

Royalston Historic District Commission

Royalston, Massachusetts, 01368

Meeting Minutes

Date: Oct 15, 2009

Attendees: Peter Kraniak (Chair), Celt Grant (Vice-Chair), Bob Casinghino, Rick Carrier, Pierre Humblet, Roger O'Donnell and Andy West. All were active voters.

Peter opened the meeting at 7:33 PM.

Hearings

Peter opened the scheduled hearings.

The first 3 hearing matters concern applications by Jeffrey Francis for **3 on the Common**:

1. Demolition of the chimney on the ridge of the North roof (this has already been done without permission)
2. Demolition of the 2 ground level windows on the South side of the barn and covering of their openings with clapboard matching the rest of the wall.
3. Reroofing of the house and of South breezeway with architectural shingles (same brand and "colonial slate" color as at 5 on the Common) instead of the existing slates.

Neither the applicant nor his representatives were present. Paul Tortorella from 14 on the Common had sent a letter with some comments on all the cases scheduled for this meeting. Andy read the comments about 3 on the Common: Paul regretted the demolition of the chimney, he had no objection to removing the windows if the new clapboard left no trace of their existence, and he understood the need to replace the slate roof.

Speaking as an abutter Pierre stated that he had no objection to the demolition of the windows. He regretted the replacement of the slate roof and suspected that the applicant had not made much effort to save it, although it might be the most cost effective solution in the long run. However he understood that as many slate roof demolitions have already been approved, it would be unfair to impose a burden in this case. On the other hand he wished that the chimney, which had been demolished without authorization, be reconstructed. He had also reconstructed his own three chimneys. The cost in this case would not be great if the roofer could work on the chimney at the same time as the new roof.

Attendees made comments about the need to place the dish antenna on the roof. They were told the applicant had promised to do so at an earlier HDC meeting.

Celt commented that he would like to see some evidence that the option to preserve the slate roof had been studied.

Bob said that he had to replace his own slate roof as it was in bad shape.

Rick commented that Ken Lively, at 5 on the Common, had previously been asked to preserve a chimney, which he had done.

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A short discussion took place about the windows. A picture showed that the framing mentioned in Paul's letter was minimal and that it shouldn't be hard to blend the new clapboard with the old.

4. The fourth hearing was about **7 on the Common**, where Stephen Chase, acting on behalf of Henry Cole had applied to install an above ground propane tank (already installed without authorization) surrounded on three sides by a picket fence.

Stephen Chase was present, as well as Dr. George Krasowski and Theresa Ann Quinn, abutters from 11 on the Common.

Peter explained the history of the case.

Andy read the part of the letter from Paul Tortorella, who preferred that the tank be buried, as other tanks have been. If that was not possible, a fence might be a solution, but a picket fence didn't seem to fit.

The abutters stated that they had a plunging view on the tank, which was an eyesore, and requested that it be buried, as similar tanks at 23 on the Common (Nash) and 22 on the Common (Stanton) have been.

Andy asked if the house could be heated with a smaller tank, for example a large gas bottle. They are less conspicuous and there are already several on the Common. Steve stated that the regulations didn't seem to allow that solution when the house is gas heated.

5. The last hearing was about **8 NE Fitzwilliam Road** where John McClure applied to replace all 6/6 and 3/3 wood windows with doubled glazed low-E energy efficient vinyl windows and to remove the existing storm windows. The new windows would be made by PVC Inc. They would be double glazed with muntin-like dividers between the two panes. Their efficiency would be 0.33 U.

John was present at the hearing, as well as Stephen Chase, a neighbor.

At the applicant's requests Roger had taken pictures of some original windows and of some of the proposed windows (as installed without authorization) and these pictures were circulated. Several committee members also stated that they had seen the new windows (at least Bob, Pierre and Roger).

Andy read a letter from Boyd Estus and Liane Brandon (abutters at 8 NE Fitzwilliam Road) in favor of the application.

He also read the letter from Paul Tortorella opposing the use of vinyl windows in a historic district.

Roger quoted from the booklet titled "A Guidebook for Historic District Commissions in Massachusetts" published by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, W. F Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth (July 2006). It states in bold letters on p. 64: "Vinyl windows in an historic district as simply an inappropriate material". Roger stated that the Commonwealth had defined standards for historic preservation and that we should uphold them.

Steve Chase, a neighbor of the applicant, speaking as a professional carpenter and windows restorer, stated that the proposed windows look unattractive, are not very efficient, are not long lasting and

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have a cost that can be similar to that of wood based solutions. He explained that old windows can be repaired and restored and that eliminating air infiltration is the most critical factor in improving energy efficiency.

Bob observed that from his research using storm windows improves the efficiency from 0.8 U to 0.4 U and that the lower number is close to what the proposed windows achieve.

John McClure, the applicant, stated that the windows were very well sealed, to the point that skunk smell didn't go through. He also observed that the windows eliminate the need for aluminum storm windows and that they can be painted so as to look like wood windows.

Bob opined that it is still easy to tell the difference and that windows are important to the historical character of the district. It's a matter of appropriateness.

John McClure countered that Boyd Estus, a professional cinematographer with a critical eye, did not find them objectionable.

Pierre observed that the proposed windows did not meet the standard (0.3 U efficiency) for products purchased on or after June 1, 2009 to benefit from the federal tax credit under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Tax Act of 2009.

Andy asked how the windows were installed. If only the sash was taken out (and not the entire frame) the new windows would be narrower than the existing ones. John explained that only the sash was removed and that the new windows are narrower, but no more so than the transparent part of standard storm windows. He continued that he had looked at other brands, such as Marvin, Sears and Pella, but they were very expensive. Steve Chase objected, stating he had recently installed standard size Marvin wooden windows at the Rabinowitz house. They have double panes and e-glass, the cost was about \$400 plus installation.

At 8:48 Celt motioned to close the hearings. Rick seconded. All voted in favor.

Minutes

Roger read the minutes of the September 17 meeting. Roger made a motion to approve them as read. Celt seconded. All voted in favor.

Roger then read the minutes of the special meeting of September 28. Bob requested that the discussion about the parsonage windows be recorded. Andy made the requested change. Roger motioned to approve the minutes as amended. Celt seconded. All voted in favor, except Pierre who abstained, as he was not present at the [special](#) meeting.

Old business

Votes on the six pending applications for certificates of appropriateness.

1. The committee discussed the application to demolish the North chimney at 3 on the Common. Roger read the applications. A short discussion followed, and the sentiment was that it

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should be preserved, as chimneys are an important element and that recently Ken Lively at 5 on the Common had been asked to preserve his chimneys (his application to demolish had been rejected). Celt motioned to reject the application. Rick seconded. All voted in favor of then motion to reject, except Pierre who abstained as abutter.

2. The committee discussed the application to demolish the ground floor barn windows at 3 on the Common. Roger read the applications. Andy motioned to approve the application, with the clarification that the window frames be removed and that the clapboard be blended with the rest of the wall. Bob seconded. All voted in favor, except Pierre who abstained as abutter. The application was assigned number 10-1-09.

3. The committee discussed the application for a new propane tank surrounded by a picket fence at 7 on the Common. Roger read the application. The feeling from the hearing was that the tank would be objectionable with any kind of fence or painting and that it should be removed or buried. Celt made a motion to reject the application as architecturally inappropriate and to attach a letter advising the applicant that a fence is not an acceptable solution and that the precedent is to bury tanks of that size. Andy seconded. All voted in favor of the motion, except Pierre who abstained as abutter.

4. The committee discussed the application to replace the slate roof at 3 on the Common with architectural shingles. Roger read the applications. Andy stated that while he hates to see the slate go, he does not feel that it is terribly significant. Changing the roof of the church would be another matter. That sentiment seemed to be shared. Andy motioned to approve the application and issue a certificate of appropriateness, Roger seconded. All voted in favor, except [Celt and](#) Pierre who abstained, [the latter](#) as [he is an](#) abutter. The application was assigned number 10-2-09.

5. The committee discussed the application by John McClure to replace the 3 tab shingles at 8 NE Fitzwilliam Road with architectural shingles. Andy motioned to approve the application and issue a certificate of appropriateness, Roger seconded. All voted in favor. The application was assigned number 10-3-09.

6. The committee discussed the application by John McClure to replace all 6/6 and 3/3 wood windows at 8 NE Fitzwilliam Road with low E energy efficient vinyl windows made by PVC Inc. Those are single light double pane windows with muntin-like dividers between the two panes.

Roger read the application. The committees asked John how many had already been replaced and how many remained. The answer was: 4 in front, 1 on a visible side, 2 in the back. 15 remain, 12 of which are visible from a public way.

Bob made a motion to not approve the application for the proposed windows when visible from a public way as they are inappropriate. Celt seconded.

- Pierre explained his position. The proposed windows have several characteristics:
 - They are made of vinyl instead of wood. However that difference is barely visible.
 - They are somewhat narrower than the original, however that is not worse than aluminum storm windows, which can now be eliminated. On the other hand, Royalston is not another Plymoth plantation or Sturbridge, storm windows were a feature of Royalston when the historical district was created.

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- They have of low E and are glazed, but those features are not noticeable.
- They have a single light, which reflects light differently than windows with multiple lights.
- They are lacking true external muntins, and this feature is very noticeable.

While not all elements are objectionable, the proposed windows have a historically incorrect look that is not compensated by remarkable energy efficiency. The character of the district would be highly altered if the trend were allowed. Thus he would vote in favor of the motion.

- Andy stated that several owners in the district had taken the trouble to fix their windows to respect the historic character of the district. The Livelys have reglazed theirs and added storm windows for energy saving. He himself had put new sashes with divided lights and interior storms. Therefore he could not approve the application.
- Roger stated that he had also installed interior storm windows.
- Celt stated that he did not feel good about the application. The windows are the eyes of the house, the door its mouth.
- Peter stated that there are precedents for vinyl windows in the district and that he had installed such windows on his house (outside the district). Andy objected to the claim that there were precedents. Those cases have never been handled properly. Rather a disorganized historic district commission unable to get a quorum let them slip by. It's the Town's fault. That's why we took quick action in this case. John McClure then volunteered that he had installed the new windows on the front of his house without asking for authorization so that we can all see how they really looked. He suspected a negative reaction to the mention of vinyl, but hoped that we would see how good they are.
- Bob stated that he had redone lots of windows in a historic manner and has hassled neighbors about visible propane tanks and other matters. There is nothing personal in his vote. He then recalled that when the HDC was created, experts stated that it was one of the most intact towns in the area. That's why it's particularly important that we preserve it.

Six commission members voted ~~Overall the vote was unanimous in~~ favor of the motion, ~~while except~~ Peter ~~who~~ voted against.

New business

It was brought up that the renovation of fence of the Columns did not seem to be exactly in kind. Some pictures seemed to provide some evidence that this might be the case. Pierre mentioned that if larger decorative poles were added all along the fence, they would not match the section of the fence that fronts his property. Andy will call the owner, Terry Dangel, and ask for clarifications.

Meeting adjourned

Following unanimous approval of a motion made by Peter and seconded by Roger, Peter adjourned the meeting a 10:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,



Pierre A. Humblet,
Secretary