



TOWN OF WINCHESTER
MIDDLESEX COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
TOWN HALL
WINCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01890

Meeting Minutes

Date: February 6, 2023

Mystic Valley Room, Winchester Town Hall

Members Present: Jack LeMenager, Chair
Bruce Hickey, Vice-Chair
Janet Boswell
Emily Dowling
Jon Carlisle
Julie Broderick

Members Absent: Michelle McCarthy

Also Present: David Robinson, Engineer for 316 Highland, 100 Commerce Way, Woburn
Daniel Belknap, 19 Hancock Street
Catherine Frotten, 19 Verplast Avenue
Chris Downey, 1 Winter Street
Iverson Guo, 18 Thompson Street, Head Chef and Owner of Karma Asian Fusion
Eric Sanderson, Property Manager of Locatelli Properties
Nicholas Rossettos, 2 Pine Street, Planning Board Member
Arianie Keeney, Recording Secretary

A quorum being in attendance, the meeting was called to order at 7:25 p.m.

Board of Appeals Petitions

316 Highland Avenue - Site Plan Review

The owner of 316 Highland Avenue, Dr. Virginia Hung, is seeking a Site Plan Review under Section 9.5.1 (7) of the Winchester Zoning By-Law so as to change the grade of more than 500 square feet by more than six percent. The property is located in the RDB (Single Residence) zoning district and contains 39,810+/-square feet.

Project Engineer, David Robinson of Allen and Major Associates represents Dr. Hung. He recounted that in 2016, the late homeowner, Mr. Gately, began constructing a retaining wall along the eastern property line without a permit or structural design drawings. The massive, high wall is unstable and needs to be taken down. Robinson said the project is solely to remove the wall and re-grade the slope to be no steeper than 3:1 (3 horizontal feet for every vertical foot) and then return it to its original state with plantings.

Robinson said the property, built in the early 1900s, was originally one large house. It was split in 1978 into 316 Highland (the southern portion), and 314 (the northern portion). He noted that the structure will be untouched. They will be clearing some trees at the toe of the wall on the 314 property after repairing the slope.

Commissioner Boswell, who lives near the property, said she is thrilled that the wall will be removed because it appears to be as dangerous as it is unsightly. Robinson mentioned that one of the neighbors, Mr. Baldwin, at 25 Mason Street, has been very vocal and wants to see the wall come down as it is unsafe. His team is scheduled for a Conservation Commission hearing on 3/28 and they would like to have the permit from the Building Department to demolish the wall by this summer.

In response to a question from LeMenager, Robinson said the neighbors at 314 Highland Avenue, new to owning the property as of last February, totally support the project. They not only want to see safety issues addressed, they want native landscaping installed between the property and the wetlands. Robinson added that once the Japanese Knotweed invading the site is eradicated, the new plantings will include river birch trees and native and drought resistant plants.

MOTION: In accordance with **Zoning By-law Section 9.4, subsection 8**, the Historical Commission finds no adverse impact on a historical or cultural resource from the proposed plan to remove the retaining wall, and grade and landscape the property. The motion was made and seconded.

VOTED: 5 in favor, 0 opposed (2 absent)

19 Hancock Street - Special Permit

The owners of 19 Hancock Street, Daniel Belknap of 19 Hancock Street, LLC, are seeking a Special Permit including waivers for frontage lot and lot areas under Sections 4.5 and 9.4 of the Winchester Zoning By-Law in accordance with Chapter 40A, Section 9 of the Massachusetts General Laws so as to be permitted to divide the existing property into two lots (Lots 15A and 15B) creating two new non-conforming lots.

The plan is to subdivide the existing 100 ft. lot into two 50 ft. wide lots, enabling the construction of a new single family home, and permanently preserving the existing historic 2-family dwelling. Lot 15A will not meet the lot area, lot frontage and lot width requirements. The existing two-family dwelling will be located closer to the side property line than permitted as of right. Lot 15B will not meet the lot frontage and lot width requirements. The property is in the RG (General Residence) zoning district, Lot 15A contains 7,522+/-square feet and Lot 15B contains 7,522+/-square feet.

Chair LeMenager noted that the Commission met with Daniel Belknap last summer, and subsequently in September when they signed a letter of conditions. Belknap presented the current plan. He noted that the primary difference is the driveway. They were initially trying to install two driveways with shared space for plantings. Based on the feedback he received from the Commission, they have developed a plan that incorporates a shared driveway with a shallow infiltration system to manage high ground water.

Belknap intends to respect the character of the neighborhood. The new home will be similar in size and scale to nearby houses, and includes some features commonly found in the neighborhood: a gable, shed dormers set back from the facade, ganged windows, a bay window tucked into an overhang, a gabled porch, cedar shingles with crowned trims, and garage placement behind the house.

Commissioner Broderick asked about the material for the shingles and Belknap said it will be cedar as it currently is on the existing building.

Planning Board member Rosettos asked about the project's upcoming timeline and Belknap said he will be meeting with the Planning Board and Design Review this week, and the Board of Appeals next Thursday.

MOTION: In accordance with **Zoning By-law Section 9.4, subsection 8**, the Historical Commission finds no adverse impact on a historical or cultural resource from the proposed construction of the new house on 19 Hancock Street. Conditions of the letter from September 13, 2022 have been met and Special Permit has been in compliance with the **Section 4.5.2 By-law**. The motion was made and seconded.

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed (1 absent)

Belknap mentioned that the Chair of the Board of Appeals requested the preservation restriction draft language, and Belknap was hoping he could get a template. Cate Frotten of 19 Verplast said that the state has a template online which Belknap could customize to restate the conditions on the property.

19 Verplast Avenue - Special Permit

The owners of 19 Verplast Avenue, Catherine Frotten and Scott Hathaway are seeking a Special Permit under Section 4.5 and 9.4 of the Winchester Zoning By-Law in accordance with Chapter 40A, Section 9 of the Massachusetts General Laws to be permitted to divide the existing property into two lots (Lots 1 and 2) creating a new non-conforming lot (Lot 1) that will not meet the lot area, lot frontage and lot width requirements. The property is in the RG (General Residence) zoning district, Lot 1 contains 3,288+/- square feet and Lot 2 contains 11,118 +/-square feet.

Chair LeMenager mentioned that the new lot on Pine Grove Park would measure 3,288 sq. feet which seems small. Other lots on the street vary between 6,500 and 10,000 sq. ft. He also noted that the lot is an odd horseshoe shape. Catherine Frotten said that the property originally belonged to her grandparents. The previous owners sold the property off piecemeal and they never acquired the center part of the horseshoe. The grandparents sold it to her aunt and uncle in the 60s.

Frotten provided an older plot plan that differs somewhat from current maps. It shows the lot line at Pine Grove Park and a lot without access to Verplast Avenue. She presented other old documents showing the cliff that goes into that subdivision (the location of a sandpit for a cement factory for many years) and a private way that granted easement when the subdivision was built.

LeMenager said that Frotten's Design Builder, Annie Chow, mentioned to him that there would be a lot of interior work. The only exterior work would be preservation of the bay windows on the south side, and replacement of asbestos shingles and vinyl siding. Frotten confirmed this and noted that the replacement material is wood.

LeMenager inquired about the remodeling that was done in 2010 on the left side of the property. Frotten said that the foundation of an enclosed porch was pulling away from the house. It was removed and replaced during a kitchen renovation. They now have an open porch. LeMenager said that he will reference retaining the front porch and its current elements when he develops the Commission's conditions for this project.

Frotten said she is exploring selling the lot. She researched the lead time, supply chain issues, and inflation costs of building a net zero modular home herself and decided against it. Frotten would like to put what she makes from selling the lot into funding the renovations of the existing house. In the event that the lot does not sell, she plans to fix the house and sell the whole property. LeMenager explained that the Commission will build language into the conditions requiring future purchasers to build a new house that is harmonious with others on the street.

Commissioner Broderick asked if Frotten had any indication of whether a lot that small is saleable. Frotten said that apart from the appraisal she obtained, which indicates there is a market for it, she has been approached by a local realtor who thinks she would be able to realize enough from the sale to finance the repairs she wants to make on the existing house.

LeMenager said that Vice-Chair Hickey and he will draft the letter of conditions on behalf of the Commission for Frotten to present at the meeting with the Planning Board prior to her Board of Appeals hearing. He recommended that Frotten read it carefully as it is a legal document and if there's some changes she would like to make that they could come up with a compromise. LeMenager said that they need to meet again in the next month to authorize the letter of conditions.

1 Winter Street - Special Permit

The owners of 1 Winter Street, Winchester, MA, Christopher and Kerry Downey are seeking a Special Permit under Section 3.5.5 of the Winchester Zoning By-Law in accordance with Chapter 40A, Section 9 of the Massachusetts General Laws so as to be permitted to construct an addition that will be located closer to front property lines than permitted as of right. The property is located in the RG (General Residence) zoning district and contains 6,505+/-square feet.

Chris Downey reminded the Commission that he completed an addition of a covered front porch on his 1869 house last year with the Commission's approval. He now wants to widen that porch on either side of the covered area and install railings. It would be about 50-60 sq. ft. of space uncovered on each side. The house would be unaltered.

Downey said he does not want to cover the entire expanse of the porch because it would darken the interior space too much. He presented several examples of similar houses in the neighborhood that feature the design he would like to use. Commissioner Broderick said she appreciated his furnishing examples of other houses in the neighborhood with partially covered porches.

Chair LeMenager said he does not have any problem with the addition.

MOTION: In accordance with **Zoning By-law Section 9.4, subsection 8**, the Historical Commission finds no adverse impact on a historical or cultural resource from the proposed construction plan of uncovered porch construction at 1 Winter Street. The motion was made and seconded.

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed (1 absent)

Center Business District Review

14 Thompson Street (Karma Restaurant)

In an email to the Commission prior to the meeting, the Owner of 14 Thompson Street, Kevin Foley, stated that he wishes to modify the front of the building to accommodate the needs of a new tenant, Karma Restaurant. He wants to reconfigure the entrance moving it to the left where a window is presently

located. He stated that the window in question is not original to the facade, nor is the surrounding brick. He assured the Commission that he will personally oversee the selection of new materials, including the replacement brick.

Head Chef and Business Owner of Karma Asian Fusion, Iversen Guo, and Property Manager, Eric Sanderson of Locatelli properties presented the Commission with full sized drawings of both the original design, and a second alternative design. Guo said this will be Karma's fifth location, joining ones in Burlington, Westford, Concord, and Andover. His team is very excited about launching in Winchester. Guo assured the Commission that they plan to retain all of the existing doors. Guo explained that they need to reconfigure the entrance because the current entryway is tight and when the door opens, cold air pours straight into the dining room.

Chair LeMenager said that the semi-circular window detail over the current doors is an important design feature throughout the Locatelli Block that should be retained. He pointed to several places the element occurs including on the building's signage and above a door adjacent to the back patio. Guo assured the Commission that the courtyard patio will be preserved the way it is, other than replacement of pavers.

Guo reported that the Planning Board did not oppose their first design but wanted recommendations from the Historical Commission. He came up with a second design so they could have options. Property Manager Sanderson added that when they met with Design Review, they requested more detailed drawings. Guo explained that in the first design, an additional layer of materials covers the original door but it will not be demolished and could be subsequently restored and used.

Commissioner Dowling said she really likes the second design and asked about the glass under the awning. Guo said that they will not be changing or modifying the glass. He added that since it's a black steel storefront, all the windows will sport the black grid style and assured the Commission that the glass is transparent. Planning Board member, Nicholas Rossettos asked whether the antique copper material is a surface treatment or if it will change the building, or affect the brick. Sanderson said it is just a decoration that goes over the brick.

Guo and his team prefer the first design and believe it will bring more excitement and energy to the town. The bronze panels are an element of their brand used at their other locations. Commissioner Broderick said that the second design is more faithful to the building but she understands why the first design is more exciting and trendy.

Commissioner Boswell said she is not opposed to the designs if there are no changes to the openings or damage to the brick that would alter the building.

MOTION: The Historical Commission finds no adverse impact on a historical or cultural resource from both proposed design plans of Karma Restaurant at 14 Thompson Street. The motion was made and seconded.

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed (1 absent)

Other business

Historic Tour

Chair LeMenager said that he was contacted by Town Archivist Ellen Knight regarding historic tours of the cemetery that the Historical Society is planning this fall. Any members of the Historical Commission who are interested in participating in the tours as guides are encouraged to contact Knight at the Town Hall.

Approval of January 9, 2023, and January 19, 2023 Meeting Minutes

A vote to approve the minutes of January 9 and January 19, 2023 was held.

MOTION: To approve the meeting minutes of January 9 and January 19, 2023 Historical Commission Meetings.

VOTED: 5 in favor, 1 abstain (1 absent)

Adjournment

A vote to adjourn the meeting of February 6th, 2023 was held.

MOTION: To adjourn the Historical Commission meeting of February 6th, 2023.

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed (1 absent)

The meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m. Next meeting: TBD

Respectfully Submitted,

Arianie Keeney, Recording Secretary



Jack LeMenager

3/8/2023

Date