

**WELLESLEY HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
CALLED MEETING & PUBLIC HEARING
JULY 10, 2019, 6:45 PM
GREAT HALL - WELLESLEY TOWN HALL**

Members Present: Chair David Smith, Emily Maitin, Edwina McCarthy, Tom Paine

Staff: Catherine Johnson, Chair Planning Board, facilitating as staff.

Others Present: Karen Griffith, Warren Borgen, Sarah Borgen, Chris Royer, Tamara Selecki

Call to Order. David Smith called the meeting to order at 6:55 pm.

Public Hearing HDC 19-03 – 17 Waban Street – Certificate of Appropriateness. Mr. Smith introduced the Public Hearing for the Certificate of Appropriateness for changes to 17 Waban Street and asked that the owner of the property [Karen Griffith], join the Commission at the table and walk the members through the scope of the project.

Ms. Griffith explained that the project they were [her family was] doing was reworking or rebuilding two retaining walls on opposite sides of her property. On the Weston Road side, there is a concrete retaining wall that is cracking. She said that it wasn't built properly, with provisions for drainage, and that the wall was not aesthetically pleasing. The proposal is to take it down and rebuild it with fieldstone in the exact same location – same height, same width, using stone, but including weep holes for drainage. She said that on the other side of the house, there is another retaining wall made of concrete block material. She said that at the side of this wall, there is a ramp that is treacherous and that it is made of dirt with some stones on top of it. She said that the proposal is to remove the ramp and replace it with a few simple steps made of stone; and then they will continue the patio across. She explained that they were looking to rework the fence that is there now, centering the gate and building a small, simple pergola over the gate.

Mr. Smith asked whether the fieldstone was a veneer over the block. Ms. Griffith said that no, it was actual stone. She added that veneer had been considered, but that her landscaping contractor indicated that veneer probably wouldn't adhere well and would fall off over time so the decision was to use actual stone.

Mr. Paine whether Ms. Griffith had determined what type of stone would be used – local stone, weathered stone, or quarried stone. Ms. Griffith said that it would be as shown in the picture included in her proposal, that it would be simple, just local stone. Mr. Paine ascertained that it would be masonry, in other words, that the wall would be mortared. Mr. Paine also asked if there were any drainage issues or whether there would be weep holes in the wall. Ms. Griffith said that there would be and added that, currently, there were none.

Mr. Paine asked about the steps, wanting to know if they would be concrete. Ms. Griffith explained that the steps would be made from the same pavers that were there now but that they would have a cap on them.

Ms. Maitin, referring to the site plan provided, confirmed that only the two highlighted areas displayed the scope of the project. She also asked about where the fence is delineated on the site plan. Ms. Griffith said that it was at the top of the site plan, just inside the grass line; that is was

an L-shaped fence that went around the patio, near her neighbor's driveway. She confirmed that Ms. Maitin's impression that the fence could not be seen from Waban Street, but said that the fence could be seen by someone walking along Weston Road.

Mr. Smith asked whether the pergola was going to be made of wood. Ms. Griffith confirmed that it would be and that it would be painted the same color as the fence. Ms. Maitin said that she had noticed only one other pergola in the area, on Abbott Street. Ms. Griffith confirmed that and added that there was no depth to this pergola, that it was only as wide as the fence post. She explained that the post would be taller and have the two slats bracketing the posts. Mr. Paine asked whether the six small [wooden] pieces that were on top of the slats were simply decorative. Ms. Griffith answered affirmatively.

Hearing no further discussion, Mr. Smith asked for a motion. Mr. Paine moved to approve granting a Certificate of Appropriateness as presented. Ms. McCarthy seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous (4-0).

Public Hearing HDC 19-04 – 29 Cottage Street – Certificate of Appropriateness. Mr. Smith asked the applicants to sign in and walk the Commission through the requested changes and the scope of the project.

Mr. Warren Borgen, one of the owners, explained that their proposal was to build a two-car garage and to add a master bedroom over the back of the existing house.

Mr. Chris Royer introduced himself as the architect and said that he had provided a narrative to accompany the drawings, which would explain how he had attempted to scale the addition down from the house itself. He further explained that the applicants realized that this house was a small house; and that, while a garage needs to be a certain size to accommodate two cars, he had worked with his clients to push the garage back towards the rear of the house, to give it a lower ridge line than the house, and to make it proportionally smaller than the house itself so that the main house would predominate. He said that there was also the second story master bedroom addition, which is not very visible from the street. He explained that he had gone to great lengths to make sure that the details, such as the roof pitches, were harmonious and consistent with the existing structure. He added that he wanted to have the garage doors on the side so that they were not visible from the street; however, the dimensions of the garage and the condition of a 20-foot side setback made that impossible. He said that this was when he and his clients noted the precedent of having front-facing garages on the street and decided to make that work.

Mr. Smith asked what the dimensions of the garage and the master bedroom above it were. Mr. Royer said that the garage was 670 SF, but that this included the area connecting the garage to the house, that the half-story above the garage was 330 SF, and that the second story addition for the master bedroom was 250 SF. He and Mr. Borgen confirmed that Town records indicated that the size of the current house is 1684 SF. Mr. Smith noted that the applicants were adding to the size of the house. [The increase is approximately 74%.]

Mr. Smith asked Ms. Johnson for clarification as to whether that would involve permitting by other boards. Ms. Johnson said that as long as the lot was conforming and as long as the square footage was below the 3600 SF threshold for houses in a 10,000 SF district, there shouldn't be the need for additional permitting. [If the setbacks for the current house were non-conforming, this might involve ZBA approval.]

Ms. Maitin asked if the space above the garage was habitable. Mr. Royer said that it could be, but that it was unfinished for now. Mr. Borger confirmed that it would be used for storage. Ms. Maitin said that, in looking at Plan #3, the garage appeared to be quite massive, and she was looking for a reason for this. Mr. Royer said that the garage was 24 x 22, but that when his clients wanted a two-car garage and when space permitted, he often made them larger. He added that the massing came from putting a roof above the garage that matched the pitch of the roof; that the dormer matched the dormer on the main house. He also confirmed that there was no plumbing in or above the garage. He added that when you have that space above the garage, it seems important to make it accessible and usable. Ms. Maitin further questioned the size; Mr. Royer said that because the house was small, putting a two-car garage next to it would make the garage seem more massive. He said that the lot is relatively large and that the existing house occupies only about 1/3 of the width; therefore, it seemed to him that the two-car garage added balance to the property.

Ms. Maitin asked about the main structure of the house and whether there were any visible changes. Mr. Royer explained that the front of the original house was unchanged and that the drawings were tonal to indicate what was original and what was proposed.

Mr. Smith asked if the applicants could take down the existing garage, which is proposed to become a shed, would it be possible to move the proposed two-garage so that the doors wouldn't face the street. Mr. Royer said that there is a pool in the backyard and that its position would result in having the same problem with regard to the side lot line. Ms. Johnson then informed Mr. Royer and the Commission that a side-load garage needs a 30-foot setback from the property line to the garage doors. She confirmed that this was a Zoning Bylaw and was intended to allow for turning radius into the garage. Mr. Royer said that this would prevent having a side-load garage.

Mr. Smith asked what he said was an obvious question: had the applicant considered a detached garage? He noted that most of the houses in the Historic District had detached garages although the two new houses [636 Washington Street and 638 Washington Street] at the corner of Washington Street and Cottage Street had attached garages that were not readily visible from the street. Ms. McCarthy noted that these houses were not really historic. Mr. Smith confirmed that all of the historic houses in the District had detached garages. He asked how the Commission felt.

Mr. Paine, in full disclosure, said that he lived in a Victorian-era house and that he had added an attached garage, appreciating the convenience. However, he said that his house was not in an Historic District. He asked what material the garage doors would be made of. Mr. Royer said that it would be a steel door with a composite veneer, that, when painted, looked like wood. Mr. Paine also asked about drainage, making sure that water would slope away from the garage doors.

Mr. Smith asked about windows and whether the applicant would be replacing the windows in the original house. Mr. Royer said that they would not be changing the windows in the original house but that the new windows would be clad wood windows, with simulated divided lights. Mr. Royer said that he had an estimate for the job based on Anderson 400 series. He expressed that he was open to other suggestions, but that to his eye, the Anderson window was not distinguishable from the Marvin clad wood windows.

Ms. Maitin said that the Commission would want to see samples of the windows and the garage doors, and asked about the gutters/downspouts. Mr. Royer said that the gutters on the original house were aluminum and that his clients would be matching those. Ms. Maitin said that the Commission would want more details about the specifics of the various trim and design elements. There was dialogue about whether the Commission would be satisfied with brochures or whether

they needed samples. Mr. Royer indicated that he would be happy to bring samples or more specific information from the suppliers, but he wanted to know if what he has presented so far is more or less acceptable to the Commission.

Ms. McCarthy said that she would not vote for an attached garage. She said that the garage, as presented, overwhelmed the house. Further, she said that most, if not all, of the garages on the historic houses in the District were set way back from the houses and were only half visible from the street.

Mr. Smith said that his concerns were with the massing and that was the reason he asked about the square footage. He added that if the applicant were proposing living space – a master bedroom – above the garage, his opinion might be different. He asked if Mr. Royer could put a walkway between the garage and the house in order to create separation. He suggested that the applicant walk Cottage Street to observe the other houses and noted that the application showed pictures of 38 and 41 Cottage Street, which both have detached garages set far back on their lots. He indicated that he would have trouble accepting an attached garage.

Mr. Royer addressed the existing garage, set at the rear of the property, as having some historic significance. He said that he had done work on the property for a previous owner [Ms. Kitty Gladstone]. At that time, he had learned, as anecdotal knowledge, that the garages were used by the owners of these cottages as places where they could do piece work for the shoe factory in the area. Mr. Royer added that keeping the old garage and repurposing it as a shed or pool house would be historically appropriate and a good re-use of the building. There was discussion by the Commission members about whether the garage, with a building permit date of 1980, was historic and how to ascertain whether this structure had significance.

Ms. Maitin said that she understood and appreciated the sense of having an attached garage, given the New England winters, but that the mass and scale was a concern. She asked if it would be possible to connect it in a different way and push it further back on the lot. Ms. Maitin and Mr. Royer discussed whether the garage could be made smaller. Mr. Royer suggested that two feet could be taken off, leaving a garage that was 22 x 22 feet, but that this was the smallest it could be. He also said that there were garages on the street that did not look like the houses, that they were one-story structures. He explained that part of his thinking was that it would be better to have a garage that looked like the house than one that might bear no resemblance.

Mr. Royer said that he understood that the Commission's concerns addressed the attachment of the garage and also the massing. He asked the Commission if protecting the old garage at the back of the property carried any weight or whether this area should be considered a blank slate. Ms. Maitin said that keeping the shed would depend on whether it had historic significance. Mr. Smith said he was more concerned with keeping the historic significance of the original house. He suggested that the shed could be moved or removed and that a detached two-car garage could be put in its place.

Mr. Smith suggested that the applicant rethink some of their needs and that the Commission would need more specifics on the architectural details, especially on the area that would be the master bedroom. Mr. Smith also noted that their resident architect [Lisa Abeles] was not present this evening. He said that in his six years on the Commission, there had been no approvals of an attached garage and suggested that the applicant consider making the changes to the living space while designing a detached garage. Mr. Borgen said that they wanted the functionality of an attached garage and might consider not building a detached one at the rear of the garden. Mr. Royer said that they needed time to rethink the application. He asked if having a one-story

garage, even if the roof pitch didn't match that of the original house, would be appropriate; would it improve the mass and scale? Mr. Smith indicated that the Commission would need to see the specifics. He said that if the massing was the most important issue, detaching the garage and pushing it to the rear of the lot would be preferable.

The Commission returned to a discussion of the shed. Ms. Maitin suggested that if the applicant wished to demolish it, then he should bring some information on the historic significance to the District Commission. Mr. Royer asked what would happen if they couldn't find any history. There was no resolution to this discussion.

Ms. McCarthy asked one question about the pool. Mr. Royer said that it was a swimming pool, permitted in 2014, and that it had a fence around it.

The members of the Commission and the applicant agreed that there should be a continuation until the District Commissions' September meeting. Ms. McCarthy made a motion to continue the hearing until September 3, 2019; Ms. Maitin seconded the motion; the Commission voted unanimously in favor (4-0).

Approve Minutes: June 11, 2019, June 25, 2019. After a short discussion, with one typo to be corrected on page 1 of the June 25, 2019 set, Ms. Maitin moved to approve both sets. Mr. Smith seconded the vote. The minutes were approved 3-0, with one abstention.

Resident Discussion Regarding Truck Traffic Through the District. Mr. Smith, noting that this was a matter of public concern, asked the petitioners to present their concerns to the Commission. Ms. Selecki and Ms. Griffith joined the table.

Ms. Selecki explained that she and Ms. Griffith live in houses on the corners of Waban Street and Weston Road. They are increasingly concerned about the preservation of houses in the Historic District and that this preservation takes many forms, including how garages may be constructed, windows, doors, etc., but also the integrity and structure of the homes. Ms. Selecki said that she is concerned about the increasing amount of truck traffic that is going down Weston Road and also Cottage Street. It is cut-through traffic rather than trucks delivering to a destination on one of those streets. She said that the problem they [some residents] were having was that the houses clearly shake; and that the biggest problem were the construction trucks – landscape and tree removal trucks, concrete trucks, etc. Ms. Selecki said that the police have been helpful, especially with the landscape trucks. She said that she and Ms. Griffith were looking to see if there would be some way, through the leadership of the Historic District Commission and perhaps the Planning Board, of limiting the construction truck traffic in the District. Ms. Selecki suggested that the Town could look at truck traffic in the permitting process or that the Board of Selectmen could look at violations when they considered re-licensing, if that were a possibility. She said that one of her neighbors in the District, who was not able to be at this meeting, had noticed that the [fieldstone] foundation of his house seemed to be compromised by the truck traffic and was beginning to show cracks.

Mr. Smith said that the District Commission was very much in line with Ms. Selecki's and Ms. Griffith's thinking, but that traffic on a public way was outside of their purview. He suggested that a perhaps a petition signed by the residents of the street could be presented to the police department. He asked whether there was a weigh ban for trucks. Ms. Selecki said that the street was good signage and a weigh limit of 2.5 tons. She added that the police have been very helpful, but that they cannot be at that location 24/7. She restated that their goal was to work with the permitting boards as projects came forward. Mr. Smith suggested again that there should be a

petition, signed by the neighbors, to request that the police enforce existing laws such as weight limits and that cameras could be placed at certain locations if the police were not available at all times. He said that he felt that the District Commission would support such a petition. Mr. Smith asked if other Commission members had suggestions. Ms. Maitin said that putting restrictions within permits might be effective, but that this might be more involved, requiring a Town Meeting vote to change a policy.

Ms. Johnson added that within Planning and Zoning, the large projects, such as a new Hunnewell School or any Large House Review, had construction management plans within the permitting processes. She added that as the Board of Selectmen owned the streets and police action was within their purview, it would be logical if any petition went to them. She encouraged the Historic District Commission, along with the Historical Commission and the Denton Road Neighborhood Conservation Commission to add their voices.

Mr. Smith asked Ms. Selecki and Ms. Griffith to let the District Commission know when they have a petition ready for support.

Adjourn. Having no other business, Mr. Smith asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. McCarthy made the motion; Mr. Smith seconded it. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:12 p.m.

Next Meeting: August 6, 2019

Minutes Approved, August 6, 2019

Minutes Compiled by
Catherine Johnson, Planning Board Chair