

**Belmont Historic District Commission
MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, December 13, 2016
Belmont Town Hall, Room 2

2017 JAN 19 PH 2: 28

Commission members present: Lauren Meier, Co-Chair; Lisa Harrington, Co-Chair; Karl Leabo; Elizabeth (Sue) Pew; Terry McCarthy; Michael Chesson; Nushin Yazdi; Michael Smith; Lydia Ogilby, Member Emeritus

Jeffrey Wheeler, Office of Community Development (OCD); Spencer Gober, OCD

Not present: Jacob Cohen, Kathy Fahey

7:00pm Meeting called to order

721 Pleasant Street: Romain Aubanel, homeowner present

- Mr. Aubanel discussed his family's desire to provide better access from the kitchen to the patio at the rear of the house by changing an existing window from the kitchen into a door and changing an existing door into a window. He said he would provide the new window to match the adjacent existing window and the new door to be glazed in a style to match its existing adjacent window. He showed photos of the conditions.
- Mr. Aubanel gave a brief history of the house. Built as a boarding school (legend has it that Mark Twain among other famous educators had taught there); then later turned into condo's, then to a two family and now a single family. The kitchen is a relatively recent addition to the house. The door he is asking to replace with a window leads to a stair having previously been used to gain access to the upper floors. He said they don't expect to be using that stair any longer.
- Karl Leabo said that he and Mr. Smith visited the house with Mr. Aubanel. Both the window and door are visible from Hay Road and he agrees that the types of modifications desired are appropriate given the existing circuitous interior route to the patio from the kitchen. Mr. Leabo also suggested that the owner should consider replacing an existing 1950's bow window with a double french door leading to the patio for better access. Mr. Aubanel said he agreed with that approach.
- Ms. Meier reminded members of the need to understand that decisions of the HDC can often be precedent setting. She noted that in this case, while the window in the kitchen is relatively new, the service door to the stair is original with original trim. Mr. Leabo said that in this case, because of the change of occupancies, there is no longer a need for the service door; and the windows in the kitchen are relatively new, probably 1950's. Mr. Smith said that, given the change of use and lack of a need for a door at the stairwell and, given that this side of the house although visible from Hay Road is not the primary elevation, he supports the owner's proposal to replace the original old door with a window that matches, in all respects, the adjacent original old window. Mr. Smith also advised the owner to consult with the Building Department about the proposed removal of the door at the stairwell to be certain that there are no code/fire safety concerns.
- Ms. Pew suggested Mr. Aubanel may want to contact Mr. Merrill at 90 Somerset Street where Mark Twain was known to visit at one time.

- Ms. Meier said that Mr. Aubenel should submit 12 copies of a Certificate of Appropriateness with related materials of design and specifications three weeks in advance of a Public Hearing.

HDC Documentation

- Ms. Meier asked that HDC members review the materials prepared by the OCD. Mr. Wheeler suggested that, given the heavy current agenda of the Commission (Inventory, Demolition Delay, etc.), completion of review of the proposed HDC Documents by the Commission will be due at the Commission's meeting tentatively scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 16, 2017.

Inventory/Survey

- Ms. Harrington said that the consultant, Lisa Mausolf, has been meeting with her, Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Smith toward the completion of her work which will be presented to the full Commission for a vote on January 10, 2017. The Community Preservation Committee will then meet on January 11. Once finalized the OCD will place it on the website.
- Ms. Harrington said there is a list of 200 forms (approximately 750 pages) that are being prepared by the consultant which are being reviewed now and Mr. Chesson has agreed to assist in the review.

Demolition Delay

- Ms. Meier gave a summary of the Belmont history of the demolition delay bylaw and the need to update the list of properties affected as a result of the survey. There is a need to define "substantial" demolition; remove the sunset clause in the current bylaw (which expires in June, 2017); remove the "appeal" provision for property owners wishing to be removed from the list of properties; and reconsider the period of delay, currently six months. Since inception of the current bylaw three properties on the current list were demolished – one on Clover Street burned down; one on Prospect Street due to serious radon problems; and one on Waverley Street where a developer waited out the 6 month demo delay period despite the HDC's requests that the developer consider preservation/reuse options. Mr. Wheeler said that part of the problem with the current by law is that the demo delay period begins when the application is filed, a consideration in revising the length of delay period.
- Ms. Meier said that Chuck Clark has been appointed as the liaison of the Planning Board and she has been in touch with him.
- Mr. Wheeler said the warrant period for Town Meeting opens February 6 and closes March 6.

504 Concord Avenue

Public Hearing – Application for Certificate of Appropriateness

Present: Steven Knight, homeowner; Stephen Hart, architect; Scott Fulford, designer; Rebecca Verner, Designer.

- Ms. Meier opened the Public Hearing. She said the Commission will consider both the formal Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) application for a garage and front steps as well as an informal hearing regarding proposed changes to the house.
- Mr. Knight gave a brief history of improvements made on the property since they bought the home in 2004. Regarding the COA he described a need for a garage separate from the existing garage/carriage house which he believes would not be seen from a public way. He then described difficulties with steepness of the existing exterior steps leading to the main entry of the house and a desire to change the design.
- Regarding the garage, Mr. Knight said that he is hoping to conduct this work in conjunction with the need for digging a new electrical service from Concord Avenue to other previously approved

work behind the house, currently scheduled to be done in January or February. Ms. Verner presented the design for plans for a subterranean garage with an above-grade stone balustrade above the garage. She showed drawing and photographs to show that the balustrade would be visible from Concord Ave; however, the garage would not. Mr. Knight said that the visual purpose of the brick front of the proposed garage and the balustrade would be to refer back to historic materials of the property. The new proposed garage doors were described by Mr. Knight as matching the existing stable doors that had been previously approved for the existing garage. Regarding the garage and balustrade, comments of Commission members were generally favorable. Mr. Smith said that the Commission will need to see development of plans including sections, details and material selections. The hearing will be continued to the next HDC meeting.

- Regarding revisions to the proposed exterior steps, Mr. Knight explained difficulties in using the existing relatively steep steps and showed a plan eliminating the existing steps and building two symmetrical curved sets of steps. Commission members expressed general concerns that the proposed design would change the character of the property. Mr. Knight said he would hope to deal with the garage as the only official action taken by the Commission on the current application for a Certificate of Appropriateness, withdrawing the proposal for the steps and returning again later to discuss ways of treating that portion of the design.
- **A motion was made, seconded and unanimously approved to close the Public Hearing portion of the discussion for continuation at the next HDC meeting in January, 2017.**
- Regarding preliminary discussions for revisions to the existing house, Mr. Knight described needs to provide additional space, including a bathroom for extended family living. The design team handed out existing photographs and plans as well as proposed drawings. Mr. Hart described conditions of the south side of the house where changes over many years have created unusual conditions including roof ice formations and leaks. He described a proposal to revise this section of the house to simplify its design by expanding a bay to fill an existing gap in the plan. Mr. Smith and Ms. Meier expressed concern with the proposal to re-design an historic bay by expanding it in two directions, thereby changing the character of that historic element of the house. Ms. Meier reminded the need to preserve historical elements of the house. She asked Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Gober to investigate historical building department records for the project and share that with the owner and design team. The owner and design team will consider the concerns raised and revisit the design.

27 Wellington Lane

- Ms. Pew mentioned that her home had received a request, after a recent insurance company inspection, that the garage roof was in need of rebuilding/replacement. Mr. Leabo and Ms. Yazdi agreed to visit the home next week to assess the condition.

Minutes of November 17, 2015 meeting were unanimously approved.

Demolition Delay

- Ms. Meier said that the Selectmen have asked to have a discussion of the Demolition Delay Bylaw with the HDC, tentatively scheduled for Monday, January 9.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:55 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Smith