

APPROVED
New Castle Historic District Commission
June 4, 2015

**Continued Public Hearing for Pat & Tom Chamberlin, 49 Riverview Rd., Map 16, Lot 15
Work Session Re: David Murphy & Christine Strong, 25 Piscataqua St., Map 18, Lot 4
Question & Answer Discussion Re Carlos Rincon, 42 Main St. & 81 Piscataqua St.**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Irene Bush; Lorn Buxton; Jeff Hughes; Kate Murray;
Rodney Rowland

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Elaine Nollet; Peter Reed

Chairman Rowland called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and welcomed Lorn Buxton as the new liaison representing the Selectmen.

Continued Public Hearing Re: Pat & Tom Chamberlin, 49 Riverview Rd., Map 16, Lot 15:

GUESTS: Tom & Patience Chamberlin, applicants; Lucinda Schlaffer & Paul Bonacci,
ARQ Architects

Chairman Rowland announced this was a continued public hearing for Tom & Patience Chamberlin, applicants, for property at 49 Riverview Rd., Map 16, Lot 15 who are requesting adding black on black photovoltaic (solar electric – “PV” panels on the garage. The public hearing has been properly advertised, abutters have been notified and all fees paid.

Paul Bonacci, Architect, said they had a work session in January, 2015 and a public hearing on March 5, 2015. The project was reviewed on March 5 to demolish an existing ranch style home and construct a new one-story cape style home on the existing footprint. Included were new photovoltaic panels on the west elevation of the house and south elevation of the garage. The HDC Board approved demolition of the existing home and construction of a new home along with the PV panels. During recent building permit applications the building inspector raised a concern that the PV panels on the garage may be seen from a section towards the end of Riverview Rd. The applicants would like to review and clarify the method of screening proposed for the PV panels on the garage roof, (Attachment A.)

Photovoltaic Panels Review:

PV panels are shown on the south roof elevation of the garage. After the HDC workshop in January the architects realized that the PV panels could be seen as you approached the end of Riverview Road. The March 5th plans showed the PV panels to be screened from public view by adding two mature conifer trees to supplement the two large existing maples on the eastern side of the property. This was described in the narrative and shown on the site plan for the March 5th hearing. PV panels are to be black on black as shown during the work session. Panels to be mounted in the same plane as the roof slopes per the New Castle PV Ordinance requirement.

Garage PV Panels Clarification:

Per the original HDC submittal, the owners intend to screen the PV panels with mature conifer trees with an initial height of 20' or greater. One additional conifer is added in the updated site plan for additional screening. A computer rendering and hand sketch were provided to show the intended screening from the public street, (Attachment B.) The applicants believe that the added trees will screen the Photovoltaic Panels "to be installed per the enclosed garage elevations" from the street. The applicants believe there will be no adverse impact on the physical or visual architectural landscape of the historic district.

It is their intent to provide New Castle with a new home and garage that will contribute and preserve the historical character of the Town of New Castle. The homeowners seek to build a home that will enhance the district.

Schlaffer distributed photographs of the trees they plan to use, (Attachment C) and a photograph of how the panels would look, (Attachment D.)

For the record, Chairman Rowland emphasized that the HDC has no purview over the natural landscape. They cannot take trees into consideration because they have no right to allow them or disallow them.

The Chair asked if the Board had further comments.

Murray asked who would see this because this would be at the end of Riverview Road.

Schlaffer replied probably the only person who would see this would be their abutter, Doug and Anne Pinciario, 52 Riverview Road.

The Chair agreed with Murray. He asked if the Board had further comments. There were none. He asked for public comments.

Craig Strehl, 62 Main Street, said that in the past several years he has been an opponent of solar panels but he does not have any problems with the solar panels on the Chamberlin property because it is at the end of the road. He wants to make sure this issue, if approved, does not become a precedent.

David Kearns, 73 Piscataqua Street, agrees with Strehl and hopes this issue would not become a precedent.

Holly Biddle, 7 Piscataqua Street, also agrees with Strehl for the same reasons.

Ann McAndrew, 27 Steamboat Lane, believes there is a right of way (ROW) so the public can pass through and she hopes they will try to keep it open.

The Chair said this was discussed at the March meeting and he believes there is a common way between the applicant and the neighbor.

Patience Chamberlin replied it is a Right of Way (ROW) that is used often.

Chairman Rowland said the solar panels are not going to be in the ROW. He mentioned there are some guidelines for the Historic District in relationship to Photovoltaic Panels. He feels the most prudent point for this discussion is that the appropriateness of a PV or Solar System was based upon the historic character and architectural significance of the individual structure and its relationship to its surroundings.

The Chair asked if the public had further comments. There were none. He closed the public portion of the public hearing.

Bush moved for the Board to hold discussion. Murray seconded the motion.

Chairman Rowland agrees with the public comments in this particular case. He has been an opponent of Photovoltaic technology in the historic district. He feels, in this particular case, it is a very limited view in the area; it is at the bottom of a cul-de-sac that is not going to be seen regularly by anybody except the people who live down there. He thinks that the technology they are asking approval for is the best that it can be at the moment. He feels the technology is going to get increasingly better. He is intrigued by this opportunity to perhaps dip our fingers into alternative energy in the historic district and he feels this may be a great place to do it. In terms of setting precedence, one has to consider the area of the district in which this is being asked to be introduced. He feels, in this particular case, it is appropriate and it has a very low impact on this particular area. If this was Main Street, that would be a totally different issue. He will be voting for this.

Bush said the Board knows that no decisions in the past actually set a precedent. Each case is looked at as a new case and each case is decided on its own. She is also concerned about setting a precedent.

Murray said as long as it is clear in the minutes that there is some reference that the HDC is not tied to precedent. She agrees with the Chair and Bush.

Hughes said we need to keep up with the times and he feels there is a real need to go to a different form of energy. There has to be some latitude and for the reasons already stated, this seems to be a reasonable compromise. He would concur in support of approving this request.

The Chair said the applicant has been very cooperative and understanding and he feels the applicant respects the HDC. He loves the idea of the trees even though he cannot consider them and he loves the fact they have chosen a model of panel that brings down the appearance.

Murray moved for the HDC to approve the plan for Patience and Tom Chamberlin, as proposed. Hughes seconded the motion. Approved.

Chairman Rowland closed the public hearing for Patience and Tom Chamberlin.

Work Session Re: David Murphy & Christine Strong, 25 Piscataqua St., Map 18, Lot 4:

GUESTS: David Murphy & Christine Strong, applicants; Anne Whitney, Architect; Martin Gorham, Gorham Structural Engineering, PLLC; Steve Bedard, Bedard Preservation & Restoration

Chairman Rowland said this was a work session for David Murphy & Christine Strong, applicants, 25 Piscataqua St., Map 18, Lot 4. He announced that Bush has recused herself from this work session because of her proximity to the property as an abutter.

The Chair said there is a petition with eighty plus (80+) signatures because of the profound desire to save this house from destruction. This house epitomizes the essence of why the Historic District was established by the wishes of the town's people at their 1993 Annual Town meeting. Thus the purpose of this ordinance is to preserve the character of the historic district. It is the HDC's obligation to uphold the ordinance not only in the preservation of our old homes but to the scale and size of new construction, (Attachment E.)

Anne Whitney, Architect, distributed some drawings/plans of the existing structure and the proposed rebuild, (Attachment F.)

Page 1 of the plans – Whitney said the windows had been replaced on the main front elevation and are similar in size to the existing openings. There are two windows she found on this property that are located on the west gable elevation that actually have the original sill, frame and molding around the window for both the first and second floor windows but the sashes have been replaced and are 2/2. When she looked at the sizing that corresponded to a typical 6/9, 8 x 10 window, she proposes to get rid of the 2/2 windows and replicating the 9/6 and the trim detail. Basically a 2 1/2" sill and a 4 1/2" casing.

Presently, there is a very plain front door as there is a 4 1/2" casing around it. They are proposing to do some more detail around the door.

Proposed right side elevation – This will be where the current driveway is located. Currently there are two 2/2 windows, again the upper window in size to match the 6/6 window. Presently, there is a single smaller picture window and in this elevation they are proposing to have two windows 9/6.

Page 2 of plans – rear elevation – They are proposing to get rid of the shed dormer and on the left hand side there will be a driveway entry. On the opposite side there is a 6/4 window. On the other gable end the upper drawing shows a 10 x 12 addition that was put on the back and then cut into the existing. That addition would be coming off and recreating the existing gable. Again, they would like to relocate one of those windows up to the side.

Page 1 of plans – They would be doing clapboards; the chimney seems to be in good shape. They may have to take down the chimney part way and build it up but it would be the same size and shape; Trim - she would like to add more trim because a lot of it has been removed.

When you look at the front of the house now you see the sheathing boards and the drip edge. They will be getting rid of the concrete steps and they plan to have granite steps. In terms of foundation – if the existing foundation stays you will have that parged concrete foundation. If they are able to take it down and rebuild, they plan to have a concrete foundation just below grade and they would do a natural stone veneer foundation above that.

Martin Gorham, Structural Engineer, distributed a Structural Condition Assessment of the property, (Attachment G.) He was retained as a consultant by the property owners to provide a conditions assessment of the building structure at 25 Piscataqua St. He found a quaint building that has been neglected and poorly maintained. The house was originally a timber frame; the foundation itself is fieldstone that is laid up with lime mortar. Over the years that lime mortar has been washed away and the concrete parging was fine. Concrete parging was added to provide waterproofing, water resistance and rodent-proofing. In his opinion, the concrete parging was an inappropriate repair that added little to the structural integrity of the foundation.

Gorham said the basement has two (2) 12 x 12 masonry piers, eight adjustable steel jacks, and approximately ten (10) 4 x 4 wood posts that are supporting the first floor. The steel jacks are not original to the building as they have been installed over the years and they are in poor condition. The masonry piers are in good condition and the wood posts are supported on small concrete pads or boulders bearing on a sloping earth floor area.

Gorham indicated there is insect infiltration in the timbers and the entire floor needs replacement. When you are in the basement and look around at the perimeter of the foundation you can see the sills and the bottom of the studs. A large amount of sills have decayed and have been replaced. Most of the original studs have decayed. To properly repair that building one has to disassemble it.

Gorham discussed the roof level – someone added a shed dormer along the entire length of the back of the building. He does not feel that an engineer would tell you the construction is correct. He would say that the building is not adequate. He pointed out the entire back side of the roof needs to be removed. A low pitch shed dormer framed with conventional 2x4 wood rafters was added along the entire length of the back. Both the shed dormer exterior wall and the front wall of the house are leaning outward. This is due to inadequate structural framing resulting in forces from the roof pushing the exterior walls outward. The existing roof condition is structurally unacceptable.

Gorham said that to repair this house is a real difficult task to bring it up at a level of structural stability that would be acceptable. In his opinion, the building is in such poor condition that it is structurally obsolete and it would be impractical and unreasonable to attempt to repair or reuse the existing building structure and foundation. This entire building is twisting and slowly collapsing.

Chairman Rowland said that Gorham indicated the shed dormer needed to be removed. The applicant's intent is to remove the shed dormer and he assumes that would address Gorham's concerns in terms of the dormer.

Gorham replied it would address his concerns but part of the challenge with that is on the right side of the roof. He explained that tying a new roof into an existing roof is a challenge. The existing roof, although it has been there for a number of years, is significantly below what the building code requires. Going forward, they would like to frame a new solid roof on top of the building.

The Chair asked if the Board had further comments for Gorham. There were none. He thanked Gorham for his report.

Chairman Rowland introduced Steve Bedard, Bedard Preservation & Restoration. He said that he and Mr. Bedard toured the property this afternoon with the permission of the owners and they went through the entire house from top to bottom.

Steve Bedard said he was not an engineer but he has been doing preservation and restoration work for forty (40) years. He looks at old buildings all the time and looks at approximately 75 to 100 old buildings during the year. His goal is to save buildings.

After reviewing the project this afternoon, Bedard said it became very evident that this building has problems and issues but so does every other old structure. His review found no major issues that would tell him this building has to be torn down. This building needs repair work. One thing they did find in the basement and he was surprised to find - there are three major carrying timbers that are 11 x 10, and from the 17th century. While those timbers have issues they can also be repaired. There is no doubt that this project to restore this section of this proposed building plan will cost more to the owner than to build something new. Given the size of the entire structure, it is certainly not going to break the bank to make repairs to this structure.

Bedard met one of the owners and the Architect. He pointed out they want to see good things happen to this structure. He found inside the building there are several door openings that are original to the building. There is one kitchen fireplace; there is another fireplace on the other side. The chimney itself is in reasonable condition and it has some fallen bricks and it can be rebuilt from the smoke chambers up through. The chimney does not have to be repaired all the way to the basement.

The dormer is coming off as it has already been an issue. It has been discussed that the sidewall has been an issue. He does not believe the sidewall has become a structural problem. The foundation, while being fieldstone, is stable, is fairly straight, and is in reasonable condition. The sills in the area of the door rot have already been replaced several times and that is typical in older houses. He did not see that as being overly bad.

Bedard agrees that the original window openings are correct and he encourages to keep the original window openings and not move them around and to leave the fenestration the way it is. The only other issue he has is with the back ell roof that sticks up above the main house. It is an odd situation as usually the back ell comes in below the roof line of the main house.

Whitney said they plan on having all new sills and new framing. They also plan on replacing all the clapboards and window trim.

The Chair asked Bedard for clarification about restoring a timber frame on the end of a beam as opposed to replacing the entire roof.

Bedard replied it is basically an end problem and a timber frame is used to make that connection. He does not have a problem with that issue.

The Chair asked for public comments.

Craig Strehl, abutter, 62 Main St., said it cost them 33 % more money to restore their house and interior with new efficient windows than if they could have torn the original house down and start all over again. He feels the HDC should consider the financial hardship on the new owners.

Bedard replied this house has only 850 s.f. and this structure can be saved without tearing it down. He pointed out that every time you lose a historic structure, it is gone and you never get it back. This is one that can be saved.

Hughes is struggling with the fact that Mr. Gorham is a professional licensed engineer and Mr. Bedard is not an engineer.

Bedard replied he has 40 years' experience with preservation and restoration of older buildings.

Chairman Rowland there is two viable solutions to this problem. 1) To demolish the building; and 2) to restore the building. The HDC has to determine where the building sits in between those two options. Is it benefiting the HDC streetscape?

Hughes asked Bedard to clarify his credentials.

Murray asked for clarification on how the old materials blend in with the new materials. She questioned how the old and new come together.

Bedard replied the blending of 1" boards, the studs replaced, the sills 8 x 8 being replaced are all available.

Bedard replied it is from a visual standpoint.

Whitney said the existing building has rather high ceilings for an old building and they are trying to get two floors without any dormers. They probably could make that work if they compromise the head room on the second floor.

Catherine Colliton, 42 Piscataqua St., said the HDC's purpose is to preserve and protect the historic landscape of the HDC district. This is hallowed ground. That is the purpose of the HDC. A modern home does not fit in this district. Are we to preserve the authenticity of New Castle or are we to build new homes?

The Chair asked for additional public comments. There were none. He closed the public portion of the work session.

Whitney said this project is going forward either way. She commented on the plans she previously distributed to the Board, (Attachment F.) She included several photographs of homes on 25 Piscataqua St. and what they are proposing. She said that all of these buildings are two story buildings. She asked for feedback from the Board on the overall height of the building and the massing.

Chairman Rowland agrees to the need of addressing the two issues: 1) what will happen to the original structure; and 2) the massing.

Buxton believes that New Castle has a number of old structures. However, once you leave this geographic area there are no comparable historic structures. He believes these old structures are worth preserving; even if it takes extra money it should be done. Buxton believes this is a valuable example.

Murray said when you buy a home in the historic district and it is an historic home, you are also buying into the history of that community and into the history of the neighborhood. She feels this house is a treasure in New Castle and it should be saved.

Hughes said he is still struggling with trying to understand the structural integrity of the home.

Chairman Rowland said his focus, in terms of the demolition of the existing structure, is around two things. This commission is charged with protection of the historic district and the streetscape. He knows for certain that if we allow this building to go away the new building is going to look new. He has a problem with that. He knows that the applicant has indicated that they are going to build the same building but it is not going to be the same. There is not a building in the historic district that is square, it just does not exist. It does not mean that the building is structurally a disaster; it just means that the buildings are old.

The Chair said in the course of listening to discussion today, the applicant is talking about relocating windows and fancying up the doors, that might be appropriate but without the contents of the structure to determine whether the structure had those things, he does not know if they are appropriate. He considers this structure to be a simple house and it needs to be simple.

The Chair said another concern is that the applicant has indicated that the dormers are going away. They have indicated that they want to put on new clapboards. If he pictures that this original structure at that point, it seems to him that it is in a good spot where investigative work could be done and decisions could be made on which way to go.

To make a decision to this wholesale demolition, at this point, is very difficult for him. He has not seen anything in terms of conditions that make him think that this building is going to fall down and he certainly has not seen anything that cannot be repaired. He would like to see the structure stay.

Massing – Chairman Rowland said in terms of the massing he was thrown off by the conversation of taking down the structure because he was using that as his base to see if the addition was appropriate. He sees this 850 s.f. home with the addition that is over 2,000 s.f.

This is a lot. He has no problem with the connector as he has seen those all over the place. The garage would be fine if it was just a garage but it is a whole lot more than a garage and there is a lot going on. He does feel that reducing the roof height to hide it from the streetscape would be advantageous. He is just not sure that the massing is appropriate beyond that.

The Chair asked for the Board's comments.

Murray said the massing is inappropriate and you can see a great deal of the house from the street. She saw the layout and the risers going up; she was taken back on how large this was going to be. She has found a lot of the elements do not fit into that neighborhood. She is looking at the impact of that addition on the original structure and she has found it out of proportion. This is a very large addition to this little house.

Chairman Rowland said there are other houses that have this massing in the district but that is what is troubling him. It is starting with a very small house and adding on a very big house. It is so much house on so little an original house.

Buxton suggested lowering the connector, and then the large structure in the rear would look almost like a separate piece.

Whitney said the connector is 24 x 36 building; it is not a massive building. It is shorter than the existing smaller houses.

The Chair said if the connector were made smaller could they actually end up with something that looks like two different buildings. The view that he is most troubled with is the opposite side of what he is seeing from here. He has concerns regarding the view from the street.

Hughes has concerns with the connector rising up above the roofline of the existing house and pointed out that was one thing that has troubled him from the start. This raises attention to the size of the addition to the house as opposed to keeping the integrity of the historic house. The size and scale of the house has given him some concerns but he also struggles with the ability of a land owner to have certain rights for development of their property within the zoning laws of the town.

Whitney discussed the density regarding several of the houses in the neighborhood and pointed out that this house is fairly less dense than some of the houses on Piscataqua St.

Murray said when you are coming down the road with the set up you have now, you lose the historic house almost completely. Everything is drawn to the back. In her opinion, the historic house completely disappears and no longer exists.

The Chair asked for public comments.

Donna Kearns, 73 Piscataqua St., questioned the square footage of the house.

Whitney replied the building area is 3600 sf with the garage and about 3200 s.f. without the garage.

Murray said the existing footprint is 836 sf and the living space is approximately 1400 sf.

Holly Biddle, 7 Piscataqua St. said that, in her opinion, the addition looks too big for the original house.

Ann McAndrew, 27 Steamboat Lane, commented on the massing.

Rita Fusco, 33 Piscataqua St., has concerns with the height of the house and the streetscape. She pointed out that this street is photographed a great deal and not because of the fancy houses. The proposed house addition is too big for what is being added on. We have to be very careful not to lose sight of that. We need to respect what came first. The house is a beautiful house but it is too big for what they are adding on to what is currently there.

Craig Strehl, 62 Main St., abutter, said he has no problem with the scale of the house and no problem with the plans.

Sarah Flause, 46 Piscataqua St., said the back portion of the house is too big.

Holly Biddle, 7 Piscataqua St., said she is so worried when you start taking parts of the old house away. What is going to happen is what happened on Cranfield St. years ago.

Rita Fusco, 33 Piscataqua St., asked clarification on whatever happened with the conditional permit for the turn around. She has not heard much about redesigning the garage so that they can turn around.

Murray replied that was approved by the Planning Board.

The Chair asked if the public had further comments. There were none. He closed the public portion of the work session for David Murphy and Christine Strong.

Informational Session Re: Max Pruna, 42 Main St., and 81 Piscataqua St.:

GUESTS: Max Pruna, applicant

Max Pruna said this previous work session was very informational for him. He has a question regarding the property at 42 Main St. and 81 Piscataqua St. on judging an old building by the life cycle.

The Chair replied that is one criteria of the Historic District.

Pruna understands that the building on River Road was demolished and asked for clarification on the determining factor of that house.

The Chair said the criteria for demolition in the historic district are historic importance to the streetscape; historic importance as a building by itself. In the case of River Road, the building had no historic significance to the streetscape and it had no historic value.

Buxton said the Piscataqua St. house was not an historic structure.

Andy Schulte, 107 Main St., said the historic district is not only about 1600, 1700, and 1800 houses. Part of the historic district is about the evolution of New Castle. He wants to maintain that the 1950 ranch style house the applicant is referring to was built in the 1950's and the house at the bottom was originally the garage for that because the driveway is so steep. He would like to maintain that particular house along low land is part of the evolution of New Castle.

Chairman Rowland said there has been a great deal of debate in the preservation world about historic restoration and whether the definition of restoration is to take a building back to its original roots or to respect and honor its entire evolutions of time.

Buxton commented on a building with additions and pointed out that each piece should respect its age.

Holly Biddle, 7 Piscataqua St., referred to 81 Piscataqua and pointed out that to add a second story on that home on the hill would not be historic.

Schulte said the house down below was supposed to be 28 ft. above grade. The house down below is 28 ft. above grade but in order for the house to be that they had to bring in 4 ½ ft. of fill. That house is 4 - 5 ft. higher than what it should be and the person behind lost his view which will cost \$100,000 in the value of his house.

Wally Mallett, 34 Main St., said that is a technical example – it is to grade. He feels all the Boards needs to be attentive to the grade and to look at definitions. If you do not give the Building Inspector directions, he is powerless.

The Chair told the applicant that for a work session he could do something as simple as sketches to give the Board some idea and some direction. It is very hard to have some discussion without sketches or photographs on what the applicants wants to do.

Pruna questioned the time line he would need.

The Chair replied it depends on a number of factors and it would also depend on how many Boards the applicant would need to go before. The HDC does not want to see an applicant until they have satisfied the other Boards that the Building Inspector indicates he needs to appear before.

Chairman Rowland closed the Informational Session for Max Pruna.

Review of HDC Minutes of May 7, 2015:

Bush moved for the HDC to approve the HDC Minutes of May 7, 2015, as amended. Murray seconded the motion. Approved.

New Business:

Chairman Rowland said the Board started a process approximately a month ago to try to see if the Board could come up with districts within the district. The reason this came up was because of the question of ridge heights. How can the HDC address ridge heights. He had spoken to Patty Cohen who had planned to contact Cliff Sinnott, Chairman, Rockingham Planning Commission to give us some help on this issue.

Buxton said it would be helpful to identify specific structures.

The Chair also pointed out that the fill versus ridge heights is a huge issue. He asked Buxton to speak to one of the Building Inspectors for their thoughts on how the HDC can control the ridge heights to a fixed point.

Buxton will contact one of the Building Inspectors regarding this issue.

Adjournment:

Hughes moved for the Board to adjourn the meeting. Murray seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Anita Colby
Recording Secretary

Attachment A: Project Description re Property at 49 Riverview Rd.,

Attachment B: Computer Rendering & Hand Sketch, Photographs showing intended screening
From public street

Attachment C: Photographs of trees they plan to use

Attachment D: Photographs of what Panels would look like.

Attachment E: Petition of 80+signatures to save house from destruction

Attachment F: Drawings of Existing Structure & Proposed Rebuild

Attachment G: Structural Condition Assessment