

1 APPROVED
2 NEW CASTLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
3 MAY 5, 2016 at 7 PM
4

5 Board Members Present: Rodney Rowland, Chair, Lorn Buxton, Kate Murray, Elaine Nollet and
6 Judy Groppa.

7 Not Present: Irene Bush, Jeff Hughes, Peter Reed
8

9 Chair Rowland called the meeting of the New Castle HDC to order at 7:00 pm and noted that all
10 members present will be voting this evening. Asked that anyone who wants to speak must sign
11 in.

12
13 Public Hearing for Sharon Platt, 64 Piscataqua Street, Map 18, Lot 14

14 Guests: Sharon Platt, Applicant; Chris Havey; Rita Fusco
15

16 Chair Rowland advised that all fees have been paid and abutters have been notified.
17

18 Sharon Platt passed around the credentials for the stone mason, Karl Gifford, who will be putting in the
19 stone wall. She has picked out regular shaped field stone. One of the reasons for adding a stone wall is
20 to add more ambiance and to break it up as there is so much fence going on, from the street to the back
21 and all along the back of the property. She is asking for a plank fence which is a recreation of one that is
22 at Strawberry Banke and it is a solid fence.
23

24 Chair Rowland stated that the packets have detail of the stone wall and the gate and there is a site plan
25 where the fence will be located.

26 Judy Groppa asked what the height of the stone posts are? Platt stated that for the regular post next to
27 the gate they purposefully picked out stone that will be higher than the gate.

28 Groppa asked if the post should be on both sides of the gate? Platt stated that she considered that but
29 with the wall length at 14', once you incorporate the large post and a 30" gate which will need posts on
30 both sides to hold the gate, she felt that with another large stone post it would make the stone wall look
31 small. She doesn't think there is any rhyme or reason as to how stone walls and fences should come
32 together.
33

34 Chair Rowland asked the applicant to talk about the wood fence. Chris Havey stated that there are a
35 couple of changes to the application. Sharon had her property surveyed after the drawings were done.
36 The survey found that part of the existing fence lies 6" into the Yacht Club property so the whole fence
37 needs to move ½ foot closer to her building on the side that abuts the Yacht Club. Sharon Platt
38 approached the Yacht Club as it was suggested she ask if they would approve a 6' fence between her
39 yard and the parking lot, which they did approve.
40

41 Originally, the posts and top & bottom rails, i.e., the framework of the fence, were going to be facing
42 away from the Platt property so if you were in her yard, all you would see is planks. She has since
43 decided to reverse that so it will be a more standard presentation of boards and rails facing inside the
44 property and the pickets facing out.
45

46 The other issue that came up after the drawings were done, and since the survey was done, is that the
47 telephone pole which is to the right of the 7' of fence on the street (that is being deleted from the

1 applicant's proposal), is actually on Yacht Club property. In the drawing, where the telephone pole is in
2 the left corner, the fence diminishes as it reaches the street. The saw teeth would look very weird
3 because of the downward slope. To make it simple, Platt wants to run the fence past the telephone
4 pole and keep it 6' all the way to the street.

5
6 Applicant will be using pine for the planks themselves and hand forged nails to attach them to the post
7 and rails which will probably be made of locust because of their stability. Havey had a piece of fence as
8 a sample. It is rough sawn on one face and hand planed on the other face; this fence was found 20 years
9 ago by John Schnitzler at Strawberry Banke Museum.

10
11 Rowland asked if they planned on using 6" round post? Havey said they are thinking about using square
12 stock, but that would present an issue of moisture building up around the contact points. A discussion
13 was had as to how wide the rails should be. Sharon Platt asked Chair Rowland about the fence behind
14 Wheelwright House and whether he knew if they used oil or water based stain? Rowland replied that
15 he believed it was a water stain.

16
17 Kate Murray asked what happens with the fence at the back where it ends? Platt answered that her
18 neighbors, the Zuckerts, planted a row of forsythia and that they have a fence that ends before
19 applicant's fence and the forsythia is coming over and it would push the planks of the fence, she
20 therefore decided to stop the fence where Zuckert's fence stops. There is gravel at the back corner of
21 her house.

22
23 Chair Rowland confirmed that applicant would change the height of the fence with 6' on the left and 4'
24 in the back. He then asked if anyone in the public wanted to speak, to, for or against.

25
26 Michael and Ann McAndrew of 27 Steamboat Lane submitted a letter dated May 5th stating they
27 endorse the plans for the fencing and that the restoration has been thoughtful and concise. (a copy of
28 this letter is attached to these minutes)

29
30 Public hearing closed at 7:22 pm.

31
32 Kate Murray was concerned that there were a lot of changes requested from the original application
33 and asked the Chair to be precise and write in the changes; Chair Rowland acknowledged that he had
34 written in the changes and deleted the 7' of fence in the front along the road by the telephone pole.
35 Murray MOVED that the application be accepted as presented on May 5th with the specific amendments
36 as recorded by Chair Rowland; Elaine Nollett SECONDED. UNANIMOUSLY PASSED.

37
38 Building Inspector, Don Graves attended the meeting as Chair Rowland wanted to discuss how to better
39 communicate to him approval of plans and applications made at HDC meetings, stating that sometimes
40 it is very hard to put changes discussed on plans. He used as an example 25 Piscataqua Street which did
41 not come before the HDC for a demo permit yet as the process moved forward, the house disappeared.
42 He asked if the Building Inspector thought changes should be in writing or if there should be more
43 meetings between the commission and the Building Inspector.

44
45 The Building Inspector stated that the commission's instructions should be as specific as possible and
46 make an itemized list. He added that Piscataqua Street struggled with structural details both inside and
47 outside. He knew what the HDC wanted but sometimes what historic wants and the building code
48 dictates collides. Once they opened up the building, and found they couldn't construct as planned, the

1 Building Inspector told them to come back to the HDC. He also told them they could not take down the
2 whole house and instructed them to use some existing studs and sheathing, to use some of the fabric of
3 the existing house. The homeowners pushed back but there were some studs that were structurally
4 sound and some sheathing that remained, although not as much as the commission would like to see.
5 He stated the homeowners are still wrestling with internal structural issues.

6
7 Chair Rowland had a conversation with the Chair of Portsmouth HDC who stated that although
8 applicants have their permissions, if the Building Inspector thought they should come back to the HDC to
9 talk about an issue, he should advise that. Graves stated he had suggested that and he thought Dave
10 Strong spoke to Rowland, but the Chair said not after the initial approval.

11
12 When the homeowners wanted to switch the garage doors on Cranfield Street, he sent them back to the
13 commission stating he tries to maintain as much integrity of the approvals as he can.

14
15 Rowland asked if Graves felt the building inspectors were getting the info needed to understand what
16 the approvals are? Graves responded that they could be more succinct and have an itemized list. For
17 instance, the fence application that was before the commission tonight had a lot of changes to the initial
18 application. Rowland stated that it might be a good idea for the Building Inspector and Chair to sit down
19 and review the changes, and asked the Building Inspector to please reach out to him if at any time things
20 are not clear.

21
22 Kate Murray asked what if there are a lot of changes and the Building Inspector is not here? Chair
23 Rowland stated that typically his copy of the application has the approval with all changes discussed and
24 that his documents filter into the Building Inspector's office.

25
26 Rowland stated that Portsmouth HDC asks that if much of the original material is going to be removed,
27 the homeowner hand plane new wood to make it look as though it has been around for awhile, so it
28 doesn't look brand spanking new and incorporate some aging. Murray asked if that would be a
29 hardship to the homeowner as the cost would be higher. It was stated that if it appears that the
30 majority of the house is to be demolished, they need to talk to the HDC again.

31
32 Rowland stated that Graves is right that the HDC code and building code collide and you don't know
33 what you will find after you take down walls. The Building Inspector stated that he reads the minutes to
34 get the intent and if there is a drastic deviation, he tells the homeowner to come back before the HDC.

35
36 Graves stated that at Piscataqua Street, when they got into the house they found more discrepancies
37 that the architect never picked up. There were so many issues, that the Building Inspector was
38 concentrating on roof heights and roof pitches, (because applicants mentioned to him changing the
39 roof) and the structural integrity of what is required by code.

40
41 Chair Rowland stated that the applicants had contacted him when they found a lot of rot and asked
42 what do we do about this? Rowland stated "I'm a preservationist but I cannot say they should use
43 bondo or sister existing joists".

44
45 The Building Inspector said they had it all going into the dumpster and he made them to take pieces out
46 and reclaim some of it. He said that all the shingles will be hand planed and fitted and that they are
47 doing a good job, not cutting corners.

48

1 Chair Rowland stated th definitely needs to be more communication and asked Graves to please feel
2 free to come to him any time if there are questions as it is not as black & white as Planning or ZBA.
3
4 Kate Murray asked if there is anything the commission we can do better?
5
6 Sharon Platt stated that it seems that because there was a typical architect and not really a restoration
7 person to do the work, that a restoration person would have known what to do and how to save the
8 house. The Board thought there was someone with restoration knowledge as that is how she presented
9 herself. The applicants hired an architect and a structural engineer to say the house was too far gone
10 and the Board hired Steve Bedard to say there are ways to save it. They then withdrew their request to
11 tear the house down but once they got into it, it went awry.
12
13 Graves said that Ann tried to save that project. They wanted to raise the roof line and I told them they
14 could not do that. Graves suggested the HDC prepare a checklist to ask applicants in projects that are
15 large, such as Piscataqua Street.
16
17 Rita Fusco stated that she assumed that the Building Inspector and all the boards were working together
18 but found the process disjointed that one board does not talk to another board. On the town website it
19 says that the Building Inspector is part of the HDC but does not attend HDC meetings.
20
21 Chair Rowland thanked Graves for attending the meeting.
22
23 The following Minutes were reviewed:
24
25 Elaine Nollett MOTIONED to approve the March 3, 2016 minutes; Judy Groppa SECONDED; ALL
26 APPROVED.
27
28 The April 7th minutes were reviewed and edited; Lorn Buxton MOVED to approve, Kate Murray
29 SECONDED; UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.
30
31 Motion to adjourn by Lorn Buxton, Kate Murray SECONDED ; ALL APPROVED.
32
33 Adjourned at 7:48 pm.
34 Respectfully submitted,
35 Diane L. Cooley, Recording Secretary.