

HISTORIC AREA COMMISSION
New Castle Town Hall
Meeting via Zoom Technology
September 10, 2020

Present: Laura Fontana, Chairperson
Kevin Wade
Justin Day
Bill Walters
Mark Chaump

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

Ms. Fontana convened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. Roll call followed and a quorum to conduct business was declared.

Approval of the Minutes

A Motion to approve the Minutes of the August 13, 2020, meeting as presented was made, seconded, and on vote, was unanimously approved with a vote of three in favor and one abstain.

Ms. Hamroun stated that the Application for 156 East 2nd Street on the Agenda was approved as Tier 1.

Old Business

46 West 3rd Street – DeAscanis Homes, Inc.

An Application was resubmitted for the construction of a single family house with 1-2 off-street parking spaces with additional drawings per Motion on the Application at the August 13, 2020 HAC meeting.

Ms. Hamroun stated that per the Guidelines the scale of the proposed structure is out of sync with properties on either side and across the street relative to mass and volume; and the setback of the front of the house is out of alignment relative to adjacent the two-story properties. She added that a lower roofline would be more appropriate for the area. Materials proposed in the Application are appropriate.

Mr. Walters strongly expressed his opinion that regardless of the Guidelines, the proposed structure is appropriate for the area and stated he would vote in favor of the Application as presented.

The Applicant explained that the front porch aligns to the front of the adjacent two-story houses, noting that was what he thought had been agreed at the August 13 HAC meeting. Relative to the height, the Applicant noted some newer houses built in the City are taller than their surrounding properties. He also made an assumption that a similar style house might be constructed on the two vacant lots across the street.

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Ms. Hamroun noted that context is defined by the location of the property and the surrounding area and not by what is up the street or two streets over. The surrounding homes on the block are low and are historically significant to the area. The proportions of new construction are based on what is adjacent to and across the street from the property. She went on to explain the rationale behind the Guidelines in maintaining the fabric and character of the environment, noting that different streets in New Castle have different significance and different scale. She reiterated that the scale of the 2-1/2 story proposed home would make a huge impact and contrast to the surrounding homes.

In response to a question from Mr. Chaump relative to the alignment of the house, Ms. Hamroun explained that the preference would be to have the façade of the house align with the adjacent 2-story structure. She noted that her major concern is the mass and volume, and a secondary concern is the alignment. In looking at the plans, Ms. Hamroun opined that if there was a shallower roofline or a different style of roof the height would still be out of sync with adjacent properties.

In response to a question from Mr. Day, Ms. Hamroun explained the purpose of the Guidelines, noting that in addition to being both a Local and National Historic District, New Castle is a certified local government eligible to obtain federal funds for certain programs relative to the Historic District. In order to maintain the Historic District designation, the City must have Guidelines that meet the Secretary of the Interior's standards. The goal of the Guidelines is to maintain the nature of the Historic District, and is meant to be the barometer by which HAC bases its decisions. During further clarification, Ms. Hamroun explained the difference between a precedent and the domino effect, and cautioned that disregarding the Guidelines can change the character and significance of the area.

Mr. Wade noted that in addition to the Guidelines the Commission also uses experience, reason and knowledge of the neighborhoods to make determinations on situations that do not clearly fit the Guidelines, which would include the appropriateness of new construction in the Historic District.

Ms. Hamroun noted the role of the Historic Area Commission is to maintain the historic integrity and character of the Historic District. The fact is that what may have been approved before the Guidelines were adopted is not relevant to what current New Castle is like and what the HAC is trying to maintain. She added that if there is a consistent pattern of disregard for the Guidelines the historic character of the District could be put into question and there is a potential that the Historic District designation could be lost.

Mr. Bergstrom opined that new construction has to conform to what people want to live in and stated he is more troubled with the materials than with the mass of the proposed structure.

Ms. Fontana stated she is not bothered with the front porch alignment; however, the size of the structure is troublesome. Mr. Chaump added he felt the mass acceptable.

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Ms. Fontana clarified with the Applicant that other than putting on a flat roof, the plans cannot be adequately changed to lower the roofline.

There being no further discussion and no public comment, Ms. Fontana stated that separate Motions are required for the porch, the height, the siding, and the windows.

A Motion to approve the setback of 10' 9" to the front of the porch as presented in the Application was made, seconded and unanimously approved.

A Motion to approve the height of 33' as presented in the Application was made, seconded, and unanimously approved.

A Motion to approve all windows being wood material was made, seconded and unanimously approved.

A Motion to approve wood siding on the front and Hardie Plank on the sides of the structure was made and seconded. On vote:

Laura Fontana – yes
Mark Chaump – no
Justin Day – no
Kevin Wade – yes

The Motion failed.

A Motion to approve wood siding on the front and sides of the structure was made, seconded and unanimously approved.

In response to a question from the Applicant, Ms. Hamroun stated if the Applicant wanted to use brick on the front of the house it would be a Tier 1.

122-124 Delaware Street – Nora Lee’s Alfred Boland – Construct Pergola on Lower Flat Roof, and Rear Yard Pergola with Hard/Soft Roof.

The Applicant was not present. Ms. Hamroun stated that there is no change in the Application presented from the Application that was rejected at the August 13, 2020 meeting.

A Motion to deny the Application was made, seconded and unanimously approved.

124 Delaware Street – Nora Lee’s Alfred Boland – Install housing structure for rental Bicycles in the rear of property at Nora Lee’s Bistro.

The Applicant was not present.

A Motion to deny the Application was made, seconded and unanimously approved.

124 Delaware Street – Nora Lee’s Alfred Boland – Install fencing and gazebo.

The Applicant was not present. Ms. Hamroun stated the proposed fence is not appropriate per the Guidelines. She also noted the “gazebo” is a temporary structure.

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A Motion to deny the Application to make the wrought iron fence and the temporary gazebos permanent structures was made, seconded and unanimously approved.

New Business

224 East 2nd Street – Susan Huffington – Install a shed in back yard.

Ms. Huffington stated she would like to install a 10'x12' wood storage shed set on pressure treated wood on a stone pad and bordered by pressure treated wood in the back yard of her property. Ms. Hamroun explained the Application was not considered Tier 1 so the Commission could review the setbacks. Ms. Huffington explained how the shed will be set up and stated it will be located 5' from the back fence. After discussion, it was noted the material of the windows is not a concern.

A Motion to approve the Application as presented for installation of a 10'x12' wood storage shed with 5' rear yard setback was made, seconded and unanimously approved.

There being no further business to discuss, Ms. Fontana called for a Motion to Adjourn.

A Motion to adjourn was made, seconded and unanimously approved, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 pm.

Kathy Weirich
Stenographer