

June 15, 2009

7:30PM, Land Use Meeting Room

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Talbot

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Mrs. Boyer, Mrs. Mills

ALTERNATES ABSENT: Mr. Tilden

STAFF PRESENT: Mrs. Shade

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. Pleasants, Mr. Nicholas, Zachary Nicholas, Mrs. Canning, Mr. Daniel, Ms. Demetriades, Mr. Walker

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Nussbaum /132 Calhoun Street /Retaining wall at house entry

Ms. Gilchrist opened the Public Hearing at 7:35PM to consider the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness submitted 5/28/09 by Paul A. Nussbaum, 132 Calhoun Street, to construct a retaining wall at the house entry. She seated the members and Alternate Mills for Mr. Talbot. Mr. Rod Pleasants of McIver-Morgan Architects represented the applicant.

Mr. Pleasants looked at the overall site plan(A0-02) with the commissioners showing the driveway and the retaining wall which follows the curve of the driveway toward the house. He stated that in January of this year they got approval for the house, but at that time the members thought the retaining wall was too high. Mrs. Boyer asked how tall it was before. Mr. Pleasants replied at that time it was 6ft tall. Now it is 3ft 2in tall at the highest point, slants down and eventually disappears. Ms. Gilchrist agreed - it curves around and dives into the driveway.

Ms. Gilchrist noted that Mr. Talbot had asked about the character of the wall. Mr. Pleasants said the retaining wall will be fieldstone, random coursing, not flat on top. Mrs. Boyer inquired if the fieldstone would be local. Yes. Ms. Gilchrist observed the wall appears flat and straight in the drawing. Mr. Pleasants assured the members that the wall would not be square or straight. The wall will have an uneven top and look more natural than it does in the drawing.

Ms. Gilchrist asked if there were any other questions or discussion. There were none.

MOTION: To close the Public Hearing to consider the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness by Paul A. Nussbaum, 132 Calhoun Street, for construction of a retaining wall at the house entry. By Mr. Kerr, seconded by Mr. Chute and passed 5-0.

Ms. Gilchrist closed the Public Hearing at 7:47PM.

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

Fineman /32 Sunny Ridge Road /Alter existing sun porch

Ms. Gilchrist opened the Public Hearing at 7:50PM to hear the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness submitted 5/28/09 by Lori and Steven Fineman, 32 Sunny Ridge Road, to alter their existing sun porch. She seated the members and Alternate Mills for Mr. Talbot. Mr. Rod Pleasants of McIver-Morgan Architects represented the applicants.

Ms. Gilchrist read a letter from Mr. Charles Treadway, 20 Nettleton Hollow Road, in support of the application. A copy of this letter is filed with these minutes and the original is in the applicant file.

The members looked at the photos submitted with the application. Mr. Pleasants commented that they had just installed a wood roof on this house. He said the problem with the existing roof on the sun porch is there is very little pitch due to the master bedroom windows directly above. Mr. Chute asked what type of roof is presently over the sun porch. Mr. Pleasants replied it is now a rubber membrane roof with black tar. They could possibly install a flat roof with a rail or a metal roof. Mr. Kerr asked if there was a picture or rendering of a flat roof with railing. Ms. Gilchrist said she thought a railing would make the addition stand out even more.

Mr. Pleasants showed the members several photos of historic buildings with additions on the side. Mrs. Boyer observed that most of the photos show the relationship of the additions to the main house as being about 1/3 as high. Mrs. Mills asked if the existing sun porch is set back from the main house. Mr. Pleasants said it is, but not much.

Ms. Gilchrist said the problem with enclosing the sun porch, is it appears more solid and competes visually with the body of the house; whereas the big jalousie windows read as a more transparent volume and allows it to recede. Mrs. Boyer agreed. She said with the present pitched roof and glass enclosure the sun porch looks much taller and in proportion with the house. The proposed change to yellow clapboards makes it look squatty.

Ms. Gilchrist said she has a problem with replicating the windows. It makes you wonder if the sun porch is part of the original house or is it new. She read Mr. Talbot's comments: The fenestration appears to be replicating that of the original house. Rather than punched windows a more "glazed porch" configuration I believe would be more appropriate, i.e., multipane glazed panels or double hung windows that fill a larger percentage of the wall.

Mr. Pleasants told the members the sun porch is more open at the back. He showed the members drawing A2.03 showing French doors on the back near the pool. Mr. and Mrs. Fineman would like for this to be a year round room but their concern is they do not like the exposure to the road, especially at night with lights on.

Mr. Smith stated the point is that this proposal makes it look like part of the original house. It has to come across as a later addition; clearly different and not trying to look the same. Mr. Chute said a peaked roof would be possible on this addition if they would change the bedroom windows that are above it. Mr. Pleasants said he did not think his clients would want to change their bedroom windows. Mr. Kerr said he would like to see more windows but smaller and narrower. After some additional discussion, Mr. Pleasants agreed that not using the same size windows as the main house will help. He said he would come up with two or three different options to show Mr. and Mrs. Fineman and then bring those back to the Commission. He asked if the consensus was to keep the pitched roof and not use the railing. Yes.

MOTION: To continue until the next regularly scheduled meeting on July 20, 2009, the Public Hearing to consider the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness by Lori and Steven Fineman, 32 Sunny Ridge Road, to alter their existing sun porch. By Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Kerr and passed 5-0.

Ms. Gilchrist continued the Public Hearing at 8:12PM.

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

Wexler /157 Calhoun Street /Alterations and additions to existing house, barn and driveway

Ms. Gilchrist opened the Public Hearing at 8:14PM to hear the application for a Certification of Appropriateness submitted 5/28/09 by Lloyd Wexler, 157 Calhoun Street, for alterations and additions to the existing house, barn and driveway. She seated the members and Alternate Mills for Mr. Talbot. Elizabeth Demetriades and Patrick Walker, architects, represented the applicant.

Ms. Demetriades asked Ms. Gilchrist if she should go over some information from the past preliminary discussions which Ms. Gilchrist had missed. Ms. Gilchrist replied she did not think that would be necessary since she had studied the application and had read minutes of the past meetings.

Ms. Demetriades said she had a list of questions from Mr. Talbot's application review and she listed each one:

1. A clear written explanation on why the proposed work should be considered "appropriate" to the Calhoun-Ives Historic District. Ms. Demetriades read:

Stylistically, the work proposed for the Wexler House does not hearken to past historic periods, but reaches forward with a vocabulary sympathetic to the existing landscape, which is the primary element in the identity of the Calhoun-Ives Historic District. Curved roof slopes harmonize with the rolling hills. The hierarchy and interplay of shapes and details break down the scale and massing, while anchoring the house to the ground. Materials have been selected to integrate with and recede into the natural landscape. Relocation of the driveway from its current location to the property edge, through the woods, along the old stone wall will restore the open field. The alterations to the existing house reuse the existing foundations and floor framing, with additions adding less than four hundred square feet to the existing footprint. The house and barn (garage) are minimally visible from the public street in winter. Trees and undergrowth render these structures virtually invisible in the spring, summer and autumn seasons. The existing woods on the property are within designated wetlands areas and accordingly protected. Visibility of the house is further diminished by the proposed soft (curved) roof profile as well as the natural, dark materials.

2. Clearly identify any and all exterior lighting.

Ms. Demetriades: All exterior lighting is indicated on the plans. We put together a package of lighting that we propose to use in various locations with the intention that they conform to your Guidelines.

Mrs. Boyer: Does that say which one is going to be used in which place? Ms. Demetriades: Yes, on our drawings they are identified as either wall surface mounted, recessed, etc. - so we've put a little tag on each of those pages that says what it corresponds to.

Mr. Kerr: Can I ask a procedural question? For purposes of the record, is this the first time you've been before us? Ms. Demetriades: No.

The members briefly discussed the fact that there had been one preliminary discussion in April and another in May. This is the first Public Hearing at which an application was received.

Mr. Kerr: So as far as the record is concerned, this is the first time we're officially dealing with it. So, it's good for you to go through things again because what you did before was informal and this is the first formal presentation you've made. You can do it in summary fashion.

The members agreed that would be good. Mr. Walker presented the model of the house. Ms. Demetriades rolled out the site plan. Mr. Daniel, who is no longer a resident, asked if he could look on.

Ms. Demetriades: Guess you've all made a site visit. This time of year it is very difficult to seem from the road.

Mrs. Boyer: You have to remember we have to look at this as if none of those trees are there.

Ms. Demetriades: We photographed it before the trees came out so we would have a record of it.

Ms. Demetriades: So, we are building on the existing footprint. There were some comments about the face of the house being large. We tried very hard to fine-tune the plans and have lowered the curve of the roof by about 6ft. The intent of this house is to blend into the landscape and respect the landscape. To take this driveway which bisects the field now and take it back to its original location, so when the Wexlers are in the house they'll be looking out at the field. As far as materials go – the roof is proposed to be a freedom gray copper that weathers to a matte finish. Siding would be painted a dark gray color. Stone finish as described in the picture with the application. (showed members new model) For those of you who were here last time, as you can see, we did quite a bit of work on the articulation of that façade to break it down. The rendering shows where the stone goes and where the painted wood is. We introduced a cedar brise soleil that casts some shadows and breaks down that massing. On the south side of the house, the brise soleil breaks the sun during the summer season when it is high in the sky and admits it in during the winter. It seemed like an appropriate device to help the owner and also mitigate some of the scale issues.

Ms. Gilchrist: Do you propose any changes to grading?

Ms. Demetriades: Yes. Right now the structure is sort of dug in at a certain point and we'll actually raise the grade a little bit along that elevation. Other than that there will be no changes to the existing foundations. As far as the garage goes the, addition to that is we're adding a little dormer to allow more headroom.

Ms. Gilchrist: Did you say anything about how the architecture relates to the context of the district and town?

Ms. Demetriades: My statement was that Calhoun-Ives is really about the landscape and about the fabric of the landscape with wooded areas and open areas. If this pre-existing house had been on Calhoun Street, there is no way that we would have proposed something like this. The fact that it's off the road to begin with is not where historic structures would have been placed. They were built right on the road, so to begin with, it's an anomaly. What we tried to do, is once it is in this anomalous location, we tried to make it work with the land and echo the undulating hillside by using curved roof structures and darker materials. We just tried to knit it in.

Ms. Gilchrist: Are we at the point where we want to entertain discussion or comments from the audience?

Ms. Demetriades: I'll just give you the rest of the package.

Mr. Walker: Mr. Talbot asked a couple of questions. Is the gate part of this application?

Ms. Demetriades: No it is not. You'll see us again for the gate. It will be designed to go in a kink in the driveway so it cannot be seen from the road.

Mr. Walker: Mr. Talbot also asked about what happens to the stone wall.

Mr. Walker showed the members photos of the existing stone wall. Pillars will be removed and wall will be connected. New driveway entrance will have no pillars or lights, just whatever 911 requires.

Ms. Demetriades showed the members the small low profile in-grade lights for the edge of the driveway. They will fit right on the ground – just graze the surface.

Mrs. Mills: Do we have a barn drawing.

Ms. Demetriades: Yes, it is part of this application.
Members looked at existing and proposed barn drawings.

Ms. Gilchrist: How high is any exterior lighting?

Ms. Demetriades: Lighting is code conforming. Downward lighting over the door. Nothing will be seen from the street.

Ms. Gilchrist: All of it looks like source is hidden and you just get the glow nearby.

Mr. Kerr: You know those beautiful driveway lights you showed us? Will they still be legal after all the fluorescent mandates come out?

Ms. Demetriades: I think there is actually a compact fluorescent version of that. They're going to be changing incandescent to be longer life. And last, but not least, Mr. Talbot asked about the location of the condenser and generator.

The members looked at the drawings and photos showing the location of the mechanical equipment along with the greenscreen fence.

Mr. Kerr: We don't have to treat a greenscreen the way we do a tree do we?

Mrs. Boyer: We have to treat it as a structure and forget there's anything green there. Are these visible from the road? I think they will be small, but visible.

Ms. Demetriades: The stone walls are as high as the condensing units. I think it would be difficult to see them. These are pictures of the house before the leaves came out. I think it would truly be hard to see them.

Ms. Gilchrist: I will read Mr. Talbot's comments:

1. A beautiful presentation.
2. I'd like a clear explanation on why this should be considered "appropriate".
3. I like the revisions done to the massing. However I still feel the south and north walls and west end will read tall and the curved roof relatively flat. Can the plan reflect the hill so that the east (living) 1st floor be lower than the west (guest suite). This would allow, on the second floor, Lloyd's suite to be the highest level relating to the curvature of the roof above the sleeping quarters on the same elevation, or ideally, lower again to reflect the roof form as well as the contours of the hill.

Ms. Demetriades: The ceiling heights in this downstairs are already 8ft.

Mr. Kerr: Did he say lower the east or west?

Ms. Gilchrist: The east 1st floor be lower than the west the living area lower than the guest wing.

Ms. Demetriades: We're using all the existing 1st floor framing and all existing foundations. In terms of grading that would be highly impractical. You can't drop the level and enter the house at that elevation.

Mr. Walker: You'd also lose any function in the basement. Two thirds of it is crawl space.

Mr. Kerr: Isn't the eastern ridge on the existing building higher than what you've got right there?

Ms. Demetriades: Yes.

Mr. Chute: Your treatment of this façade makes quite a difference compared to the last drawing.

Ms. Gilchrist: Is this lower than what you originally showed us?

Ms. Demetriades: Yes, by 6 inches.

Mr. Kerr: It is quite a dramatic difference – just lowered by 6 inches.

Ms. Gilchrist: I think you've taken a building that is non-contributing and introduced a really kind of exciting example of 21st century architecture in the historic district which we don't see as a stagnant museum, but as hopefully representing good design on a continuum. I think it is really nice.

Mrs. Mills: I don't think we need story poles. You had mentioned them last time.

Ms. Gilchrist: I don't feel a need for story poles. How does everyone else feel? No Need.

Mrs. Boyer: I find it exciting; the way we think.

Ms. Gilchrist: It's clearly an exciting time. Would you like to present the lighting plan now or do you feel you've already covered it.

Ms. Demetriades: There's a fan shown on the screened porch on the west end of the building. The fan light is recessed so it is not exposed. There is an entry light where code requires. Driveway lights. The members looked at the lighting information.

Mrs. Boyer: What happens to the driveway lights in the snow?

Ms. Demetriades: My guess is we'll probably have to put stakes up. We've used these lights before – they're wonderful.

Ms. Gilchrist: What materials for the driveway; any curbing or special treatment of the driveway? Lights at the gate?

Ms. Demetriades: The driveway will be just gravel. No curbing. The owner wants the entrance to be understated; nothing to attract attention. No lights.

Ms. Gilchrist: Any other questions or discussion?

Mr. Chute: I think it's very fine – outstanding.

Ms. Gilchrist: You've done a really nice job.

Mr. Daniel: I'm glad to see it change. It's great.

MOTION: To close the Public Hearing to consider the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness by Lloyd Wexler, 157 Calhoun Street, for alterations and additions to existing house, barn(garage), driveway and site. By Mr. Smith, seconded by Mrs. Mills and passed 5-0.

Ms. Gilchrist closed the Public Hearing at 8:47PM.

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 opened the regular meeting at 8:48PM, seated the members and Alternate Mills for Mr. Talbot.

Consideration of the Minutes

MOTION: To accept the 5/18/09 minutes as written. By Mr. Chute, seconded by Mrs. Mills and passed 5-0.

MOTION: To include subsequent business not already posted on the agenda. By Mr. Chute, seconded by Mr. Smith and passed 5-0.

Pending Business

Nussbaum /132 Calhoun Street /Retaining wall at house entry

MOTION: To approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness submitted 5/28/09, by Paul A. Nussbaum, 132 Calhoun Street, for construction of a retaining wall at the house entry as specified in drawings by McIver-Morgan received with the application. This work is to be completed by June 15, 2010; or else this approval shall be void. By Ms. Gilchrist, seconded by Mrs. Mills and passed 5-0.

Fineman /32 Sunny Ridge Road /Alter existing sun porch

MOTION: To continue until the next regularly scheduled meeting on July 20, 2009, the Public Hearing to consider the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness by Lori and Steven Fineman, 32 Sunny Ridge Road, to alter their existing sun porch. By Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Kerr and passed 5-0.

Wexler /157 Calhoun Street /Alterations & additions to existing house, barn & driveway

Ms. Gilchrist: Are we ready to vote?

Mrs. Boyer: Since I can't vote – I think it's fascinating. It's so smooth it scares me a little bit. As Peter says – it's beautifully presented.

Mr. Smith: I think you raised the basic point. It's modern architecture and we have to decide whether we think the historic district can accommodate that and I think we've been discussing it with them in terms of maintaining some of the basic things that you put into our standards about massing and that kind of stuff. That's certainly been the focus of a lot of the discussions.

Mrs. Mills: Do you think it's still going to look like a big mass? They've done a good job of breaking up the mass.

Mrs. Boyer: To me it was like a primary school or an airplane hangar. But then I thought about the fact that the materials they're using are very sophisticated materials that will take away from some of its shape. It will break it up. There's nothing in our Regulations that says you can't put up a modern house, it says you just can't duplicate an old house.

Mrs. Mills: That's right. You can't make it look like an old house.

Mr. Smith: There must be some compatibility.

Mrs. Boyer: With what? The district?

Mr. Chute: She defined it in her statement about relating to the land and the important things in the vicinity. She did a good job.

Ms. Gilchrist: A lot of what's important about this district is that the land and the rolling landscape, matters as much as the houses. Because you have to remember in most historic districts it is the buildings that matter. In this district it's the land as much as the buildings and the spaces and the contours and the undulation of the land that matter.

Mrs. Boyer: It's not scary that it's a modern house because it's so far back. It could not be built on the road.

Mr. Chute: She did say that.

Mrs. Mills: One thing that Peter said before that scares him is we've approved a lot of things we thought would be to scale and they ended up being much bigger.

Mr. Kerr: To what extent do we consider what's being replaced? Do we consider it an upgrade? Probably we all agree this is more appropriate than what is there now. And is it important that it's an upgrade even though it's not everyone's ideal.

Ms. Gilchrist: It is an upgrade. And to my mind it could ultimately be considered a contributing structure.

Mr. Chute: This is more than an upgrade. This is outstanding.

Mrs. Boyer: And it's not that much larger. We know what the existing house looks like and this is not going to be some gigantic leap.

Ms. Gilchrist: I don't think so either. And even if they took all the trees down, which I doubt they'll do, this is going to be a much more significant piece of architecture than what's there now.

Mr. Kerr: It's hard to turn it down when it's replacing something far inferior to it.

Mrs. Boyer: Our regulations say, and I know I keep jumping on it, that we can't take trees into consideration. Is this a state regulation or is this ours?

Ms. Gilchrist: It is a State enabling statute.

Mrs. Boyer: Because I thought if it's ours, we could reconsider it. Because there are trees that live longer than some houses and you have to replace them with other big trees. But if it's a state thing we can't do it. Too bad.

Ms. Gilchrist: One reason this house appeals to me even though it's very modern and it differs in almost every way from other houses in the district or even the town, it has a utilitarian feel to it that I really like. To me it relates in some aspects to the Averill barn. And the fact that it's a rural district, I almost wish we had more basic utilitarian, well designed stuff in that district and less of this fussy, expensive, pretend colonial stuff.

Mrs. Mills: This house doesn't bother me at all and I live in the district.

Ms. Gilchrist: This answers to that idea we put out there now and then which is – wouldn't it be great if somebody came along and designed something modern and unusual that really works.

Mr. Chute: I think this is in that class.

Mrs. Boyer: This also gives us something to lean against when something is too frilly or has too many little details.

Ms. Gilchrist: Are we ready to vote?
All agreed they were.

MOTION: To approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness submitted 5/28/09, by Lloyd Wexler, 157 Calhoun Street, for alterations and additions to existing house, barn(garage), driveway and site as shown in photos and drawings by Demetriades & Walker presented with the application; also, received 6/15/09, plan showing location of A/C condenser with greenscreen fence, and information on exterior lighting. This work is to be completed by June 15, 2010; or else this approval shall be void. By Mr. Kerr, seconded by Mr. Smith and passed 5-0.

Correspondence

Ms. Gilchrist read a letter from the State Historical Society stating that the Hollister House on Nettleton Hollow Road has been accepted as an historic site.

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

Ms. Gilchrist adjourned the meeting at 9:15PM.

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL
Respectfully Submitted,
Martha T. Shade, Secretary