

HISTORIC AREA COMMISSION  
New Castle Town Hall  
2<sup>nd</sup> and Delaware Streets  
February 9, 2017

Present: Laura Fontana, Chairperson  
David Baldini  
Lynn Briggs\*  
Jean Norvell  
Marty Wright

Also Present: Leila Hamroun, Architectural Consultant  
Jeff Bergstrom, Building Inspector

\*joined meeting at 6:34 p.m.; departed meeting at 7:35 p.m.

The meeting was convened at 6:30 p.m. Roll call followed. A quorum was declared.

**Approval of Minutes** – Mr. Wright was incorrectly identified on page 3. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the 1/12/17 meeting as corrected. The motion was seconded and the minutes approved.

**OLD APPLICATIONS**

**145 East 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, K. Baker**

Appeal of administrative review decision.

Discussion: The applicant was present. The application included a material that is not appropriate in the historic district and was denied. The applicant would like to discuss the material and come to an agreement on what can be used. The applicant proposes using AZEK which is a vinyl based product that resembles wood and is painted. The applicant cited maintenance as a factor in using this plastic wood composite product. The house is a 2-1/2 story home. Two samples of AZEK were shown to commissioners. They are seeking clarification on where they can use AZEK or an alternate material versus where they cannot.

Ms. Hamroun said that AZEK is a cellular PVC product. She cannot recommend approving the application as submitted because the material is not appropriate per the guidelines. Wood is required on the main elevation and areas visible from the public right-of-way. Potentially an alternate material may be used on the back. Ms. Hamroun stated that the new guidelines identify and address condition, quality, and appearance of materials in the historic district. The guidelines are specific about what materials can be used on areas visible from the public right of way and what is not visible from the public right of way. As it pertains to the roof people are encouraged to keep as much of the original or natural trim as possible. If the homeowner wants to do a full replacement they must demonstrate that the natural wood is beyond repair. In this case, pictures of the rotted wood would be helpful.

Further, Ms. Hamroun said when it comes to replacement the guidelines state clearly that contributing buildings should have wood trim on areas visible from the public right-of-way. She does not question the ease of maintenance of an artificial product versus a natural product. However, part of being in the historic district is the homeowner should keep the

natural fabric that would be more consistent to what would have previously existed; properly maintained it performs well. Ms. Hamroun said the guidelines address some accommodations for using alternate wood materials. Vinyl is not an acceptable material in the historic district. It is very artificial in appearance and ages at a different rate. Ms. Hamroun said in areas that are not as visible the HAC also prefers keeping wood, but the guidelines allow for alternate products such as engineered wood, that should be painted so they age naturally just as the rest of the structure. There is more maintenance involved, but it is part of the value of the historic district.

The applicant said there is a lot of rotting and if the rotting goes on longer then water could enter the house. She asked what makes her house a ‘contributing’ house.

Ms. Hamroun said a contributing house gives character to the historic district. The structure is one that is deemed to have been from a certain period of time and adds value to the historic district. Contributing houses in New Castle’s historic district include Colonial, Federal, Victorian, and turn of the century homes. She noted what makes them significant is their fabric, i.e., windows, masonry, and trim. Ms. Hamroun stated there is some flexibility for items that are difficult to see from the public right of way.

Ms. Hamroun offered to meet with the applicant or contractor onsite to discuss materials and advise them on what is and is not visible from the public right of way.

The applicant believes that it would be difficult to see a difference in product at the higher elevation. According to Ms. Hamroun over time you can see a difference with the way the product ages. A painted wood product will age and weather differently than an artificial product. Using wood protects the appearance and the fabric of the structure. She said that painted materials are recommended on the rear of the house so it fits in harmoniously over time with the rest of the structure. Ms. Hamroun said that wood should be used on the main elevation.

Mr. Baldini indicated the applicant submitted applications in 2013 and 2015 for the same thing. He asked if any work was done at that time. The applicant said that no work was done because her spouse did not want to use all wood. The result is that the wood further deteriorated; if work had been done earlier, repair and limited replacement may have been possible. Mr. Baldini noted they have a large tree in front of their house that keeps things moist and hard to dry out. He understands their desire to use a non-wood product, but it should not be a perpetual maintenance problem. The historical integrity of the house is important. He wonders what alternate the HAC can offer beyond using wood.

Ms. Hamroun said routine maintenance is a constant when you look at main elevations visible from public right-of-way but also on all elevations. Repainting is part of that maintenance. Not all houses have adequate sun, but things can be done to protect the fabric, like painting and priming the natural materials. Additionally, she said that some of the engineered wood materials are options in areas that are not visible from the public right of way. Ms. Hamroun can provide a range of material samples to look at in the City office or Mr. Bergstrom’s office, but HAC cannot recommend a specific product.

The applicant asked where the public right of way is for her house. Ms. Hamroun replied that the public right of way is the street – this means that the front elevation, street corners and portions of the side elevations.

Mr. Baldini said it is a 'hard look' up to the third floor. Alternate materials on the sides is not an issue. He agrees it is a maintenance issue, but the schedule should not be accelerated. He thinks that the HAC should do something different that allows work like this to be done and still look good. He added that the houses on both sides also have wood rot.

Ms. Norvell supports Ms. Hamroun meeting with the applicant onsite to discuss materials that are appropriate long term and with less maintenance.

Ms. Hamroun said that after meeting with the applicant to discuss the application, if a resolution is agreed upon by the applicant, the City and Ms. Hamroun that conforms with the guidelines, then an administrative review could be done and work could begin.

**Action: The consensus of the HAC was to table discussion until further consulting is done by the homeowner and Ms. Hamroun. The applicant agrees to table the application.**

**158 East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Martino** – *(Not on agenda.)* A representative from Gary Fedele Roofing and Siding was present to discuss replacement of the roof with blue trim. Ms. Hamroun informed him the application was administratively approved on 1/25/17. Notices are then sent to the homeowner and the contractor. The representative was unaware of the approval. He will follow up with Mr. Bergstrom to obtain a copy of approval documents.

**Old Business** – Training Session – Ms. Hamroun will speak with the City about the structure of training sessions and dates to consider. The purpose of the training would be to educate commissioners and the public about the new guidelines, i.e., process, building category (key, contributing), alternate materials. She suggested having the National Association of Preservation Commissions provide their perspective of issues they have encountered and that the HAC has encountered. She will be getting confirmation from City officials on whether the HAC member training would be open to the public. She anticipates training to take place in March 2017.

Structure of the training session(s) was discussed. A public work session could be held for commissioners only and allow the public to submit questions via email to be addressed at the session. Ms. Hamroun will check on parameters and wording for work sessions with the City Solicitor. A second training session for the public could be held after the work session to address their questions and/or concerns. Mr. Bergstrom believes it would be beneficial for commissioners to have a training session with Ms. Hamroun first. Commissioners think the training should be available to approved City contractors, realtors, designers, and property owners among others.

Mr. Baldini raised the issue of agenda timeline and having the process on the City website. Ms. Hamroun added the need to clarify the process of tabling an application and how it affects the timeline for applications. Discussion followed.

Mr. Baldini reminded commissioners that a recent applicant indicated his confusion about some of the guidelines, including the agenda process. Ms. Hamroun suggested asking for public input on what is confusing and needs clarification. She said there is a certain amount of responsibility on the part of the applicant to understand some of these things.

Ms. Fontana said that many homeowners are not aware there are historic house credits available to those who are working on historic houses. Ms. Hamroun said this is included in the guidelines, but perhaps a note could be included in the *New Castle Weekly*.

**Adjournment** -- There being no further business to address, the meeting was adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Debbie Turner  
Stenographer