

**RIDGEFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**  
**Town Hall, 400 Main Street**  
**Ridgefield, CT 06877**  
**March 14, 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 at the Lounsbury House, 316 Main Street, Ridgefield CT 06877, on Thursday, March 14, 2024, and beginning at 6:30 p.m.

The following members were present:

Dan O’Brien (Chair), Sean O’Kane (Vice-Chair) attended via Zoom, Kam Daughters, Marc Blandford (alternate for Rhys Moore), Michael Mitchell (alternate for Harriet Hanlon) and Sara Kaplan (alternate)

**AGENDA**

- 1) **Preservation Brief #16 issued by National Park Service on use of substitute materials to be discussed.**
- 2) **316 Main Street – Addition of fence to the rear of property**
- 3) **149 Main Street – Barn reconstruction; changes to previously approved plans for certain exterior changes to main house**
- 4) **212 Main Street – Removal of certain exterior sections of the structure and the addition of certain windows.**
- 5) **Approval of Meeting Minutes**
  - **January 18, 2024 – Regular Meeting Minutes**
  - **March 10, 2024 - Site Visits and Special Meeting Minutes at:**
    - **St. Stephens – 353 Main Street**
    - **127 Main Street**
    - **149 Main Street**
    - **The Benjamin – 20 West Lane**

## Meeting:

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Dan O'Brien at 6:31 p.m.

### 1) **Preservation Brief #16 issued by National Park Service on use of substitute materials to be discussed**

Mr. Dan O'Brien distributed copies of the Brief to the Commission members.

Mr. O'Brien said that the Brief appeared to offer some flexibility for the use of substitute materials in certain circumstances. However, it always is up to the Commission's judgement as to the look, feel, and appropriateness of materials. Both Ms. Kaplan and Mr. Mitchell agreed. Mr. Blandford said each property was reviewed on a case by case basis. Mr. Mitchell said durability could also be a factor. Mr. Blandford said the Commission does prefer original materials. Mr. O'Brien said especially in the case of a historic main house. Accessory items, like fences, may possibly use substitute materials depending on the facts and circumstances. Mr. O'Kane said in the Brief, he noticed there were lots of examples of substitute materials used in the South. However, in the Northeast, sourcing of the materials was more readily available. Mr. O'Brien agreed that each structure was different. Decisions may also be influenced by look, location and age of a house.

### 2) **316 Main Street – Addition of fence to the rear of property**

Ms. Suzanne Brennan, Executive Director of the Lounsbury House, was present.

The rear of the property had previously been used by the Ridgefield Community Kindergarten. As the kindergarten has relocated, the former sand lot had been replaced with gravel.

The Commission members took a few minutes to observe the back of the house and view the area for the proposed fence addition. Ms. Brennan said they would like to enclose the back with a lattice fence and include landscaping. Mr. O'Kane asked if they were keeping the gravel. Ms. Brennan said they were. Also, they were not enclosing the area entirely, as shown on the plans.

#### Materials:

Ms. Brennan pointed to a couple samples of Azek fence lattice material on the table. She also distributed pictures of other areas that they were looking to replace and add fencing. This fencing was made of composite materials (Azek) and without a plastic shine. The material had a wood-like feel and look.

Mr. Blandford asked if everyone was comfortable with the composite fencing material. Ms. Kaplan, Ms. Daughters and Mr. Mitchell agreed the material was fine.

#### Mechanical - Fences:

Ms. Brennan said around the air condensers and gas tank, they would enclose them with a black fencing. They had a fountain cover they wanted to store in the back, with fencing around it too.

Ms. Daughters asked if the fencing around the tanks would be diagonal. Ms. Brennan said diagonal lattice.

Lounsbury House Base – Fence:

At the house's base, they had a black diagonally screened wood fence which they were going to repair and paint. To maintain this fence would be at great expense (over \$5000).

Mr. O'Brien asked if the fence being painted at the house was diagonal. Ms. Brennan said it was diagonal, and would be replaced with wood. They wanted to keep it as the original, which was diagonal. Mr. O'Kane said he thought the square looked better and more historic. Ms. Brennan said she also liked square but they wanted to honor the physical building by keeping it the same.

Back property – Fence:

Ms. Daughters asked if they were going to put lattice only on the top of the fence in the back, as the plans showed there was a top and bottom. Ms. Brennan said the whole fence would be lattice. Mr. Blandford confirmed with Ms. Brennan this fence would only be in the back area. Ms. Brennan confirmed both the top and bottom fence sections were all lattice which was used historically.

Mr. Mitchell asked if the back fence, the lattice would be vertical. Ms. Brennan agreed. Mr. Mitchell said by having the top rail vertical, it would be noticed a lot if not level. Ms. Brennan said their contractor would be very careful with the posts which would adjust for any leveling variations.

Landscaping:

Mr. O'Brien asked about the greenery. Ms. Brennan said they were going to have about 20 large arborvitaes behind the fence to soften and create a natural border. Smaller arborvitaes would be in front of the fence. Ms. Brennan said this area would be used for community events.

Color:

Mr. Mitchell asked if the fences would be painted. Ms. Brennan said in back would be white. The lattice at the building base was black and would be repainted black. The fencing around the condenser would also be in black. Mr. Blandford agreed that would look great. He was fine with either straight or vertical. These fences were not facing the sidewalk

For the mechanical fences, Ms. Kaplan opined that all should be black diagonal to be consistent. Ms. Daughters agreed, by saying the black would make the fence disappear.

**Mr. Blandford moved and Mr. Mitchell seconded a motion to approve the application as presented for the addition of the fence to the rear of the property with the option to choose either the square or diagonal lattice fencing. Motion passed 5-0.**

### **3) 149 Main Street – Barn reconstruction; changes to previously approved plans for certain exterior changes to main house**

Applicants Mr. Earl Flath and Ms. Colleen Flath were present.

Ms. Flath distributed revised drawings of the West and North elevations. Mr. Blandford showed Mr. O’Kane via Zoom the updated changes since Sunday’s Site visit. Mr. O’Kane asked Ms. Flath if she liked the roof line change. Ms. Flath said she liked it. She also liked the suggestion of having the three glass windows on the conservatory room. Mr. O’Kane asked Ms. Kaplan’s opinion. Ms. Kaplan said it was a convincing sketch. She liked the lower roof pitch. Mr. O’Kane said it tied better to the other facades.

Mr. O’Brien said there were several changes to the architect’s plans which need to be updated on such final plans. He asked when their architect, Richard Vail, would be able to present the updated plans. Ms. Flath said Mr. Vail would be returning to the country at the end of the month.

Mr. O’Brien asked about the elevation plans. Ms. Flath said they didn’t have landscape or pool plans yet. This would be in their next phase.

Mr. O’Brien asked about the stone wall. Ms. Flath said the wall was not part of the current submission. She mentioned the wall during the Site visit. The wall would be part of the next phase.

Mr. O’Brien said he wanted to understand what steps were being corrected to level height. Ms. Flath said from inside the house, from the house to the Conservatory, to the Patio would all be one level – no steps. Mr. O’Brien said he needed to see revised plans. Mr. O’Kane said he was wondering about the ceiling height in the Conservatory. Ms. Flath said they would have 11 ft ceilings. Mr. O’Kane that was a nice height.

Mr. O’Brien asked about the barn materials. Ms. Flath said she had not priced them out yet. Mr. O’Kane said the Flath’s had photos of previously approved HDC approved tin roofs. He said this was something to look at, but the decision was made on a case by case basis. Mr. O’Brien asked about the tin color. Ms. Flath said they were looking at a dark bronze. Mr. Blandford asked about the current roof. Ms. Flath said it was asphalt. Ms. Flath said she heard the tin roof was noisy from inside but would last forever. Ms. Kaplan said either was acceptable to her. Ms. Daughters said tin looked nice. Mr. Blandford and Mr. Mitchell agreed.

Ms. Flath said they were reusing windows from the main house. Ms. Kaplan said she liked the idea of reusing the windows.

Ms. Flath said they were not adding a cupola.

Ms. Flath said the architect would be back on March 20<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Flath said they had verbal P&Z approval for the work. They would request P&Z for the written approval. They will send the HDC updated/revised final plans once they were completed.

Mr. O’Kane left the meeting at 7:37pm. Ms. Kaplan became alternate to Mr. O’Kane.

4) **212 Main Street – Removal of certain exterior sections of the structure and the addition of certain windows**

Mr. O'Brien said he communicated with Mr. Ken Fichtelman, Applicant. Mr. O'Brien advised Mr. Fichtelman that given the statutory 65-day time limit for applications to be considered by the Commission, the Commission would need to close out the application at this meeting with a vote on a Denial Without Prejudice in view of the Applicant not prepared to move forward on the application at this time. However, the Applicant may resubmit this application at a later time should their plans change.

**Ms. Daughters moved and Mr. Blandford seconded a motion to Deny Without Prejudice the application on the basis that the Applicant may continue to consider plans and require additional time beyond the statutory timeline for the Commission's consideration of such application. The application included proposed removal of 2<sup>nd</sup> floor "sleeping porch" in rear of house and replacement with decorative railing; removal of single-car garage attached to rear of house and 4-foot extension above it; removal of Plexiglass enclosure on northeast house corner; and the addition of three windows. Motion passed 5-0.**

5) **Approval of the January 18, 2024 HDC Regular Meeting minutes and March 10, 2024 HDC Site Visit and Special Meeting minutes at St. Stephens-353 Main Street, 127 Main Street, 149 Main Street and The Benjamin at 20 West Lane**

**Mr. Blandford moved and Ms. Daughters seconded a motion to approve the January 18, 2024 HDC Regular Meeting minutes and March 10, 2024 HDC Site Visit and Special Meeting minutes at St. Stephens-353 Main Street, 127 Main Street, 149 Main Street and the Benjamin at 20 West Lane. Motion passed 5-0.**

**Ms. Kaplan moved and Mr. Blandford seconded a motion to adjourn the Historic District Commission Meeting at 7:55 p.m. Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Fields  
Recording Secretary