

BOROUGH OF FENWICK
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING & PUBLIC HEARING – MARCH 2, 2024

A Regular Meeting and Public Hearing of the Fenwick Historic District Commission was held on Saturday, March 2, 2024. Notice of the meeting was posted in a timely manner on the Fenwick kiosk, on the website, and in the Harbor News.

Members Present: Deborah Neely, Beverly Keeney, Kim Gilhool (Alternate)

Members Present via Zoom: Mike Reynolds, Mimi Brainard (Alternate), Ashley Gengras (Alternate).

Members Absent: JD Rehm.

Others Present: Marilyn Ozols, ZEO and HDC Compliance Official; Steve Hallahan, Brooke Girty, Bruce Baird, Frank Sciamie.

Others Present via Zoom: None.

1. Call to order.

Chairman Neely called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. and appointed A. Gengras and K. Gilhool as voting members. A quorum was established (Neely, Keeney, Reynolds, Gilhool, Gengras).

She asked for a moment of silence in memory of Patsy Jones, noting that Patsy was a great, longtime member of the Historic District Commission and a great member of the community.

She also noted that this is the 50th anniversary of the Borough of Fenwick Historic District Commission.

2. Public Hearing: 11 Pettipaug Avenue, map 10, lot 26. Owner: Eniotna LLP; Applicant: SD Hallahan Housewright, Inc. Application HDC24-001 to install screens, wood stops, and porch columns on 2nd floor porches.

S. Hallahan presented. He stated that there are two existing second floor porches on the east and west corners of the south side; they would like to screen them in order to be able to leave the primary bedroom doors open during the day in the summer; the screens will be above the existing 4½' railing; on the east the screens will be on two sides and on the west they will be on three sides; the structure to support them will be minimal – 1½" vertical pieces; the screens will be seasonal and removed in the winter; the frame will be white to match the trim.

K. Gilhool stated that the request is straightforward and Commission members agreed.

After asking for public comment and any additional input, **on a motion by B. Keeney, seconded by K. Gilhool, it was voted unanimously to close the public hearing and go into regular session.**

For: Neely, Keeney, Reynolds, Gilhool, Gengras.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

3. Possible Action on HDC24-001: 11 Pettipaug Avenue.

Based on the discussion in the hearing, **B. Keeney moved to approve the application as presented and to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for Application HDC24-001, 11 Pettipaug Avenue, to install screens, wood stops, and porch columns on the 2nd floor porches. M. Reynolds seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.**

For: Neely, Keeney, Reynolds, Gilhool, Gengras.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

4. 10 Pettipaug Avenue, map 10, lot 38. Owners: Stephen & Polly Carta; Applicant: Brooke Girty. Modification Application HDC24-002 for light fixtures, generator, window and door changes.

B. Girty presented.

Lights. B. Girty pointed out the various light locations on the model and stated that they will all be copper. B. Keeney noted that some are called out as brass in the application. B. Girty stated that they will all be a browning color.

Generator. B. Girty pointed out the general location of the generator relative to the house and stated that it will be near the mechanicals and the landscaping will be extended to screen it.

Windows and Doors. B. Girty reviewed the proposed changes.

- East Side. There is one less mullion break up in the kitchen door. The window that is changing is there but is raised from the original location to allow a window seat inside 27” above the floor.

M. Reynolds stated that this is starting to change the look of a touchstone house and it is important to retain as many original elements as possible. B. Girty stated that the bay was new; the original window was taller than any other original window; the window to the right is what was there; the new window is more in keeping with the original windows than what was previously proposed. D. Neely suggested that it is a little lower than the original window.

- Pettipaug Side. B. Girty stated that they had originally proposed doors on the porch and they are going back to windows, which is what was in the original house; upstairs, they had originally proposed a pair of casements but they are changing this to a single double hung – the original window was a single casement.

M. Brainard stated that all of the lights are quite different – farm, mission, Revere New England, nautical – and it is important for them to be more unified (Section 7.1 of the Guidelines). D. Neely stated that they are all similar except for the shower light which needs to meet safety requirements. B. Girty stated that there are basically two styles – a down light and a wall light. B. Keeney noted that the finishes are not the same. A. Gengras stated that the lights are typical of what is seen in Fenwick and they should all patina similarly. M. Reynolds agreed that the finishes should weather the same, but stated that the bulbs and the upper style are different, although the size and shape are similar. B. Girty stated that the bulb types are for different brightness.

B. Girty verified that there will be landscaping around the generator and there will be no change to the house design to accommodate the generator.

Based on the discussion, **B. Keeney moved to approve the application as presented and to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for Application HDC4-0022, 10 Pettipaug Avenue, for light fixtures, a generator, and window and door changes. A. Gengras seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.**

For: Neely, Keeney, Reynolds, Gilhool, Gengras.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

5. Reports on Current Projects.

a. 24 Pettipaug Avenue (B. Keeney)

Construction is going along as planned; she requested that the porch screening be verified with the C of A.

b. 10 Pettipaug Avenue (A. Gengras)

The property was discussed earlier in the meeting.

c. 19 Neponset Avenue (D. Neely)

The work appears to be almost completed. M. Reynolds stated that he had noticed some aspects not following the plan and had spoken with the property owner to address them.

d. 15 Pettipaug Avenue (K. Gilhool)

There really isn't much house left at this time; the house is up on "stilts".

e. 28 Fenwick Avenue (JD Rehm)

No report.

6. Approval of Minutes: January 6, 2024.

B. Keeney moved that the minutes of the previous HDC meetings on January 6, 2024 be accepted as written. M. Reynolds seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

For: Neely, Keeney, Reynolds, Gilhool, Gengras.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

7. Election of Vice Chair.

D. Neely reminded members that they had elected a chair (D. Neely) and a secretary (B. Keeney) at a previous meeting but had tabled the election of a vice chair. M. Reynolds and B. Keeney both indicated that they were interested in the position; B. Keeney suggested that M. Reynolds might want to start as secretary and then move to vice chair. M. Reynolds stated he is not interested in the secretary position.

K. Gilhool moved to nominate M. Reynolds as vice chair stating that he comes from a different perspective that might serve the Commission better. A. Gengras seconded the motion. There were no other nominations and the motion was approved 4-0-1.

For: Neely, Reynolds, Gilhool, Gengras.

Against: None.

Abstain: Keeney.

8. Old Business / Other Business.

- a. **Training.** M. Ozols reported that Mary Dunne from the CT State Historic Preservation Office and Stacey Vairo of Preservation Connecticut have agreed to do a training at the May 4 HDC meeting. They will do an overview of responsibilities and how to review applications with a discussion of substitute materials, but will also tailor it to Fenwick and be open for an informal discussion/Q&A. They will not comment on specific projects but may be able to present some similar case studies. There will also be a general training in Old Saybrook this spring that will be more global for anyone who is interested.

Members discussed their jurisdiction and charge.

M. Reynolds stated that he still would like to consider having an advisor at each meeting.

K. Gilhool expressed concern that sometimes after a house is built, there are features that don't appear to be consistent with the guidelines and she would like to be able to revisit them, not to change those already approved but to learn for future applications. She noted that there are not many touchstone houses left that are original.

M. Reynolds concurred noting that Fenwick is losing a portion of its history.

M. Brainard stated that other towns have been able to preserve special features of homes and this has not happened in Fenwick.

F. Sciame shared his background on New York City Landmarks where it is tough to modify a building and offered to share some simple but point on point criteria that had been developed for one of his projects.

B. Keeney stated that the Commission has refined some of its Design Criteria but didn't go far enough; they can't go back to undo what has been done but they can make things more clear going forward.

D. Neely stated that the Commission has tried to control change but has allowed some leeway to make houses more livable.

M. Reynolds indicated that touchstone is important but so is the cottage style; the Commission can establish better criteria going forward but can't change what has been done.

K. Gilhool gave the example that the original columns were varied in design and material, but most of the new ones are the same fat white columns; it is important to preserve the personality of the houses and better criteria will help.

9. Adjourn.

On a motion by B. Keeney, seconded by M. Reynolds, it was voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:58 a.m.

The next meeting is Saturday, May 4, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn M. Ozols, Acting Clerk