

RIDGEFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Town Hall, 400 Main Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877
November 16, 2023

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.

UNAPPROVED SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

A Special 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, November 16, 2023, and beginning at 6:30 p.m.

The following members were present:

Dan O’Brien (Chair), Sean O’Kane (Vice-Chair), Kam Daughters, Harriet Hanlon (via phone), Mark Blandford (alternate for Rhys Moore) and Sara Kaplan (alternate)

Ms. Kaplan arrived at approximately 6:44pm

AGENDA

212 Main Street – Proposed demolition of garage and a chimney, and the addition of several fences to the property.

Meeting:

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

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

Mr. O’Brien distributed pictures, an aerial photo along with proposed fencing information emailed to the Commission by the property owners.

Ms. Gregory said they had requested an exploratory meeting. The HDC’s thoughts on the current proposed work as they may likely impact future floor plans.

Mr. Fichtelman said they had already done some interior work, with permits in place. They are currently working with a builder whom they have worked with for years. Most recently in 2022, they completed an antique guest house restoration as well as renovated their main residence in Westport, CT.

Ms. Gregory said they would like to discuss proposed demolition of the attached garage and chimney, along with installation of various permanent and temporary fencing.

Fencing

Ms. Gregory said they had several dogs and fencing is needed for their dogs' safety. They were looking for an aesthetic solution, not only containment and privacy. Mr. O'Brien said to have a fuller understanding, the Commission would conduct a site visit. However, given the information provided, the Commission welcomed their proposed detailed fence plans.

Ms. Gregory went through the five fence sections outlined on the aerial photograph distributed:

Section 1: Facing Main St., wood fencing would begin at the right edge of the stone pillar, come forward towards Main St about 6 ft and then turn left running to the South side of the property approximately 60 ft.

Section 2: Along this South side, there was a large 60 ft rhododendron. They proposed using 4" x 4" square black welded wire deer fencing in front of it. To hide the fencing, they would pull the rhododendron branches through the wire.

Section 3: Continuing from the black welded wire deer fencing, they would transition to a 5 ft deer fence with 1" x 1" welded wire and run it the length of the property. In the fall, they would add landscaping.

Section 4: This would be temporary fencing pending future plans and landscaping decisions. The wood fence would run East from the trellis under the deck to just past the driveway and then turn across to the South side of the property. They would use 1" wire black fencing attached to approximately 75 ft to 100 ft of wood. Mr. Blandford stated he would like to see Phase two as this was a temporary solution.

Section 5: This fence would abut with their neighbor's property. It would be approximately 10 ft from the property line. Mr. O'Kane asked if there was a pool fence. Ms. Gregory said not at this time. Ms. Daughters asked if the proposed fence would extend to Branchville Rd. Ms. Gregory said it would not. Mr. O'Kane asked if there was a current survey. Ms. Gregory said there was an old survey, dated around 1985. Mr. O'Kane suggested they obtain an up-to-date survey given the scope of work. An up-to-date property survey would be required by the Town.

Chimney and Garage

Ms. Gregory said the chimney dictated the future floor plans. It was situated 3 ft into the kitchen on the first floor. Ms. Daughters asked if the sleeping porch was coming off. Ms. Gregory said it was proposed to be removed. Ms. Gregory said there was a staircase that went up to the kitchen.

The garage could be accessed only through the ground floor. There was no direct entry to the house. Mr. Fichtelman said the Fieldstone foundation/exterior was original. The stonework wrapped around the house. By removing the garage, it would be possible to see the Fieldstone clearer. Ms. Gregory asked if they would be able to remove the garage. By removing the garage, they would better be able to commit to a design. Mr. Blandford said they were asking if the HDC agreed, they would do option A, if they did not agree, they would do option B. Ms. Gregory said their contractor advised they could replicate the stonework with stone veneer if necessary. Ms. Kaplan asked how far down was the stonework. Mr. Fichtelman said it was believed to be fairly extensive.

Ms. Gregory said inside the house, the chimney brickwork was 72” wide by 32” deep in the kitchen. Mr. O’Kane suggested their kitchen designer come up with a plan A and plan B to show the HDC. Ms. Kaplan said it was a hard decision for the HDC to give them about whether they should take down the garage or chimney without seeing plans. In her view, to the left of the gable was key, in that it looked to be a historical structure. She thought the chimney looked nice. Ms. Gregory agreed that it would be a shame to lose the chimney. Ms. Kaplan said as a designer, it was very difficult to believe with the size of the house, how the chimney would not work. Ms. Gregory said the kitchen was 18 ft by 22 ft. There was a butler pantry and five doorways that led into the kitchen. Ms. Kaplan said nevertheless, it was difficult to make an immediate decision with such a profound effect on the house. There needed to be a more compelling reason. Mr. O’Kane said the HDC were visual people. They needed a plan to understand the owner’s point of view.

Mr. Blandford said the question was if a replica chimney could come out of the roof. He was curious how that could be done. Mr. O’Kane said it was not a good idea. If they added stone veneer, it would be difficult to keep moisture out. Once moisture entered the plywood shaft, the stonework would pop off.

Mr. O’Kane said when the owners returned before the Commission, to bring their proposed demolition and addition plans. This was what they asked of all their applicants. Mr. Fichtelman said this was still exploratory. Mr. Blandford said to show as much as they could with a rendering, given the feedback. Mr. O’Kane said these plans would be of tremendous help. The plans should show how the house would be with and without the chimney amongst their other proposed plans.

Mrs. Kaplan said the HDC members appreciated what they had taken on. All agreed the house was beautiful and would benefit from their updates.

Mr. O’Brien said the next step would be the site visit which was scheduled for Sunday, December 3, 2023 at 11:00a.m. Thereafter, the next regular HDC meeting was scheduled for Thursday, December 14, 2023 at 6:30p.m.

The open items discussed and plans needed for a future meeting are the following:

- 1. Section 4 – Temporary Fencing – what do possible “future plans” look like?**
- 2. Plans for pool fencing.**
- 3. Updated property survey.**
- 4. Kitchen floor plans: (1) assuming chimney remains, and (2) assuming chimney is removed.**
- 5. Plans showing demolition of the garage and addition on a (1) current “as built” basis, and (2) post demolitions.**

Ms. Daughters moved and Mr. Blandford seconded a motion to adjourn the Historic District Commission Meeting at 7:12 p.m. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Fields
Recording Secretary