

**TOWN OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Calhoun-Ives, Sunny Ridge and Washington Green Historic Districts**

Minutes – December 17, 2018 – Public Hearing

Members Present: Jane Boyer, Tom Hollinger, Sally Woodroofe
Members Absent: Susan Averill, Phyllis Mills
Alternates Present: Bill Fairbairn, Dimitri Rimsky, Louise Van Tartwijk
Clerk: Joan DeLuca
Others: Patsy Ciccarelli, Michael and Nellie Condon, Joe Fredlund,
Dennis McMorrow, and Robert Woodroofe

With a quorum present, and alternates present but not seated, Mr. Hollinger called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Public Hearing on Washington Club Application

The Commission Clerk read the application submitted by the Washington Club at 92 Green Hill Road to construct a platform tennis court within the Green District into the record, and Mr. McMorrow of Berkshire Engineering distributed site plans to all members present. Mr. McMorrow explained that he was hired to resolve drainage concerns on the proposed site. Due to an existing easement to The Gunnery, allowing access to a 17' path along the property line, the proposed court needed to be moved approximately 18' from the property line to accommodate this right.

Speaking on behalf of the applicant, Ms. Ciccarelli noted that this easement was granted in the 1970's, and the Washington Club was unaware that it existed. Placing the court where the Historic District Commission originally approved would impinge upon that easement, as the Washington Zoning Board of Appeals pointed out. The Gunnery also expressed concerns about water issues that might result from a court's construction so close to the property line, but after working with them, the Club now has its support and approval.

Mr. McMorrow gave a presentation on how to best remedy the engineering concerns on the site, explaining the planned drainage remedies. Commission members asked several questions to clarify these plans regarding the resulting look and precise placement, which was to be 17.5' from the property line. Mrs. Ciccarelli confirmed that the proposed placement is extremely close to the placement of the Club's original application, and Mr. Fredlund noted that the Gunnery easement was the primary concern of the Zoning Board of Appeals, and that moving the court would alleviate the concern of that Board.

Mr. Hollinger then read a letter of support dated December 17, 2018 from the Gunner's CFO and Business Manager, Christopher Cowell.

After further discussion, Mr. Fairbairn stated that the commission's original concerns still applied, and this new application did not address the charge of the Historic District Commission, which is to maintain and respect the guidelines set forth in the commission's charter. Mrs. Van Tartwijk questioned whether the commission should ask the Washington Club to construct some sort of façade, so that a decision could be made based on a visual representation, not a guess, as to what the structure might look like, but Mr. Hollinger noted that moving the structure closer to the building would surely mean that the lights would be visible, which was still a major concern, and questioned if higher screening might resolve this worry. There was a brief discussion about the contour of the land, with Mr. Rimsky noting that the contours might diminish visibility from surrounding approaches, but Mrs. Woodroffe noted that the location would be clearly visible, day and night, from the northbound approach on Route 47.

Mr. McMorrow noted that there was a stand of mature trees on one side of the site, but Mr. Hollinger confirmed that landscaping and foliage is not taken into consideration when presented with applications.

There was a discussion about the design of the court itself, with Mr. McMorrow affirming that screening would exist on all sides of the court, and that downlit lights would be installed within this framework. Mr. Hollinger questioned whether it was possible to increase the height of the screening to 20', to decrease visibility of the lights. Mr. McMorrow did not know if this was possible, but members agreed that while 20' of fencing might reduce light pollution in the evening, the result during the day would not be acceptable.

Mrs. Woodroffe maintained that the court itself, regardless of screening, would be a distraction when lit, and Mr. McMorrow suggested that the Commission might consider making night sky compliant fixtures a condition of its approval. Mr. Fredlund noted that the new LED lighting available for courts is much less objectionable than those from the past, because they have full covers and focus the majority of light downward and not in a full spray. Mrs. Woodroffe said she was still concerned about the necessary brightness of the court itself when the lights were on at night.

Mr. and Mrs. Condon wanted their support noted for the record, and with no further questions and nothing further to add by the applicant, Mr. Hollinger prepared to close the public hearing.

A motion was made by Mrs. Woodroffe to close the public hearing on the Washington Club's application to construct a platform tennis court at 92 Green Hill Road. Seconded by Mrs. Boyer and passed 3-0.

Regular Meeting

Mr. Hollinger called the regular meeting to order at 7:40 p.m., and seated Mrs. Van Tarwijk for Mrs. Mills, and Mr. Fairbairn for Mrs. Averill.

Consideration of Washington Club Application

Having considered the facts before them, Mr. Hollinger asked members for their opinions on the matter. Mrs. Woodroofe said that nothing in the new application addressed her original concerns about the resulting light that would be visible from the road. Mr. Hollinger asked her if making specific lighting a condition of approval would appease her concerns, but she felt that the court itself would still need to be quite bright to allow for the ball to be seen at night, and that placing it close to the Club Hall was not in line with the Historic District guidelines. Mrs. Woodroofe noted that she was sensitive to the desire of the Club to add the court as a benefit to its members, but remained firm that its placement so close to the Green was objectionable. Mr. Fairbairn agreed, and noted that the design was simply not compatible with the established guidelines, and felt that placing it in such close proximity to the Hall did not respect the guidelines the Historic District Commission was trying to uphold. He said it was the responsibility of members to consider how a new structure would fit in with existing structures, and the character of the district as a whole, and that this proposal did not meet that criteria, that it would not fit in. Mr. Fairbairn also noted that as a member of the Washington Club, he could appreciate that a paddle tennis court is a nice idea, but he could not support the current proposed placement. Mrs. Van Tartwijk concurred with both Mrs. Woodroofe and Mr. Fairbairn, and noted that she had the same concerns with this application as she did with the first application, and could not now agree that moving it up the hill made sense from the Commission's perspective. Mrs. Boyer had nothing further to add and a motion was made.

A motion was made to approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness submitted by the Washington Club for the construction of a paddle tennis court at 92 Green Hill Road, following the design by its engineer and the original design by Tittman Design. This certificate would expire in a year. So called by Mrs. Van Tartwijk, seconded by Mrs. Woodroofe. Application approval was denied 5-0.

Unfinished Business

The Gunn Memorial Library – Mr. Hollinger reported that the Certificate of Appropriateness granted to the Library was due to expire the following day. A letter had been sent to the Library's director, inquiring about the lack of lattice work around the air conditioning units and propane hatch, but no response was received. Mr. Hollinger will follow up to see if the work was completed on time, or if an extension would be required.

New Preston and the Village District Act – Mrs. Payne of the Conservation Commission provided Mr. Hollinger with the name of a lead contact in the New Preston Business Association. Though several messages were left, he has not heard back from the business owner, so was unable to determine when the association might meet. He will continue to follow up.

Delay of Demolition Ordinance – Mr. Fairbairn has made many attempts to reach Mr. DiBella, and provided him with a great deal of information about ordinances established by other Connecticut towns regarding demolition, but has not been successful in reaching him. Mrs. Woodroffe noted that this issue was raised over a year ago by members, and pursuing other avenues was raised. Members agreed that it might be a good idea to invite the Board of Selectmen to attend a future meeting to review the suggestions of the Commission and determine their level of support. As a reminder of the importance of this issue, Mrs. Boyer happily reported that the silo at 11 Ives Road was reconstructed, and appeared to be in line with the original structure.

Correspondence with the Connecticut Trust for Historical Preservation – Mr. Hollinger reached out to the trust to better understand options available to the Washington Historic District Commission moving forward. Responses from Mr. Greg Farmer are quoted below.

Regarding Expansion of District Boundaries:

“Increasing the boundary of the historic district requires the Study Committee process outlined under the state statute (CGS Chapter 97a, Sections 7-147a-y). The existing Historic District Commission can serve as the Study Committee and would prepare the report evaluating the potential boundary increase. Ballots would go only to owners of properties within the boundary increase, not to the owners of properties already in the district.”

Commissioners agreed that it might be best to approach those homeowners in question first, possibly in an informal manner, to see if there are any notable objections to the idea. If the idea is met with approval, the Historic District Commission would serve as the Study Committee on the proposal. There was a brief discussion about the areas in question, and the consensus was that parts of Ferry Bridge and near Wykeham Road will be considered, possibly up to Old North Road.

Regarding Cemeteries in Washington:

“Cemeteries that are designated as Local Historic Properties or that fall within the Local Historic District boundaries are subject to HDC review. If Judea Cemetery is not already designated, it could be proposed as a Local Historic Property using the same Study Committee process described above. Is the Commission interested in more direct control of the cemetery or just regulatory review?”

Mr. Hollinger noted that town cemeteries do not fall into either of these categories, and questioned whether bringing them into such jurisdiction was warranted. Mrs. Van Tartwijk reminded members that she raised this point because there are revolutionary-era headstones that seem to require attention. She noted that while she was aware that there was a small allowance given to town cemeteries, it did not seem to cover anything more than the bare minimum when it came to maintenance, and she questioned whether there was something more that could be done. Mrs. Woodroffe confirmed that monies available were extremely sparse, and questioned where additional funds could be derived. Mr. Fairbairn suggested that the cemetery could register itself as a 501(c)(3) organization, which might make charitable donations a possibility. He also suggested that if funding is truly needed, there is land available that could be sold, and those

profits could be ear-marked for a fund specifically maintained for upkeep. At this time, members agreed that the matter need not be further pursued.

Regarding Response Times from Residents:

“Letters sent to property owners requesting information of inviting them to submit an application usually include a response date. If the original letter did not, then a follow up letter might request a response within a certain time from (e.g. 30 days) or by a date certain (e.g. January 15). If there is no response from the owner, then another letter should advise him that the property appears to be in violation of the municipal ordinance and encourage him to resolve the matter by meeting with the HDC. The Building Official or Zoning Enforcement Officer should receive a copy of that letter and may take appropriate action.”

Mr. Hollinger assured members that he will be certain to follow these guidelines in the future, to ensure timely responses from residents. He also wanted to inform everyone that the current Zoning Enforcement Officer was leaving the town’s employ, but they would work with her replacement should the need arise.

Parameters of the Historic District on the Green – After reviewing the town’s ordinances regarding the boundaries of existing districts, Mr. Hollinger was able to determine that the Green District starts at the corner of the Gunn Library and runs approximately 500’ and parallel to Route 47 toward the Grace Mayflower Inn and Spa. Based on these measurements, there are parts of The Gunnery’s field and structures that do not fall within the district. While all members agreed that it is important to do everything possible to safeguard town treasures, the Commission will not concern itself with matters beyond its boundaries going forward.

Consideration of Minutes

Members reviewed the minutes from the November 19, 2018 meeting. There were no corrections.

A motion to accept the minutes as written for the November 19, 2018 meeting of the Washington Historic District Commission was called by Mr. Fairbairn, seconded by Mrs. Van Tartwijk, and passed 5-0.

Mrs. Boyer asked members if she could add one more item prior to the close of the meeting, and suggested that a letter be written to the Wodke’s, letting them know what a beautiful job they have done with the work on their house. She also commended the quality of work performed, and said that acknowledging a job well done was the least the Commission could do. All agreed.

With all matters concluded, a motion was made by Mr. Hollinger to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m. Seconded by Mrs. Boyer and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joan DeLuca", written in dark ink.

Joan DeLuca, Historic District Commission Clerk
December 20, 2018