



## Schenectady Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes  
August 22, 2019

### I. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Yager called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

### II. ROLL CALL

**PRESENT:** Patricia Yager, Chair; Ben Wiles, Vice Chair; Shaun Andriano; Dr. Dean Bennett; Frank Gilmore; Christopher Marney

**STAFF:** Matt Smith, Planning Staff; Jennifer Mills, Secretary

### III. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

### IV. ADOPTION OF MEETING MINUTES

Motion by Commissioner Andriano, seconded by Commissioner Wiles, to approve the July 25, 2019 Meeting Minutes as submitted.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

### V. APPLICATIONS

**A. Consideration for approval submitted by Ron Gardner on behalf of Green Street Development to install new windows, siding, shutters, railings, doors, canopies, and steps, and to paint the exterior of the building. The premises are located at 308/310 Green Street in the Stockade Historic District.**

Ron Gardner presented the application.

Mr. Gardner briefly reviewed the additional materials that had been submitted by his architect since the last meeting. Commissioner Yager noted that at the July meeting the Commission had communicated that although the door design was acceptable the door should be wood rather than steel. Mr. Gardner stated that he would have no objection to wood.

Commissioner Andriano stated that the brand and series of windows specified in the application are not available in aluminum-clad wood, but only vinyl-clad. Commissioner Gilmore asked if vinyl is not acceptable. Commissioner Yager stated that vinyl windows are not a material that is supported by the standards and practices and have not been approved before by the Commission. Mr. Gardner

stated that his intent is to use aluminum-clad windows but perhaps there is a mistake in the application materials. Commissioner Andriano stated that he had no objection to moving forward with the application as long as Mr. Gardner submits a spec sheet to City staff for final approval prior to purchasing the windows. The other Commissioners agreed that this would be acceptable. Because they were mentioned on the windows submitted with the application it was also noted that no interior blinds may be added between the glass panes.

Commissioner Gilmore noted that the windows should have at least a six-inch trim around them and that the corners should not be mitered. He showed Mr. Gardner examples of other Stockade houses of a similar style and era with this type of trim and noted that most also have a flat fascia trim board that runs under the eaves and down along the corners of the building. Mr. Gardner indicated that he would have no objection to this.

Commissioner Andriano asked if the other Commissioners had an opinion about which style of parging they preferred of the three submitted. Commissioner Gilmore stated that the smoothest example is the most historically accurate. It was decided that the smoothest style submitted should be used.

The Commissioners discussed the proposed cement board siding. Commissioner Yager noted that as a rule cement board has only been approved in special situations where it was necessary for unique reasons. She stated that she would not object to the back of the building being cement board, but strongly feels that the three other sides should be wood siding. Mr. Gardner stated that he would rather do all four sides in wood. Commissioner Andriano stated that when installation costs are considered cement board is not always less expensive than wood, and that although cedar is expensive pine is another option. Mr. Gardner stated that wood also has to be primed and painted and maintained regularly. Commissioner Yager noted that in the Department of Interior's standards it notes that wood is an essential component of historic buildings.

Commissioner Andriano asked if the entry surround being proposed is fiberglass, as is noted on the application. Mr. Gardner stated that he believed that this was the architect's original proposal. The Commissioners agreed that the surround should be wood. Commissioner Gilmore stated that the top peaked pediment is more of a federal style element and is not in keeping with the style of this building. It was agreed that the top pediment would be removed from the design.

Commissioner Marney asked Mr. Gardner if he had decided on an exterior color yet. Mr. Gardner stated that he had not, but that it would be close to the green cement board color he had originally submitted. He stated that he thought the trim would be white. Commissioner Gilmore suggested an off-white or cream, which would seem less harsh against the green and would not show dirt as obviously. Commissioner Marney stated that the Commission should see an actual paint

sample before approving a color. It was decided that Mr. Gardner could install and prime the siding and then return to the Commission when he had decided on the color of the main body of the building.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

### **RESOLUTION**

Motion by Commissioner Marney, seconded by Commissioner Gilmore, to approve the application with the following modifications and conditions:

1. The project will be completed within one year.
2. The smooth-style parging of the foundation wall is accepted as submitted in the second-to-last page of the parging examples included in the application.
3. The six-panel front door design is approved but the door will be wood and not steel. The design of the door surround is accepted with the exception that the peaked pediment at the top will be removed, and the surround will be constructed of wood and not fiberglass.
4. The window design, dimensions, and locations are approved as submitted. The windows will be aluminum-clad wood with two over one divided light and no interior blinds between the glass panels. Vinyl-clad wood windows are not approved. The applicant will submit a specifications sheet of the actual window model to be used to City staff for approval prior to the purchase and installation of the windows.
5. The trim on the building will be off-white or cream.
6. The siding will be wood – either pine or cedar, with a six-inch reveal. As discussed at the meeting a fascia board of a minimum of six inches will be installed under the eaves and down the corners of the building.
7. The siding may be installed and primed, but the applicant will return to the Commission for approval of the exterior paint color prior to painting the siding.
8. The windowsills and extension enframements will be constructed of wood. The sills will measure a minimum of 2”. The extension enframements will measure a minimum of 4” and will not have mitered corners.
9. The three-rail square fence is approved as submitted.

And with the following findings of fact:

1. This is a Type II SEQRA.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

- B. Consideration for approval submitted by Bernier, Carr, & Associates on behalf of the YWCA of Schenectady to replace deteriorated fiber-cement siding with new cement board, replace metal roofing with asphalt shingles, and to replace**

**existing wood windows with the same style wood windows. The premises are located at 38 Washington Avenue in the Stockade Historic District.**

Sandy Dardanelli, architect for the project, and Terry Smith, Facilities Director for the YWCA, presented the application.

Ms. Dardanelli explained that the YWCA was recently awarded a grant that will allow them to repair the building. She noted that with the exception of the roof they will mostly be replacing existing materials in kind. Ms. Dardanelli stated that the metal roof expands and contracts in the heat and cold and has leaked in many places over several years. Mr. Smith noted that it was originally installed with improper screws, which has also led to excessive corrosion and leakage. Commissioner Bennett stated that to him it will be a loss to remove the metal roof, but he can understand the justification for it.

Commissioner Gilmore noted that in this case the cement board siding has lasted only about twenty years, which supports the case for using wood siding when possible. Ms. Dardanelli stated that in this case they cannot use wood due to the fire rating regulations. Commissioner Yager noted that the structure is 30 years old, having been rebuilt after a fire, so there really are no historic materials on the building.

Ms. Dardanelli stated that they would prefer to install aluminum-clad wood windows if the Commission allowed but would use wood replacement windows if necessary. Commissioner Andriano asked if the existing windows could be repaired. Mr. Smith replied that the existing windows are wood replacement windows that were installed over twenty years ago, and they were not old-growth wood and are completely rotted. The Commissioners indicated that they would have no objection to the aluminum cladding. Commissioner Marney stated that the applicants will be required to submit a spec sheet to City staff for final approval after they choose the window they will be using. Ms. Dardanelli explained that this application is somewhat unique due to the fact that it is grant-funded. She stated that after the project goes out to bid the contractors can choose what brand of product they will use as long as it meets the predetermined specifications. She noted that this is why she has not submitted a specific shingle sample yet. Mr. Smith stated that once materials are finalized, they may be submitted to City staff for final approval. The Commissioners agreed.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

#### **RESOLUTION**

Motion by Commissioner Marney, seconded by Commissioner Gilmore, to approve the application to replace deteriorated fiber-cement siding with new cement board,

replace metal roofing with asphalt shingles, and to replace existing wood windows with the same style wood windows as submitted with the following conditions:

1. The project will be completed within one year.
2. The cement board siding will be replaced in kind.
3. The windows are approved as two-over-two aluminum-clad wood replacement windows. After the project has gone out to bid and the final product has been determined the applicants will submit a spec sheet showing the details of the windows to staff for final approval.
4. The architectural shingles are approved as a medium to dark brown color. After the project has gone out to bid and the specific shingle has been determined the applicants will submit a sample of the shingle to City staff for final approval.

And with the following findings of fact:

1. This is a Type II SEQRA.
2. This is a non-contributing building that was completely rebuilt after a fire in 1993.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

**C. Consideration for approval submitted by Shelton & Barbara Schmidt to replace existing wood railings on the second-floor porch with new railings covered in vinyl trim. The premises are located at 1333 Lowell Road in the GE Realty Plot Historic District.**

Shelton Schmidt presented the application.

Mr. Schmidt explained that the second-story porch floor is leaking very badly and must be replaced with a new EPDM roof. He stated that when the roof is replaced, he and his wife would also like to replace the porch railing, which is wood but has been repaired as many times as possible and must be replaced. He reviewed the spec sheet of the vinyl-wrapped product they would like to use and noted that because the porch has a door leading out onto it the railing must be increased from 24” to 36” in order to meet code.

Commissioner Gilmore stated that he has spoken with Julian Adams and Weston Davey of the State Office of Historic Preservation (SHPO) and they had communicated to him that SHPO is not opposed to some of the new synthetic materials that look exactly like wood but weather much better. Commissioner Marney stated that he believes that this is a topic worth exploring but that he would not feel comfortable using that opinion to support the use of vinyl in this case without having some sort of formal input from SHPO. Commissioner Andriano agreed, stating that he is also concerned about how the new railing system would

attach to the roof, as the requirements might be very different than those of the installation of a wood railing. Commissioner Andriano asked Mr. Schmidt if the railing has to be replaced at the same time the roof is replaced. Mr. Schmidt replied that his contractor had suggested this because it is better for this type of sealed roof if any necessary holes are drilled before and then the roof is applied, and sealed, over or around the holes.

The Commissioners and staff discussed the height of the railing and what the City requirements are. Mr. Smith stated that to the best of his knowledge the requirement is 36” for a second-floor porch with a door exiting onto it, but that he is not certain if there are any exceptions for historic properties. Commissioner Gilmore suggested that Mr. Schmidt could investigate having a wood railing custom-made with mahogany or tamarack, but there would still be a question about the required height. Commissioner Wiles stated that he believes that the Commission needs more information about the required height and what the actual system being proposed looks like before any decisions can be made. He added that the porch railing is a very significant part of the design of the front façade of this house and altering it in any way will definitely impact the structure’s appearance. It was determined that the application should be tabled pending the gathering of further information.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

#### **MOTION TO TABLE**

Motion by Commissioner Marney, seconded by Commissioner Andriano, to table the application to replace existing wood railings on the second-floor porch with new railings covered in vinyl trim pending the gathering of the following additional information:

1. Information from the State Office of Historic Preservation (SHPO) on their official position on the use of synthetic materials such as the proposed vinyl-wrapped rail system and if there are special circumstances regarding historic structures which might allow railing height requirements to be altered.
2. Staff will follow up with the City Codes Inspector regarding the required height of the railing.
3. If the material is deemed an acceptable alternative the applicant will bring a sample of the railing system to the HDC meeting at which the application is considered further.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

#### **D. Consideration for approval submitted by Daniel McNett to replace existing 3-tab shingles with architectural shingles, and to remove back porch and solar**

**water panels from the rear roof. The premises are located at 822 Union Street in the Union Street Historic District.**

Danie McNett and the homeowner, his mother Ellen McNett, presented the application.

Ms. McNett explained that in February 2019 her roof suffered significant wind damage and the existing solar panels were damaged. She noted that one has become partially dislodged and is hanging over her rear porch entrance. She stated that she is not proposing to remove the rear porch but just the second-floor deck that sits on top of the porch roof.

Commissioner Marney commented that it does not appear as if much of the roof is visible from the street. Ms. McNett stated that it is not. Commissioner Andriano stated that it appears to be a very straightforward application and time is of the essence to have the dangerous solar panel removed. The other Commissioners agreed.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

#### **RESOLUTION**

Motion by Commissioner Andriano, seconded by Commissioner Wiles, to approve the application to replace existing 3-tab shingles with architectural shingles, and to remove the back porch and solar water panels from the rear roof as submitted with the following condition:

1. The project will be completed within one year.

And with the following finding of fact:

1. This is a Type II SEQRA.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

#### **VI. MISCELLANEOUS**

Commissioner Yager suggested to staff that perhaps a training could be set up with representatives of SHPO regarding their positions on alternative materials. Staff will follow up.

Commissioner Wiles stated that the topic of urban reforestation and the tree population within the City is gaining some attention within the administration and with key City civic groups and interested residents. The Commission briefly discussed ways that they could support these efforts.

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Commissioner Wiles, seconded by Commissioner Andriano, to adjourn the meeting.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

The meeting was adjourned at 8:56 p.m.