

NASHUA HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Monday, July 22, 2019, 6:30 p.m.
Room 208, Nashua City Hall.

Members:

Ald. Patricia Klee
Robert Sampson
Robert Vorbach
Mariellen MacKay
Edward Weber

Also present:

Carter Falk, Deputy Planning Manager/Zoning

MINUTES:

April 22, 2019

MOTION by Mrs. MacKay to approve the minutes as presented, waive the reading, and place the minutes in the file.

SECONDED by Mr. Vorbach.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Albert & Marylyn Todd (Owners) 4 Greeley Street (Sheet 67 Lot 60), requesting approval to renovate exterior of existing barn. RB Zone, Ward 3.**

Mrs. Todd said that they want to convert their barn into a two-family residential structure, and renovate it and make it structurally sound. She said it's a hazard the way it sits now.

Mr. Weber asked what the exterior would look like.

Mrs. Todd said that they would put in four-inch vinyl siding, it would be a historical red color, and she'd like to keep the look of the barn. She said that the barn used to be Nashua's Milk Supply House, it was Roby Milk House, there were horses kept in the main part, so at one point it was a commercial business, owned by the Roby family.

Mr. Sampson said that the interior is not something that the Commission has jurisdiction over. He said that there was an approval in 2003, and asked if that work had ever been done.

Mrs. Todd said she didn't believe any work has been done on the barn in a very long time.

Mr. Falk said that he didn't see any building permits from that time.

Mrs. Todd said that the barn is going to take a lot of work, the whole barn needs to be jacked up, there needs to be a sill plate put on it for the foundation. She said she already has a proposal from the Gas company, and the electricity will be free, the gas will be free, and for sewer, it will all work out. She said it's a 200 year old barn, not being used, and is a waste of space, and wants it to be used. She said its 3,600 square feet on three floors.

Mr. Sampson asked if their house was a two-family or single-family.

Mrs. Todd said it is a single-family home.

Mr. Falk said that if this request is supported, they would have to go to the Zoning Board next, for two variances, one would be to allow two principal residential structures, the other would be for density, where about 5,600 square feet of land exists, and over 18,000 square feet would be required.

Mrs. Todd showed a photo of what the barn currently looks like. She said you can tell where the original windows were located, at least on one side. She said that they are not proposing windows on the back side abutting the neighbor's house behind them. She said that sheet A3 would face the Fire Station, and on this elevation, they would take two windows out and move them over. She said that the bathroom windows would be a little smaller, they're the ones in the far left on Sheet A3. She iterated that it would have 4 inch clapboard vinyl siding, not 3 inch as shown in the drawing. She said she wants to keep the look of the barn, and took off the fake doors. She said that the new plans show that this door is removed, so it's the same layout with the fake door removed.

Mrs. Todd said that the side that faces Greeley Street is shown on sheet A5. She said that each dwelling unit would have their own entrance. She said that the windows on the first floor would be egress windows, and on the second floor, there would be the fire escape. She said that there would be an internal staircase to get to the second floor unit. She said that they've tried to eliminate any common space to keep costs down. She said that the bathroom windows would be a little bit smaller. She said that the windows would be the same ones they have now.

Mr. Sampson asked if there are any specs, or data sheets, catalog sheets, product literature, for the windows, doors, and so forth.

Mrs. Todd sent her structural engineer a picture of the two doors that she plans to buy, along with the windows.

Mrs. MacKay said that generally, applicants bring in materials and all the data needed to support a request. She said it will be very difficult to make a decision based upon what is submitted.

Mrs. Todd said that financially, this is a lot. She said this is Step 1, and can't get to Step 2. She said she feels that she is gambling with her money to get all this information without hearing a

positive answer, and this has cost a few thousand dollars already. She said that she would do whatever the Commission wants.

Mr. Vorbach said it's not the Commission's issue what this has cost so far. He said that her architect should have been a bit more helpful, especially with the components of the project. He said he is not a fan of vinyl in a Historic District at all, but this isn't Lexington or Hollis. He said that the aesthetic character should have been clearly shown on the drawings. He said he's not against the project as far as concept at all, but the concern is the aesthetics. He said that the cheap vinyl windows that exist are not of the Todd's doing, but they lack character. He said that vinyl siding, when it's well done, can look fine. He said that there should have been more information, and the submitted drawings are not what he considers professional. He said that the Commission is just lacking information.

Mr. Weber said that right next door on Abbott Street just got approved, and they had vinyl windows, and they brought the samples to the meeting. He suggested that they look at those windows. He said that the Commission should hold off, because we don't have the drawings that will be there. He said that the Commission really needs to see spec sheets.

Mrs. Todd showed a picture from her phone of what it would look like.

Mr. Sampson said that the Commission has approved cases on fairly vague and shaky plans, and has been bitten badly, in that people didn't do what the Commission thought they were going to do. He said that the Commission needs data, drawings, specs, to know what is proposed.

Mrs. Todd said that with a bad storm or a blizzard, this barn is done. She said that the barn is rotting, and has been rotting for a long time. She said if they can't start working on this before the winter, they'd have to sell, as it needs work. She said that the barn doesn't have much life left, and the structural integrity of it is unsafe. She said it is a 200 year old barn, and when you walk in it, you can hear it shake.

Mr. Sampson said that she should get the specs, data sheets, etc, of what materials would be used, then the Commission would be happy to review the project. He said he would like to see the barn improved, but the Commission needs to see some more detail than what was submitted.

Mrs. Todd asked if they can do a conditional approval, just to go to the Zoning Board. She said she cannot go for the variances until the Historic District votes on the case. She said she needs to get this project going now.

Mrs. MacKay said that the Commission would like to see them get what they want to have done, however, the plans we have are not the ones we need, and the Commission really can't conditionally approve them, even though they're sort of the same, they're not. She said that the Zoning Board will want all of this information.

Mr. Falk said that the Zoning Board must have the Historic District Commission's approval letter, same thing if it were from the Conservation Commission. If they don't have a final response from this Commission, they won't even hear the case.

Mr. Sampson said that the Commission is sympathetic, but the Commission just can't, in good conscience, or legally, just say that we've received some ideas that will be mostly what will be done, and the Commission approves it. He said that the Commission doesn't approve ideas, but will approve specifics.

Mrs. Todd said that she has specifics, but they just are not printed.

Mr. Sampson suggested she come back in August.

Mrs. Todd said she can't.

Mr. Sampson said that to hold a special meeting before August is difficult.

Mr. Weber said it would also affect the upcoming Zoning Board meeting tomorrow.

Mr. Todd said that they do have the specific plans, and thought they sent them in, and they're not printed. He asked why they would need specs of the windows, etc., when they know it will be 4-inch vinyl siding, vinyl windows.

Mrs. Todd said that whatever they need to do to move on with this project, they'll do. She said the barn will have the same windows that are in there now, the barn is horrendous to look at, it's just another abandoned building. She said that the barn right now is not doing the City any justice at all. She said it will be sad to watch the barn fall.

Mr. Todd said that this is it, there is finally a family that will renovate the barn, do something with it, they have the plans and specs, they know it will be 4-inch red vinyl siding, it will have the same windows that are already there on the barn, one over one windows.

Mrs. Todd said that the oldest house in Nashua right around the corner has 4 inch vinyl siding that is red.

Mr. Falk said that the Zoning Board will at least want to see an approval letter, with any special conditions or stipulations of approval.

Mrs. MacKay said that the Commission needs to know if what is proposed is historically accurate, and that is what needs to be maintained. She said it cannot look out of character.

Mrs. Todd asked how it looks now, it's about ready to fall over.

Mr. Todd said that two of the sides of the barn are original, the other two sides have been covered up.

Mrs. Todd said she's pretty sure that the plans that they want to do, the original plans from 2013, even show the windows that are in there now, and they can use the same windows.

Mr. Vorbach said that the one over one window is totally out of character, but that is what exists. He asked if structurally, per the engineer, if he indicated that the building would fall down.

Mrs. Todd said that is what the engineer said, and she won't allow her kids to go in there. She said that the structural repair needs to be done by winter.

Mrs. Todd said that there is no sill plate, and there is nothing connecting the barn to the ground anywhere.

Mr. Sampson asked if she has the specs and drawings.

Mrs. Todd said that they're on her phone.

Mrs. Todd showed a photo of the exact door she wants to use from her phone, they would be the front two doors.

Mr. Sampson asked if the door has a model number, it's from Home Depot. He asked if the Commission puts into our minutes the part/model number for the doors, windows, so forth, and identify the vinyl siding, put it all in our minutes, it would give us some of what we need.

Mr. Weber said it would, also, the roofing.

Mrs. Todd said it would be the exact roof as it is now.

Mr. Sampson said what he is thinking of, if we put enough detail in the minutes, the burden would be on the owners that if something is not what is in the minutes, they'd have to come back before the Commission.

Mrs. Todd said ok.

Mr. Sampson said it would have to be in the motion.

Mr. Vorbach said that they should have been here with all the information, it's just part of the process. He said that we're not here to be adversarial, but we are here to maintain the integrity of the District. He said that their architect should have known.

Mrs. Todd said that the structural engineer is working on the framing plans, since it's so old.

Mr. Sampson said that if a motion is made, the part number of the window, door, four-inch vinyl siding, the asphalt shingles.

Mrs. Todd said that the shingles would be asphalt, black, architectural shingles. She said it's possible that they may not even have to change the roof, as nothing is changing.

Mr. Weber said that if a motion is made with these specific items, and change would have to come back to the Commission.

Mrs. Todd showed a picture of her neighbor's fire escape ladder, they want to use the same one, she said it's the abandoned lot with two houses on it, it is 15 Merrimack Street.

MOTION by Mr. Weber to grant approval of the renovation of the existing barn, with the following stipulations:

1. Windows part number Home Depot model # 2854726G
2. Door part number Home Depot model F63042
3. Siding – four inch barn red vinyl textured
4. Fire Escape – metal per the same one as 15 Merrimack Street
5. Roof – Architectural black asphalt matching existing, with no change to roof plane.
6. Corner boards – white 5½ inch corner boards

Mr. Weber said that any changes to this must return to the HDC for approval.

SECONDED by Mrs. MacKay.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Weber said that whatever contractor they choose, they must be bonded and insured.

OTHER BUSINESS:

DISCUSSION ITEM:

Attorney Andrew Prolman
Prunier and Prolman, P.A.
20 Trafalgar Square
Nashua, NH.

452 Amherst Street, the Country Tavern Restaurant.

Atty. Prolman said that the current owners are wishing to sell the Country Tavern Restaurant. He said that there is a Façade Easement on the property that was granted in 1982. He said that the façade easement was established when the property was converted from a residence to a restaurant. He said that the then owners went before the Zoning Board and that they would like to maintain the look of the property along Amherst Street, and a façade easement was granted. He said that it has worked well for years, but now they are looking to sell, but cannot with the status of the building today. He said they initially thought that this wouldn't be a big deal for the City, but it turned out that it is, and there has been some push-back, hearing that people want it to stay.

Atty. Prolman said that they hired a consultant, Lisa Mausolf, who has worked with the City in the past, and she is in the process of preparing a report, but it is not ready to be released yet. According to excerpts from the report, this property has been looked at a number of times over the years for being on the National Register, in the 1990's, and in 2007 as part of the Amherst Street improvements, and in every instance, the same conclusion has been that it is not eligible for the National Register. He said that there are five separate criteria for consideration, and this property, with its extensive renovations and alterations and far-reaching changes to it, it does not contain enough integrity to qualify for the National Registry under any criteria.

Atty. Prolman said another draft from the consultant has reached the same conclusions, as it's not eligible for registration on the National Historic Places. The author is in the process of debunking this ghost story, and the consultant has come to the conclusion that it was a fabrication by folks from the restaurant, or perhaps for marketing, and that this shouldn't be a factor in historical preservation.

Atty. Prolman said that there was a letter passed around from the Planning Director, it has some information in there where she cites multiple errors and untruths, and there is a lot of internet research on this house and property which is not supported. He said that the consultant says that despite its survival surrounded by modern development, the building does not rise to a level of significant or warrant further protection, as there have been many alterations to the property over the years, including loss of the 40-acre farm, and the gutting of the interior.

Atty. Prolman said that this still has to go to the Planning Board and the Infrastructure Committee, and it will result in a recommendation to the Board of Aldermen. He suggested a couple ways to address this; the first would be to not take any action because this property is not in the Historic District. He said another thought would be to have him allow this report to be finished and finalized, so it can be distributed and shared to the Commission before any recommendation is offered.

Mr. Sampson asked when the full report may be available.

Atty. Prolman said that she is on vacation this week, and expects a copy of it perhaps late next week, and it can be given to the Commission.

Mr. Falk said that there will be an August meeting.

Mr. Sampson said it can be considered at the August meeting.

Atty. Prolman said that would be fine.

Mrs. MacKay said it would be August 26th.

Mr. Falk said that the package goes out one week before, so on or about August 19th it will be in the mail.

Mr. Weber said it may be nice that if there is some type of plaque that indicates who used to live here in the new building, documenting some of the history of the property and what families lived there.

Mr. Vorbach said that the property is not in the Historic District, and we've had discussions on other buildings not in the District, such as the Methodist Church and the addition they put on. He said that most of the construction on Amherst Street is just minus architectural integrity, it's just strip-mall construction. He said that the Commission just doesn't have jurisdiction.

Mr. Weber said that Brady Sullivan put a lot of historical information in their building on Franklin Street, and now its rental units. He said they put it into their lobby, and did a nice job.

MEMBERS COMMENTS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

CF/cf