

NASHUA HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Tuesday, March 22, 2021, 6:30 p.m.

NOTE: Due to Governor's Executive Order, City Land Use Boards are authorized to meet via Zoom meetings, until it is deemed safe to meet in City Hall. Chairwoman MacKay read an introductory statement stating that the Historic District Commission is meeting via Zoom, and indicated how the public is able to access the meeting.

HDC Members:

Mariellen MacKay, Chair
Robert Vorbach, Vice Chair
Robert Sampson
Ed Weber
Bill Slivinski
Ald. Skip Cleaver

Also present:

Matt Sullivan, Planning Manager
Carter Falk, Deputy Planning Manager/Zoning
Kate Poirier, Zoning Coordinator

Mr. Falk called the Roll Call, the attending members indicated their presence by verbal confirmation, and everyone stated that they are alone.

MINUTES:

February 23, 2021

MOTION by Mr. Sampson to approve the minutes as presented, waive the reading, and place the minutes in the file.

SECONDED by Mr. Vorbach.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY VERBAL ROLL CALL OF THE MEMBERS.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Gary & Anne Ostler (Owners) 3-5 Mount Pleasant Street (Sheet 67 Lot 67) requesting approval to construct an attached 14'x16' sunroom addition in back of 5 Mount Pleasant. RB Zone, Ward 3.

Voting on this case:

Mariellen MacKay
Robert Vorbach
Ed Weber
Robert Sampson
Bill Slivinski
Ald. Skip Cleaver

Abby and Gary Ostler, 5 Mt. Pleasant Street, Nashua, NH.

Mr. Ostler said that the plan is to build an addition in the back of the house, it will be a sunroom. He said that it will be 14'x16' in size, and GM Roth has designed the plan to match it up with the existing architecture in many ways.

Mrs. Ostler said that the schoolhouse, which is the historical piece, is to the left, and the addition is going to the right. She said that the roof line is almost identical, it almost comes out right to the end of the schoolhouse. She said that the addition will not look any different, it will match exactly.

Mr. Ostler said that there isn't much evidence of it being a schoolhouse at all, but that part of the structure is the part.

Mrs. Ostler pointed out the deck that they put on previously, to the left of the window off the back.

Mr. Ostler said that the reason why the addition is slightly offset is because of the existing bulkhead which leads to the basement as shown in the photo. He said that there is no water involved in the project, just electric. He said that the siding will match the color of the house, which is aluminum, but will be using vinyl. He said that the roof colors will blend in as much as possible.

Mr. Slivinski asked if the structure will be on a full foundation.

Mr. Ostler said it will not, it will be on pilings that get pounded into the ground, they are helical piles.

Mr. Slivinski asked if it will be heated.

Mr. Ostler said it will be heated, it will have a mini-split device for heat and cooling, it's internal, on the wall.

Mr. Vorbach said that he likes the clarity of the package, it is a simple addition, and it belongs in context. He said that he has no design issues with it. He said that aesthetically, it belongs, and sees no issues with it.

Ald. Cleaver said that he agrees with Mr. Vorbach's comments, and aesthetically, it's fine.

SPEAKING IN FAVOR:

Mr. Falk said that there was a response in favor from Herbert Buchanan, 1 Mt. Pleasant Street, Nashua, NH, who said it is a good idea.

SPEAKING IN OPPOSITION OR WITH QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS:

No one.

END OF PUBLIC HEARING, BEGINNING OF PUBLIC MEETING:

All Commission members expressed support for the application.

MOTION by Mr. Vorbach to approve the application as submitted.

SECONDED by Ald. Cleaver.

Roll call for the vote:

Mr. Sampson said yes.

Mr. Vorbach said yes.

Mrs. MacKay said yes.

Mr. Slivinski said yes.

Mr. Weber said yes.

Ald. Cleaver said yes.

MOTION FOR APPROVAL CARRIES UNANIMOUSLY.

- 2. City of Nashua, Jackson Falls Hydroelectric Facility Powerplant (Owner) Deb Chisholm, Waterways Manager, City of Nashua (Applicant) 1 Nashua Drive (Sheet 43 Lot 99) requesting to replace the existing turbine/generator/control equipment of the Jackson Falls Hydroelectric Facility Powerplant, including demolition, excavation and construction of a new powerhouse, a new draft tube section with stoplog slots in the tailrace, and a refurbished substation. GI Zone, Ward 3.**

Voting on this case:

Mariellen MacKay, Chair
Robert Vorbach, Vice Chair
Ed Weber
Robert Sampson
Bill Slivinski

Ald. Skip Cleaver

Deb Chisholm, Waterways Manager, 229 Main Street, City of Nashua. Ms. Chisholm said that the turbine was installed in the hydroelectric facility in the mid 80's, and it has seen better days, and it will need replacing soon. She said that they will be taking out the power house that is made of concrete, most of it will be torn down and there will be one wall that will stay. She said that on the aerial photo shown, it stands out. She said that they will be tearing off the roof, three of the walls, and the wall that will remain is the wall closest to the river than the land side, as it is part of the fish ladder.

Ms. Chisholm said that they will be tearing out the old turbine, and will be doing some drilling in the river itself, because the new turbine that is being made doesn't fit perfectly in the slot left by the old one, so some of the bedrock needs to come out, and the powerhouse will be rebuilt over the top of the new turbine. She said that all of the fish passage equipment, the fish ladder, will be staying, and the powerhouse will be the same size as the old one, it will be the same footprint.

Mr. Weber asked what the condition is of the retaining wall and the rest of the structures, as far as their integrity.

Ms. Chisholm said that as far as the dam is concerned, it was just replaced a few years ago, and the structures themselves were all inspected through that process, and they're in good shape, and it is inspected at least on an annual basis, and a monitoring report is sent out once a year that tells if there are any issues or repairs. She said the dam is considered a dam of high significance, and the City has a contractor, Essex Power, who is out there on a daily basis. She said that the powerhouse was built in the 1980's.

Mr. Sampson said that the Margarita's brick building was built around 1919 or 1920.

Mr. Slivinski asked what is historic about the concrete powerhouse.

Ms. Chisholm said that the location of the building is what is prompting the meeting with the HDC, as it is located within the District. She said that the staff at the NHDES expect to look at this as well. She said that they just want to follow all the rules for permitting.

Mr. Vorbach said he appreciates the detail of the package, and said that it is a utility, it's a utilitarian structure, turbine, and upgrading it. He said that this is one of the better brick buildings on the river.

SPEAKING IN FAVOR:

No one.

SPEAKING IN OPPOSITION OR WITH QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS:

No one.

Commission members all expressed support for the application.

MOTION by Mr. Sampson to approve the request as presented.

SECONDED by Mr. Vorbach.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY IN SUPPORT BY VERBAL ROLL CALL OF THE VOTING MEMBERS.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Master Plan Update: Matt Sullivan, Planning Manager, City of Nashua:

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen, of the update of the Master Plan to date. He said that the last plan was done in 2000, and twenty years is a long time for any community to go without updating their comprehensive plan, which is the foundation for a lot of the land use regulations and ordinances that are in place. He said that there were several updates of the Land Use Code since 2000, culminated in a complete revision in 2008.

Mr. Sullivan said that after the Master Plan is adopted later in 2021, then, it will move towards a comprehensive land use code rewrite. He said that the Master Plan is a long-term planning document, and is intended to be an all-inclusive process that looks at a variety of topics, such as historic preservation, land use development, conservation, natural resource preservation, economic development, arts and culture. He said it is a real opportunity to set some policy about what will happen in these various areas.

Mr. Sullivan said that there is a broad vision of the Master Plan, and it has core values that are intended to be the common threads that are going through the topic areas, and then there are issues such as land use and development, housing, economic growth, mobility and transit, open space and natural resources, and arts. He said that those will be the implementable actions as we go through this process. He said that there will be actions and recommendations, and would like to work closely with the Commission and other decision-making bodies to ensure that the plan is implementable moving forward.

Mr. Sullivan said that this process started back last July/August with a lot of public outreach and engagement, and some of the background data. He said that currently, the City is in a place that would be classified as being comfortable with what the public has said, and there is a lot of data to make decision on, so we're moving into the important part. He said that the plan will be in the development process until mid-year.

Mr. Sullivan said that there are a lot of ways to get involved, as you can sign up for email updates, you can leave comments through many tools, you can take a survey, participate in digital maps, large public meetings, and the Commission, as decision makers, have a unique opportunity to talk about specific interests that the Commission has. He said that the website is the critical, or number one outreach piece now, it is imagine.nashuanh.gov and encourages the Commission members to check it out.

Mr. Sullivan said that due to the pandemic, we've been somewhat limited from having larger public meetings, but still find value in doing smaller one-on-one group engagements. He said that there have been some social media meetings, and have been engaging with decision-makers across the board, and many small group meetings and some other larger meetings, and have been

trying to get in front of as many groups as possible. He said that the Master Plan group is happy to meet with anyone the Commission suggests.

Mr. Sullivan said that the Master Plan group is putting together some of the goals and big ideas into real goal statements that will form the foundation of the actions. He said that the action statements will really drive the work that will happen, including the Land Use Code re-write and other policymaking the City will do over the upcoming ten year period. He said that they are looking a lot at the existing conditions analysis, looking where we've come over the past twenty years, as we've had the benefit of the 2010 Census data to review, the RKG Housing study that was recently done.

Mr. Sullivan said that there is a tool called Social Pinpoint. He said that it allows folks to provide input from the website, you can go right to a parcel on the map and provide comments on the property, it allows you to indicate a maintain/protect, develop/redevelop and improve category, so you can leave feedback on any site you desire. He said that it is available through the imagine.nashuanh.gov website and you can navigate directly to this page.

Mr. Sullivan said that there will be an event on April 6, which will focus on Daniel Webster College, the Amherst Street corridor, the Daniel Webster corridor and some other smaller geographical areas. He encourages all the HDC members to attend, and there will be specific discussions on these areas and potentially radical vision for these areas.

Mrs. MacKay asked if the powerpoint presentation can be sent to the Commission members, and asked how people can register for the April 6th meeting.

Mr. Sullivan said he can make it available, and the April 6th meeting is at 6:30 pm, and the login information is on the website directly. He said it is a zoom session, and no registration is required.

Mr. Weber said that there are some buildings that are not protected by the Historic District, and they're scattered in the City, and without protection, they can be redeveloped into anything. He said it would be great to protect these older buildings that are there. He suggested that we have a meeting to go over these buildings that need to be protected before the April meeting to present it to the Imagine Nashua.

Mrs. MacKay said that would be a great idea, and if we can have one of those special meetings to share information.

Mr. Sullivan said it needs to be a publicly noticed meeting, and it can happen.

Mr. Falk said that if more than a quorum of HDC members are present, it needs to be noticed.

Mr. Sullivan said he'd be happy to set something up.

Amber Loque said that when you're shifting from the goals to the actions, that could actually be a specific action to preserve "x" amount of properties, or to include "x" amount of parcels, and have that detailed letter of recommendation and list that would accompany with the Master Plan overall.

Mr. Sullivan said that perhaps staff could review the 2000 Master Plan and pull out the goals that were related to historic preservation, and it may be a good baseline to have a larger conversation about what the new goals could be, or action statements.

Mrs. MacKay said that we don't want to lose all this history of these old homes that have such character to them, they need to be saved for future generations.

Mr. Sullivan said that in looking at the Social Pinpoint, one comment that is a "thumbs up" says that we should retain the character of these old homes, and leave the zoning intact as much as possible to protect the area.

Mr. Slivinski said that perhaps our own Historic District members should put out our own vision of what we see the Historic District being over the next twenty years. He said that it's been a neglected child in the City, and ignored. He said so many of the buildings that we've lost have been in the downtown district, and that area should have been part of the Historic District, and that was turned down.

Mr. Falk said that there was an attempt to have the downtown included in the Historic District, but the downtown merchants did not support it.

Mr. Sullivan said that we've had some recent projects in the downtown, in which staff has looked at the design standards, and whether they're actually consistent with what we want architecture to look like in the downtown area, that may be something that the Commission may want to weigh in on, even though it isn't part of the district.

Mr. Weber said hopefully Robert can have a list of buildings throughout the City that he feels should keep the historical value, and that would be most helpful, and it can be given to Carter, who can give it to the members, and we can go out and look at all these houses and have a more substantial conversation about these properties. He said that perhaps we can break it down to the top 25 or 50 properties. He said that Ms. Miller, in Concord, can help out with getting more information and grants to give more information on the historic district, and she'd come down and work with the district and provide information and it would be paid for by New Hampshire Restoration Commission in Concord.

Mr. Vorbach said he has a list of not only houses, but buildings as well, and would be happy to put it to paper. He said that Architecture is definitely what matters to him. He said three sites come to mind, the Main Street Methodist Church, the new Pennichuck Headquarters, and the building on Water Street, it's white, and sticks out like a sore thumb. He said that Portsmouth, or Marblehead, even Manchester to a degree, what gets built is interesting architecturally, and that does not happen in Nashua at all. He said the Main Street Methodist Church addition is unbelievable. He said it was designed by someone who is not a licensed architect and probably true of the Pennichuck headquarters too. He said that over the past thirty years, what has been built is not impressive architecturally. He said he's not aware of even one project that has been recognized by AIA or anyone regarding excellence in architectural design. He said he's willing to roll up his sleeves and get involved, and has brought this up to City officials in the past. He said that especially in the downtown, quite a lot of interesting buildings have been lost over time, and what has replaced them is really not that interesting.

Mr. Sullivan said one powerful tool is that the City offers an incentive in the downtown district that basically, provided an applicant meets the design standards in the ordinance, they are permitted to skip through the Planning Board review process, so it places a high emphasis on

look and feel, and reduces the burden of the typical development review process. He said that we have a great opportunity to incentivize good architecture should those development standards actually be thoughtfully improved from where they are today. He said that occasionally, even staff struggles with these standards we have and whether or not they're actually reflective of what the community wants in the downtown.

Mr. Weber said that Mr. Sampson has such great history of the City, and it would be great to have his list of buildings.

Mr. Sampson said that there are at least five buildings that are or were schoolhouses at some time or another, some eighty or one hundred years ago, so, it's great history of how Nashua educated its children. He said Im Street Junior High School, Mt. Pleasant, the old high school on Temple Street, the Shattuck Street School, and there are probably others. He said that part of our industrial heritage, in the cellar of one of the mill buildings, perhaps it's "mill number two", there is one of the waterwheels that originally drove the textile machinery. He said that should be preserved.

Mr. Sullivan said that Staff will work on getting a special session with the Commission to talk about the Master Plan, and general historic preservation vision within the community, it will be a very valuable conversation.

Mr. Weber said that he hopes that Mr. Sampson and Mr. Vorbach could put together their lists of historical buildings, and give them to the members before the meeting we have so we can all go out and visit these sites.

Bylaws revisions:

Mr. Falk said that staff made some minor revisions to the Bylaws, and said that the first paragraph shows the updated dates of the Land Use Code, the Municipal Code, the RSA's, they were from 1982 and now they reflect present day.

Mr. Falk said that staff added a section at the end, number 6, which is for Alternate Members voting. He said that they have a good handle on it now, there are seven members and three alternates, and tonight is a good example, with Bill voting tonight, he's taking the place of a member to vote. He said that it was done properly tonight, as long as there are seven people here, all may vote, especially if a member is not here, an alternate can take their place, such as what Bill did.

Mrs. MacKay asked for comments on the Bylaws.

Mr. Sampson said that he's looked at the changes, and they are what he would have done, and is prepared to adopt them.

MOTION by Mr. Sampson to adopt the Bylaws as revised.

SECONDED by Mr. Weber. He said that he appreciates the alternates being able to come in and speak. He said that it makes alternates, especially when they can speak and vote, to feel more of a part of the Commission.

Mr. Falk said that in the Bylaws, number 2 says that Bylaws may be amended in any meeting, provided there is a two-thirds vote of all the members present. He said that at least two-thirds of the members present need to be ok with this.

Mr. Sullivan said that this should be voted upon during the next meeting, because it has to be posted by a written notice by the prior meeting.

Mr. Falk said that this came up verbally at the last meeting, and staff had it listed in the Agenda, but it wasn't the published agenda, so it can be done at the next meeting.

Mr. Sampson withdrew his Motion.

Mr. Weber withdrew his Second.

Mrs. MacKay said that voting for the Bylaws will happen at the next regularly scheduled meeting. She said that even if we don't have any regularly scheduled cases, she still requested that the Commission have a meeting so that this can be voted on, allowing alternates status to be solidified.

Mr. Falk said that is fine.

MEMBERS COMMENTS:

None.

MOTION TO ADJOURN by Mrs. MacKay at 8:00.

CF/cf