



Natick Historic District Commission Meeting Minutes for April 12, 2023

Commission Members in Attendance via Zoom: MC Mike Collins (Chair)

JKF Jeannine Furrer (Vice Chair)

CM Chris Milford

ML Matt Labrie

SF Susana Fernandes

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM

OLD BUSINESS

Minutes of March 29th, 2023 were reviewed, and Mr. Collins made a motion to approve, the motion seconded by Ms. Furrer. A roll call vote unanimously approved the motion. Voice vote by name approved: MC, JF, SF, ML, CM.

68 Eliot Street

The discussion was continued from March 6th. Updated plans were presented by the owner Bill Churchill and Architect Leslie Saul together with Monique Jankowski and Stephanie May of Ms. Saul's office.

Mr. Collins observed that the plans have been revised. The scope of the updated plans and elevations now include a glass railing (not cable as the agenda had listed) and that the new proposal shows one (not two) skylights.

Bill Churchill introduced the plans as responsive to last meetings comments.

Mr. Collins commended the updated package, especially the side by side comparisons of existing and proposed. He asked for clarifications. On the stone veneer, might it be thinner with a brick veneer, he asked. In whatever material is chosen he suggested that the detail turn the corner on both the east and west sides so as not to look so synthetic.

Mr. Churchill explained that the stone was intended to amend the stark meeting of the asphalt sidewalk and the clapboard. The sidewalk had been raised 4” by the town. The veneer is to add a transition in materials and to protect the house.

Mr. Collins asked about the window and door casings. Were they as detailed or as pictured on the elevations? Monique Jankowski explained that both windows and doors would be trimmed as the detail shows.

Mr. Milford asked about the stone veneer and suggested that when the siding is removed we will learn exactly how much exposed stone will be possible.

Mr. Churchill anticipates needing to replace sills.

Ms. Furrer asked for clarification of the motives behind changing to glass rails from cable. Mr.. Churchill spoke of trying for maximum transparency.

Mr. Collins anticipates that structural engineering of the project may reveal other issues. An assigned Resource Person will help guide them through and advise about how resulting changes might require further HDC review.

Mr. Collins likes that the design has reverted to an asymmetrical, saltbox shape. He likes the scale and appealing interest that this new shape gives which closely resembles the original shape.

He asked about the interrupted soffit and fascias by the window trims on the east elevation, suggesting the interior shower flip directions to enable the windows to fit without interrupting. Ms. Saul said the headroom is not there

for the shower to flip so she she will drop the windows 2” and avoid the soffit/fascia/window overlap..

Mr. Collins advised the designers to turn the corners with the stone veneer to avoid a look of “lick and stick.” He said some of the veneer products (stone or brick) make corner pieces.

Leslie Saul spoke of brick being an acceptable veneer alternative. Bill Churchill cited the Book Binder’s house (across Eliot Street) which has a shallow exposed foundation.

Mr. Collins commented that a record set of drawings will cover the foundation decisions that are finalized.

He suggested the skylight be located on the south side of the ridge. Monique Jankowski thought the stairway which is structural might not permit the skylight to move. She felt the skylight was so high up it would hardly be visible.

Mr. Collins spoke of material choices:

Hardieplank has never been approved in Natick’s Historic District. He explained that originally it had been made with silica, for stabilizing. Once that additive had been proven to be a carcinogen, it had since been removed from the material mix. Mr. Collins said the product does not do as promised. He has observed Hardieplank, installed as specified with open joints for drainage to 1/8” and 1/2”. They look terrible. When the Hardieplank is colored, pieces need to be trimmed. Cut ends are not colored and need to be treated but colors don’t match.

Mr. Collins admitted metal roofs were popular in the mid 1800s—they were made of copper or tin, not coated aluminum. Colors give a softer look than the black standing seam roof proposed.

Leslie Saul spoke in favor of the black roof saying the idea was to blend with a brand of solar panel they hope to install when they become available in the US.

Chris Milford spoke about the metal roof, saying he believes that it would stand out too much in the Historic District. He spoke of cedar performing well and earning our confidence in it over time, as opposed to the Hardieplank siding product which has not earned that confidence. Mr. Milford, who had suggested glass rails in a previous meeting, spoke against its use here due to the reflectivity of the glass. He feels that with glass rails, the decks will stand out more than the house. He would instead prefer wood rails and posts with cable.

Leslie Saul likes wood with cable rails.

Mr. Milford clarified that while we do not have jurisdiction over the color of homes, we do have oversight of the color of pre-treated materials like veneer stone or roofing.

Mr. Collins interjected that a mesh inner panel with wood rails and posts might work at this home, providing the integration with the architecture and the desired transparency. He produced a photo of a project with such a rail. The architects liked it.

Ms. Furrer likes the revised witchy shape of the proposed home. She spoke against the glass rails, feeling the reflectivity would make them stand out. They look too modern to her so she preferred the mesh or cable rail with wood. She spoke in favor of a cedar clapboard. She asked about the veneer stone and worried that with it proud of the clapboard, it would not provide drainage and would pop off due to freeze/thaw cycles.

Ms. Fernandes believes the glass rails appear too modern. She does not find the metal roof bothersome. She prefers cedar clapboard.

Matt Labrie appreciates the improvements that are proposed on this house. It will be a new building when it's done: materials, shapes, sizes need to be right, he observed. Materials should "age with the neighborhood." He objected to the new, synthetic materials: aluminum standing seam roof, concrete composite Hardieplank clapboards, glass and metal rails and

Timbertech decking. He says the rebuilt house won't fit in or "age with the neighborhood."

He likes the stone or brick veneer.

For materials he prefers a natural red cedar clapboard siding with a 4" exposure (now it is 4 1/2 " according to Mr.Churchill). with 5/4 x 8" corner boards as opposed to the narrower corner boards shown on the elevations. Alternative roofing he suggested be considered were Architectural or State Line asphalt roof shingles. He believes skylights don't fit on a colonial home.and wishes for no skylights or that the the skylight be moved to the south side of the ridge. Mr. Labrie prefers mahogany decking to Timber Tech..

He questioned 2/1 windows which he felt are not appropriate on a colonial home. He asked if there were grills on the sliders. (Ms. Saul said no.) Mr. Labrie asked about the front windows, would they be too low for a counter inside. Ms. Saul said there would be a window box on the inside to enable them to raise the counters to a usual height.

He commented that he has seen poor installations of AZEK where it has bowed out due to expansion and contraction.

Mr. Labrie is not a fan of the shed. He feels a two story shed will remove a river glimpse that the old, one story shed didn't do. Ms. Saul spoke of the unsightly vista of garbage bins that would be the alternative. Mr. Collins commented that there would likely be a fence in lieu of a shed and it would prevent a view.

Mr. Collins spoke of the project challenges: is it historic preservation or new? We have been known to accept Timbertech decks and AZEK. This amount of construction is extensive. The new owner won't neglect the property the way previous owners did. He expects this will be a well installed, high skill level of construction.

That said, he believes cement board is not as competent as they say and is not as competitively priced. He can not approve it.

To him the standing seam roof detail is off putting by the black color. He says he thinks it will stand out too much.

Mr. Churchill spoke in favor of the roof specification. He observed that asphalt is not a historic material and that it is not sustainable; that landfills are filled with the used asphalt shingles. He expects to install solar panels that will be black. The standing seam roof will blend best with the type of solar tiles he is waiting for. He feels the panels will stick out less on a black standing seam roof. He awaits Merlin or Sun Flare roofs. He showed the roof across the street which has very prominent black solar panels atop grey asphalt shingles and said he knows his proposal could look much better than that.

He asked that letters of support from neighbors be read into the record. Mr. Collins will provide and post them at a subsequent hearing

Mr. Churchill spoke of termite damage he'd observed on historic homes and which he expects to find on this one. He does not wish to "age with the neighborhood" like that here.

No members of the public were present.

Mr. Churchill chose to continue the hearing to April 26th. He directed his architect to revise as follows: use smooth cedar clapboard siding, mesh railings, provide clarity on stone or brick veneer. He continues to want a black standing seam metal roof as it will blend with his solar panel plans. He is trying for durability, environmental sustainability and low maintenance. He feels metal roofing is more reverential to history than asphalt and observed it had been approved at Riverbend School in the past.

Ms.Saul said she will attempt to move the skylight to the south side of the roof ridge. The structure of a stairway may prohibit moving it, she thought.

Mr. Collins suggested moving a doorway to make room for the skylight on the south side. He commented that his own natural cedar clapboard had been installed 25 years ago and had been painted once since then.

Mr. Collins requested a color sample of the proposed roof and solar panels.

Ms. Saul summarized she will adjust the railings to mesh details, use cedar clapboard. and brick veneer. They plan to return on the 26th having kept AZEK trim, standing seam metal roof and the shed. They will revise the east side window and soffit/facia overlap and bring samples of the metal roof and solar paneling.

OTHER

58 Eliot Street

Mr. Collins presented plans and for 58 Eliot Street walkway revisions to enable handicapped access to the Natick Historic Society. He circulated a letter from The

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Public Archeology Lab who had already reviewed the work and stated that MHC has too. As HDC are last on the list of people and our "review" follows the prior approvals, Mr. Leblanc moved we issue a Certificate of Non Applicability. Ms. Furrer seconded the motion. Roll call of votes for unanimous approval included MC, JF, CM, ML and SF.

28 Eliot

Mr. Collins updated us that previously noted delimitation of the paint on one of the spires on the old Scared Heart Church appears to have been fixed,

Mr. Labrie made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Ms. Furrer at 8:44. A roll call vote unanimously approved the motion: MC, JF, SF, ML and CM

These minutes were prepared and submitted by Jeannine Furrer

