

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION STAFF REPORT
Wednesday, July 19, 2022 at 7:00 PM
HYBRID IN-PERSON & REMOTE MEETING VIA ZOOM
Town Hall, 125 Main Street, East Greenwich, RI 02818

Historic District Commission Hearings – 7:00 PM

1. James and Carolyn Drumm

28-30 Queen Street; Map 85 AP 1 Lot 75

Proposed Work: Window Replacements in both units, siding and trim repairs, and masonry work– FINAL

Architectural Style: c. 1870 late Victorian Style

Relevant Standards: #2 #8

HISTORY: In February 2011, the previous owner of the property received a Certificate of Appropriateness to replace 3 existing windows with double hung vinyl replacement windows with a 2 over 2 light pattern, matching muntin widths and simulated divided lights to match the originals. The previous owner was also granted permission to replace the front door with a 6 panel wood door. These alterations all occurred on the 28 Queen Street structure.

PROPOSAL:

28 Queen Street

The Applicant is proposing to remove the existing clapboard (with asbestos) and expose an earlier version of wooden clapboard underneath. The original clapboard is proposed to remain with in-kind repairs when needed. Trim repair is also proposed in areas of rot and any replacement will be in-kind. These elements are allowed by right due to in-kind repair.

The Applicant is also proposing to replace or repair all 12 windows in the structure. The existing windows are a mix match of light patterns, grille styles, and natural and modern materials. The applicant is proposing to replace all windows (that can not be repaired) with wood frame windows with 2 over 2 light patterns. The one exception is the casement windows on the eastern side. The applicant is proposing to remove the window and replace it with a larger bay or plate glass window. Staff does not have any further details on this proposal.

The applicant is also proposing masonry repairs to the brick foundation and stone wall. An area of new stone wall is proposed, but staff is unsure the extent of this proposal.

30 Queen Street

The Applicant is proposing replace existing wood clapboard with in-kind wood clapboard and repair where possible. The original clapboard is proposed to remain with in-kind repairs when needed. Trim repair is also proposed in areas of rot and any replacement will be in-kind. There is also a fence onsite that has fallen over. This fence is proposed to be reinstalled and repaired in-kind where necessary. These elements are allowed by right due to in-kind repair.

Unlike 28 Queen, the windows at 30 Queen are not proposed to be changed. The exception to this is one window that may need replacement. The Applicant is proposing to use the same wooden window with 2/2 light pattern as proposed at 28 Queen.

The Applicant is proposing to construct a new stone wall to match the existing as much as possible. Staff is unsure of the exact location or the extent of this proposed new wall.



Figure 1. 28 Queen in front and 30 Queen in rear. Image via Google Street view in 2011.

STANDARDS:

Commission Standard 2 applies which states that if existing materials have deteriorated beyond repair the new materials shall match the originals in composition, design, texture, and other visual qualities.

Commission Standard 8 applies which states original window sashes can usually be repaired and retained. In the event that a window sash must be replaced, the replacement shall match the original in size, operation, materials, configuration, number of lights, muntin

width and profile. Window manufacturers today offer a wide variety of factory made windows appropriate for installation in historic buildings. Storm windows of appropriate design are also available and should be installed to be as unobtrusive as possible.

STATE SURVEY: The subject structure located at 28 Queen Street is a c. 1870 late Victorian, non-descript house. It is 1-½ stories tall with a high brick foundation and front porch. Many alterations have been done to the structure over the years including asbestos siding that conceals any architectural detail that may exist underneath.

The structure located at 30 Queen Street (on the same subject property) contains a detached apartment only. According to the survey the subject building was originally an outbuilding (a contributing one) that was eventually converted to an apartment. The survey sheet notes the insensitive alterations, including the asbestos shingles and lack of fenestration that leave the property essentially without character defining features.

The total parcel is assigned 10 out of 38 possible points for architectural value. The apartment is not assigned its own values.

DISCUSSION: The Applicant is proposing to improve the historic structures through repairs and in-kind replacements of materials. The applicant is also proposing to repair as much of the original material as possible.

Staff opines that the window replacements with wooden windows with 2 over 2 light patterns are consistent with the time period and will match the windows that were previously approved. Staff also notes that consistent window style and light patterns throughout will enhance the structure which currently has a mix of different windows that were assembled throughout the years. Staff does note that exact window specifications have not been submitted and the Commission may want to determine specific grille patterns and styles before approval.

Staff also notes that the casement window proposed to be removed would result in a major alteration due to fenestration change. Although Staff does not have specific dimensions or specifications on a proposed bay window, it is safe to assume that it would be larger than the existing casement window. Staff is unsure if a bay window would be appropriate in the district, but does note that it would be replacing a modern casement window.

The Commission may also want more details regarding the stone wall replacement and new stone wall construction. As previously stated, Staff is unsure of the extent or exact location of the new walls. The existing stone wall should be repaired and appear similar to existing and should not be fully demolished and reconstructed.

Overall Staff is very supportive of the application and opines that the project can meet the applicable standards.

2. Centerville Builders Inc.

0 Duke Street; Map 85 AP 1 Lot 22

Proposed Work: New construction of three residential dwellings and 3 accessory garages – FINAL

Architectural Style: None-Vacant lot

Relevant Standards: #5

PROPOSAL:

The Applicant is back before the Commission for final review to construct three (3) 20' x 40' single family dwelling units with covered front porches. Each single family dwelling will also have a 14' x 20' garage in the rear portion of the property. Although the buildings are proposed to meet the dimensional setbacks, the application required relief to construct more than one detached dwelling unit on a single lot.

For materials, the applicant is proposing 8 series double hung windows with a 2/1 light pattern. For materials, the applicant is proposing modern materials such as composite decking, Hardi Plank lap siding with Hardi Plan board and batten vertical siding in some areas of the gable walls. The porches will also contain modern material with composite decking with pvc railings and caps.

HISTORY:

Centerville Builders Inc. purchased the subject property back in May of last year. The property is located in a Residential, R-6, zoning district which is designed to provide for high-density residential development in Town. The parcel currently vacant and has been vacant for several decades. The Applicant came before the Commission in November of 2021 and again in June 2022 for conceptual review. On both occasions the Applicant received favorable comments from the Commission. The Applicant then received the required relief from the Zoning Board of Review on June 28th to allow more than one

residential structure on the lot.

STANDARDS:

Commission Standard 5 states new construction includes substantial additions or modifications to the exterior of existing buildings. The design of new construction need not be an exact or modified copy of historic style and could be totally different in concept. However, all proposals for new construction shall be compatible with the surrounding buildings in size, scale, materials, and siting, as well as with the general character of the historic district.

DISCUSSION:

Staff considers the designs of the proposed structures to be appropriate and compatible with the surrounding buildings in both size and scale. The use of all modern materials will need to be discussed by the Commission, but historically modern materials have been allowed in new construction.

Staff suggests that this application can meet the applicable standards.

3. Old Forge Properties

41 Division Street; Map 85 AP 1 Lot 21

Proposed Work: To demolish the existing structures and construct 4 new residential dwellings and with accessory garages. – FINAL

Architectural Style: c.1880 late Victorian

Relevant Standards: #5 and #9

PROPOSAL: Old Forge Properties, LLC purchased the subject property back in May of this year after the Romano Family sold the building with the adjoining parking lot (being 22 Duke Street, aka Map 85 AP 1 Lot 22). The site had been home to Pal's (Palermo's) Restaurant for the last 88 years which was known for its legendary classic American-Italian meals.

The property is located in a Residential, R-6, zoning district which is designed to provide for high-density residential development in Town. The parcel currently has a legal non-conforming 5,000+ s.f. mixed-use building which consists of commercial/restaurant space on the first floor with a residential use on the second floor. There is also a four-bay detached garage that was rebuilt in 1989.

The Applicant is requesting to demolish and remove the primary building along with the accessory detached garage in anticipation of redeveloping the property as multi-family residential use - a use that is permitted by right with the intent to comply with the dimensional requirements of the R-6 zone.

The Applicant came before the Commission in November of 2021 and again in May 2022 looking feedback regarding the conceptual proposal. The applicant received support from the Commission and it was conceptually determined that the existing structures have been modified to such an extent that their historical value and contributing status to the surrounding neighborhood is minimal.



Subject property being 41 Division Street, the former Pal's Restaurant (north elevation)



Subject property, West and North elevations

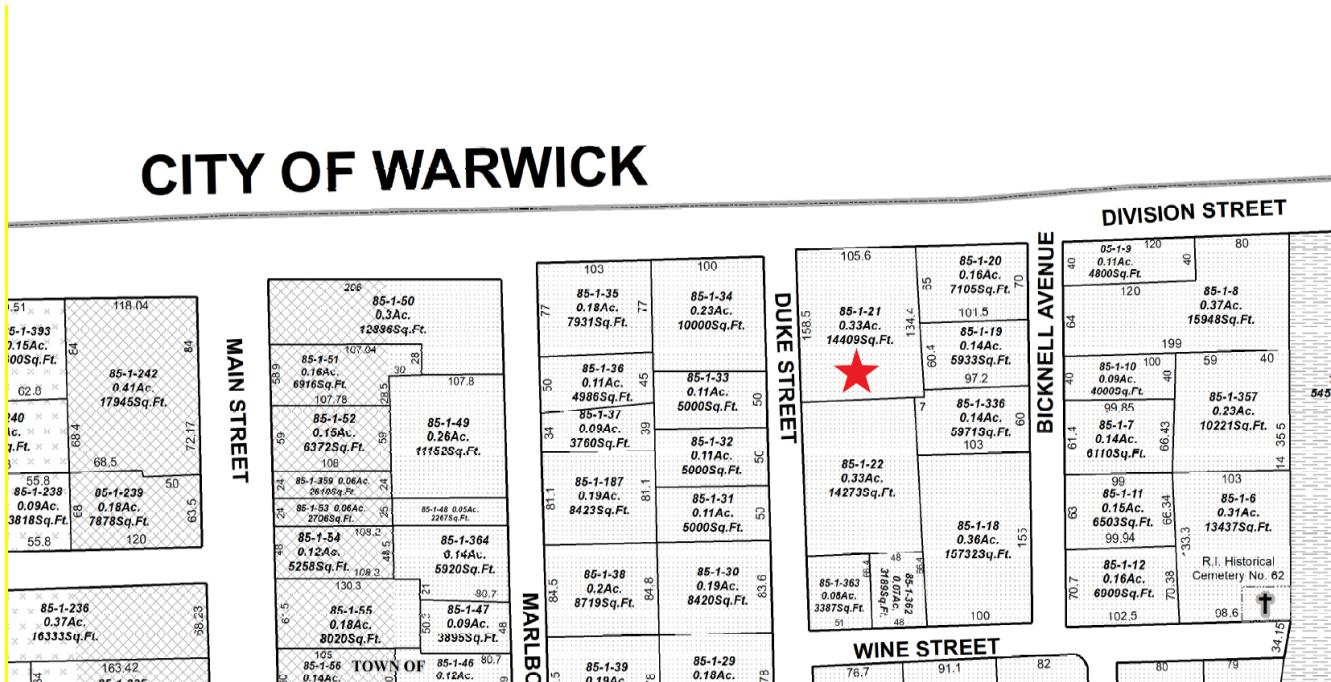


Pal's from 1986



Duke Street side of the property

CITY OF WARWICK



Lots 21 and 22 highlighted

STATE SURVEY: The subject structure is a c.1880 mixed-use late-Victorian 2-story building. The exterior siding consists of vertical boards on the first floor and shingles on the second floor. The building's original integrity has been altered over the years by the use of modern materials. Glass block has replaced any window sash on the first floor with the main entrance facing Duke Street. The survey sheet assigns the building zero points for both architectural and historical value and 5 out of 14 points for importance to the neighborhood.

STANDARDS:

Commission Standard 5 states new construction includes substantial additions or modifications to the exterior of existing buildings. The design of new construction need not be an exact or modified copy of historic style and could be totally different in concept. However, all proposals for new construction shall be compatible with the surrounding buildings in size, scale, materials, and siting, as well as with the general character of the historic district.

Commission Standard of Review Number 9 states, “Demolition shall only be acceptable provided it would significantly benefit the Town, would serve the greater interest of the community as a whole, and that there are no alternatives to demolition available. Demolitions shall not result in a significant threat or loss of an historic and/or architectural resource to the Town, State or nation.” In addition to the local standard; the Federal Department of the Interior’s “Secretary’s Standards for Rehabilitation” guide notes that the following are **NOT** recommended:

- Removing or relocating historic buildings or landscape features, thus destroying the historic relationship between buildings, landscape features, and open space;
- Removing or relocating historic buildings on site – thus diminishing the historic character of the site or complex;
- Failing to maintain site drainage so that buildings and site features are damaged or destroyed;
- Permitting buildings and site features to remain unprotected so that plant materials, fencing, walkways, archeological features, etc. are damaged or destroyed;
- Failing to provide adequate protection of materials on a cyclical basis so that deterioration of building and site features results;
- Failing to undertake adequate measures to assure the preservation of buildings and site features.

DEMOLITION CRITERIA: Demolition of any historic structure constitutes an irreplaceable loss to the historic district and the Town of East Greenwich. The Standards & Guidelines and zoning ordinance clearly spell out the procedures for a demolition application as noted below.

§ 260-64 Demolition.

A. Standards for decision.

(1) If the Commission is presented with an application for the removal, relocation, alteration or demolition of a structure and finds that the approval of such an application would pose a significant threat or total loss to the Town, state or nation, it shall endeavor to work out with the owner an economically feasible plan for the preservation of the structure.

(2) Applications for demolition shall require proof that the retention of the structure would constitute a public safety hazard (as defined by the Rhode Island Building Code)^[1] which cannot be eliminated by any economic means available to the owner. If the Commission remains unconvinced that retention is a hazard, the Commission shall forward its rejection of the application for demolition to the Building Official.

[1]Editor's Note: For the State Building Code, see R.I.G.L. § 23-27.3-100.1 et seq.

B. External considerations. If any of the following conditions apply, the Commission may approve the application for a certificate:

(1) Preservation of such structure is a deterrent to a major improvement program which will significantly benefit the Town.

(2) Preservation of such structure would cause undue or unreasonable financial hardship to the owner, taking into account the financial resources available to the owner, including the sale of the structure to any purchaser willing and able to preserve such structure.

(3) Preservation of such structure would not be in the best interest of the community as a whole.

C. Alternatives to demolition and removal.

(1) When considering an application to demolish or remove a structure of historic, cultural, architectural or archaeological value, the Commission shall assist the owner in identifying and evaluating alternatives to demolition.

(2) In addition to any other criteria, the Commission shall also consider whether there is a likelihood that some person or group of persons other than the current owner is willing to purchase, move and preserve such structure or accessory and whether the owner has made continuing, bona fide and reasonable efforts to sell the structure to any such purchaser.

As with all HDC applications, demolition requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis but the procedure is very specific. Staff has laid out the following procedures for a demolition application. The Applicant must make a good faith effort to demonstrate that all alternatives to demolition have been evaluated (including rehabilitation, adaptive reuse and relocation of the structure), and to provide both architectural and financial data to support a conclusion that demolition is the only feasible solution.

The review process for a demolition application consists of at least two public meetings, and is structured to give ample time to the community, the Applicant and the EGHDC to obtain information and study the proposal thoroughly. The first preliminary public meeting is held to determine the architectural and historic significance of the structure and its contribution to the Town, and to determine whether to accept the application as complete. The Applicant and/or property owner shall attend the meeting and present the project and public comment will be taken.

The HDC shall first determine whether the structure proposed for demolition is:

- 1) Contributing to the significance of the district, and valuable to the Town, State or Nation;
- 2) Contributing to the significance of the district, and valuable for the period of architecture it represents, or to the district;

3) Non-contributing to the significance of the district.

The HDC will use its own judgement in making determinations of architectural and historical significance, and may call upon expert witnesses. Applicants may also present testimony as to the significance of the structure.

Next, the HDC shall determine whether sufficient information has been submitted with the application to allow thorough review, and whether all alternatives to demolition have been considered. If the HDC finds that the documentation is complete and all alternatives to demolition have been considered, it will vote to accept the application and schedule the application for review at the next regular meeting. If the application cannot be accepted because additional information is needed, then the preliminary meeting will be continued until the next regular meeting or such time as the additional information can be submitted. The application is considered formally accepted as of the date of the vote to accept.

The second public meeting is held at the next regular meeting following the vote to accept the application, to review the application in light of the Review Criteria. The criteria vary depending on whether the structure was determined to be a contributing or non-contributing structure. The Applicant and/or property owner shall attend, and public comment will be taken. If the structure is contributing, the HDC votes whether the proposal meets the primary review criteria. If so, then the application will be reviewed in light of the secondary review criteria. If the application is consistent with both the primary and the secondary review criteria, then it may be approved, either as submitted or with conditions. If not, the application may be denied. If the structure is non-contributing, the HDC votes whether to approve, approve with conditions, or to deny the application for demolition, using the secondary review criteria. At the second meeting the HDC may review any claim of economic hardship.

If the structure is deemed **contributing**, the HDC shall consider whether the application meets the following primary criteria:

- 1) If the structure is deemed valuable to the Town, State or Nation, such that its loss will be a great loss to the Town, State, or Nation, then in order for the HDC to approve demolition, the structure must constitute a hazard to public safety, which hazard cannot be eliminated by economic means available to the owner, including sale of the structure to any purchaser willing to preserve the structure.
- 2) If the structure is deemed valuable for the period of architecture which it represents, or to the district as a whole, then at least one of the following requirements must be met in order for the HDC to approve demolition:

- a. Retention of the structure constitutes a hazard to public safety, which hazard cannot be eliminated by economic means available to the owner, including the sale of the structure on its present site to any purchaser willing to preserve the structure.
- b. Preservation of the structure is a deterrent to a major improvement program that will be of substantial benefit to the community.
- c. Preservation of the structure would cause an undue and unreasonable financial hardship to the owner, taking into account the financial resources available to the owner including the sale of the structure to any purchaser willing to preserve the structure.
- d. Preservation of the structure would not be in the interest of the majority of the community.

If the primary criteria have been met, then the HDC may consider any or all of the following secondary criteria in deciding whether to approve or deny the application:

The merit of the structure to be demolished.

The effect of the demolition on the surrounding buildings.

The effect of the demolition on the historic district as a whole and general area.

The value or usefulness of the proposed replacement structure to the community, and the appropriateness of its design to the historic district and neighborhood.

If the lot is to be left open, the impact of open space in that location and on that area as a whole.

The effect of the demolition on the general economy.

Whether the demolition will foster civic beauty.

Whether the demolition will stabilize and improve property values in the neighborhood.

The effect of the demolition on safeguarding the heritage of the Town, State or Nation.

The effect of the demolition on promotion of the district and its outlying properties for the education, pleasure and welfare of the citizens of the Town of East Greenwich.

If the structure is deemed **non-contributing**, the HDC may consider any or all of the secondary criteria in deciding whether to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition.

A written decision must be provided within 15 days of the vote to approve or deny the application, describing the HDC's decision and the reasons behind it. Any conditions of approval must be met before a Certificate of Appropriateness is issued and a demolition permit obtained. If an application is denied, a new application for demolition of the structure may not be submitted for a period of one (1) year from the date of the written resolution.

DISCUSSION: As noted above the Applicant is looking to have a formal conversation regarding the proposed idea of demolition of the existing buildings before. Staff has laid the groundwork for the formal demolition process above; this hearing should be considered as the first hearing of the demolition process.

Staff recommends the HDC determine the architectural and historic significance of the structure and its contribution to the Town, and to determine whether to accept the application as complete. As previously noted, the Commission have completed a site investigation back in 2021 and the Applicant has received a conceptual favorable review for demolition as the structure has lost much of its historical significance.

Once a determination is made regarding the historical significance, the HDC should ensure that no additional information is needed to make this determination and findings prior to determining the application complete. Due to limited information being submitted in the application, Staff would recommend that the Applicant enter information into the record during the public hearing to address the standards above. If the HDC would like additional information such as a report from a structural engineer or alternative proposals to be submitted as part of the Application, the meeting should be continued.

If the HDC finds that the documentation is complete and all alternatives to demolition have been considered, it should vote to accept the application and schedule the application for review at the next regular meeting.

Overall, Staff is very supportive of the applicant and considers the proposal to be a significant benefit to the neighborhood.

**4. Venture Home Solar LLC representing Marla Director
67 Water Street: Map 75 AP 1 Lot 392
Proposed Work: Installation of rooftop solar panels to front side of dwelling -
FINAL**

Architectural Style: c. 1865 Early Victorian
Relevant Standards: #4 & 5

The Town adopted a Solar Energy Systems & Facilities Ordinance (Ordinance 873) on November 6, 2017. The subject application is requesting to install a “minor solar system” as defined in said ordinance. A minor solar system installation is designated to primarily service the property on which the solar installation is located with an output of 25kW or less.

PROPOSAL: The Applicant is requesting to install a roof mounted 3.95kW solar array system consisting of ten (10) panels primarily on the southerly facing roof.

STATE SURVEY: The subject home is a c. 1865 Early Victorian house that is assigned 10 out of 38 points for its architectural value and 5 out of 14 points for its importance to the neighborhood. The original house is 2 stories tall with clapboard siding replaced with cedar shingles. The windows are largely 6/6 double hung. Other character defining features include the central red brick chimney, and front central entrance.

STANDARDS: Commission *Standard 4* applies to the application which states all proposals for additions and architectural changes shall be appropriate to the original design of the building or to later changes which have historic significance of their own. *Standard 5* states new construction includes substantial additions or modifications to the exterior of existing buildings. The design of new construction need not be an exact or modified copy of historic styles and could be totally different in concept. However, all proposals for new construction shall be compatible with the surrounding buildings in size, scale, materials and siting, as well as with the general character of the historic district.

DISCUSSION: The Commission is generally in favor of solar panel applications as it is a great example of good stewardship to the environment; it does not diminish from the architectural value of the original structure in any way; the project is completely reversible and will not affect any contributing elements of the building. Although these solar panels will be visible from the street, the Applicant has provided documentation stating that this location is the only option due to shade and sun angles. Staff is in favor of the solar installation and has no objection to the application.

- 5. Jessie Perry**
100 Peirce Street; Map 85 AP 1 Lot 214
Proposed Work: Install a pre-fab shed- FINAL

Architectural Style: c.1853 Greek Revival style

Relevant Standards: #4 & 5

PROPOSAL: The Applicant has explained the primary house has minimal storage for bikes, kayaks, and garden tools. The petition requests to move a 10' x 20' pre-fab shed (200 square foot) storage shed to be located on the northeast side of the main dwelling. The Applicant has not yet submitted the exact location, but has stated that he will present this at the meeting. The shed appears to be made with natural materials, however staff can not confirm this from the materials submitted.

STATE SURVEY: The subject structure is the c.1853 Samuel Knowles House. This is a 5x3 bay residential building surviving with much integrity. Features include a primary Peirce Street front of five bays framed by wide plain pilasters with capitals supporting a wide entablature and bracketed cornice. The central entrance is recessed in an unusual Greek Revival frontispiece of paneled pilasters interrupting an elongated 3 bay entablature. The four-panel door itself is framed with reeded mouldings, sidelights, and transom. Fenestration in all elevations is a 6/6 sash in frames with projecting flat arched cornices. The large monitor is 4x4 bays of 2/2 sash framed by paneled pilasters. The Historic Survey data sheet assigns the structure 30 out of 38 possible points for architectural value, the maximum points available for importance to the neighborhood, and 20 out of 38 points for historical value.

STANDARDS: Commission Standard # 5 applies to this application which states new construction includes additions or modifications to the exterior of existing buildings. The design of new construction need not be an exact or modified copy of historic styles and could be totally different in concept. However, all proposals for new construction shall be compatible with the surrounding buildings in size, scale, materials, and siting, as well as with the general character of the historic district.

Until 1976, the Knowles House served as a private residence. In 1976 the House was purchased by the Kentish Guard Home Corporation as an educational/museum to be open at times to the general public. At one point in time the Town of East Greenwich rented out the first floor for office space and was home to the Planning Department while a one bedroom residential unit served as a caretaker's apartment. While completing some restorative work on the Knowles House in September of 1990 a paint-removal tool ignited a bird's nest in the upper southeast corner setting the upper rafters on fire. The fire quickly spread throughout the second floor and third floor monitor, gutting those sections. The interior suffered extensive fire, smoke and water damage.

The Kentish Guards formally subdivided the Knowles House from the Kentish Guards Armory (houses the fifth oldest military company in the U.S.), being located at 90 Peirce Street, and moved forward with selling 100 Peirce Street recently.

DISCUSSION: Staff has no objections to the application as the shed will provide the storage space the Applicant needs to properly store outdoor equipment. However, the Commission may want to inquire about the exact location and materials when making a decision.

6. April and Carson Cambree

17 Bicknell Avenue; Map 85 AP 1 Lot 336

Proposed Work: Repair Existing Porch, change wood on deck, install wood screen door.

Architectural Style: Gothic Revival Cottage

Relevant Standards: #1, #2

PROPOSAL: The applicant has proposed to replace the existing decking and columns on the front porch of the subject dwelling. The Applicant has provided limited material to specify the extent of the repair/replacement project. However, from the attached estimate, it appears that full replacement of decking, columns, and trim work is proposed. The Applicant has also requested to change the decking material from existing pine to mahogany. In addition, the Applicant is requesting to place a wooden screen door on the front of the structure. Details regarding the wooded door are not specified.

STATE SURVEY: The single-family structure is a 1 and a half story early twentieth century gothic revival cottage. It has a wraparound front porch and a central chimney noted as its character defining features. The survey sheet assigns the structure 20 out of 38 possible points for architectural and historical value and 10 out of 14 points for importance to the neighborhood.

STANDARDS: Commission standard #1 applicable to this application. It states that original materials and architectural features shall be maintained or repaired whenever possible rather than replaced.

Commission standard #2 also applies to this application. It states that if existing materials have deteriorated beyond repair the new materials shall match the originals in composition, design, texture and other visual qualities.



Subject property at 17 Bicknell, via Google Street view in 2011

DISCUSSION: The Commission must first inquire if the Applicant pursued the option of retaining some of the original wooden decking, columns, and trim on the front porch. The Applicant has not yet provided existing pictures or documentation to document the condition of the existing materials. If a full material replacement is required, it is important that the covered front porch be reconstructed to its original specifications and appearance. The Commission should also determine if mahogany is an appropriate substitute for the existing fir.

The front-porch at the subject property is a character defining feature that contributes to the neighborhood. The Applicant's proposal to repair the porch is certainly supported by Staff. However, Staff questions if some of the original materials can be preserved and blended in with new natural materials to better conform with Standard number 2.

Historic District Commission Business – After Hearings

1. Minutes: Review and approval of the January 12, 2022, February 9, 2022, March 9, 2022, April 13, 2022 meeting minutes. Continuance requested.
2. COMMISSIONER REPORTS: Commission members may report on cases where they have been appointed as Referee, and refer observations or possible violations that they have observed to staff. Any substantive discussion of any such Report shall require addition to the Agenda by motion.

Adjourn