

**TOWN OF GROTON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
DECEMBER 20, 2005 - 7:00 P.M.
GROTON SENIOR CENTER – 102 NEWTOWN ROAD**

Members Present: C. Nado, E. Cole, and D. Seager
Alternates Present: R. Boardman, D. Madden
Staff: K. Quinn, S. Discordia

Chairman Nado called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. The Chairman described the public hearing process.

Cole read the Call of the Hearing as it appeared in The Day.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

HDC 05-64 – 132 Clift Street; Kersten Elenteny and Patrick McQuown, owners; Peter Springsteel, applicant; replacement of windows. PIN 261914324910

Peter Springsteel, architect, presented for the owners. Mr. Springsteel submitted photos of the house and displayed sample replacement windows. He stated they are wooden windows with a thick sill. The owners want to pull out the entire windows and entire frame. The purpose for this is that the owners received a lead reading in one of their children and need to replace them. To strip the windows does not always alleviate the lead problem. Mr. Springsteel submitted drawings to the Commission displaying dimensions of the 3 different size windows that would be installed in the home. The owner will use wood frames, casings and sills. They would like to use an aluminum clad sash. Mr. Springsteel stated that the check rails are a little larger than the originals. The proposed replacement windows are Marvin and the manufacturer will provide a thicker sill to match the original. The sill will be 1 and ¾” to match the existing windows.

The Commission members stated that the replacement windows would be suitable.

Chairman Nado asked for public comments and there were none.

The following exhibits were presented:

- 5 pictures
- 1 material sheet
- One map
- One sheet with dimensions of windows

HDC 05-65 – 10 Latham Street; Mary Fiorelli & Dennis Doherty, owners; Peter Springsteel, applicant; ridge vent & replace 2nd floor window. PIN 261806391996

Mr. Doherty explained to the Commission that the reason they need to raise the window 8” is because they are installing a bathtub and the window would interfere. The window

will be smaller than the original. They also have decided not to install the triangular window above it.

They will replace the window with a Marvin double-hung wood window exactly matching the existing except that it will be shorter in height. The sill will be specially made to match the thicker original sill.

They would also like to install a ridge vent along the front of the house.

Chairman Nado stated that he wanted the ridge vent right to the end of the home so it isn't as noticeable.

Chairman Nado asked for public comments and there were none.

The following exhibits were presented:

- 2 pictures
- 1 floor plan with dimensions
- 2 material sheets

HDC 05-66 – 18-22 West Main Street; Historic Mystic, LLC, owner; Rod Desmarais, applicant; construct new retail/residential building. PIN 261918412081

Rod Desmarais, presented for the owners, Historic Mystic, LLC, for the property at 18-22 West Main Street. Mr. Desmarais displayed drawings of the proposed retail/residential four-story building.

Carl Gehring, attorney, introduced Sara Miners, a recorder for this public hearing. Mr. Gehring asked what the procedures for voting would be. Attorney Gehring stated that whoever should be present to vote on the Board be required to listen to earlier transcripts of the public hearing. Chairman Nado stated that they encourage absent board members to review submitted materials before voting. Attorney Gehring presented materials to the Commission for review. Attorney Gehring stated that although this is a vacant site it's not a site without history. He went over some history concerning the site.

Attorney Gehring stated that the proposed building is historically appropriate to the site. He stated that the dimensions are actually smaller than other historic buildings.

Rod Desmarais displayed drawings and the model to the audience and Commission. He explained that the proposed building would be used for residential and retail. The building would be 132' wide, 65' deep and the height would be 45'. The first level will be retail shops that carry through to a sidewalk and lead to a public walkway. The walkway will provide 200' more public access to the river. The walkway is protected from the elements by a projected roof line of 10'. The ceiling of this colonnade is 10' high. It is a flat roof building and brick on all sides.

Mr. Desmarais talked about the history of the downtown area. Mr. Desmarais stated that he attended the special meeting on December 9 featuring guest speaker, Carol Kimball, regarding the history of downtown. The first building to occupy this site was Floral hall. There is an engraving that shows Floral Hall, but not any pictures. It was the first major building to be built. There were eight retail stores on the first floor, family residences, doctor and lawyers offices, and residential on the remaining floors. The building burned down in 1863 and was rebuilt almost immediately. The second building to be built was the first Central Hall. Mr. Desmarais displayed three pictures depicting Central Hall. This building had a flat roof. The size and scale of the building compared to the neighboring buildings shows that it dominated them. Mr. Desmarais stated that the difference in scale, historically, has always been different, showing an up and down pattern.

Mr. Desmarais stated that the flat roof failed as it had a lot of leaks. A pitched roof was built a few years later. By building a pitched roof they probably added another 10' to the height making it 60' high. This building was destroyed in the fire of 1880 and rebuilt within 6 months of burning down. In 1881 the town celebrated the grand opening of a new building. The new building had a hip roof and may have been either a 2 or 3 story building. The building was used as residential/retail. There were shows that presented there and a roller rink. There were dances and town meetings. Mr. Desmarais stated that this building was the center of historic Mystic. He stated that the building was destroyed in the fire of 1910.

Mr. Desmarais showed a historic picture when both large buildings faced each other at a brief point in history. He displayed an older picture of a previous building that was much larger in scale.

Mr. Desmarais stated that two other applications went through the process and were approved by the Historic District Commission, but they were never built. There were problems applying for permits and adhering to DEP regulations since the building is mostly over water. Mr. Desmarais noted that this building is deeper than previous buildings. He described how they've gone to several preliminary hearings to gain input from the Commission and they have downscaled this building from its original size.

Mr. Desmarais explained the history of the preliminaries before the Historic District Commission and the evolution of the drawings and how they came to the present proposed building.

Mr. Desmarais presented a vicinity plan showing the environs of the proposed building. He pointed out the difference in height and depths of the adjacent buildings. He showed the difference of buildings going from 30' in height to the proposed building of 45' back down to 30' in height. The building across the street is 50' high and the neighboring building, "41 Degrees North", is only 14' high.

Mr. Desmarais showed different camera shots of different points of view of the site. He showed tables of statistics comparing height of different buildings in the downtown area. He pointed out several buildings in downtown that were over 45' high. Mr. Desmarais showed another graph comparing the depth of the proposed building to other existing buildings in the downtown area.

Mr. Desmarais showed that all the buildings across the street are almost double the depth of the proposed building with the average depth being 81 feet. Seager asked what was the depth of the proposed building including the arcade and Mr. Desmarais responded it is actually 71'. Mr. Desmarais made the point that as in all commercial districts, buildings occupied as much of their building lot as possible. He showed another depth/footprint of the proposed building versus the building that was just demolished due to fire. He showed that the footprint of the proposed building is smaller than the original building that was there.

Mr. Desmarais compared the height of his proposed building to a plan that was previously approved by the Historic District Commission.

Mr. Desmarais showed all the porches of all the buildings that exist in Mystic today. He stated he agreed with the Commission that most of the porches do not appropriately fit the historic district, but he wanted to point out how important it was to include porches in his proposed building. Mr. Desmarais stated it wasn't reasonable to assume they could sell residential units on the Mystic River without any form of a balcony or porch.

Mark Comeau, an architect, spoke before the Commission. Mr. Comeau discussed the original drawings and how they came to today's proposed version. He discussed the history of Mystic. Mr. Comeau quoted from the Historic District regulations. He discussed architecture and how an average person views it.

Mr. Comeau stated that the storefront would be glazed millwork. The upper levels would be brick veneers with arched trim veneers. He stated that the commercial level is primarily glazed.

Mark Comeau showed a collage of different extraneous features such as lights, doors, signage, and windows. The mechanical systems will be located on the rooftop.

The Commission stated that they would need dimensions and details of the extraneous features, light, windows, signs and HVAC units at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

Chairman Nado opened the floor to public comment.

Sully Ahamed lives on Gravel Street. He has a good view of the property and he has no relationship to the builders or architects. He is in support of this proposal. Mr. Ahamed is impressed with their presentation. He stated that you need people living in the downtown otherwise the town dies. Mr. Ahamed stated that he does not understand the canyon effect described as most buildings are much taller. He also said he does not have a problem with the porches. Mr. Ahamed stated that if this is not approved, then the Town should buy this property and make it into a parking lot.

Frank McLaughlin, Gravel Street, can see the vacant site from his home. The proposed building is large because the lot is large. He has no interest in this project except to see it developed. He believes that the size of the building proposed does relate to history of the site. Mr. McLaughlin doesn't know what period we're trying to replicate. He believes the proposed building looks like

it relates to history and our downtown. He believes the proposed building will balance the big block building. Mr. McLaughlin doesn't see a problem with a four-story building.

Alan Berry, 74 Crown Knoll Court, Groton. He has no personal interest in this project. This proposal has been before the Commission for over a year with no decision forthcoming. He believes the Board must consider the economics of this application.

Kathleen O'Beirne, 32 New London Road, Mystic. She stated that the previous buildings were similar to the proposed. She believes that the Commission should approve the height.

William Bertsche, Architect, of 131 High Street, submitted materials to the Commission. He stated he has lived here for 30 years. His firm was the architect for one of the approved applications for the site. He is against the four stories and he is against the scale of this building. The two previous Central Halls were 3 story buildings. He showed that most of the buildings comply with the 25' height for zoning. He submitted the heights of all of the buildings in downtown along Wets Main Street. Mr. Bertsche pointed out that the buildings adjacent to the proposed site may not be drawn to scale.

Kathleen Bertsche, 16 Main Street, Old Mystic. She stated she does not like the brick and the building being so large. She believes that the building should be clapboard, not brick. Ms. Bertsche doesn't feel that it is typical of the historic district. She stated she does not like arched windows. She feels the building looks more contemporary than historic.

Bill Turner, president of the Mystic Chamber of Commerce. He stated he lives in Stonington. Mr. Turner is for this proposed building. He felt this project was important to the economics of downtown Mystic. He read some comments from various business owners. He read the letter that was submitted for the record.

Neil Danaher, 6 Park Place, Mystic. He stated he moved here because he wanted the protection of the historic district. Mr. Danaher stated that just because there is a vacant lot does not mean there needs to be a structure there. He stated that after listening to the proposal he is in favor of the proposed new building.

Joyce Resnikoff, owner of Old Mystic Village. She stated she does not know the developer. Ms. Resnikoff stated she is for the project. She stated that tourism is a big business to this area.

Jonathon Duncklee, 232 Noank Road. Mr. Duncklee stated he has no personal interest in this project. He read an article from "The Day" paper stating that it is hard to run a business in Connecticut. He stated that you will see HVAC units on the top of the building no matter what.

Bill Hermann, 50 Edgecomb Street, Mystic. Mr. Herman stated he is for the project.

Karen Barthelson of 35 Langworthy Avenue, Stonington. She stated she has lived here for 30 years and works at the Mystic Arts Center. Ms. Barthelson stated she is for the proposed building.

Mickey Williston has a business at 48 West Main Street. He stated that he has been a resident of Mystic and Stonington for 20 years. Mr. Williston stated he is for this application and approves of the proposed building. He felt that they've altered the project considerably since its conception a year ago.

Dennis Donahue, of 21 Gravel Street, can view the property from his home. He also thought of taking on this project, but realized it was too big of a project for him. He stated that the foundation that is required is too expensive. He felt that this size building is necessary for anything to be built there.

Dave Cornell, Sandy Hollow Road, stated he was for the project.

Ann Page Mercer, 4 Mill Street. Ms. Mercer stated she was neither for or against this project and just wanted to thank the Historic District Commission for doing a good job and volunteering their time.

Todd Brady, 17 Water Street, owner of Factory Square at 12 Water Street. Mr. Brady commended the Commission's efforts in keeping our district historic. He believed that although the plan is not perfect, it is good, and he could live with this building in the historic district.

Ed Stebbins, Elm Street, Noank. Mr. Stebbins is the Chairman of the Zoning Board of Appeals for the Town of Groton. He believed that this was an excellent proposal for the site and it was time to rebuild.

Carl Gehring read a petition signed by over 150 people and submitted it for the record.

Mark Comeau read and submitted a letter for the record.

Chairman Nado continued the public hearing to the next regularly scheduled meeting on January 3, 2006. The location will be announced at a later date.

The following exhibits were presented:

- 13 letters
- 1 petition
- 2 drawings
- One spiral bound packet of materials

Chairman Nado closed the public hearings at 11:06 p.m.

DISCUSSION ON ITEMS OF PUBLIC HEARING

HDC 05-64 – 132 Clift Street

MOTION: To grant a Certificate of Appropriateness as submitted.

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

HDC 05-65 – 10 Latham Street

MOTION: To grant a Certificate of Appropriateness as submitted.

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

PRE-APPLICATION HEARINGS - None

CORRESPONDENCE - None

MINUTES

Review of the minutes for December 6, 2005 were postponed to the next regularly scheduled meeting.

OLD BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS - None

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 11:10 p.m. made by Seager, seconded by Madden, so voted unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Cole, Secretary