

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION MEETING
MAZZA ROOM
TOWN HALL
GREENWICH, CT
JANUARY 13, 2016

MINUTES

ATTENDEES PRESENT

COMMISSIONERS: STEPHEN BISHOP – CHAIRMAN, LLOYD HULL, ARIS CRIST,
NOBLE WELCH, FI FI SHERIDAN, KATHRIN BROWN, DARIUS TORABY

ALTERNATES: MARIE WILLIAMS, JENNIFER KOSSLER

Mr. Bishop called meeting to order at 7:11pm.

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1. 299 GREENWICH AVENUE
GREENWICH, CT

PRESENTED BY: ALAN MONELLI
OWNER: TOWN OF GREENWICH

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS REQUESTED

Review proposed handicap ramp

[Continuation from previous meeting held on December 9, 2015]

Mr. Monelli began his presentation by summarizing his deliverables and stated that he would develop several finishes of the ramp as well as look at different railings. He then produced various drawings that showed the brick and railing alongside the building along with some landscaping.

Mr. Bishop opened the questioning to members of the Commission.

Mr. Toraby asked Mr. Monelli to review the other alternatives that were considered with the access arrangement of the building. Mr. Monelli responded that the primary task was to put a first floor egress (non mechanical) in the building and that there were only two spots available for that to happen based upon ADA standards -- the north and the south elevation. The north elevation was deemed inappropriate due

to its proximity to the sidewalk. The south elevation had more room to accommodate a ramp.

Mr. Hull asked if there was any way to do this internally. Mr. Monelli responded “no”.

Mr. Crist asked if there was any room to the east since then it wouldn't have a major impact to the front of the building. Mr. Monelli said that the project would then have to be scissored down. Mr. Monelli gave further descriptions of the renovations that would happen to the interior of the space that included a kitchen, activity space and storage areas.

Mr. Monelli stated that the seniors show up at the front of the building and want to go through the front door. More and more seniors do not want to access the building from the rear and go up via an elevator. They wish to enter through the front door.

Mr. Crist inquired if there was a way to access the front (northwest) via removing a part of the circular drive. Mr. Monelli responded stated that the highway department does not want to move any of the driveway for fear of impacting the roots of the pin oaks and possibly cause one of the trees to fall.

Mr. Bishop asked the width of the walkway with two railings on each side and Mr. Monelli responded that will be 4 foot 2 inches wide to promote two-way traffic.

Mr. Toraby asked if this is a code requirement? Mr. Monelli said it was a functional requirement. Mr. Toraby then asked how do things function now under the code requirement. Mr. Monelli responded that all persons are sent to the rear of the building and up the elevator. Ms. Burns interjected that the elevator is 30 years old and often does not function. Mr. Monelli further added that the elevator needs to be replaced. Further Ms. Burns added that the seniors sit downstairs waiting for their bus where they are unseen and unmonitored. She said that issues can arise when the seniors are unsupervised that can result in a serious situation.

Ms. Sheridan interjected that each member of the Commission makes every effort to work with applicants. From Ms. Sheridan's perspective, the building being discussed is in two historic districts – the Greenwich Avenue Historic District and the Greenwich Municipal Center Historic District and is considered a contributing structure in both districts. She further stated that the Old Town Hall was the second building constructed that helped to establish modern Greenwich (the first being the Havemeyer Building constructed in 1893). She further said that this is such a significant structure on the Avenue and that our (HDC's) charge is to approach the application the application from a historic and architectural perspective. We have a responsibility that needs are met in an aesthetically responsible manner.

Ms. Williams stated that she is trying to think of another design concept that meets the applicant's objectives as well as maintain the historic integrity of the building.

She then suggested to develop, from the circular drive, on grade, around to the building's entrance an appropriate path. And then, creatively design a glass structure on the outside of the building that would enable an elevator to raise wheelchairs so it would be less obtrusive and transparent but something very clean. Ms. Williams further described adding a staging area for the glass structure (elevator). She is still trying to produce a creative solution rather than building a monumental ramp.

Mr. Bishop thinks it's terrific that the building is being used as a senior center. And that historic buildings are being used for multiple purposes. Mr. Bishop wants the ramp to look as good as possible and as unobtrusive as possible. Does this ramp have to be on a monumental piece of masonry or is it possible to have a steel structure with the ramp on top to make it lighter looking?

Mr. Monelli interjected and said that the current building is not the same one that the Bruce family had built as there had been an addition of the two wings created in the 1950s. As Greenwich Avenue is one-way down hill, most people would never see the proposed ramp and that the pin oaks block the view as well. The most visible side of the building is from the Starbuck's corner (facing north). So the idea was to blend the addition (as this plan does as it uses the same material that is found on the base of the building) as much as possible and that, therefore, the only thing you are going to see is the railing. So if the ramp is changed to a steel structure with steel pylons, he thinks that that would attract more attention and further added that nothing would be able to grow under it as well as collect garbage.

Ms. Burns then spoke and said she wanted to give the commissioners a bit more framework. The senior center is being repositioned due to its growth and is being reformed to be used as best as possible. So instead of moving, the Senior Center is being redesigned with 85-90% of the activities being on the first floor rather than split between the first and basement floors. The kitchen is being moved downstairs. The dining room will be moved to the other side (on the first floor) and open all day.

Mr. Monelli added that having the ramp access the first floor is important and as it is a non-mechanical means this becomes important as in case of a fire, you cannot use the elevator. So now if someone has to come in and out, gurneys can be rolled up and down the ramp.

Mr. Toraby asked him if the main factor that is driving the addition of the ramp, other than handicapped access, is to create more kitchen space in the basement? Mr. Monelli responded no, it was to move everything up to the first floor. The new interior design allows kitchen to go downstairs and activities to go upstairs. Mr. Toraby responded that for historically significant buildings, an installation of a ramp is very detracting and in those instances, a lift is used which is much less obtrusive and quite practical. Mr. Monelli replied that the ramp is not for wheelchair access only. He further added that there are seniors who want to come in and only walk on a ramp not walk on stairs.

Mr. Toraby was also concerned about the glass-canopied enclosure that is being created at the top of the ramp being very detracting and distracting to the building design.

Mr. Monelli said that he has been tasked to get a ramp into the first floor. This is being driven by the Chairman of the Commission on Aging and their constituents.

Mr. Toraby believed that other design options should be considered as perhaps there should be a larger installation that becomes a true part of the building rather than a miniscule appendage.

Ms. Sheridan asked Mr. Toraby to expand a bit more on his proposal.

Mr. Toraby said that he viewed the building that morning. And that the additions were beautifully integrated with the original. He further stated that the ramp as proposed in the current application is simply a ramp and not drawn with the building's context. Mr. Toraby further stated that the ramp could be designed to blend in with the building and with landscaping it can be camouflaged. Mr. Toraby said that this installation on the current application will affect the building's look in a negative way and he hopes to propose an alternative to avoid this. Mr. Toraby's first thought is maybe it should become a larger extension in design that replicates the design elements of the existing building and becomes integrated – in other words, a larger addition. Now you have something that is “that wing” of the building and could become an interior ramp.

Mr. Bishop asked if this addition would be on the front or side.

Mr. Toraby replied that it would be on the side but this proposal would need to be worked out.

Mr. Monelli said it was a difficult solution but possible. He further added that it was a great idea but he didn't know if the town would foot the bill. Mr. Toraby said that that cost would be about \$500,000.00

Ms. William then asked to break up the walk, would it make sense to have a build up of landscaping with a stage seating area like a terrace-fashion and/or gradation of plantings similar to that of the Greenwich Hospital? Mr. Monelli said that a retaining wall could be placed at the sidewalk to mask the mass but you are creating another masonry mask.

Mr. Toraby still wants an attempt to be made for expansion. He further added that the proposal to use the same base material that is used on the building to be used on the ramp is a good one. But the glass enclosure is totally out of character of the building. The enclosure needs to be better blended into the building. The canopy is right under the cornice and it cuts into the window's lintel.

Mr. Monelli said that Mr. Toraby's idea of the addition is great but is concerned about the price. Mr. Monelli agreed that the design of the ramp needs further discussion. He then asked if HDC could approve the ramp concept, he could then go to Planning & Zoning as he needs to obtain variances. Mr. Monelli would state to Planning & Zoning that a condition of their approval is that the project could not receive complete approval until HDC gives its approval to the ramp design.

Mr. Monelli stated that he will come up with a new design for a retaining wall with the same material as the base of the building and redesign the airlock and not have it overhang as much (with a matching brick) and duplicate the window.

Mr. Toraby suggested that another option he would like to see proposed in the design treatment is maintaining the horizontal line of stone. Mr. Monelli said it would have to be stepped.

Ms. Sheridan commented that it appears that the railing is a darker color than the stonework and is concerned about colors matching. Mr. Toraby interjected that as the railing will be an additional element as currently you have a masonry building without any railings the idea of adding a one-foot railing with more of the railing being masonry lessens the impact. Mr. Monelli felt that that design might work but he would need to review the building code.

Mr. Toraby suggested planter area boxes that cascade down. Mr. Monelli said he is considering implementing that but cautioned that the town's maintenance is not always continuous so the plantings need to be as self-maintaining as possible.

In concept you are ok with a ramp structure but needs better design

A motion to accept the necessity of the design concept of having a ramp on building so Mr. Monelli can proceed to apply for variances but the Historic District Commission will and must approve the final design

Moved by Mr. Bishop and seconded by Mr. Welch

Unanimous vote

Voting in favor: Mr. Bishop, Mr. Hull, Mr. Welch, Ms. Sheridan, Mr. Crist, Ms. Williams, Ms. Kossler, Ms. Brown, Mr. Toraby

OTHER BUSINESS:

117 DINGLETOWN ROAD (GERSHOM LOCKWOOD III HOUSE)
OWNER: MARGARET LARKIN

Review Study Report of Nils Kerschus and vote on approval as local historic

property.

Motion to accept the report and approve the property to be preserved as a local historic property

Moved by Mr. Welch and seconded by Mr. Toraby

Unanimous vote

Voting in favor: Mr. Bishop, Mr. Hull, Mr. Welch, Ms. Sheridan, Mr. Crist, Ms. Williams, Ms. Kossler, Ms. Brown, Mr. Toraby

EASTERN CIVIC CENTER

Discuss upcoming January 21, 2016 public meeting on capital expenses, including a proposed redesign of the Civic Center and possible support for placement on the Connecticut State and National Registers of Historic Places

Motion to submit a letter to BET advocate for an additional \$10,000 to prepare an application to place the building on the National Register of Historic Places

Moved by Mr. Hull and seconded by Mr. Toraby

Unanimous vote

Voting in favor: Mr. Bishop, Mr. Hull, Mr. Welch, Ms. Sheridan, Mr. Crist, Ms. Williams, Ms. Kossler, Ms. Brown, Mr. Toraby

MINUTES

Motion to approve December 9, 2015 minutes

Moved by Mr. Welch and seconded by Ms. Kossler

Unanimous vote

Voting in favor: Mr. Bishop, Mr. Hull, Mr. Welch, Ms. Sheridan, Mr. Crist, Ms. Williams, Ms. Kossler, Ms. Brown, Mr. Toraby

DEMOLITIONS

43 Keofferam Road
Riverside, CT

169 Milbank Avenue (1923)
Greenwich, CT

178 Weaver Street (1900)
Greenwich, CT

18 Lake Drive (1923)
Greenwich, CT

19 Meadow Lane (1904)
Greenwich, CT

77 Ritch Avenue (1915)
Greenwich, CT

8 West View Place (1914)
Riverside, CT

267 Weaver Street (1850)
Greenwich, CT

The structure is a contributing structure to the Glenville Historic District – a district listed on the national register of Historic Places. Mr. Bishop will place a stay to extended the demolition-waiting period.

Mr. Bishop moved to have the meeting adjourned at 9:03p.m.