

RIDGEFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Town Hall, 400 Main Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877
January 18, 2024

Policy: Historic District Commission meetings will be conducted under Roberts Rules of Order and all participants are expected to conduct themselves with dignity and treat all those present with respect, empathy and civility.

APPROVED MINUTES

A meeting of the Ridgefield Historic District Commission (“HDC”) was held in the lower level small conference room of the Town Hall, 400 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877, on Thursday, January 18, 2024, and beginning at 6:30 p.m.

The following members were present:

Dan O’Brien (Chair), Sean O’Kane (Vice-Chair), Kam Daughters, Rhys Moore, Harriet Hanlon, Mark Blandford (alternate) and Michael Mitchell (alternate).

AGENDA

- 1) **Election of Officers**
- 2) **212 Main Street**
 - **Remove 2nd floor “sleeping porch” in rear of house and replace with decorative railing**
 - **Remove single-car garage attached to rear of house and 4-foot extension above it**
 - **Remove Plexiglass enclosure on northeast house corner**
 - **Add 1 triple hung window on east wall**
 - **Add 2 windows on south side of house in kitchen and breakfast room**
- 3) **Approval of Meeting Minutes**
 - **December 14, 2023 – Regular Meeting Minutes**
- 4) **Annual Review of**
 - **Freedom of Information Act**
 - **Code of Ethics**
 - **Town Charter**

Meeting:

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Dan O’Brien at 6:30 p.m.

1) **Election of Officers for 2024**

Mr. Moore moved and Ms. Daughters seconded a motion to elect Mr. O’Kane as Commission Vice Chair and Mr. O’Brien as Commission Chair. Both are for one-year terms ending on December 31, 2024. Motion passed 5-0

Ms. Fields joined the meeting at approximately 6:37 p.m.

2) **212 Main Street**

Mr. Ken Fichtelman and Ms. Kathryn Gregory, property owners, were present.

Mr. O'Brien distributed North, South and East photo shopped pictures with notations, the Certificate of Appropriateness application and an email dated January 2, 2024 from Ken Fichtelman.

Ms. Gregory said around Christmas, there was a substantial amount of water in the backroom and kitchen that convinced them of the need to remove the sleeping porch. Mr. O'Brien asked if this porch was an original structure. Ms. Gregory said their research showed it was not original. Mr. Fichtelman said they planned to reframe the roof flat, and finish with decorative railing to match the railing elsewhere on the house. They pointed to the 'before' and 'after' pictures provided. They planned to paint the 28" high railing white, using Azek material. They found a company that would be able to copy the current railing design. Mr. Blandford asked if this was a decorative railing. Ms. Gregory said it was decorative.

Ms. Gregory said they planned to remove the garage and a 4 ft extension above the garage. This structure was also not original to the house. Ms. Hanlon asked if the stonework still existed behind the garage. Ms. Gregory and Mr. Fichtelman said it was still there.

Ms. Gregory said the plexiglass structure would be removed. This was a walkout. There would be no access to the outside. The current door to the plexiglass enclosure would be replaced with a matching window, spaced equidistant from the left corner of the house. The window trims would match the rest of the house. Mr. Blandford asked about the origin of the new windows. Ms. Gregory said they would be from Indiana. These new windows were only on the East side, not facing Branchville. Current windows were 29" x 66 ". The new windows would be 36" x 66". Mr. Fichtelman said the windows would be wider. Next year, they would like to add shutters. Ms. Gregory said they found the porch shutters in the basement. Mr. O'Kane asked if there were any renderings, any elevations, not just pictures. He said he wanted to see what the windows would look like after the change. Ms. Gregory said they would be 7" wider and centered on the wall.

Ms. Gregory said on the Breakfast room South side, the new window would also be 36" x 66". Moving along to the kitchen, one double hung window would be replaced by a triple pane window and the adjacent window would be replaced by a door, taller than the original. Mr. Blandford mentioned that the public couldn't see the South side from the sidewalk, in his opinion. Mr. O'Kane said to visualize the changes, there should be a plan that detailed the elements, especially given the sizable scope of the project. Some things appeared pretty clear, like the matching of the existing railing to the house. But there were a few individual elements that were not clear without plans. Ms. Gregory said they were not providing additional plans.

Mr. O'Brien said the elements being removed appeared to be not original to the historic structure. The work being proposed was more of a demolition job. Ms. Hanlon said it was clear to her what they were trying to do. Ms. Daughters said drawing plans would be helpful. She heard what Mr. O'Kane was saying and knew this was more about demolition. However, a project of this scope without drawings when typically everything was drawn out, was difficult to visualize on such a prominent home as theirs. Ms. Gregory said she appreciated her stance. Ms. Daughters said she would like to see what it would look like in plans because she believed they would do a beautiful job. Ms. Daughters said a huge part of the house was being removed. Looking at drawings would

help her visualize the impact. Mr. O’Kane said not having drawings on such a large scale change to the exterior of an historical structure would set a bad precedent. Before and after drawings with proportions to scale would be easier for the Commission members to consider the application and make a decision as to the appropriateness of the proposed changes. Ms. Gregory loudly tried to talk over Mr. O’Kane and interrupted him on several occasions. Mr. Fichtelman said he was not sure why the Commission members were concerned. Why architectural plans? Mr. O’Kane said this house was at the center of the Historic District. As such, it was an important home. Having building plans was a simple request. He said they would not require an architect’s drawing. A draftsman would be able to do the plans in a couple hours. He was not looking to solicit work, merely expressing what he had been asking from the beginning. Ms. Gregory said they would not pursue plans. Mr. Mitchell pointed out that on the Certificate of Appropriateness application, item #2 stated that four copies of architectural drawings were required to be submitted. This was a requirement for every Historic District Commission in Connecticut that he was familiar with. Mr. O’Kane said a draftsman drawing would be fine. He is merely looking for basic data. Mr. Fichtelman said they were clearly removing what was destroying the house. Ms. Gregory said these structures were rotting the house away. Mr. O’Brien asked if Mr. Moore had anything to add. Mr. Moore said he did not have anything more to add.

Ms. Hanlon made a motion to approve the application as presented. There was no second to the motion. Accordingly, the motion did not move forward.

Mr. O’Kane said he would motion to see plans of the changes (before and after), to be done by a draftsman. Ms. Gregory shouted a vulgarity at Mr. O’Kane and quickly left the meeting at approximately 7:07 p.m. Mr. Moore said that a Special Meeting could be held instead of waiting another month to continue the consideration of the application. Mr. Fichtelman got up to leave. Mr. O’Brien asked if he would stay to discuss further next steps on the application they filed. Mr. Fichtelman said it was clear to him what the Commission had proposed to do and Mr. Fichtelman left at approximately 7:09 p.m.

3) **Approval of the December 14, 2023 HDC Regular Meeting minutes**

Ms. Daughters moved and Mr. O’Kane seconded a motion to approve the December 14, 2023 HDC Regular Meeting minutes. Motion passed 5-0.

4) **Annual Review of Freedom of Information Act, Code of Ethics and Town Charter**

Prior to the regular meeting, Mr. O’Brien emailed the Town Code of Ethics and a page from the Town Charter with respect to the HDC to the Commission members for their consideration. The Commission members briefly discussed the Freedom of Information Act and had no comments regarding the Code of Ethics or the Town Charter.

Ms. Hanlon moved and Mr. Moore seconded a motion to adjourn the Historic District Commission Meeting at 7:26 p.m. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Fields
Recording Secretary