

Somersworth Historic District Commission

October 26, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Members Present; Mrs. Barry, Mr. Brooks, Mr. Gerding, Mr. Metivier, Mr. Poulin, Ms. Shoen.

City Staff Present; Mrs. Mears.

Members Absent; Mr. Monahan, Mr. Young.

Mrs. Barry called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Mrs. Barry appointed Mr. Metivier as a full voting member.

APPROVAL OF PAST MINUTES

Mr. Poulin made the motion to accept the minutes as presented.

Mr. Metivier seconded the motion.

Motion passed 6-0.

PROJECTS OF MINIMAL IMPACT

Mrs. Mears reported;

4 Pemberton Lane was approved for an in kind reroofing.

63 Prospect Street was approved for an in kind reroofing.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Sheridan Llyod read aloud several comments provided by various residents in the vicinity of the 85 Elm St project that has been discussed as a conceptual review. All seven comments seemed to oppose the project.

Nathanial Spence of Silver Street spoke concerning 85 Elm St spoke about the uniqueness of Somersworth's architectural character and suggested that the proposed building is overly large and out of character with the surrounding area.

OLD BUSINESS

A) David Mitchell, 35 Mount Vernon St HDC #20-2022

Mrs. Mears noted the application was continued from the last meeting and had returned to discuss in more detail the replacement of the windows.

Luke Braun noted that they had looked into the replacement of the windows. He noted that the storm windows would need to be removed as they would not be useable with replacement windows. The windows would be using tempered glass. The project would require lead safe practices. The windows would not disturb or alter the outside existing trim. He also presented photos showing which specific windows would be replaced.

Mr. Metivier questioned the applicant concerning the tempered glass need.

Ms. Shoen asked if the applicant had pursued any quotes for repair of the windows opposed to simply replacing the windows. The applicant forwarded that suggestion to the owner of the property, but had not seen a quote.

Mr. Brooks noted the windows are scattered over the building façade. The windows being older original windows are easily maintained and would not require significant repairs as they are described.

Mr. Poulin agreed with Mr. Brooks and feels that replacing a few scattered windows would create an appearance that stands out rather than a uniform look.

Mrs. Barry asked if the building was owned entirely by the applicant. She also asked about the process of painting the windows.

Mr. Gerding offered the opinion that he may approve the replacement of some of the windows, but would not feel that replacing the front window within the bay window would significantly change the appearance.

Ms. Shoen asked that the applicant acquire at least one quote to repair rather than replace the window.

Mr. Metivier noted that some of the windows may require tempered windows. He was also of the opinion that replacing all of the windows may be entertained opposed to replacing only a few windows.

Mr. Brooks noted that replacing old windows require removing the window jambs to remove the window sash is actually half the work required to repair the windows. New windows

Ms. Shoen made the motion to deny the application due to the applicant not considering or even acquiring a quote for repair of the windows.

Mr. Poulin seconded the motion.

Motion passed 4-2 with Mr. Gerding and Mrs. Barry opposing.

B) Conceptual Review by 85 Elm Street Somersworth LLC for property located at 20 Green St.

Mrs. Mears noted that the applicant had provided additional renderings including a view showing the Green St façade.

Mrs. Barry read a letter submitted by Andrew Cushing from the NH Preservation Alliance offering possible resources related to the 85 Elm St project.

Matt DiNola spoke concerning 85 Elm St. He stated that the project will likely benefit the City. He also commented about not repeating the urban renewal that occurred in downtown several decades ago. He also encouraged everyone to work together for a solution that benefits all.

Ben Stebbins, Rob Preivity, and Adam Morrell spoke about the changes and provided additional views made based on comments and concerns provided by the HDC. They noted that they have pursued a mill style for the overall appearance. They noted that the granite slabs located on the property would be reused for landscaping and as benches around the property.

Ms. Shoen asked if the number of building units could be reduced in an effort to save the servants' quarters.

The applicant did not believe that would be possible.

There was discussion about the Green St. façade being only three stories and a shorter length than the Elm St. façade.

Mr. Brooks spoke about the overall size and massing being overbearing compared to the character of the exiting neighborhood. The housing is needed but will likely not make a dent in the overall housing situation. The mill appearance obviously would be a large building, but it is a bit out of place not being along the river as mills would be built.

Mr. Gerding spoke about the servant's quarters' condition and wanting to save the building and suggested a site walk to better understand the buildings condition as well as the proposed buildings placement on the property.

Mr. Poulin agreed with Mr. Gerding's suggestion for a site walk. He also noted the size is large but sometimes with progress there needs to be some compromise.

Ms. Shoen asked if the NH Preservation Alliance offered funding for an independent analysis of the servants' quarters because the current analysis was written by the same company that wants to tear it down.

Mrs. Mears noted that it is a competitive grant funding and could take significant time to acquire.

Mrs. Barry agreed that the site walk is a good idea. She also would prefer the outbuilding being moved over being demolished. She thanked the people that had come forward with comments earlier, but comments presented in person hold more water than being shared as hearsay through a third party. The Green St. façade is fitting due to being only three stories. She also noted the brick sections help break up the overall mass rather than being one consistent texture the full length of the building. She asked if it would be possible to have a cherry picker truck on site and place the bucket at the same height as the building to help display the size of the proposed building.

Mr. Gerding commented that more brick would always be favored in his opinion. He also wondered if any vegetation could be added to help soften the size of the building. He also asked, if the board required a smaller massing, what could they change to meet that request?

The applicant noted that the current ordinance has requirements about the build out and placement of the building.

Mr. Gerding spoke a bit more about the plans show only the proposed building and when you picture it with the surrounding buildings it may not look so huge. He spoke to the fact there is only a parking lot and this would provide a structure where there is only the servants' quarters and another out building.

Mr. Brooks asked if it was possible to separate the building into two separate buildings to help break up the massing.

Ms. Shoen agreed with the idea of breaking up the buildings into two or even three separate buildings.

Mr. Metivier thank the applicant for the work they have done reusing the granite, adding the arches and brick. He was concerned about saving the servants' quarters. He also noted the proposed window arrangement should be single windows rather than the paired double windows. He also asked for a streetscape view that will show the building with the surrounding buildings to better represent the actual proposed project which would help the board understand the overall scale.

Mr. Brooks thanked the applicant for the effort and changes that they have provided through the meetings. He noted that his comments may sound negative to the project, they are not meant to disregard their work and effort. It is only the overall size and massing that he is being critical of.

The board discussed and scheduled a date and time for the site walk for Nov 18th at 8am.

NEW BUSINESS

A) Dayle Crocker, 105 High St HDC #26-2022

Mrs. Mears noted the proposal is for a sign to be installed on an existing post.

Dayle Crocker and John Crocker provided a brief description of the sign.

Mr. Brooks inquired if the sign would have a high gloss plastic like look.

The applicants noted the sign would not.

Mr. Metivier made a motion to accept as presented.

Mrs. Shoen seconded the motion.

The motion passed 6-0.

WORKSHOP BUSINESS

Mr. Brooks provided a summary of the Agenda and Rules of Procedure Subcommittee. Concerning the Agenda, the committee had suggested adding an attendance roll call at the beginning, maybe adding comments at the end as well as the beginning, and possibly providing a slot for conceptual review after the new business so that actual applicants do not have to sit through a longer conceptual review. The Rules for Procedure portion had been looked at and used the ZBA as a comparison. The application and meeting procedure sections were discussed in depth. The discussion also brought up questions about the timeline of applications that had to be researched and will be scheduling a second meeting afterwards.

Mrs. Barry asked Mr. Gerding if there was any update on the Street signs for the Historic District, he replied that he would look into that topic.

Mrs. Mears noted that there is support for the signs.

Mrs. Barry also asked about the story book work. Mrs. Mears noted that left over funds may be used to expand that project.

COMMUNICATIONS AND MISC

Mr. Metivier noted that 195 High St has had railings installed and looked great. He also noted that the first house on Winter St had not completed the stone retaining wall that was to cover the block wall.

There was a brief discussion about parking on front lawns of houses and if it was allowed.

Mr. Metivier made the motion to adjourn.

Mrs. Shoen seconded the motion.

Motion passed 6-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:37pm.

Submitted by

Richard Brooks, HDC Secretary