

BOROUGH OF FENWICK
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING & PUBLIC HEARING – September 10, 2022

A Regular Meeting and Public Hearing of the Fenwick Historic District Commission was held at 4 Nibang Avenue and via Zoom on Saturday, September 10, 2022. Notice of the meeting was posted in a timely manner on the Fenwick kiosk, on the website, and in the Harbor News.

Members Present: Matt Myers, Valerie Bulkeley, Deborah Neely, Ashley Gengras (Alternate).

Members Present via Zoom: None.

Members Absent: Beverly Keeney, Patsy Jones, Scott Pulver (Alternate), Mike Reynolds (Alternate).

Others Present: Marilyn Ozols, ZEO and HDC Compliance Official, Chuck Chadwick, Joan Wright, Art Wright, Matthew Dougherty, Ginny Frelinghuysen, Connie Wilson, Bruce Baird.

Others Present via Zoom: Hilary Donald, Jonathan Larken, Bar Chadwick, Lucy Borge, Duby McDowell, Martha McDowell, Meg Smith.

1. Call to order.

Chairman Myers called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. A quorum was established (Myers, Bulkeley, Neely).

2. Election of Officers.

M. Myers suggested that this item be tabled to the next meeting when more members could be present. When asked, V. Bulkeley stated she was willing to continue as Vice Chair but would be happy to step down if someone else wanted the position, and D. Neely stated that she was willing to continue as Secretary.

V. Bulkeley moved to table the election of officers to the November regular meeting. M. Myers seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

For: Myers, Bulkeley, Neely.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

At this time A. Gengras arrived and was seated as a voting member. A quorum was reestablished (Myers, Bulkeley, Neely, Gengras).

3. Public Hearing: 3 Wilson Avenue, map 5, lot 103. Jonathan Larkin & Gavin Owston, owners, J. Larken, applicant. Application HDC22-015 to replace wood windows and railings with Azek.

J. Larken presented. He stated that they are applying to repair rotten upstairs windows, replacing the wood with Azek, and replace the rotten porch spindles on the east, north, and south sides with Azek. He verified that there would be no change in window or spindle design.

V. Bulkeley stated that the repair is necessary and they are updating the material. Members had no concerns.

After asking for public comment and any additional input, **on a motion by V. Bulkeley, seconded by D. Neely, it was voted unanimously to close the public hearing and go into regular session.**

For: Myers, Bulkeley, Neely, Gengras.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

4. Possible Action on HDC22-015, 3 Wilson Avenue.

Based on the discussion in the hearing, **V. Bulkeley moved to approve the application as submitted and to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for Application HDC22-015, 3 Wilson Avenue, to replace the wood windows and railings with Azek windows and railings in the same design. D. Neely seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.**

For: Myers, Bulkeley, Neely, Gengras.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

On a motion by V. Bulkeley, seconded by D. Neely, it was voted unanimously to go back into public hearing.

For: Myers, Bulkeley, Neely, Gengras.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

5. Public Hearing: 17 Pettipaug Avenue, map 10, lot 24. Charles Chadwick, owner and applicant. Application HDC22-0016 to replace vinyl clad wood windows with pvc material.

C. Chadwick presented. He stated that the application is to replace the sliding windows on the south and east sides, which is half of the porch; the current windows are vinyl covered wood; what is now available is a pvc material; the dimensions will be the same; the style will be the same except for a stanchion in the middle to strengthen the screen.

Members had no questions or concerns.

After asking for public comment and any additional input, **on a motion by V. Bulkeley, seconded by D. Neely, it was voted unanimously to close the public hearing and go into regular session.**

For: Myers, Bulkeley, Neely, Gengras.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

6. Possible Action on HDC22-024, 17 Pettipaug Avenue.

Based on the discussion in the hearing, **V. Bulkeley moved to approve the application as submitted and to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for Application HDC22-016, 17 Pettipaug Avenue, to replace the vinyl clad wood windows with pvc material. D. Neely seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.**

For: Myers, Bulkeley, Neely, Gengras.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

On a motion by D. Neely, seconded by V. Bulkeley, it was voted unanimously to go back into public hearing.

For: Myers, Bulkeley, Neely, Gengras.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

7. Public Hearing: 24 Pettipaug Avenue, map 10, lot 46. Joan and Arthur Wright, owners, Matthew Dougherty, applicant. Application HDC22-017 for new dwelling, pool, and site improvements.

M. Dougherty, architect, presented. He described the proposed construction pointing out the elements on the plans:

- the lot is 1.15 acres sandwiched in between Agawam and Pettipaug Avenues;

- the proposed house has 5,200 square feet of heated space on two floors;
- there will be a new oil and stone driveway and parking area with steel edging;
- the bulk of the remaining property will be lawn and they will be keeping as many trees as possible;
- there will be a new pool in the rear with a spa and a trellis area;
- the pool fencing will go around the property line and will be made of chain link with new hedging to screen it;
- the front door will be glass and wood;
- the windows will be clad and will match many others in the Borough with divided lights at the top and a single light on the bottom;
- the house will have shingle siding and an asphalt shingle roof;
- the trim will be Azek or wood components if they can't find Azek to match the detail;
- there will be a screen porch on the front and a porch on the side where there is a mudroom entrance;
- the intersecting gables reduce the mass and fit in with other houses in the Borough;
- the garages are towards the back of the property;
- on the northern side a screening fence encloses the generator, ac units, and pool equipment;
- there is a trash enclosure on the north rear of the house;
- there is a porch on the back of the house;
- the main street gable runs all the way through the house with intersecting dormers and gables;
- there is a sleeping porch on the back of the house that opens to the bedroom.

M. Dougherty presented a street view board showing the houses, street locations, and property line locations of this and the adjacent houses to demonstrate the size, scale, and massing and explained that the lengths and heights of the three houses relate, noting that the highest ridge of this house is 30'. He also displayed a photo simulation, noting that the facades are shown at an angle in order to get the perspective of the extensions and porches, and he pointed out the various rooflines and projections.

M. Myers stated that an email had been received from M. Reynolds noting his concerns and all members present had received a copy. He added that the design is well done but evokes less of a feeling of a Fenwick cottage than a colonial that belongs in New Canaan. Members also expressed concern that there is no front porch.

J. Wright stated that they had tried for something more simple and a departure from all of the gambrel roofs. M. Dougherty stated that this house is not uncharacteristic of the Borough; there are other houses without front porches and with gable fronts. M. Myers added that there are many examples of dormers in Fenwick and referenced the Arneault house.

D. Neely stated that the photo simulations do not include a straight on view of the front which looks massive and a porch would cut this down. M. Dougherty stated that pushing the pieces back away from the street alleviates the massive feeling. He added that he did a quick calculation of the footprints of other houses on Pettipaug Avenue (#11 – 4,000 s.f., #15 – 2,700 s.f., #17 – 1,500 s.f., #18 – 2,368 s.f.); this house at 2,537 is not out of the ordinary for the street. D. Neely stated that it is not the size; people don't realize how big the others are because of the wraparound porches and this doesn't fit. V. Bulkeley stated that they could get a better feel of the depth and facets with a model rather than a photo simulation; the look of the house is wide on Pettipaug and doesn't fit with the look of a Fenwick cottage.

A. Gengras stated that the point is whether the proposal meets the design criteria and they have taken steps to meet the criteria and alleviate the vertical façade. She asked if there had been any consideration of a front porch. M. Dougherty stated that the property fronts on two roads; they have incorporated porches on the back and used staggered facades on the front; the overall mass is no bigger than other houses on the street. J. Wright added that the focus is on the back since they do not want the road dust; they want the sun to be able to come in the front door; they did not want a tower or a gambrel; the Frelinghuysen house has a flat front; they kept the garage entry out of view from the street; and there is no third floor.

M. Ozols reminded the members that the submission included all of the materials, light fixtures, and detail and this is the opportunity to comment on any of them. J. Wright added that they copied light fixtures from other Fenwick houses. There were no further questions on materials or details.

M. Myers asked for comment from the public.

Martha McDowell, 26 Pettipaug Avenue – asked about the asphalt roof and if any consideration had been given to a cedar roof, noting that the Wright’s other house had so much charm and this house doesn’t seem to fit in in the same way.

J. Wright stated that the other house also has asphalt shingles; the house shingles will weather in over time and it will look like the Tenney house and other houses.

Meg Smith, 26 Pettipaug Avenue – stated that the massive front looks straight in the drawings with only one roofline and that compared to the 1800’s, today’s lifestyle changes don’t favor larger houses. M. Dougherty pointed out the front projection and the parts of the house that step back, adding that the intent is to break up the façade with variation. M. Smith thanked him, noting that a model would have helped people to see this.

D. Neely asked if the landscaping is essentially grass with existing trees. M. Dougherty confirmed this noting that is what it essentially was in the past. He added that they are proposing a hedge of boxwood, hydrangea, or other plant material in the front, which he pointed out, along with the expansive lawn with trees.

G. Frelinghuysen, 41 Agawam Avenue – asked if they intend to keep the Elizabeth magnolia by the pool. J. Wright stated that it will stay.

M. Myers asked members if the proposal violates any design criteria and members stated that it does not.

V. Bulkeley stated that the original drawings gave the impression of massiveness and not of the various setbacks; the explanation was great; the property can handle a big house; the design meets the criteria; others might do it different in the front but everyone has his/her own opinion.

M. Myers asked for any additional public comment or input. There being none, **on a motion by D. Neely, seconded by V. Bulkeley, it was voted unanimously to close the public hearing and go into regular session.**

For: Myers, Bulkeley, Neely, Gengras.
Against: None.
Abstain: None.

8. Possible Action on HDC22-017, 24 Pettipaug Avenue.

M. Myers stated that it appeared there was consensus on the application as presented. In discussion of the motion, V. Bulkeley stated that she still feels that it looks massive and her vote would be a qualified one in favor because she would prefer to see more interest in the southern façade in order to make it less imposing.

Based on the discussion in and after the hearing, **D. Neely moved to approve the application as presented and to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for Application HDC22-017, 24 Pettipaug Avenue, to construct a new single-family dwelling with attached garage and inground pool and spa with associated site development. V. Bulkeley seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.**

For: Myers, Bulkeley, Neely, Gengras.
Against: None.
Abstain: None.

V. Bulkeley complimented the applicant for all the detail in the application, noting that very often the Commission gets the detail in dribs and drabs.

D. Neely asked if there would be additional landscaping. A. Wright replied that what was shown is what is planned right now.

9. 4 Nibang Avenue, map 10, lot 1-2. Borough of Fenwick, owner and applicant. Modification application HDC22-014 to retain temporary railing and add landscape screening.

Members asked if the landing complies with handicap accessibility requirements. M. Ozols stated that it does and is designed to accommodate a future handicap accessible door. A. Gengras stated that a committee has been formed to reevaluate the uses at 4 Nibang and it would seem wise to hold off on any changes until there is a complete plan. P. Christensen stated that the Borough is always reacting to issues with the building rather than being proactive; the ramp was approved by the Burgesses without drawings and was not going to be seen or have railings; the committee would be looking at the building as a whole and would be looking for resident input. V. Bulkeley stated that it makes sense to maintain what is there and not throw any more money at it. M. Myers clarified that the application seeks to maintain what is there and grade up in front of the ramp so that the cement will be screened by the grass.

Based on the discussion, **V. Bulkeley moved to approve the application as submitted and to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for Modification Application HDC22-014, 4 Nibang Avenue, to retain the temporary railing and grade the lawn up to screen the concrete. D. Neely seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.**

For: Myers, Bulkeley, Neely, Gengras.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

10. 100 Sequassen Avenue, map 11, lot 17-1. Richard & Vicki Rosenthal, Trustees, owners, Hilary Donald, applicant. Modification application HDC22-018 to enlarge deck; add pergola, fire pit, and outdoor shower; replace existing deck with bluestone patio.

H. Donald presented. She stated that they are still planning a deck but are proposing some modifications from what was previously approved. She identified the changes:

- screen in the lower story using square 10"x10" fiberglass columns with wood panel screens;
- eliminate the glass panels in the upper deck railing; instead use the same railing as the existing railings;
- remove an existing wood deck that is 12" to 18" above grade and replace it with a bluestone patio which will not be seen;
- add a wood pergola at the upper level of the deck with posts that match the tower posts;
- add a small fire pit, 5'x5' and 20" high, on the patio;
- add an outdoor shower on the stair side of the tower with a 6' high, vertical wood board enclosure.

V. Bulkeley asked why they are proposing square posts on the lower level and round posts on the upper level; M. Myers asked if they had considered retractable screens. H. Donald stated round posts are problematic for the installation of screens and they do not intend to change the screens so do not need retractable screens. She also clarified that the upper porch will go to the end of the house.

V. Bulkeley asked if the drawing of the screen panel at the lower level is accurate since it does not show a lot of divisions and she is concerned that more division would create a busy look. H. Donald stated that the drawing is accurate; they want to maintain good viewing of the outdoors and they had maximized the size of the screens to the point that they are still stable.

A. Gengras stated that the design looks very square and flat in the back. V. Bulkeley pointed out that the public view is limited; the proposal meets the basic criteria; and the footprint is not changing.

All members stated that they liked the elimination of the glass panels.

Based on the discussion, **V. Bulkeley moved to approve the application as submitted and to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for Modification Application HDC22-018, 100 Sequassen Avenue, to enlarge the deck; add a pergola, fire pit, and outdoor shower; and replace the existing deck with a bluestone patio. D. Neely seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.**

For: Myers, Bulkeley, Neely, Gengras.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

11. 6 Pettipaug Avenue, map 10, lot 39. Jonathan Gengras, owner, Robyn Gengras, applicant. Modification application HDC22-019 to add porch ceiling light fixture.

P. Christensen presented. She stated that this application is just for the porch light over the dining table on the southwest corner of the house; the fixture was selected because it has more bulbs with lower wattage rather than one bright light; the light bulbs look like candles; the fixture is 39"x18" with eight lights on a dimmer; it is seasonal only and will be removed in the winter; the material is black iron; it is minimal and people can see through it; it is not the length of the table; and there is no glass – it is very open.

D. Neely stated that it is attractive and not terribly bright. Members noted that they either had seen it or not noticed, adding that it is an after-the-fact application.

P. Christensen added that when the screens and railings are installed, it will look very different and hardly be noticeable.

Based on the discussion, **V. Bulkeley moved to approve the application as presented and to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for Modification Application HDC22-019, 6 Pettipaug Avenue, to add a porch ceiling light fixture. D. Neely seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.**

For: Myers, Bulkeley, Neely, Gengras.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

12. Reports on Current Projects.

There has been no work over the summer. A member will be assigned to the Wright project at the next meeting.

13. Approval of Minutes: June 4, 2022.

V. Bulkeley moved that the minutes of the previous HDC meeting on June 4, 2022 be accepted as written. D. Neely seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

For: Myers, Bulkeley, Neely, Gengras.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

14. Old Business / Other Business.

New Materials. M. Ozols stated that she had received a request from B. Keeney that a discussion of new building materials be added to the next agenda. Members indicated that they had discussed this recently but would add it to this agenda also.

2023 Meeting Schedule. M. Ozols stated that a draft meeting schedule would be prepared for review at the next meeting. Members agreed to keep to the first Saturday every other month (moving to the second Saturday in the case of a holiday) with an extra meeting in June.

Hedges. V. Bulkeley stated that hedges have become a problem – there are too many; they are too high; and they are not pruned. She noted that some C of A's have included a maximum height and that some hedges create dangerous situations at intersections. M. Myers suggested a presentation to the Burgesses

regarding this. M. Ozols stated that she would prepare a spreadsheet for the next meeting identifying all of the hedges with their specific requirements so that it might be easier to identify noncompliance issues.

15. Adjourn.

M. Myers adjourned the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn M. Ozols, Acting Clerk