



HISTORIC DISTRICTS COMMISSION
Public Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 18, 2019
First Floor Conference Room, 141 Keyes Road

Pursuant to notice duly filed with the Town Clerk's office, the Town of Concord Historic Districts Commission held a public meeting on Thursday, April 18, 2019 at 7:00 P.M. at 22 Monument Square, Concord, Massachusetts.

Commission Members Present: Luis Berrizbeitia, Mark Giddings, Nea Glenn, Justin King, Peter Nobile

Associate Members Present: Kate Chartener, Abigail Flanagan, Katharine Mast, Melinda Shumway

Commission Members Absent: Paul Ware

Staff: Heather Carey, Administrative Assistant

Also Present
Heather Dudko, for 97 Lowell Road
Ned Perry, 362 Bedford Street
Kerry Cronin, Concord Free Public Library
Stephan Bader, 7 River Street
John Kells, for 4 Walden Street
Jeff Adams, Concord Free Public Library
Stewart Roberts, for 129 and 151 Main Street
Michael Bellefeuille, for 129 and 151 Main Street
Sherry Litwack, Concord Free Public Library
Pierce Brown, 154 Balls Hill Road
Brian Jones, 374 Sudbury Road
Joanne Gibson, 88 Walden Street
Sally Sanford, 25 Academy Lane
Edward Nardi, 29 Academy Lane
Jean Nardi, 29 Academy Lane
Richard Briggs, 253 Elm Street

Chairperson, Peter Nobile called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. Voting Members for the meeting were Mr. Berrizbeitia, Mr. Giddings, Ms. Glenn, Mr. King, and Mr. Nobile.

CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

97 Lowell Road – Main Street Historic District, to install signage

Chair Nobile opened the hearing and reviewed the application. Heather Dudko appeared for the hearing and stated that Citizens Bank has agreed to replace the signs to match the existing. Mr. Giddings asked for confirmation that the wall signs were now considered replacement in kind.

Chair Nobile opened the hearing for public comment and there was none.

Mr. King moved to approve the application of Heather Dudko, Philadelphia Sign to install signage at 97 Lowell Road as amended. Mr. Berrizbeitia seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR. The motion passed (5-0).

Documents used during public hearing: Updated Sign Specifications dated April 4, 2019

OTHER BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes

Documents:

1. Minutes from 3/21/2019 Historic District Commission Meeting

Mr. Giddings motioned to approve the minutes as submitted. Ms. Glenn seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR. The motion passed (5-0).

NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

4 Walden Street – Main Street Historic District, to install signage and associated lighting

Chair Nobile opened the hearing and reviewed the application. John Kells, architect for FatFace, appeared for the hearing to install a high density urethane blade sign above the entry with lighting and a flat wall sign. Ms. Flanagan questioned if there were other recently approved signs that were illuminated and didn't think lighting was appropriate for the signs and other Members agreed. Chair Nobile asked if the sign could be repositioned over the door and Mr. Kells stated that the sign would be too close to the windows above for the mounting bracket. He also confirmed that the blade sign is at the same elevation as other signs on the street.

Chair Nobile opened the hearing for public comment and there was none.

Ms. Glenn moved to approve the application of John Kells to install signage at 4 Walden Street with the condition that lighting will not be installed on either sign. Mr. Berrizbeitia seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR. The motion passed (5-0).

Documents used during public hearing: Sign Specifications dated March 3, 2019

129 and 151 Main Street – Main Street Historic District, to demolish portions of the building, construct a single-story addition linking the Heywood-Benjamin (HB) House to the Concord Free Public Library, renovate existing buildings, and make numerous site improvements.

Chair Nobile opened the hearing and reviewed the application.

Jeff Adams, Trustee with the Library Corporation appeared for the hearing along with Stewart Roberts and Michael Bellefeuille, architects from Johnson Roberts Associates, Inc. Sherry Litwack, President of the Board of Trustees of the Library Corporation spoke regarding the planning of the building addition and connector. Mr. Roberts presented a video of the proposed interior renovations including the link between buildings and gave an overview of the proposed interior renderings. Mr. Roberts spoke regarding the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation and also discussed Concord's Historic District Guidelines for additions. Mr. Roberts also detailed out changes that were made to the original submitted plan including changes to roof heights, front porch, windows, paint colors, and the size of the window trim.

Commission Members discussed the night view renderings and Mr. Berrizbeitia asked if a night view of the Sudbury Road elevations could be created. Mr. King stated that every side of the building can be seen from the public way and equal attention needs to be paid to each side. Mr. Berrizbeitia stated that the design is expression of the interior program but that the HDC makes their decisions on how the exterior design fits contextually in the Historic District. Mr. Giddings explained that he had asked for the interior video to be presented for the Commission to understand how the exterior plans were made. Mr. Roberts continued his presentation of the exterior building elevations. Commission Members discussed the Main Street elevation and the proposed windows. Chair Nobile stated that he viewed this project as three separate buildings – the original library building, the connector, and the HB house – and asked to discuss all three parts as individual items. Chair Nobile asked about exterior lighting and it was confirmed that

there is lighting at exterior doors only and that some of those lights are step lights with a concealed source to keep the lighting low. The Chair asked about interior lighting stating his concerns that light seen from outside of the building at night could prove problematic, and also asked whether all of the mechanical equipment has been represented on the plans due to concerns about visibility and noise transmission. Mr. Bellefeuille confirmed that there will be a rooftop parapet but that most of the mechanical equipment will be located in the basement or with existing mechanical equipment adjacent to the existing library building.

Ms. Glenn stated that she would like to see more drawings that explain how the whole project looks together, as these presentations emphasize the new addition alone. Chair Nobile stated that the language of the connector/addition as a standalone building reads coherently, but that the addition seems to collide rather than bridge harmoniously between the two existing buildings. He continued that the design creates competing language between buildings and that the Commission is struggling with how to knit the design together in a more cohesive way. Ms. Flanagan stated that the change to the pitch at the Children's Room breaks up the roofline and is more in keeping with the original structure in a way that is complimentary and improves the view from Main Street. She continued that the change in fenestration of the corridor is also an improvement that looks more like a porch and recedes into the building. Ms. Flanagan also commented that she cannot detect much of a change with the updates to the connector and is still concerned with potential light emissions. Ms. Chartener agreed that the changes she could detect were an improvement but would like to see more paring down, blending in, and receding of the additions. She also voiced her concerns with the overall massing of this building in a residential neighborhood. Ms. Shumway discussed a letter received from Sally Sanford regarding compatibility with the existing buildings and color scheme changes. She explained that she has reservations about the very modern connector and the height of the children's craft room and would like to see more changes. Ms. Glenn stated that she was in favor of the pitched roof on the children's craft room but was still struggling with the Main Street view of the connector. She commented that she appreciates the need for it to be distinct from the existing buildings but that it also needs to be cohesive. Ms. Glenn also voiced her concerns over the possible light coming out of the link at night so adjacent to the library and existing HB house.

Mr. Giddings commented that he liked the overall updates that they have made but that the connector portion of the design still needs work. Chair Nobile observed that the lighting in the link acts as kind of beacon and will likely appear to be a main entrance. Mr. Berrizbeitia stated that the accessible parking area should be deemphasized and voiced his concerns both about the overall massing of the structures and the changes being made to the west elevation to the house. He opined that the connector does not tell a clear story and is so a-contextual that it could be located anywhere. Ms. Mast stated that she understood the challenge of bridging two existing historic structures and appreciated the changes that have already been made but thought that there was more that could be done. Mr. King also agreed with the essence of criticism in the letter from Ms. Sanford and also wants to see parking moved to a less prominent area or reduced. Mr. King opined that while the proposed color of the HB house was chosen based upon research the majority of houses on Main Street are white or blue and in his opinion those colors would be more appropriate. He also commented that the connector is violating our guidelines regarding its overall appearance and should be designed to complement the historic structures instead of appearing to be so glaringly different. Mr. King also voiced his concerns for the height of the children's craft area and light patterns at night from the connector. Commission Members discussed handicap accessible parking and determined that they should reach out to the Planning Board to get more information on the requirements of the Zoning Bylaw.

Chair Nobile opened the hearing for public comment and acknowledged a letter received by Sally Sanford of 25 Academy Lane dated March 19, 2019.

Edward Nardi of 29 Academy Lane spoke in support of the project generally but voiced concerns with the amount of glass in the connector for a building that is open seven days a week. He opined that the connector is does not feel historic and draws attention to itself because it does not fit in with the Historic District. Mr. Nardi commented that Federal Historical Guidelines should be superseded by Concord Local Historic District Guidelines. He also requested renderings that accurately show the trees, landscaping, and the existing houses, not idealized landscapes.

Pierce Brown of 154 Balls Hill Road spoke in favor of the project generally but voiced concerns over the architectural design of the connector and how in his opinion it could be designed to match the architectural style of Harry Britton Little, the architect who transformed the Concord Free Public Library as well as many other prominent buildings in Town. Mr. Brown presented several photos and renderings in support of his comments.

Sally Sanford of 25 Academy Lane stated that she wanted to make a correction to a statement made earlier that the foundation on the existing house is cut granite and not field stone. She also spoke regarding an earlier discussion on the color chosen for the Town House which was a restoration and that this project is not a restoration but a repurposing of the HB house.

Brian Jones of 374 Sudbury Road spoke against the design of the connector.

Joanne Gibson of 88 Walden Street spoke against the design of the connector, especially on the Main Street side, and felt that a whole new design should be submitted.

Jean Nardini of 29 Academy Lane stated that the light from windows at night is a deep concern for the neighborhood and questioned the appearance of the skylights and whether interior window shades would be properly maintained. She also referenced the recently completed Concord Museum Project.

Richard Briggs of 253 Elm Street and Treasurer of the Library Corporation Board of Trustees commented that the connector has been a concern from the beginning, that he appreciated the feedback they have received and that they will work to modify the design to something more appropriate.

Chair Nobile stated that the Commission needs to develop a more formal process for delivering the right level of detailed feedback at this point. Mr. King stated that per Open Meeting Law, the Commission is not allowed to discuss this project outside of the meeting and all Members agreed. Mr. Giddings stated that this is about balancing both neighbor concerns and approving a design that is appropriate for the Historic District. Ms. Flanagan stated that there are such serious concerns with the design of the connector that the applicant may need to submit additional options to allow for the dialogue to progress.

Mr. Giddings moved to continue the application of Johnson Roberts Associates, Inc. to demolish portions of the building, construct a single-story addition linking the Heywood-Benjamin House to the Concord Free Public Library, renovate existing buildings, and make numerous site improvements at 129 and 151 Main Street to the May 2, 2018 meeting. Ms. Glenn seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR. The motion passed (5-0).

Documents used during public hearing:

Video of Interior Renovations, Model Views, Site Plans, Computer Models, Elevations

NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

170 Barretts Mill Road – Barrett Farm Historic District, to replace windows

Chair Nobile opened the hearing and reviewed the application. Ms. Carey commented that the applicant could not be at the meeting and presented the application to replace two windows in the mudroom connecting the house to the garage. She explained that the windows were damaged and that they were proposing to remove the existing window and storm windows and replace them with Anderson 400 series wood windows with simulated divided lites.

Chair Nobile opened the hearing for public comment and there was none.

Mr. Giddings moved to approve the application of George Stewart to replace windows at 170 Barretts Mill Road as submitted. Mr. Berrizbeitia seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR. The motion passed (5-0).

Documents used during public hearing: Proposed elevations

Other

7 Lexington Road – Ms. Carey stated that the homeowner had received a Certificate of Appropriateness to install a driveway gate but was unable to complete the project before their Certificate expired. Commission Members agreed that they would extend the Certificate an additional 6 months from the meeting date. Mr. Giddings moved to approve a 9-month extension of the certificate. Ms. Glenn seconded. ALL VOTED IN FAVOR. The motion passed (5-0).

General Discussion – Commission Members spoke about our review and approval process and how we can more effectively reach mutually beneficial solutions with large projects like that described in the library application. Ms. Flanagan suggested that applicants, particularly for public building designs, should meet with the Commission early in the process, review possible changes at each phase of design per Chair Nobile’s suggestion, and always have options for discussion. Ms. Glenn talked about the informal discussion process and thought that applicants sometimes get a false sense of approval for their proposed design when only a concept for the project has been discussed. Commission Members discussed how best to review conflicts on large projects between applicants and abutters and the Town as a whole. Mr. Berrizbeitia suggested that the Commission ask a reporter from the Concord Journal to attend meetings when large scale projects are on the agenda to get the word out and elicit opinion from the people of the Town. Stephan Bader of 7 River Street stated that it would be reasonable to have rules for a public or quasi-public building that differ from residential applications. Ms. Flanagan stated that it might be a good idea to change the application procedure and guidelines for public projects so that feedback could be given and avoid the lengthy meeting process.

Mr. Giddings moved to adjourn. Mr. Berrizbeitia seconded the motion. The motion passed (5-0).

The meeting was adjourned at 9:52 P.M.

The next Historic District Commission meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 2, 2019 at 7:00pm.

Documents used during the meeting are on file in the Planning Division Office.

Respectfully submitted by:
Heather Carey
Administrative Assistant

Minutes Approved on: 6/20/19

Luis D. Berrizbeitia, Secretary