



**Schenectady Historic District Commission**

**Meeting Minutes  
April 4, 2019**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Commissioner Yager called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

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

**STAFF:** Avi Epstein, Zoning Officer; Jennifer Mills, Secretary

**EXCUSED:** Shaun Andriano; Frank Gilmore

**III. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

None.

**IV. ADOPTION OF MEETING MINUTES**

Motion by Commissioner Marney, seconded by Commissioner Wiles, to approve the February 28, 2019 Meeting Minutes as submitted.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

**V. NEW BUSINESS - APPLICATIONS**

**A. Consideration for approval submitted by Robert Van Zetta on behalf of Family and Child Services to replace existing clay tile shingles with sculpted fiberglass shingles. The premises are located at 1007 Maryland Avenue in the Union Street Historic District.**

Robert Van Zetta presented the application on Behalf of Family and Child Services.

Mr. Van Zetta explained that the not-for-profit organization he works for, Family & Child Services, purchased the property in 2012 after it had been vacant for some years. He stated that they obtained a variance to operate their offices out of the building, but do not see any clients at the site. Mr. Van Zetta explained that the original green tile roof has needed repairs many times over the last seven years, noting that due to seasonal changes in temperature the tiles crack and fall off frequently and must be replaced. He added that there has been water damage inside the house, as evidenced by the pictures submitted with his application. Mr. Van Zetta stated that the roofing company that regularly repairs the roof has communicated to him that they feel that it is no longer a realistic course of action to

keep repairing the roof; they recommended removing the tile and replacing in with architectural asphalt shingles.

Commissioner Wiles asked Mr. Van Zetta if the application is to replace the entire roof. Mr. Van Zetta replied that all the existing tile would be replaced with asphalt shingles but the copper roof on the lower sections of the roof would be maintained. Regarding photos of other Maryland Avenue roofs that were included in the application, Commissioner Marney noted that the other homes on the street that have architectural asphalt shingles are not in the historic district. He stated that the green tile roof is not seen on many structures in the City and is quite significant to this structure. Mr. Van Zetta stated that he believes that the look of the roof is great, but his organization is fiscally unable to continue maintaining it. He noted that they had investigated buying the tiles from a manufacturer in California but due to their heavy weight the cost of shipment alone would be \$6,000 to \$7,000.

Commissioner Marney stated that he had done some research on the tile roof and found out that its lifespan can be one hundred years or more, with proper maintenance. Commissioner Yager commented that since the house was built in 1925 the roof could be nearing the end of that time period. Commissioner Marney stated that, according to his research, the tiles can be removed, the underlayment repaired, and the tiles replaced. He explained that this can significantly add to the lifespan of the roof.

After further discussion it was decided that the Commission needs more information from the applicant regarding the current condition of the roof and the possibility that the tiles can be replaced. Commissioner Wiles asked Mr. Van Zetta if there are any more tiles stored somewhere on the property. Mr. Van Zetta replied that there is a small supply of tiles in the basement. He added that those are the tiles that they have been using to repair the roof, but their supply is quickly being depleted.

The Commissioners encouraged Mr. Van Zetta to contact roofing companies who have experience with tile roofs and obtain their opinions on the viability of the roof long-term, as well as estimates for both the repair and alternatively the replacement of the roof. It was decided that the application should be tabled as incomplete pending the submittal of additional information by the applicants.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

#### **MOTION TO TABLE**

Motion by Commissioner Marney, seconded by Commissioner Wiles, to table the application pending the submittal of further information, including:

1. Information regarding the current condition of the roof, specifically photographic and professionally documented evidence of damage that is so severe as to not be repairable.
2. An estimate of the cost of the repair of the tile roof, including specific parameters of the work necessary and what percentage of the existing tiles could be reapplied after repairing the underlayment.
3. A comparison of the cost and scope of work of a) removing the tiles, fixing the underlayment, and replacing them with asphalt shingles, and b) removing the tiles, fixing the underlayment, and reusing and/or replacing the tiles as necessary.
4. The Commission recommends that the organization research available grants and alternative funding sources that might support retaining and repairing the tile roof.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

**B. Consideration for approval submitted by Molly Goodman on behalf of Union College to install double-hung aluminum clad windows on the southern facing side and to install a 300 SF rain garden. The premises are located at 1294 Lenox Road in the G.E. Realty Plot Historic District.**

Molly Goodman, student at Union College and project manager, presented the application, with assistance from Alex Lykins, Sustainability Coordinator for Union College, and Paul Matarazzo, Associate Director of Capital Projects and Campus Properties at Union College.

Ms. Goodman reviewed the application and briefly explained the scope of the proposed work. Commissioner Yager asked how the water will be fed into the rain garden. Ms. Goodman replied that it will be fed underground. Commissioner Marney asked if the windows will be aluminum-clad wood. Mr. Matarazzo stated that they will be and explained that they plan to replace the existing windows, which have different divided light patterns, in kind so that the new divided lights will match each window. He added that the windows being used are not replacement windows but custom new construction windows which will be retro-fitted into the existing openings.

Commissioner Wiles asked why they are not proposing to replace all the windows on that side of the house. Ms. Goodman replied that because of budget constraints they are not able to replace all the windows, but using a thermal heat gun they had researched which windows were the worst as far as energy loss and draftiness. Commissioner Wiles stated that currently the windows on the southern façade all match and after eleven are replaced they will not. Ms. Goodman stated that it will be very difficult to discern any difference in the windows from the street. Commissioner Marney stated that the Commission usually suggests repairing and

re-glazing the existing windows and adding aluminum storm windows, which can result in a similar energy efficiency to that of a replacement window. He added that the reuse of the existing windows would seem to further their sustainability efforts, as it would keep additional materials out of the landfill. Mr. Matarazzo noted that there are aluminum storms on the existing windows.

The Commissioners discussed the repair of the existing windows versus replacing the windows. Commissioner Yager asked the applicants if they have any photographic evidence that the windows are beyond repair. Mr. Lykins stated that they did not. Commissioner Marney suggested that they research the cost of repairing the windows. Mr. Lykins explained that they have a concern with time constraints, as the sustainability grant that Ms. Goodman has received to fund the project must be used by June 30 of this year. After further discussion it was decided that the Commission would approve the new windows but would strongly encourage the applicants to further research and consider the repair option.

The Commissioners discussed the rain garden and felt that the concept was a good one. Zoning Officer Epstein noted that while the Commission can approve the size and location of the garden, they do not have jurisdiction over the species of plants chosen.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

#### **RESOLUTION**

Motion by Commissioner Bennett, seconded by Commissioner Wiles, to approve the application as submitted with the following conditions:

1. The project will be completed within one year.
2. The divided light pattern of the new windows will match the existing.
3. The aluminum clad wood windows will be the color that most closely matches the body of the house, either olive or sage as shown on the manufacturer's color chart submitted for the record.
4. The sample dark brown aluminum gutter shown at the meeting is approved for installation on the north side of the house.
5. The rain garden location is approved as submitted; however, the Commission does not have jurisdiction over what species of plants are used.

And with the following finding of fact:

1. This is a Type II SEQRA.

***Motion carried unanimously.***

**C. Consideration for approval submitted by Paul Matarazzo on behalf of Union College to replace existing shake shingles with architectural asphalt shingles. The premises are located at 1248 Lenox Road in the G.E. Realty Plot Historic District.**

Paul Matarazzo, Associate Director of Capital Projects and Campus Properties at Union College presented the application.

Mr. Matarazzo explained that the current split wood shakes on the roof are not good quality, adding that they were replaced approximately twenty years ago but are at the end of their life span. He stated that this type of shingle does not have the durability of a cedar shake but is the only shingle available in this style. Mr. Matarazzo stated that because there are no acceptable wood shakes currently available, they would like to replace the shakes with an asphalt shingle product which is made to mimic the look of wood and is a far superior product. He added that since submitting the application he has decided to repair the existing copper roof rather than replace it, as it does not appear to have deteriorated as much as initially believed.

Commissioner Marney stated that while he sees the similarity between this application and the first one of the meeting, there is no question that these wood shakes cannot be re-used or replaced with an acceptable new wood material. Mr. Matarazzo stated that some of the shingles have disintegrated, especially on the rear of the house which is susceptible to more weather damage. Commissioner Bennett stated that the loss of the wood shakes does not seem to him to be as lamentable a loss as that of a slate or tile roof. Commissioner Marney stated that he believes that the applicant has demonstrated that applying new wood shakes would not be an acceptable alternative because of the lack of quality wood products available. Commissioner Yager agreed, stating that she believes that the proposed asphalt shingles will replicate the look of the wood shakes very well, and will eliminate concerns about fire codes or the sustainability of the wood roof.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

**RESOLUTION**

Motion by Commissioner Marney, seconded by Commissioner Wiles, to approve the application as submitted with the following conditions:

1. The project will be completed within one year.
2. This approval is for the replacement of the existing shake shingles with CertainTeed Presidential Shake® TL shingles in the Weathered Wood color. The copper roof replacement submitted with the original application has been omitted from the proposal by the applicant.

And with the following findings of fact:

1. This is a Type II SEQRA.
2. The wood shake shingles previously used are a substandard historic material. The new asphalt shingles will maintain a similar look and spatial relationship as that material but will be much more durable and will better protect the integrity of the building.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

**D. Consideration for approval submitted by Jason Small on behalf of the Historical Society of Early American Decoration to paint the exterior of the building, erect a sign, and install new landscaping. The premises are located at 26 North College Street in the Stockade Historic District.**

Jason Small presented the application on behalf of the Historical Society of Early American Decoration.

Mr. Small briefly reviewed the application. Zoning Officer Epstein pointed out to the Commissioners that they had been provided with a copy of the site plan approval conditions issued by the Planning Commission in 2018 for the property. Commissioner Yager noted that the Planning Commission had approved a wood sign, but a PVC composite sign had been proposed in the application. Mr. Small stated that the PVC sign had been proposed due to its better durability. Commissioner Wiles stated that he would not support a PVC sign, as it would be introducing a new material where it has not been proven to be necessary.

Commissioner Wiles stated that he would also not support the use of a PVC fence. The Commissioners agreed. Commissioner Yager provided an example of an anodized aluminum alternative and stated that she would suggest a fence with a top rail for this application. Mr. Small stated that he did not believe that his client would have any objection to the aluminum fence. Commissioner Marney stated that Mr. Small should provide a cut sheet of the fence to be used to Zoning Officer Epstein for final approval prior to installing the fence.

Commissioner Marney asked what the materials of the proposed sign post would be. Mr. Small responded that they had proposed a PVC material. Commissioner Marney stated that in order to not introduce any new materials the post should also be wood, with an aluminum bracket. The Commissioners agreed.

Zoning Officer Epstein pointed out that the application called for the removal of the planting beds in front of the building, but the site plan approval issued by the Planning Commission called for the beds to be replanted and maintained. It was decided that the wood edging on the raised beds will be replaced in kind and

additional landscaping should be added to the beds, as required by the Planning Commission.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

### **RESOLUTION**

Motion by Commissioner Marney, seconded by Commissioner Bennett, to approve the application as submitted with the following conditions:

1. The project will be completed within one year.
2. The paint colors, which will match the existing, are approved as submitted.
3. The fence is approved as two sections of black anodized aluminum, one 18' section and one 4' section, which will have a solid top rail, as discussed at the meeting. The applicant will submit a detailed cut sheet of the final fence design to City staff for final approval prior to purchasing or installing the fence.
4. The concrete block wall will be painted the light blue shade that matches the rest of the body of the building.
5. The raised landscaping beds at the front of the building will be repaired with similar wood and supplemented with additional plantings.
6. The design of the sign is approved as submitted, but it will be constructed of wood and the post will be painted wood. A detailed sign proposal showing the design and specifying the materials to be used will be submitted to City staff for final approval prior to purchase and installation of the sign.

And with the following finding of fact:

1. This is a Type II SEQRA.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

- E. Consideration for approval submitted by Robert Woods to install cedar clapboard siding with cedar trim on the front section of the eastern facing wall and Hardie-board siding with PVC trim on the middle section and the rear to remain novelty siding. Siding to be repainted in Sandstone Beige. The premises are located at 32 Front Street in the Stockade Historic District.**

Robert Woods presented the application.

Mr. Woods presented photos of the exterior and interior of the house and gave a brief overview of the work he has done to restore the home over the last eleven years. He also brought samples of the original wood siding, with 15 wood rings per inch, and a piece of new siding, with 5 wood rings per inch, to demonstrate the

significant difference in the quality of wood materials available today. Mr. Woods also distributed and reviewed a timeline of the previous applications he had made to the Commission and the approvals that he had been granted. He briefly reviewed his application and explained the siding choices he has made for the three sections of the house, which were built at different times.

Commissioner Yager asked Mr. Woods how far out of plumb the wall is. Mr. Woods replied that it varies from 1 ½” to 6”. Commissioner Yager asked if the cement board siding, some of which has already been installed, has a smooth finish. Mr. Woods replied that it has a slight texture, but the texture is not distinguishable from the street. He added that when he chose the siding it was the only texture that was available in the specific reveal that he needed.

The Commissioners discussed the different siding applications for the three sections of the house. Commissioner Wiles asked Mr. Woods if the cement board siding is being used in this specific style and reveal because it will most closely replicate the siding that was originally used on this section. Mr. Woods stated that it will, and that he feels that this is the best option because the wood siding in this style that is available today would not hold up to the moisture challenges on this side of the house. Commissioner Wiles agreed.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

The Schenectady Heritage Foundation submitted a letter in support of the project.

### **RESOLUTION**

Motion by Commissioner Wiles, seconded by Commissioner Bennett, to approve the application as submitted with the following conditions:

1. The project will be completed within one year.
2. The paint colors for the exterior of the building are approved as submitted. The clapboard will be Benjamin Moore Edgecombe Gray, the trim Benjamin Moore China White, and the Brick Benjamin Moore Bone White.
3. The front section of the house will be furred out approximately 4” and will be sided with an 8” reveal cedar siding. The middle section will be sided in clapboard with 4 ¾” exposure Hardie-board siding which will replicate the siding style that would have been used for that section of the house in 1816. The back section of the house will remain Novelty siding to maintain what was original to that section of the house which was built in 1910.

And with the following findings of fact:

1. This is a Type II SEQRA.
2. The building was built during three different time periods, using different materials that give reference to the available supplies and the styles of those respective eras. The use of the three sidings serves to make a distinction

between the three sections of the house and to reference their specific historic relevance.

3. The use of cement board siding has been accepted because there are no available new wood materials that would replicate the look and quality of the siding used originally in that period. The applicant has demonstrated that the siding available today is new growth wood, which would not be practical for use in this application where the building is significantly out of plumb and susceptible to water damage.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

**VI. OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

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

*Motion carried unanimously.*

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.