

August 18, 2008

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Chute, Mr. Talbot

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ms. Gilchrist, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Smith

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Mrs. Boyer

ALTERNATES ABSENT: Mrs. Mills

STAFF PRESENT: Mrs. Shade

OTHERS PRESENT: Mrs. Gorra, Mr. Owens, Mr. Werkhoven, Residents, Mr. Cagle, Mr. Pleasants, Mr. Queral, Mrs. Canning.

PUBLIC HEARING

First Congregational Church /6 Kirby Road /Construct handicap ramp.

Mr. Talbot opened the Public Hearing at 7:32PM to consider the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness submitted 8/1/08 by the First Congregational Church, 6 Kirby Road, to construct a handicap access ramp. He read the legal notice which appeared in Voices on 8/3/08. Mr. Talbot seated the members and seated Alternate Boyer for Ms. Gilchrist. Mr. Werkhoven and Mrs. Gorra represented the Church. Also present was their architect, Mr. Reese Owens, Halper Owens Architects.

Mr. Owens brought two new drawings to insert into the record. These new drawings, #HOO2 and #HOO3, indicate the dimensions of the ramp and show the addition of a light beside the door and a guardrail, installed inside and a little lower than the balustrade. Mr. Owens said a guardrail is required with a handicap access ramp. He noted that this is the only viable place for the ramp since there are obstructions on the other side of the building. He said the ramp will not detract from the west elevation. It has been designed as simply as possible. One of the windows will be removed and be replaced by a door with transom above. Mrs. Boyer asked if there could just be a door without a transom. Mr. Owens replied no, that would be too flimsy. Mr. Chute asked if the footings would miss the sprinkler system. Yes.

Mr. Talbot voiced his concerns about the Green because the ramp is such a large structure. And although it has been done very respectfully to the building, he would like to hear thoughts on why a lift could not be installed on the other side of the church. Mr. Owens said he would let Mr. Werkhoven and Mrs. Gorra respond. They are on the Committee for the ramp.

Mr. Werkhoven said he also has great respect for the church building and the Green. However, they do have some large gatherings at the church. At one gathering, two people in wheel chairs had to be physically carried into the church. They do need a ramp that is visible enough for people to see that there is easy access. He added, there is a lift in front of the church but people do not like to use it.

Mr. Talbot asked why not consider the east side of the church; although there is not an ideal spot anywhere. If the ramp could be minimized as much as possible on the east side, it would seem to be a viable alternative. Mr. Werkhoven said they did consider the east side but they would have to do some regrading. Mr. Owens noted that in order to install a ramp at the front of the church, a retaining wall would need to be built. The area is too steep to be considered accessible.

Mr. Werkhoven stated the church people would much prefer a ramp. Mrs. Gorra added; people in wheel

chairs feel more comfortable using a ramp because it does not require someone else to be there to help, as with a lift. There is less of a stigma in using the ramp.

Mr. Talbot asked if there were any comments from the Public. There were none.

Mrs. Boyer said she agrees with Mr. Talbot and would like to see a new drawing showing an alternative to the ramp. Mr. Owens said the church feels strongly that there should be a ramp and not a lift. He said a lower ramp on the west side would be better than a lift on the other side.

Mr. Talbot said he would like for more members to be present. Also, he would like to hear a straw vote. He said he would be hard pressed to vote on this application tonight. Mrs. Boyer and Mr. Chute agreed. The members decided to continue the Public Hearing until the September 15 meeting.

MOTION: To continue the Public Hearing until September 15, 2008, to consider the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness submitted 8/1/08 by the First Congregational Church, 6 Kirby Road, to construct a handicapped access ramp. By Mr. Chute, seconded by Mrs. Boyer and passed 3-0.

Mr. Talbot continued the Public Hearing at 8:10PM.

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

Mr. Talbot called the meeting to order at 8:12PM, seated the members and Alternate Boyer for Ms. Gilchrist.

Pending Business

First Congregational Church /6 Kirby Road /Construct handicap ramp.

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Other Business

Nussbaum /132 Calhoun Street /PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION – Construct new house.

Mr. Cagle, Mr. Pleasants and Mr. Queral of McIver-Morgan Architects represented Mr. and Mrs. Nussbaum. Mr. Pleasants said there were 6 acres with several easements on the property. The land falls away in the back, so in the winter as one drives up Calhoun Street the back, side and front of the house will be visible.

Mr. Pleasants brought some house plans to show the commission. In addition, Mr. Queral showed the members some pictures and plans on his laptop computer. Mr. Pleasants said the house will be a little over 6000sqft. The foundation is stone, house is clapboard. He said the idea of using the two materials is to cut the house so it does not look so tall. Mr. Talbot agreed the stone breaks up the mass. The roof will have wood shingles. The porch runs across the front like a country farmhouse. The house will be 78ft

long and 48ft on the sides.

Mr. Talbot said the commissioners would like to hear how they see this house fitting into the district. He said the members are basically looking to see what the scale will be and the sympathy to the landscape in this rural district. He said he would like a better understanding of why the commission should approve this when they come for a Public Hearing. Mr. Pleasants said perhaps they could change the pitch of the roof.

Mr. Chute said he liked the look of the front, but the back of the house does not have the feeling of a farmhouse. Mrs. Boyer said it is too big. Mr. Pleasants said they could remove the upper decks off the back. Mrs. Boyer commented the number of windows on the back make it not like a farmhouse. Mr. Pleasants said the land has beautiful views so obviously they want to see the views. Smaller windows were put on the front.

Mr. Talbot noted they were starting with a massive building and asked if they would be adding anything in the future. Mr. Pleasants replied they would like to add a swimming pool and guest house. The garage is under the house.

Mr. Talbot suggested that when they come with an application, they should be prepared to show how the house relates to the district as a whole. Be prepared to present the plan in its entirety. On the site plan show the location of swimming pool, fencing, guest house, any air conditioning units, driveway, driveway materials and any exterior lighting. How it will all be viewed is a critical part of the application. He said his hope is that whatever is built on the property might be seen as a farmhouse for the Mills' barn.

Mr. Queral said maybe they could break up the symmetry of the house. Mr. Talbot said that is a good idea if they can make it work. If they want a big open plan, this may not be the site for it. He said this plan is big in square footage.

Mr. Pleasants thanked the commission for their time and suggestions.

MOTION: To add to the Agenda, a discussion with Sandra Canning, 119 Calhoun Street, regarding Certificates of Appropriateness. By Mr. Talbot, seconded by Mr. Chute and passed 3-0.

Mrs. Canning represented a neighborhood coalition which has been trying for three years to secure the Stuart Farm. They have met with Mr. Hiram Williams of Weantinogue and they are very interested in receiving this land; 14 acres without buildings. They cannot proceed unless the buildings can be removed. The house and barn are deteriorating. Mrs. Canning asked the Commission the following questions:

1. What are the criteria on which a C of A is issued or not issued?
2. Does public safety play a role?
3. Does the deteriorated condition of a structure play a role?
4. Do any and all previous changes to a building that have already destroyed some or all of its historical value influence the issuance of C of A?
5. If a C of A is denied by HDC what options do landowners have if they do not possess the funds to renovate structures in an existing deteriorated condition?
6. If a building is unsafe, is the 90 day delay mandatory?
7. Are there any other circumstances under which the 90 day delay is not required?

Mr. Talbot replied that HDC cannot act on anything until there is an application before them. Benign neglect has basically destroyed the house and barn.

Mrs. Boyer asked Mrs. Canning if they were looking for a C of A to take the buildings down. Mr. Talbot

said if they come with an application, it would require a 90 day demolition delay and if no one comes forward the commission would have to consider if it is appropriate to remove the buildings. Perhaps HDC could get someone to document the house and barn.

Mrs. Canning said they have not signed a contract with Weantinogue yet and they can hold off for a while. She stated they are very committed to this project. She thanked the Commission.

Zoning in Historic Districts

Mr. Talbot presented a draft of a letter he wrote to the Zoning Commission about heights in historic districts. This will be on the agenda for 9/15/08.

Consideration of the Minutes

MOTION: To defer approval of the 6/16/08 and 7/21/08 minutes until the next regularly scheduled meeting on 9/15/08. By Mr. Talbot, seconded by Mrs. Boyer and passed 3-0.

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

Mr. Talbot adjourned the meeting at 9:40PM.

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully Submitted,
Martha T. Shade, Clerk