

February 11, 2008

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Chute, Ms. Gilchrist, Mr. Smith, Mr. Talbot

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Mrs. Rives

ALTERNATES ABSENT: Mrs. Mills, Mrs. Boyer

STAFF PRESENT: Mrs. Shade

OTHERS PRESENT: Mrs. Crumrine, Mr. S. Nettleton, Mr. T. Nettleton, Mr. J. Franzen, Residents of Calhoun-Ives District

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Washington Club, Inc. /92 Green Hill Road /Install sign on building

Ms. Gilchrist opened the Public Hearing at 7:36PM to consider the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness submitted 1/8/08 by the Washington Club, 92 Green Hill Road, to place a sign on the building as shown in the photograph submitted with the application. She read the legal notice which appeared in **Voices** on 2/3/08. Ms. Gilchrist seated the members and Alternate Rives. Mrs. April Crumrine was present to represent the Washington Club.

Mrs. Crumrine explained to the Commission that the Washington Club building has no identification and is difficult for people to find. Mr. Chute, who lives on the Green, said a lot of people have stopped to ask him for directions. Mrs. Crumrine said people also ask at the library. She noted that all other structures on the Green are identified with signs.

Mrs. Crumrine said she would like to see simple, thin black wrought-iron letters attached to the fascia. Ms. Gilchrist asked the height of the fascia. Mrs. Crumrine replied the fascia is 11 1/2 inches. The letters will fit in between the moldings. The style of the letters will be "Arial".

Mr. Talbot asked Mrs. Crumrine if she had considered installing a side placard. She said her preference is for the letters. They are more elegant. Mr. Talbot asked how the letters would be mounted over the slight curve. He suggested consulting with a sign company to figure the best way. He also suggested looking into how signage has been applied historically. Mr. Talbot added he has no problem with the concept if it can be done. It would be useful to have something showing the commission how the letters will be mounted.

Ms. Gilchrist asked Mrs. Crumrine if she would prefer to have the letters painted on. If not, can you bring in a sample letter to show the members.

Mr. Smith asked if the curve of the fascia will change the way the lettering will look. Mrs. Crumrine stated she did not know. Mr. Smith said until that problem is solved the commission does not have sufficient information to make a decision.

Ms. Gilchrist read a note stating Mrs. Wodtke had called to say they did not have any objection to the signage. She asked if anyone else present had any comments for or against the application. There were none.

The members agreed to continue this Public Hearing until the next scheduled meeting.

MOTION: To continue the Public Hearing to consider the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness submitted by the Washington Club, Inc., 92 Green Hill Road, to install a sign on the building. By Mr. Talbot, seconded by Mr. Smith and passed 5-0.

Ms. Gilchrist continued the Public Hearing at 7:52PM.

This Public Hearing was recorded on tape. The tape is on file in the Land Use Office, Bryan Memorial Town Hall, Washington Depot, Connecticut.

Pinnacle Peak, Inc.(Nettleton) /132 Calhoun Street /construct new house, detached guest-pool house, pool, fieldstone wall.

Ms. Gilchrist opened the Public Hearing at 7:55PM to consider the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness submitted by Pinnacle Peak, Inc., to construct a new house, detached guest-pool house, pool and fieldstone wall at 132 Calhoun Street. She read the legal notice which appeared in **Voices** on 2/3/08. Ms. Gilchrist seated the members and Alternate Rives. Mr. Tom Nettleton and Mr. Shaun Nettleton were present with their architect, Mr. Jack Franzen. Several residents of the Calhoun-Ives District were also in attendance.

Mr. Franzen presented the plans to the Commission. He stated the area around 132 Calhoun Street was open landscape in the district. Mr. Franzen said there were no clear architectural themes in the district and the buildings were separated by space and topography. He added most of the buildings in the area represented 19th or 20th century architecture. Mr. Franzen said the gambrel colonial revival house, which they are proposing to build, evolves from styles in the 1600's. He added, they have made several changes since the informal discussion last month. They did not change the gambrel style roof, but the house has been shortened by four feet. The driveway is more informal. They are planning to develop only 1 1/4 acres out of the 6.6acre parcel. Most of the land will remain open and permanently undeveloped.

- The main house will have a full length covered porch. There will be a pool house and pool, the stone wall will screen the pool equipment.
- The house will have a wood shingle roof, painted clapboard siding.
- Foundation and chimney will be natural fieldstone (mortar will be recessed into stone)
- Lighting will be patina copper. There will be no flood lights or elaborate landscape lights.
- The guest/pool house will be weathered barn board. A simple picket fence will connect the main house to guest/pool house.

Mr. Franzen asked the Commissioners if they had any questions. Mr. Talbot asked if there were any photos showing the views from the public way. There were none. Mr. Talbot said his recommendation would be to continue the Public Hearing so that a story pole could be put up in order to show the height of the primary ridges and eaves so the members could get a sense of proportion of this building relative to the rural character of the street; how it will relate to the barn next door, the house across the street, the house on the corner. What you are building needs to be looked at within the context of this entire district, and this appears quite suburban. This drawing does not seem significantly different from the previous drawing.

Mr. Franzen said the house would be set back 128ft from the road. Mr. Talbot noted that all four sides of the house will be visible from the public way. He reiterated the fact that, according to Dept of Interior Guidelines, the Commission cannot take pine trees or shrubs into consideration.

Mr. Talbot said that programmatically, the Commission cannot tell people they can't have what they want, but they can say to them - you can make it smaller. He added; what he thought the members were politely trying to say last time was - this needs to be smaller. Mr. Franzen replied he did not think the Commission could tell them to make it smaller; just make it appear smaller. Mr. Smith pointed out that the Commission could simply turn it down. Mr. Talbot said the role of the Commission is to try and assist in guiding the maintenance of the character of this rural historic district; which is eroding very quickly into a suburban street.

Some of the residents of Calhoun-Ives District commented on this application:

Mrs. Shapiro said she understands the process the applicants are going through. It was quite a process. They worked on it for two years. She understands the Commission's comments. It is a question of scale and mass to present a house that does not overwhelm the street.

Mr. Markert commented that if they thought they were designing this house according to the Guidelines, they should go back and read them again.

Mrs. Canning said she tried unsuccessfully to buy this particular lot from Mr. Beck. She added, this is a very vulnerable piece of land on Calhoun Street. Mrs. Canning said there is a strong consciousness among neighbors about protecting what can still be protected. This is probably the last nugget of land that is vulnerable.

There was some discussion regarding the land behind this proposed house at 132 Calhoun Street and concerns that a house may, in the future, be built there. Mr. Talbot explained that a 50ft frontage is required to get back to the property, and space required to install a septic. In addition, this subject is not before the Commission tonight. Ms. Gilchrist said this is a good conversation; but not for this time.

Ms. Gilchrist read from a statement she had written:

One thing that makes these 3 districts special and unique, each one unto itself, is that there is a particular balance between buildings and the spaces around them, and how each structure inhabits its space and its landscape and the district as a whole. In none of the three historic districts - and I believe it was suggested at the December meeting that you take a look at them - does one building stand out and call particular attention to itself. An exception might be the churches on the Green - but they're in sort of a special category.

The neighborhood south of the Green with all the Rossiter houses is essentially suburban - in an early 20th century suburban way. The houses are neighborly in relation to each other, and build all around the same time with the view toward it all being a residential community for people of similar tastes and means. This was okay, because here the area got developed with a single vision of a neighborhood of stylish, Gilded-Age second homes.

The Calhoun Ives District was not of course developed with a single vision at all - it evolved without controls but within the context and needs of an outlying, rural, agricultural community. The buildings belonged to people of lesser means and simple, rural lifestyles, so the houses are simple and utilitarian - they don't have lots of style or individual presence or call attention to themselves architecturally. They live lightly in their surrounds, somehow. Even though affluent people predominate there now, the Calhoun Ives District still pretty well reflects its utilitarian, farming heritage, because property owners there have chosen (or been advised) to maintain those qualities. The Calhoun Ives District is really not so much about its houses and architecture. It's more about its open spaces and views across farmland and valleys and wooded hillsides in the distance. So, when we consider appropriateness, we

are looking for construction that is as simple, scaled down, and as visually quiet as possible. Presumably you buy property here and want to live here because of the way it is, not because of the way it could be. Even though it exists in other parts of town, architecture of the Gilded Age simply doesn't belong *here*.

The size and siting of this house would seem to require a great deal of regarding of the field.

It would block one of the most treasured views in the town - looking across pristine open landscape to Hidden Valley and the Pinnacle.

Main block of the house is over 7,000 SF.

Garage adds over 1300 more, and the Guest/Pool House another 1500.

Total comes to almost 10,000 SF.

I appreciate your good faith effort to design a place that tries to fit in with Washington's architecture, but because of the character of the District and the Commission's responsibility to try to protect that character, I have to say that the house as proposed is inappropriate in concept, and scale and style. It seems massive compared to existing houses in the District. Few - perhaps one, has as large a living room, 5 good-sized bedrooms, 5 full baths, and so much living space for guests. Or a 3-car garage. The concept of this kind of house is completely incompatible with the character of the Calhoun Ives Historic District.

What I'd like to see on this site is a considerably smaller, simpler, less conspicuous house that takes its design cues generally from the other older houses in the District. The new house going next door and below - LaFont, so far is okay because it is simple. Its rooflines and proportions and overall concept relate to the existing architecture in the district. It's a big house, but they have the advantage of being far away from the public way, so the overall presence of the house is diminished. What we'd like to see is something simpler, more informal, and on this site, something that defers to its site and to the precious and magnificent views beyond it.

The members agreed with Ms. Gilchrist that they would like to see a building that defers to its surroundings and defers to other buildings in the district.

Mr. Markert stated this building is not appropriate. The Mills and Connolly residences were built before the Historic District was formed.

Mrs. Shapiro said it is not appropriate. It is too fancy. Mr. Shapiro added, they are handicapped because the lot is so visible. He asked if the house could be moved back on the lot.

Mrs. Canning asked why they chose this property. The view.

Mr. Franzen said the buildings may not relate to each other, but they do relate to the road.

Ms. Gilchrist brought the discussion to a close. She read an e-mail from Mrs. Canning and a letter from Mr. and Mrs. Greenfield. Both were opposed to this application. These letters are in the applicant file and a copy filed with these minutes.

Ms. Gilchrist asked the members if they wanted to continue this Hearing. Mr. Tom Nettleton stated that from the sound of the comments this evening, they are totally on the wrong track. He said his preference

is to withdraw his application and he will send a letter to that effect.

The Commission decided to continue the Public Hearing until the March 17th meeting and will receive Mr. Nettleton's letter of withdrawal at that time.

MOTION: To continue the Public Hearing to consider the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness submitted by Pinnacle Peak, Inc.(Shaun & Tom Nettleton), to construct a new house, detached guest-pool house, pool and fieldstone wall at 132 Calhoun Street. By Mr. Talbot, seconded by Mr. Smith and passed 5-0.

Ms. Gilchrist continued the Public Hearing at 9:10PM.

This Public Hearing was recorded on tape. The tape is on file in the Land Use Office, Bryan Memorial Town Hall, Washington Depot, Connecticut.

REGULAR MEETING

Ms. Gilchrist called the meeting to order at 9:12PM and seated the members and Alternate Rives.

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Consideration of the Minutes

MOTION: To approve the 1/14/08 minutes as written. By Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Chute and passed 4-0-1.

Mr. Talbot abstaining.

Mr. Talbot abstained because he was not at the January meeting.

Mr. Talbot said the First Selectman had a couple of names for the members to discuss regarding filling the vacant seat on the Commission.

Ms. Gilchrist read a letter from Chris Charles, Open Space Equity, informing them that Mrs. Canning's field as well as two fields on the Stuart Farm are now permanently protected and will never be built upon.

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting. By Mr. Talbot.

Ms. Gilchrist adjourned the meeting at 9:25PM.

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha T. Shade, Clerk