focus on the front face of the house and the original building, and do the rest in a more economically balanced way. Mr. Smith qualified that that does not mean they can put anything they want on the rest of the house on the “non-important” windows. Ms. Abeles further elaborated that it

would be better to see no shutters on these “non-important” windows than vinyl shutters screwed onto the face of the building like they are now.

The HDC and applicant agreed that they want to keep the historic feel of the house but accept that in order to do so within a budget they must compromise. They will work together to do so. HDC members agreed that it is important that the original block of the house have historic windows, and it is okay for the addition to have something different; they can make a reasonable break between the new and original. When the applicants return, they should have sections of each window that show details including the trim. Other HDC members including Ms. Griffin and Ms. Maitin agree that this solution to the window issue is completely reasonable.

After the HDC came to agreement on the window solution, further discussion about window specifics including glazing, dormers, and scale ensued. While the HDC needs to see a full set of drawings in order to approve the updated window schedule, they agreed that the massing of the addition was great and fits the scale of the existing house.

Two concerns were about the treatment of enclosing the porch and the garage doors. Ms. Abeles mentioned that she thinks the applicant should find a garage door that is five panels across instead of four because it does not look good.

The HDC was in agreement with the massing and the design the applicants presented, but they could not vote on it at this meeting. It must be continued to next meeting so they can vote on it with a full set of drawings. There were no other outstanding issues.

Mr. Smith made a motion to continue the public hearing to the next HDC meeting. Another HDC member seconded the motion. The HDC unanimously approved to continue the public hearing to the next HDC meeting.

Interview Candidate for Current Vacancy. The candidate was not present at the meeting, however Ms. Zarazua gave an update on the situation.

Mr. Smith was present for the interview of candidate Mr. Paine for the vacancy, and recommended him to the HDC. A second applicant was invited to attend today’s meeting, however he withdrew his application. Therefore the appointment of Thomas Paine will be moving forward. A memo will be circulated to the Board of Selectmen.

Belvedere Estates Historic District Study Committee Update. Mr. Smith introduced the agenda item and Ms. Griffin led the discussion. The HDC wanted to hear public comments first.

Peter Litman, resident of 2 Arlington Road, spoke before the HDC to both share information and ask for information. Mr. Litman and a group of others put together a website for people in the neighborhood to inform them of the implications of becoming an historic district. As part of this website, there was the opportunity for residents to sign a petition and to provide comments about how they felt about a neighborhood historic district. So far, sixty-six (66) residents have signed the petition. The petition says:

“We share the goal to promote and preserve the charm and beauty of our neighborhood, but we do not support an historic district in our neighborhood.”

Sixty-six (66) people in the neighborhood do not support an historic district designation, and Mr. Litman reported that the numbers continue to grow. This reflects almost sixty percent (60%) of the homeowners in the proposed historic district on Livermore, Arlington, and Abbott. This is based on information from the website that Mr. Litman thought was pretty accurate.

Ms. Abeles asked who put together the website. Mr. Litman answered that he did with other people. Ms. Griffin stated that there were two links on the website’s resource page that led to nothing – they were dead links that have been that way since the website went up. They were for the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the Wellesley Historic District Commission websites. This was an indication to Ms. Griffin that the accuracy and integrity of the information presented was not being taken seriously. Mr. Litman said he did not know that and would try to fix it. He said he is taking it very seriously; it took a lot of time and effort to put it together.

As the leader of the study group, Ms. Griffin said that they will be conducting an official survey. The survey area has not yet been defined. Mr. Litman just wanted to bring to their attention the information on the website, and that there is a large group of people against the historic district. Ms. Abeles stated however that these people have signed the petition based on the information provided for them on the website that Ms. Griffin believes is not accurate.

Ms. Abeles brought the discussion back to an explanation that an official study is going on that will take a lot of time; that the study area and boundaries have not yet been defined, and the groups currently circulating information are not official. Through the town there will be research conducted, education events, survey material going out, and that is not going to be either from the “pro” or the “con” side. Mr. Smith added that this is not something to be imposed on everyone by the HDC or the Town. Another group asked for resources for what would be required to put together a study committee to see what it takes to even become an historic district; to see if it is even a viable idea. Ms. Abeles repeated that what is important to understand is this is a process that would probably take a year or two to put all of the information together.

To Mr. Litman’s understanding, the number of people who started this process were less than six (6). Mr. Smith was unsure of the number. Mr. Litman thought that those six people kicked this off. Ms. Griffin said that the Wellesley Historical Commission kicked this off and recommended that it come before the HDC. At a previous meeting of the Historical Commission, which Mr. Smith attended, there were roughly thirty (30) people there who were all supportive of the initiative, and when he asked if anyone was not in favor, nothing came up. Mr. Litman said that was because none of them knew.

Ms. Abeles explained that at this state there a lot of people both for and against the historic district. At this point she said there is not full information on either side. That is why there will be careful study that will take many months to put all of the information together. Once it is all put together, then everyone will have a chance to look at it and weigh in. Ms. Zarazua explained that it is within the authority of the

HDC to initiate such study. Mr. Litman was not saying that they cannot do it, but that a lot of people who do not like it.

A discussion ensued where Mr. Litman shared his issue that the neighborhood has no say. Staff and HDC members then shared the process, which includes public hearings and ultimately goes to a Town Meeting to be voted on. Mr. Litman said that is the problem because the homeowners do not have a vote. Ms. McCarthy explained the “State Historic District” [State Historic Preservation Office] will have to approve the district as well, but will notice if there is 50/50 support. Mr. Litman asked further questions about how the people who give approval would know about the level of support. Ms. Abeles repeated that this is a very long process.

Mr. Smith asked for clarification that the official study committee will be sending a survey to every affected homeowner. Ms. Griffin and Ms. Abeles clarified that this will go beyond that to all homeowners who would even potentially be affected. Mr. Litman was delighted to hear that.

Ms. Abeles asked if there was anyone else present who would like to share comments. Mandy Hore (transcribed) came before the HDC and shared comments.

Public Comments on Matters Not on the Agenda.

Adjourn. Mr. Smith asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by another member of the HDC, and they voted to adjourn the meeting.

Next Meeting: May 7, 2019

Minutes Approved: December 3, 2019

Minutes Compiled by: Dana Marks, Planner