

Royalston Historic District Commission

Royalston, Massachusetts, 01368

Meeting Minutes

Date: Sep 17, 2009

Attendees: Peter Kraniak (Chair), Celt Grant (Vice-Chair), Bob Casinghino, Rick Carrier, Chris Dawson, Pierre Humblet, Ken Lively, Roger O'Donnell. All were active voters, except that Chris ceased to vote after Rick arrived. The building inspector, Geoff Newton, was also present.

Peter opened the meeting at 7:34.

Minutes

Roger read the minutes of the Aug 20 meeting. A few typos corrections were made. Celt motioned to approve the corrected minutes. Bob seconded. All approved.

Old business

John McClure, of 8 N.E. Fitzwilliam Road, submitted an a posteriori application for his new roof which has the same color as the old one but uses architectural shingles instead of three tabs. He explained that while he was serving on the commission (from 1993 to 1995) such changes did not require a certificate of appropriateness.

It was explained that the policy is to require a certificate of appropriateness and not of non-applicability, as it is a change to exterior elements visible from a public way and it is not specifically excluded from review by the HDC. The application was duly changed.

Bob made a motion that we accept the application for consideration at our next meeting on Oct 15, without a public hearing. Roger seconded. All voted in favor.

Geoff mentioned that he had no procedures to delay the issuance of a building permit for the time required by the commission review. However it was pointed out that, except in emergency situation, MGL Chapter 40 C clearly states that building permits should not be issued until a certificate has been approved by the HDC.

At this point Celt suggested that we submit an article in the newsletter to remind the homeowners of the proper procedures and of the need to plan ahead. Bob suggested that instead (or perhaps in addition) we send a letter to the homeowners. Ultimately the homeowner is responsible, not the contractor. Roger volunteered to write a draft, which will be edited and typed by Pierre and discussed at the next regular meeting.

John McClure submitted another application to replace all 6x6 or 3x3 wood windows by vinyl windows, and to remove the aluminum storm windows. Many have already been changed without authorization.

John stated that previous 3x3 windows installed in 1992 have already rotten and that he wished to be as energy efficient as possible. He also mentioned that the cost of other solutions was prohibitive, that 6x6 vinyl windows were hardly distinguishable from wood, and that the vinyl solution offers the advantage of not requiring storm windows.

Bob and others pointed out that living in a HDC district entails responsibilities.

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Pierre noticed that the request was for a certificate of hardship. However the reasons presented are not peculiar to the case at hand and are instead applicable to virtually all buildings in the historic district. The request was changed to a certificate of appropriateness.

Bob made a motion to accept the application for a certificate of appropriateness, which will be considered at our next regular meeting after holding a public hearing. Roger seconded. All voted in favor except Chris who abstained.

New business

In answer to a recent HDC letter about the propane tank installed without authorization at 7 on the Common, Henry Cole has been in telephone contact with Ken and they discussed 3 possible solutions: move the tank closer to the home, hide it with a fence, or bury it. Subsequently Henry sent a letter and an application to Peter, requesting a certificate of appropriateness for the tank surrounded by a picket fence and some sort of cover.

The committee noticed that the application was not specific enough, as no dimensions were given.

Celt made a motion not to accept the application for consideration. Bob seconded. All voted in favor, including Rick, except Pierre and Ken who abstained as abutters.

As the matter is not urgent, Pierre will prepare a letter to Henry, to be signed by Peter, indicating that the application is not in proper form and requesting more details. Peter will also talk to Steve, the contractor, directly.

Next the commission discussed 3 applications for certificate of appropriateness for 3 on the Common transmitted by Pastor Jeff Francis through Ken.

The first application is about the chimney on the North roof. It has been demolished without authorization in 2008.

Roger made a motion to accept the application for consideration at our next meeting, after a public hearing. Peter seconded. All voted in favor, except Pierre and Ken who are abutters and thus abstained.

The second application is to replace the roof of the home as well as the breezeway between the home and the garage. The roof would be changed from slates to architectural shingles.

Although members of the commission are ready to believe that the application is meant to be about the roof of the breezeway (and not the breezeway itself), the application is ambiguous. Efforts were made to contact the applicant, without success.

Bob made a motion to accept the application at the next meeting with a public hearing. Celt seconded. Peter, Bob and Celt voted in favor. Roger and Rick voted against. Pierre and Ken abstained as abutters.

The bylaw specifies that applications must be approved by a majority of the commission (4 votes) and the same rule seems to be in use for votes on accepting an application for consideration (although nobody was absolutely sure). Thus the motion was considered to have failed.

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The third application is to remove the two windows on the first floor of the South side of the barn and to replace them with normal wood siding. They are in a great state of disrepair. They were installed some time in the past as part of a chicken coop and have no current use.

There was some discussion whether the application was specific enough, as the appellation “first floor” is somewhat ambiguous due to the topology of the site. However the commission agreed that 1st floor of the South side was precise enough.

Celt moved that we consider this application at the next meeting, with a public hearing. Bob seconded. All voted in favor, except Pierre and Ken who are abutters and who abstained.

Annual elections to the HDC board

Pierre made a motion to re-elect Peter as chair for one year. Celt seconded. All voted in favor, except Peter who abstained.

Pierre made a motion to re-elect Celt as vice-chair for one year. Bob seconded. All voted in favor, except Celt who abstained.

Bob made a motion to re-elect Pierre as secretary for one year. Roger seconded. All voted in favor, except Pierre who abstained.

Meeting adjourned

Following unanimous approval of a motion made by Celt and seconded by Roger, Peter adjourned the meeting at 9:35.

Respectfully submitted,



Pierre A. Humblet,
Secretary