

TOWN OF KINGSTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Wednesday, March 15, 2023
Public Meeting

Members Present:

Susan Prescott, Chair
Virginia Morse, Vice Chair
Madelynn Ouellette
Stanley Shalett

Absent Members:

Glenn Coppelman, Planning Board representative
Kevin St. James, Board of Selectmen representative

Other Attendees:

Marissa Federico, Recording Secretary (virtually)
Clarissa Finks
Scott Ouellette

Susan called the public meeting to order at 7:10 p.m

TOWN BOARD UPDATES

HDC: Acceptance of Minutes: The minutes of the meeting held on 2/14/23 will be discussed at a future time.

Critical Correspondence: Susan received a letter from Northland Forest Products requesting to upgrade their signage. Susan informed them it will be considered maintenance if the existing sign is utilized and only will be repainted. If they intend to make changes, they will need to file an application.

Planning Board and CIP: No representative was present.

Board of Selectmen: No representative was present.

Heritage Commission: Virginia shared that the meeting last week was cancelled due to the weather. She informed members that the plaques for properties on the National Register should arrive soon. The installation for those on public properties will be done by the Road Agent and his crew. Those on private properties will be mounted per the owner's preference. She added that the plaque for the Nichols Library will be installed on a stone on the grounds, not on the building itself.

CLARISSA FINKS, 159 MAIN STREET

WINDOW REPLACEMENT, DOOR/WINDOW SWAP

Clarissa noted all work has been done to replace the windows on the first floor according to the details approved by the HDC. She has now submitted an application to replace the windows on the 2nd and 3rd floors. There will be no change in the size or location of any window for this phase of the project. She brought pictures of the new windows and noted all existing detail will remain. The windows will have 2-over-1 mullions. This application also requests to swap out the side door that faces the street with a matching window. She confirmed that the house has wood siding, but the workshop/garage has vinyl siding.

Virginia asked if the fee had been already paid. Clarissa said she has the receipt for her payment.

MM&S: Virginia made a motion to accept the application as submitted and discussed to replace the windows on the 2nd and 3rd floors of the home and swap out one door with a matching window. Seconded by Madelynn. All in agreement.

VERIFICATION OF WORK COMPLETED AS APPROVED

Virginia created a spreadsheet to track the progress of work done for approved applications. She did not complete it but will continue working on it.

DISCUSSION OF THE PASSAGE OF WARRANT ARTICLE 12

ADDITION TO ORDINANCE 102.9, HISTORIC DISTRICT GUIDELINES

Virginia noted this addition to the ordinance passed, and members need to discuss the associated implications. Susan and Virginia agreed that the public should be better informed of the good work the HDC does, and they can do a better job communicating with the public.

Virginia expressed disappointment that her Letter to the Editor did not appear in the print or electronic edition of the paper. She noted only one application has been denied in 3 years. There will be increased costs to the town if an expert is required, and there is no current budget for professional services. She does not anticipate an expert opinion will be needed often. As a Certified Local Government, members need to track hours of continuing education, and the public should be informed of their training. Virginia noted that in the event of a denial, every detail is included in the paperwork. If there is a contentious issue, the town attorney has been involved and provided guidance. She also added that partnering with the Heritage Commission to inform the public would be beneficial. Virginia also noted that the HDC is a valuable resource for information and has many resources on the town's website and in the library to guide homeowners in the Districts. This helps guide applicants before they submit their applications.

Madelynn is worried that there may be lawsuits since the new language is vague. Per NH RSA 673:4, the appointing authority (the Selectboard) takes into consideration the appointee's demonstrated interest and ability to understand, appreciate, and promote the purposes of the HDC.

Per Ordinance 102.8, the procedure is detailed. Madelynn noted the 45-day decision deadline and inquired when the clock begins. This prompted a discussion of how applications should be reviewed in order to ensure that all appropriate documentation is included in the application. Currently, Susan and/or Virginia review applications for completeness before they are discussed in the public meeting/hearing. Madelynn suggested that the HDC begin to function more like the Planning Board in voting for jurisdiction over an application to agree that an application is complete enough to be discussed at the meeting. Scott Ouellette, a former Planning Board member, noted that the clock begins once the application is received, not discussed in a hearing/meeting.

Members expressed that they already closely follow Ordinance 102.10 regarding denials and appeals.

Susan noted they are detailed in their examination and explanation to applicants. She added moving forward, the HDC should provide examples to guide their project design. She noted this could slow down the approval process to allow the applicant time to make any changes and provide new documentation.

Virginia noted that the Planning Board holds a public hearing for every application received. She said this will cost the applicant a lot of money due to added notification costs but may be needed now that this Ordinance has been changed.

Susan said they need to consider creating a list of experts. Virginia noted the NH Preservation Alliance has a list of experts available and also possibly the NH Historical Resources Division.

Susan noted they can make a list of criteria to give to applicants.

Public Comments:

Scott Ouellette, 189 Main Street: He noted there is a numbering issue in the Ordinances where there are 2 sections titled 102.8 (Procedure and Public Hearings). He noted that the ability to hold a Public Hearing provides flexibility to discuss the project thoroughly. He noted if the process is cooperative, no expert would be needed, but in the event of a contentious project, an expert could be brought in.

MICROPHONE SOUND QUALITY IN MEETING ROOM

Madelynn expressed the sound quality of videos from meetings held at Town Hall is not good. Multiple members concurred. Virginia noted the Selectboard has spent a lot of money on the new system, but there are still issues.

RECRUITMENT OF NEW HDC MEMBERS

Madelynn emphasized that they need to recruit more members. Susan said she has been trying to find people as well. The Selectboard appoints members. Madelynn noted applicants should have interest in history of Kingston. Virginia stressed they do not have to live in either HD.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m