

1 APPROVED
2 HDC MEETING
3 JUNE 1, 2017
4
5

6 Board Members Present: Vice Chair Jeff Hughes, Tom Maher, Kate Murray, Elaine Nollet,
7 Irene Bush, and Judy Groppa.

8 Not Present: Chair Rodney Rowland and Peter Reed.
9

10 Vice Chair Hughes called the meeting of the New Castle HDC to order at 7:05 pm and noted that
11 he, Tom Maher, Kate Murray, Elaine Nollet and Irene Bush would be voting.
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13

14 1. Public hearing for Tanner Birr, 40 Riverview Road, Map 16, Lot 17
15

16 Guests: Tanner Birr
17

18 Vice Chair Hughes advised that the application was publicized, all fees had been paid and all
19 abutters had been notified.
20

21 Tanner Birr's packet had pictures of the present garage which has deteriorated and was part of
22 the original 1940's Cape. She would like to replace the door with the white garage door shown.
23 The front door was part of the original house and it no longer opens so it is a safety issue. She
24 had information on the proposed doors enclosed in her package.
25

26 Vice Chair Hughes asked if there were any questions. Irene Bush asked Ms. Birr if she was
27 replacing only the garage doors? Yes the entire garage door and it will be white. The front door
28 will be wood.
29

30 Ms. Birr then presented pictures of a nine pane and a 6 pane front door with clear glass stating
31 she would install whichever the board would prefer, however she would like to install the nine
32 pane door.
33

34 Elaine Nollet stated that she really likes the door with the house.
35

36 Vice Chair Hughes opened the meeting for public comment but there were none. He then
37 opened the meeting for board questions and discussion.
38

39 Kate Murray moved to accept the proposal as written with a nine pane front door. Nollet
40 seconded. All in favor.
41

42 2. Work session for Peter and Daphne Schwab, 63 Piscataqua Street, Map 18, Lot 11-2
43

44 Guests: Peter Schwab, Applicant, Brendan McNamara, Architect, Amy Farnum from Revision
45 Energy and Andy Schulte.
46

1 Peter Schwab thanked the board for their approval last December and stated things were moving
2 along. Vice Chair Hughes said the house looks great. Schwab stated that Brendan McNamara is
3 doing a great job with the historical details.

4
5 Schwab stated that their long standing goal has been to reduce the carbon footprint and toward
6 that end, they have added a lot of insulation and new windows. Heat pump technology has really
7 come far bypassing geo thermal, which is so expensive. However, it uses a large amount of
8 electricity, but does allow you to not have to use any propane or oil. The proposal is to create
9 energy through the use of solar panels. They know this has been an issue with the commission
10 over past years and that recent approvals have been in special situations. The guidelines are
11 quite explicit and what we are contending with is the visibility from a public street and these
12 panels will be visible from Atkinson Street and he has come before the board mainly for
13 planning.

14
15 Brendan McNamara stated that technology is going toward full on electricity and air source heat
16 pumps. He has been involved in alternative technology for years and it sounds great but the
17 reality was that technology wasn't advanced enough so the cost of putting solar panels on a roof
18 was not feasible. Three years ago he was involved with geothermal systems which takes heat out
19 of the earth. It works well but is very expensive because you have to drill wells but one never
20 knows how deep a well has to be dug until you start and it could be 15 feet or it could be 30 feet.

21
22 Air source, which are outside fan units that take heat out of the air, seems efficient and is easier
23 when its 80° but not when it's cold outside and again is based on electricity. Even with
24 geothermal you need electricity to run the heat pumps. We cannot make propane or oil but
25 through solar panels, we can make electricity. Air source heat pumps and geothermal can both
26 be used for heat in winter and cooling in summer. The solar panel arrangement proposed for the
27 Schwab house will provide 60 – 70% of their energy needs, including heating, cooling and all
28 energy needs. The proposal is the most panels that can effectively be put on this house. Solar
29 panels are a fixed dimension which can be put landscape or portrait but they have to fit onto the
30 house.

31
32 Their plan places the panels on the south face for maximum exposure and also will be going on
33 an area of the garage which is east facing. This is how we get to 60 – 70% energy; we would
34 love to get to net zero, but the Schwabs will not be doing that and they will be paying for 30% of
35 the energy they use. These are not Tesla panels as Tesla is sold out through 2018.

36
37 Hughes asked if they had a photo rather than just a sketch but they did not. McNamara said they
38 first wanted to get some input from the board. They are a retro fitted item and they have already
39 installed the conduits so the panels can just be put up and connected.

40
41 Schwab said their proposal is the same panels that were used at the Epstein and Chamberlain
42 houses, which are dark panels. Hughes confirmed those were approved because they are not
43 visible from a public street.

1 Elaine Nollet stated she is really having trouble with this because she is very pro conserving
2 energy and technology is constantly improving, but the guidelines do not allow solar panels
3 which are visible from the street.
4

5 McNamara stated they put the conduits in knowing that technology is changing and they hope
6 that there will be better panels and shingles in the near future. If Peter hadn't insulated the
7 house, we would be talking only 30-40% of energy needs being served with solar panels. It
8 wouldn't be worth it to put just a few panels up there; you're either in or you're out.
9

10 Maher asked if this was a big lot and the applicant had the land, whether they would be allowed
11 to put solar panels on the land instead of on the house? Irene Bush stated it still depends on
12 whether they are visible from a public street. Schwab said the guidelines are that they have to be
13 disguised with bushes or something. Maher asked if solar companies are working on solving this
14 problem because we want people to move into older homes and be able to conserve energy.
15

16 Vice Chair Hughes said that maybe it's time that the board re-address this as a committee and as
17 a town. He advised the applicant that Chair Rowland is against their proposal because the solar
18 panels are visible from a public street. When do you draw the line for historic character as
19 opposed to technology? You have a chimney or pipes coming up out of the roof for plumbing.
20 How do you adapt a house so you can still live in it? I think with the impact of fossil fuels on the
21 environment, we may have to look for alternative ways and this is part of the infrastructure and
22 we may have to adapt the historic district, but that is my personal opinion.
23

24 Vice Chair Hughes opened the matter for discussion to the board. Kate Murray said she is fully
25 supportive of solar except in the historic district and that she would like roofs to continue to look
26 the way they do. She believes technology will come up with something that fits in the historic
27 district, stating that she has a problem with how it would look and does not want to change the
28 ordinance.
29

30 Elaine Nollet reminded the board that they had talked about dividing the town into different
31 districts such as the center of town would be strictly historic, but never followed through with
32 that discussion. Bush stated that when the board wrote the guideline, they thought technology
33 would catch up and we could keep the district looking the way we would like it to look.
34

35 Nollet advised the Applicant that their drawings really make the black of the panels jump out.
36 McNamara said the panels on the shed dormer would be invisible because of the pitch, but there
37 is no escaping the two peaks which would be black on dark grey.
38

39 Maher stated that you would probably just see the garage and the south side, but not the east side.
40 Schwab said that this is the most panels they could possibly fit and with the garage facing east, it
41 is not as productive advising that if that was too much too soon, they could make adjustments.
42

43 Maher asked how far on the horizon are some of these shingle options? Farnum believes it will
44 be two years. McNamara stated that his concern is not the shingle itself but the panels have a
45 fixed dimension and you cannot cut them. You're not going to flash a Tesla shingle into a shed

1 dormer. All the You Tube videos are of California ranch style houses and it is much easier to fit
2 solar panels on those types of house roofs.

3
4 Nollet asked if the panels were flat on the roof? Farnum said that no, they are up about 6” off the
5 roof because they need air flow behind them. They are not a “permanent architectural” feature
6 which the ordinance refers to because they can be removed. The panels sit on a rail which is
7 lagged into the rafters. They protect the roof from the elements and extend the life of the roof.

8
9 Maher suggested the board tour those houses that have been approved in the past and Nollet
10 suggested also going into Portsmouth where they have them or looking at houses out of the
11 district that have solar, like Chair Rowland’s house. The board agreed to go take a look at what
12 is currently out there. Bush pointed out that the guidelines as they are, would have to change.
13 Murray thinks it should go to town meeting but guidelines do not have to go to the town.

14
15 Vice Chair Hughes opened the meeting to the public.

16
17 Andy Schulte of 107 Main St said it’s important that the board review the ordinance and the
18 guidelines and the board’s job is to preserve the historic structure and character of New Castle,
19 which was established in 1623 and in six years will be celebrating its 400th anniversary. It is
20 important that we preserve its historic character. There have been several approvals of solar
21 panels, on Riverview Road and on Salamander, and its working its way to the center of town.
22 He stated that the historic part (of town) is the front street and the back street and the Schwab’s
23 house is in the middle. I don’t think shiny panels on a roof are part of the historic character in
24 New Castle.

25
26 Peter Schwab stated he was very glad for the discussion adding that they are not in a hurry and
27 don’t have to come back in a month. He thanked the board for all their input. Vice Chair
28 Hughes said that the board’s thinking is evolving but probably not to put panels on a house so
29 prominently in the historic district.

30
31 Nollet asked Andy Schulte if Tesla came up with shingles that looked like shingles, would he be
32 agreeable to that? Schulte answered yes, if they look like shingles and are not shiny adding that
33 a few years ago someone came before the board with solar panels and his rendering did not show
34 the aluminum frames and in fact the panels were blue rather than black but his picture did not
35 show this. Peter Schwab stated these panels would be black with no aluminum frame. Schulte
36 advised that he has a passive solar system on his house but it cannot be seen.

37
38 Hughes asked if there were any other comments from the board and there being none the work
39 session was closed.

40
41 3. Approval of the Minutes of April 6, 2017

42
43 Kate Murray moved to approve the minutes as amended. Irene Bush seconded. All approved.
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1 4. Approval of the Minutes of May 4, 2017.

2
3 Irene Bush moved to approve the minutes as amended. Tom Maher seconded. All approved
4 with Hughes abstaining as he was not at the meeting.

5
6 5. Old Business.

7
8 Kate Murray asked if there was an update on the CLG. Maher answered that yes it passed the
9 Select Board and Chair Rowland was moving forward with the application.

10
11 Maher talked to Chief White and has been taking his temperature on how aggressive he wants to
12 be about the construction and landscape trucks on the streets. Most projects have wrapped up
13 but there are always a couple of outliers content to park their cars in the street. The Chief would
14 like to proceed gently, not going tough on people. The landscaping trucks will be here all
15 summer and the Select Board is still sifting through how to handle them. They would rather talk
16 to homeowners to have them encourage their landscaper to drop off their equipment and
17 recommend going to the Coast Guard lot for a few hours rather than leave a vehicle with a large
18 trailer for a long period of time in the street. Some landscapers have multiple clients in
19 neighborhoods and this would be easy for them to do. Also, now that the inn is coming to a
20 close, the situation is much better. The Chief is not interested in getting aggressive about
21 ticketing but prefers to go by and talk to homeowners, contractors and landscapers. Maher will
22 defer to his judgment adding that the Chief is engaged and walks around and asks people to
23 move their vehicles. He found that some people would leave when asked and then come back
24 and he found it frustrating. We may have to get the building inspector involved with large
25 projects. To the extent possible, the trucks will have to park on the property they are working at.

26
27 Irene Bush said that maybe a fire truck should be brought through to see if they can get by
28 because it's a safety issue. Nollet stated she was with a friend in a small truck and they couldn't
29 get by and asked a truck to move and were refused.

30
31 Vice Chair Hughes asked if there was any other business? Maher said he was going to swing by
32 the Epsteins to look at the panels. Murray said the board does not have jurisdiction over a
33 private road but Irene Bush said Epsteins can be seen from a public road very clearly and that if
34 the board allows panels on the Schwab house, they will be on Main Street next summer.

35
36 Hughes said there are things such as gutters that adapt a house to the current style of living and
37 where do you draw the line? Granted, solar panels on a huge roof is a lot different, but if a house
38 has radon and you have to vent it, what do you do? That's a health issue. It's a very delicate
39 balance.

40
41 Elaine Nollet moved to adjourn the meeting; Tom Maher seconded. All in favor. Adjourned at 8
42 pm.

43
44 Respectfully submitted,
45 Diane Cooley, Recording Secretary