

**TOWN OF GROTON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
DECEMBER 21, 2004 - 7:30 P.M.
GROTON TOWN HALL ANNEX - COMMUNITY ROOM 2**

Members Present: C. Nado, R. Seager, R. Keyes, K. Vaughn, E. Cole
Staff: K. Quinn

Chairman Nado called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m. Cole read the Call of the Hearing as it appearing in The Day. Cole was appointed a voting member.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public hearings opened at 7:35 p.m.

HDC 04-67 – 13 Water Street; Tapley Investment Company LLC, owner/applicant; for installation of signage and replacement of fence. PIN #261918306223

Judy Caracausa and John Luther presented packages with photos and sketches showing the proposed sign and fencing. The fence will be 4 feet and 90° to the walkway. The Commission had Mr. Luther make corrections to the drawings showing the height and style of fence.

Chairman Nado asked for public comments and there were none.

The following exhibits were submitted:

- Five-page fencing package
- Two-page sign package

HDC 04-68 – 202 High Street; Dana and Richard Semeraro, owners/applicants; for replacement of deck railing. PIN #261918313658

Richard Semeraro presented photos showing existing railing and proposed railing. Railings on the first and second floor are being replaced. The Commission had questions about columns on the second floor porch stating they should line up with the first floor porch.

Chairman Nado asked for public comments and there were none.

The following exhibits were submitted:

- One photo
- Brochure photo of railing

HDC 04-69 – 18-22 West Main Street; Poker Flats LLC, owner; Rod Desmarais, applicant; for construction of four-story building. PIN #261918412081

Rod Desmarais made an opening statement outlining the history of the site since the fire and outlining their process as to how they came to this final design that takes some design features from the original Floral Hall building but does not replicate it.

Greg Laramie, architect, went through the issues raised at the last two preliminary hearings starting with the roof form and the stepped ends, the bracketry, cornice, decks, storefronts, and the materials to be used on the building. He stated that they closely followed the HDC guidelines

when designing the building. He talked about length to height ratio as stated in the guidelines and gave several examples of buildings in downtown.

Chairman Nado asked for comments in favor:

Peg Berry is sick of seeing the green wall and is in support of this proposal.

Tom Allund, a former tenant of the Allyn/Bohlander building, spoke about other buildings that had burned in Mystic that were larger than the proposed building. He feels the wall is an eyesore and it has an effect on the downtown area. He would like to see this proposal move quickly as building costs are rising everyday. He is very much in favor of this proposal.

Mary Ellen Grills, also a former tenant of the Allyn/Bohlander building, is tired of the questions she constantly gets about when something is going to happen to the site. She agrees with everything Mr. Allund said and wants to see this move forward. She is in favor of the new building.

Liz Theodore has lived in Mystic for 16 years and is a downtown business owner and feels this building would have a positive impact on the downtown area.

Mickey Williston, owner of Framers of the Lost Art, is in favor with caution. He hopes the architect can find ways to integrate, with detail or color, a way to reduce the mass of the façade and the look of the back of the building.

Ann Semansky is in favor of the four-story building.

Dean Mackris of the Chamber of Commerce stated it is important to think of the community because the choices are this proposal or possibly nothing.

Brad Ferraro said the green wall has to come down and is in support of this building.

Tom Allund stated that if this proposal does not go through then maybe nothing would be built.

Chairman Nado asked for comments in opposition.

Mike Sarasin came to see what was being proposed and complimented the architect, but feels that this is not the right building for this site. He does not agree that this is good for downtown. He feels a one-story building would be better and feels that economics should not drive the size of the building.

Bill Bertsche, a former commission member years ago, had questions about the height of the building and the number and spacing of the windows on the front of the building. He feels the back of the building is totally out of character with the historic district. He had some photos he had made at his office showing the proposed building and the Main Block building. He said that the Main Block building was not there when the original Floral Hall building was there. He stated that if more thought and design went into this building they could come up with something

that would fit in the downtown area. He told the Commission to be cautious about approving something just to have something built there and then regret the decision later.

Elizabeth Nado was concerned about the back of the building and not having it look like the condos across the river. The building as proposed does not fit with our historic downtown and feels the front facade has no historic character.

Jim Mitchell came to Mystic in 1950 and talked about the fires in Mystic, the recent fire in Stonington Borough and what could happen if a building of this size caught fire in downtown. He asked the Commission not to make mistakes of the past. He then read a letter that he sent to the Mystic River Press.

Genevieve Cerf talked about downtown and its charm and stated the back of the building looks terrible. She cautioned the Commission not to be blackmailed by these developers stating that they have to have certain things to make a project work as she has seen with other commissions in town.

Genevieve Cerf read a letter from Nancy d'Estang who had to leave because of the time.

Chairman Nado asked Mr. Laramie and Mr. Desmarais to respond.

Greg Laramie pointed out that this is a new structure that must be built to current standards. He reiterated that he followed the Commission's guidelines as outlined in the Handbook and read some of them. They are not trying to replicate Floral Hall, they are just using some features of it.

Rod Desmarais was amazed at some of the comments especially being called a blackmailer. He spoke about the economic risks of this project and the time and thought that was put into this design working from the Commission's guidelines. He also spoke about the public access being provided around the building.

Chairman Nado then asked for commission comments:

Vaughn talked about the cornice at the first floor being enlarged to help decrease the massing of the building. She thinks the building needs more detailing. She also spoke about reducing the number of windows on the front façade and doing something with the spacing. She feels the back of the building is completely inappropriate but thinks it is workable with more design.

Seager feels the back of the building cannot have a condo essence to it and needs to be redesigned. He spoke about the fenestration of the front windows and the need for heavier bracketry. He talked about the sizes of buildings throughout downtown noting he is not concerned about the size of this building.

Keyes had some concerns, but the size of the building was not one of them. She feels the back of the building needs to be redesigned, the front windows need to be spaced further apart, and detailing of the building needs to be looked at.

Cole agreed with the other commissioners. She thought the color scheme on the current renderings made the building look totally different from the last renderings shown to the Commission. Overall, she thinks the design is good, but just needs a little more work.

Nado also agreed with all the comments the commission made. He feels the back of the building needs the most work. He also spoke about the finished plans having detailed information regarding materials, details, dimensions so everything on the building is called out.

The Commission felt the hearing should be continued and explained the process to the applicant. Discussion then continued about the porches on the back of the building and how something may possibly be done to provide some sort of balcony feature while simplifying the back of the building. They also discussed the bracketry and the size and style of the cornice.

Public hearings closed at 10:23 p.m.

DISCUSSION ON ITEMS OF PUBLIC HEARING

HDC 04-67 – 13 Water Street

MOTION: To grant a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Motion made by Keyes, seconded by Seager, so voted unanimously.

HDC 04-68 – 202 High Street

MOTION: To grant a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Motion made by Vaughn, seconded by Keyes, so voted unanimously.

HDC 04-69 – 18-22 West Main Street

MOTION: To continue the public hearing to January 4, 2005.

Motion made by Seager, seconded by Keyes, so voted unanimously.

PRE-APPLICATION HEARINGS

Barry Hogenauer, 9 Park Place, wants to replace wood roof shingles with asphalt shingles and to change the roofline of the existing outbuilding.

Ted Nelson, 2 Starr Street, presented photos and drawings of an addition to the existing dwelling. He lowered the addition roof and made changes to the windows as suggested by the Commission at the last meeting. The Commission felt the roof should come down more so that the addition is subordinate to the main house.

Peter Roper, representing the owners of 64 West Main Street, wants to replace three-tab roof shingles with architectural weathered wood shingles.

Chuck Rousseau, 24½ West Mystic Avenue, proposed changes to the previously approved plan to remove and change windows and to add skylights.

Scott Biagetti, 28 Water Street, proposed to replace the existing wood shingled roof with asphalt shingles.

CORRESPONDENCE - None

MINUTES

MOTION: To approve the minutes of December 7, 2004 as written.

Motion made by Vaughn, seconded by Cole, so voted unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS – None

NEW BUSINESS - None

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 11:40 p.m. made by Keyes, seconded by Vaughn, so voted unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Cole, Secretary