



Schenectady Historic District Commission

**Meeting Minutes
June 6, 2016**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Britt called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

Commissioner Britt noted that there were only four Commissioners present at the meeting and applications require four votes for approval. In light of this, she asked the applicants if any of them would like to have their application tabled until the next meeting, assuming that more Commissioners would then be present. All of the applicants communicated that they would be willing to proceed.

Prior to the beginning of the meeting Counsel Bailey disseminated to the Commissioners a letter from Corporation Counsel Carl Falotico. The letter was in response to the letter dated May 1st that was sent to him by the Commission. The letter to Mr. Falotico discussed inconsistencies in the City Code regarding the consideration of historic properties.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Carrie Britt-Narcavage, Chair; Ben Wiles, Vice Chair; Jackie Craven; Patricia Yager

EXCUSED: David F. Lowry

ABSENT: Dr. Dean Bennett; Mark Meigher

STAFF: Rima Shamieh, Assistant Planner; Ryan Bailey, Assistant Corporation Counsel; Jennifer Mills, Secretary

III. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

IV. ADOPTION OF MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Wiles noted that the portion of the May Minutes describing the discussion regarding decision-making procedures contained an error. He suggested that the Minutes be amended as described below.

Motion by Commissioner Craven, seconded by Commissioner Yager, to adopt the May 16, 2016 Meeting Minutes with the following correction:

- Other Business, item B, third paragraph – “Accept the application as written” will be struck and replaced with “Determine if the application is complete and sufficient for consideration for a decision.”

Motion carried unanimously.

V. NEW BUSINESS – Applications

A. Consideration for approval submitted by Michael J. Barron and John R. Allen to install seasonal awnings, valance, and sun shades. The premise is located at 1174 Lowell Road.

Michael J. Barron and John R. Allen appeared before the Commission. Mr. Allen explained their application, stating that they would like to install two roll-up shades and a valance on the first floor porch and two window awnings on the second floor windows on the front façade. He explained that the awnings would be seasonal, and would be put up around Memorial Day and removed at the end of September. Mr. Allen stated that he and Mr. Barron believe that there were originally awnings and porch shades on the house, because the old hardware is still attached to the building. He also noted that before he and Mr. Barron bought the house, when they had one of their initial viewings of the property they saw an old rolled-up awning in the attic and asked that it be kept for them. He explained that unfortunately it was inadvertently discarded.

Mr. Barron stated that Taylor Awnings in Gloversville would be fabricating and installing the awnings. He explained that they make and install awnings for historic properties all across the United States. Mr. Allen stated that they would like to install the shades on the porch for shade and privacy, and that the awning is needed on one of the second floor windows because the sun is very hot in that room. He explained that the sun is not as hot in the other room, but that they would like to install the awning to provide symmetry to the front of the house. He noted that an awning will not be installed on the smaller middle window, which is the bathroom.

Mr. Barron explained that the new hardware will be only slightly larger than what is shown in the picture in the application, and will be painted to match the wood trim. He also presented a sample of the Sunbrella canvas which they would like to use for the shades and awnings, as well as a sample of the trim. He explained that the canvas is fade and mildew resistant and comes with a ten-year warranty. Commissioner Britt asked if the valance would be cut out above the porch steps, as shown in the sample photo. Mr. Barron stated that it would. Commissioner Yager asked how the valance will be attached. Mr. Barron explained that it will be attached on hooks on the inside of the porch trim, and the hardware will not be visible from the street.

Commissioner Britt noted that the application is very thorough and gives the Commissioners all of the information that they need to consider the proposal well. Commissioner Craven noted that the applicants have obviously done research into both the history of the house and the history of the use of awnings on the structure,

which she understands were very common during the time period when this home was built, and for a significant time period thereafter. Commissioners Britt and Yager agreed.

Commissioner Wiles stated that the awnings, shades, and valance are not temporary structures. He explained that he believes that they are permanent structures which will have an intermittent use. He also noted that unlike Commissioner Craven he is not certain that awnings were historically used heavily throughout the Plot. He explained that he examined many houses in the plot looking for awnings and found virtually none. He asked if the Commissioners or the applicants could give any other examples of awnings currently in use in the Plot. Mr. Barron noted that there is a large retractable awning over the patio of the Butterfly House on Lowell Road. Commissioner Craven noted that she remembers that there is another house on Lowell Road that also currently has awnings.

Commissioner Britt stated that she understands that awnings were used historically in the Plot. Commissioner Wiles asked what evidence she had to support this conclusion. Commissioner Britt replied that she has seen them in historic pictures of the neighborhood. She explained that there is no question whether or not they were once used, but that the question is if they are used now, or should be allowed to be used now. Commissioner Wiles stated that he did not review any historic photographs before the meeting, but that he believes that allowing the awnings to be used today would mean introducing a new material to the structure. He asked the applicants if they recalled what the original awning fabric they had seen in the attic looked like. Mr. Barron stated that they did not, as they only saw the awning briefly and it was rolled up. Commissioner Wiles stated that while he believes the proposed canvas to be a very attractive choice, there is no evidence to prove that it will replicate what would have been originally used.

Commissioner Craven stated that in the early 1900s awnings were not used for decorative purposes, but rather as a means to keep rooms cooler in the warmer months. She noted that as modern cooling techniques - electric fans and eventually air conditioners – became more widely used the use of awnings dropped off. Mr. Allen noted that there is evidence that there were certainly awnings on the house. Mr. Barron pointed out the photographs showing the original hardware, which were submitted with the application. Commissioner Wiles asked the applicants if they intended the application to have three separate parts, encompassing the valances, the porch shades, and the second floor window awnings. Mr. Allen stated that he feels that the three areas should be considered as a whole, as they all work together as part of the proposed design. Mr. Barron stated that there is evidence that all three were used on the house in the past. Commissioner Britt noted that from the 1870s through the 1930's and 40's awnings were very prevalent. Commissioner Craven stated that there is sufficient evidence that awnings were used on this structure, indicated by the existing hardware and awning found in the attic.

Commissioner Wiles asked the applicants if the second floor awnings will be placed so that the keystones remain visible. Mr. Allen stated that they will be. Commissioner Wiles asked what the finished hem on the window awning will look like. Mr. Barron responded that they will be the “High Wave” style E as shown in the application. He explained that he was partial to the “Western” style B, but that the awning designers explained that “High Wave” is what would be historically appropriate for this house.

Assistant Planner Shamieh asked when the house was built. Mr. Allen stated that it was built in 1903, and had been in the same family until the applicants purchased it last fall. Commissioner Wiles noted that when the house was built in 1903 it was a style contemporary for that time period, and thus it is important that the awnings also be contemporary to that time period as opposed to being of an earlier period. Mr. Allen noted that the house is of the Arts and Crafts style and that he believes that the proposed awning and shades are consistent with that style. Commissioner Craven shared some internet photos of awnings from that time period.

Commissioner Wiles stated that if the proposal is approved he would prefer that it should cover only this set of awnings and shades, and that if they need to be repaired or replaced in the future the homeowners would be required to return to the Commission for further approval. The Commissioners concurred.

Motion by Commissioner Wiles, seconded by Commissioner Britt, to approve as submitted the application to install the valance, porch shades, and awnings on the structure as summarized below:

1. The applicants will install two awnings on the second-story front windows, a valance on the porch, and shades on the north and south ends of the porch. The awnings, shades, and valance will be constructed of the striped Sunbrella fabric submitted at the meeting, with a solid color burgundy trim, also as submitted. The edging on the awnings will be the “High Wave” style, as shown in the application.
2. The discussion of the Commissioners and applicant emphasized the historic use of awnings, both in the GE Realty Plot and on other houses of this style and time period, for the purposes of cooling the interior of the house during the warmer months.
3. The applicants will put the shades and awnings up sometime around Memorial Day and will remove them by September 30th each year.
4. The Commissioners reviewed internet photos of similar awnings shown on houses of this style and time period.
5. The applicants have agreed that the awnings will be attached to the wood portion of the window frame, with the keystones remaining visible. The porch shades and valance will be attached with hooks on the inward-facing side of the fascia and the hardware will not be visible from the outside.

And with the following conditions:

1. Once commenced, the project will be completed within one year.
2. This approval is for this set of valance, shades, and awnings only. If in the future the valance, shades, or awning need to be repaired or replaced the applicants will return to the Historic District Commission for further consideration.
3. The new hardware, as presented at the meeting, will be installed and painted to blend with the wood surrounding it.

Motion carried unanimously.

Findings:

1. This is a Type II SEQRA.
2. There is evidence that the home previously had awnings on the windows. The evidence includes hardware remaining on the wood trim and an old awning witnessed in the attic of the home.
3. In keeping with the guidelines of the Secretary of the Interior, when a feature is absent it may be restored based on pictorial or physical documentation.
4. With advances in other cooling methods, the use of awnings became less prevalent throughout the twentieth century.
5. There is evidence that this house and other homes in the GE Realty Plot also originally had seasonal awnings, used in an effort to cool the interior rooms in the warmer months.

B. Consideration for approval submitted by Michael and Terese Howard to remove two trees. The premise is located at 1135 Avon Road.

Michael and Terese Howard appeared before the Commission. Prior to the beginning of the discussion Commissioner Yager noted that in her research she had discovered that in 2014 a GE Realty Plot Tree Committee had been formed, and she wondered if the Committee would have any comment on this application. Commissioner Wiles noted that he is a founding member of the group, and that their scope is limited to street trees planted in the utility strip between the sidewalk and the street.

Mr. Howard explained that they would like to remove two trees from the property. He stated that the tree in the front yard is an ash tree that is diseased, and the other tree is a locust tree that is growing very close to the garage. He explained that he believes that it just grew up from a sapling and was not intentionally planted. Commissioner Wiles asked if the ash tree was diseased due to the ash borer. Mr. Howard responded that he was not sure, and that his tree consultant had only said that it was diseased. He stated that a very large limb, approximately 12 inches in diameter and eight feet long, had fallen from the tree from a height of about thirty to forty feet, and that he fears that there may be more falling limbs which could potentially harm bystanders. Commissioner Yager asked if the applicants plan to

replace the ash tree. Mr. Howard stated that they do not, since in very close proximity is a small flowering tree that will now get more light and have more space to grow, and there are nine other trees in the front portion of the yard. Commissioner Yager commented that perhaps if the tree is infested with the ash borer there might be specific procedures for disposal that should be followed. Commissioner Wiles commented that he could not speak to that question, but that he had observed another ash tree nearby that appeared healthy. Commissioner Wiles asked the applicants if there are any other ash trees on the property. Mrs. Howard replied that there are not. She explained that the other trees are maples and oak, and various small flowering trees.

Commissioner Wiles asked if the locust tree by the garage shows any evidence of disease. Mr. Harding replied that it does not, but that he feels that the close proximity to the garage makes it a danger to the building and foundation. Commissioner Wiles asked the applicants if they would be willing to document the species of the tree, the circumference at chest height, and the number of rings in the trunk. The applicants stated that they would. Commissioner Wiles requested that they submit the information to the Tree Committee, Assistant Planner Shamieh (for the record), and Mary Warner. Commissioner Wiles stated that he would forward the contact information to the applicants. Commissioner Wiles noted that the Realty Plot has many trees and that he believes that they will adequately fill in this yard. He added that often locusts are nuisance trees and are removed as saplings.

Motion by Commissioner Britt, seconded by Commissioner Yager, to approve as submitted the application to remove the two trees as summarized below:

1. The diseased ash tree in the front yard and the locust tree close to the garage will be removed and the age and size recorded as discussed.
2. Whether or not the trees should be replaced was discussed, and it was concluded that there are plenty of other trees in the yard which will most likely grow better once these trees are removed.

And with the following conditions:

1. Once commenced, the project will be completed within one year.
2. The applicant has agreed to measure the circumference of the trees at chest height, and count the number of rings once the tree is cut. They will provide this information to city staff for the property file, to the GE Realty Plot Tree Committee, and to Mary Warner.

Motion carried unanimously.

Findings:

1. This is a Type II SEQRA.
2. The ash tree is diseased and is most likely a danger tree. The removal of this tree will eliminate a potentially hazardous situation, and will also allow the other trees in the yard more room to grow and flourish.

3. The locust tree is a danger to the structural integrity of the garage. It is most likely that the tree was not intentionally planted but rather grew from a wild sapling that was never removed.

C. Consideration for approval submitted by Edwin Rueda to replace the roof on the front portion of the building. The premise is located at 1091 Wendell Avenue.

Colin Fausel, contractor for the project, appeared before the Commission. He explained that the applicant wishes to replace the front portion of the roof to match the rear portion, which was replaced fairly recently. Commissioner Craven asked if the front porch roof would also be replaced. Mr. Fausel responded that it would not. He explained that they would like to replace the metal edge of the roof with shingles. Commissioner Yager asked if the metal edge remains on the rear portion of the roof. Mr. Fausel replied that it does not. He also noted that they would be willing to keep the metal flashing around the dormer if the Commissioners felt that it is appropriate. Commissioner Britt stated that she would prefer for the metal flashing to remain. Commissioner Craven asked what color the flashing would be. Mr. Fausel responded that if possible they would use the existing metal, but if it had to be replaced it would most likely be aluminum. Commissioner Yager commented that to her understanding the use of flashing on roof valleys has fallen out of favor, as woven shingles has been determined to be better for the roof. Commissioner Britt noted that the metal flashing was used historically, with copper flashing used on higher-end homes, but that the woven shingles might be better for the roof. Mr. Fausel stated that woven shingles are easier to install, and that they are very water-tight, as the ice and water shield is used underneath. He explained that they could remove the metal, apply the ice and water shield under it, and then restore the metal, and this would allow for virtually the same amount of water protection as the woven shingles.

The Commissioners reviewed the City Assessor's records containing a historic photo, which clearly shows metal flashing. Mr. Fausel noted that new flashing would be quite shiny in finish, but that it could be painted for a more muted look. Commissioner Craven noted that she would be more comfortable if the flashing is painted to more resemble the original look of the roof. Mr. Fausel noted that if the existing metal is in satisfactory condition they will reuse it. The Commissioners agreed that this would be preferable. Commissioner Britt asked the Commissioners if they were inclined to allow the replacement of the metal skirting with shingles (to the edge of the roof). The Commissioners agreed that this would be allowed. Commissioner Craven noted that the edge of the roof is barely visible from the street. Commissioner Yager asked how the metal flashing would be attached to the roof around the dormer. She explained that in her research she found information that attaching the flashing with glue or epoxy does not have the best results. Mr. Fausel stated that they will nail it on, and the ice and water shield membrane will close around the nails and create a seal for a water-tight finish.

Motion by Commissioner Britt, seconded by Commissioner Craven, to approve as submitted the application to re-roof the house as summarized below:

1. The front portion of the roof will be replaced with shingles that match the rear of the roof in color and style.
2. The metal flashing in the dormer valleys will remain. The existing metal will be reused if possible or a new material of a similar style and color will be installed.
3. The current metal edge/skirt of the roof is rusted and in poor condition and will be replaced with shingles. Most of this area is not visible from the right-of-way and is thus not under the jurisdiction of the Historic District Commission.

And with the following condition:

1. Once commenced, the project will be completed within one year.
2. The metal flashing around the dormer will be reused or replaced with a metal material similar in color and finish.

Motion carried unanimously.

Findings:

1. This is a Type II SEQRA.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Determine how to proceed in developing recommendations for zoning code revisions.

The Commissioners briefly reviewed the letter disseminated at the beginning of the meeting by Counsel Bailey. Commissioner Britt suggested that the Commissioners review the letter and be prepared to discuss it at the next meeting. The Commissioners concurred. Assistant Planner Shamieh noted that she is still gathering information as to what the administration's opinion is regarding the recommendations, and as to how exactly the revision process would proceed.

VII. MISCELLANEOUS

The Commissioners and Assistant Planner Shamieh briefly discussed the email distributed to the Commissioners from David Giacolone regarding the tree committee in the Stockade. They agreed to be prepared to further discuss the email at the next meeting.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Approved 6/20/16

Motion by Commissioner Yager, seconded by Commissioner Craven, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 pm.