

**WETHERSFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
PUBLIC HEARING  
FEBRUARY 24, 2004**

The Wethersfield Historic District Commission held a public meeting on February 24, 2003 at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Conference Room of the Town Hall, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, Connecticut.

Members present:

Billye Logan, Chairperson  
Douglas Ovian, Vice Chairperson  
Jennifer Wolf, Clerk  
Vacek Miglus  
Robert A. Garrey  
Eric Hart  
Paul Courchaine

Members absent:

John Toomey

Also Present:

Robert Cook, Wethersfield Historic District Coordinator

Chairperson Logan called the hearing to order at 7:30 pm and Clerk Wolf, read the Legal Notice as it appeared in the Hartford Courant on February 13, 2004

**APPLICATION NO. 3170-04.** Paula Larsen seeking to construct an addition to the front of the house at 271 Main Street.

Ms. Paula Larsen 271 Main Street appeared before the Commission and submitted renderings showing the 690 sq. ft. addition she proposed to build onto the front of her Federal style home. The approximately 20' X 30' foot addition would be the new home of the Main Street Creamery and Cafe'. The front of the addition would have a porch and an outdoor seating area on a patio made of brick pavers.

Mr. Cook pointed out that the front of the house would be pulled out and the window configuration would change.

Commissioner Courchaine asked if the style of the pavers would be comparable to those used along the walkways in Old Wethersfield. Ms. Larsen answered that they would be and indicated the style they were proposing from pictures in a brochure. She also pointed out that there would still be 2'-3' of property left in front of the patio.

Mr. Cook indicated that although it might seem that the front of the property would be covered it would all be done according to code.

Commissioner Logan asked if there would be tables set up on the porch also. She was told that it was not large enough to accommodate any tables and would be strictly used as an entrance area.

Commissioner Logan was concerned because the former ice cream shop had not had enough outdoor seating that this arrangement still might not satisfy the applicant's needs.

Mr. Cook explained that the seating had been based upon the square footage of the addition.

Ms. Larsen said that at 690 sq. ft. this addition would be more than the 300 sq. ft. she has now, additionally that they would be put up their donation box and suggested that if the Town wants to put in some benches along the street area that would certainly be appreciated. But she didn't have any more room for seating.

Commissioner Miglus noted that the plans implied that they would be reusing windows from the house. Ms. Larsen said that they wanted to, but the windows were old and if they fell apart when removed they would have to be replaced. If replaced they would match the old ones except be clad wood.

Commissioner Miglus asked if they would be true divided light or simulated divided light, and was told that they would not be true divided light. The applicant was not sure if the windows were fixed units or not.

Commissioner Miglus asked what the doors on the side of the building would look like and was shown a brochure with the picture of a wooden door with craftsman-style lights and a single panel on the bottom.

Commissioner Miglus pointed out that the foundation of the house was stone and asked what the foundation of the addition would be. He was told that it would be poured concrete and that it would be made to match the house as much as possible.

Mr. Cook said that he believed that addition to be at grade. So it was thought that the exposure of the new foundation would be minimal.

Commissioner Ovian said that the plans showed no windows on the northern elevation and he wondered if there was a reason for it. It seemed to him that a blank wall would not be very consistent with the other buildings on Main Street and would cause less of a disruption if there were windows. He explained that the addition is not incongruous because it was a business. Certain liberties could be acceptable but that some continuity was desired. The addition doesn't have to read as a Federal residency but windows would create a more welcoming approach to walkers along Main Street which would certainly be desirable for a business.

Commissioner Ovian asked if the addition would be air conditioned. Ms. Larsen said that she thought it would be.

Mr. Cook asked if the plan was to reuse 4 of the 7 windows to be removed from the front of the house. Ms. Larsen answered that it was as long as they don't fall apart.

There was some discussion among the Commissioners as to how the windows might be distributed in order to be more welcoming and pleasing to the eye.

Commissioner Miglus asked about the trim, siding and roofing materials. He was told that it would all match the style of the existing house.

There was some question about the side elevation of the plan which showed a bit of house through the back of the porch. It was noted that the front door of the house was actually positioned on a diagonal jog and this was what was showing.

Commissioner Hart asked what the porch would be constructed of and was told that it would be wood.

Ms. Larsen began to talk about erecting a fence to replace the old stockade fence, which was actually missing, dilapidated or non-existent in some areas along 3 sides of the property. She wanted to install a 6' high flat board fence with trellis top. She also mentioned that she had gone before ZBA last night and would probably have to return because she had been turned down for a parking variance. The neighbors do not want her to put parking in the rear of the property and neither does she.

The Commissioner noted that there was no mention of a fence on the application and so neighbors had not been notified.

Ms. Kathleen Ahern 15 Hartford Avenue stepped forward and said that this plan was a lot better and more in proportion than the one that had been previously submitted. She went on to say that she had walked around the neighborhood to try to envision how the addition would look and she agreed that windows on the northern side would be more welcoming but in trying to imagine the roofline projecting out into the street 690 sq. ft. may not sound like much, however you don't see it from the renderings and it would take up all of the front property and would be quite

an extension. In continuing her walk she didn't see any other businesses that had built an addition out in front and although she admitted that she didn't know all the history it bothered her that they could be setting the precedent that one could take an old historic home and build an extension onto the front and thereby change the front of it. It had been her assumption that this Commission was in place to protect the integrity of the buildings as well as the atmosphere of the District and that this addition would certainly deface the property no matter how much they tried to match it. She also wanted to say formally that she objected to the rear parking area. Additionally she wanted to comment on the fence which would be about 25 steps from her house; she thought 6' was rather high and it looked like the type of fence one would see around a condo pool in East Hartford rather than Wethersfield. She also mentioned that there was a very old pine tree that didn't see drawn onto the plan and although she realized that trees were allowed to be cut down, she thought part of the nature of their town was the old trees. Her last comment about the plan concerned the outdoor seating. She said that she had frequented the other ice cream shop on Main Street and had enjoyed it, but noted that there had been blankets spread all over the ground to accommodate additional sitters. She worried that this might be the practice at the new shop as well.

Commissioner Ovian asked if Ms. Ahern had attended the meeting last night and was told that she had. He said that many of the issues that had been brought up here were not necessarily under the Commission's purview, but he hoped that these concerns had been raised publicly at last night's meeting.

Ms. Shirley Alderman 265-267 Main Street stepped forward and voiced many concerns as to how this proposed plan would effect her property in particular the south side. She was concerned that because her own property was only 48' wide, a high fence on either side of her would make her property look like it was contained within a tunnel. She also was concerned that the State would insist upon a handicap ramp which would have to be located on the south side of the property. She said that out of respect to her neighbors she does not rent her property out to retail or any tenant who would be there on weekends.

Commissioner Ovian asked where her home was in relation to the addition in order to minimize any shielding of the Alderson property by the new building or the fence. Ms. Larsen explained that the fence would begin at the end of the house and not be in the front at all.

Mr. Cook said that he was concerned that no public notice had been served about the fence.

Commissioner Ovian explained that the front of the new building would come out as far as her own building did in front.

Ms. Alderman showed a photograph of the way her property had looked when they had first purchased it and then another photograph which showed the way they had improved it. The improvements she explained had won the Village Improvement Award. The addition they are proposing here tonight would greatly change the look of Main Street.

Mr. Cook noted that when the plans had been reviewed he believed the property to be at grade and so no handicap ramp would be necessary.

Commissioner Logan asked about handicap parking.

It was noted that the Commission does not regulate parking lots but only how they will look.

Ms. Alderman noted that the porch would be facing right into her living room.

Chairperson Logan said that those concerns would have to be discussed at the zoning meeting but the Historic District Commissioners could not talk about that.

Ms. Alderman said that while they had said that there would be no change to the front of the house, she pointed out that it would be different because it was shorter. She thought it should be a 2 story addition to match the existing house and keep it looking like a historic house.

Commissioner Ovian asked theoretically if an addition should be made to replicate a longer Federal style building or should it be made to look like an obvious addition?

Ms. Alderman said that when they had designed their addition they had made the second building higher than the first in order to give a segway to the taller Comstock Ferry buildings next door.

Mr. Cook explained that he was available to discuss any further questions that Ms. Alderman might have and handed her his card.

Ms. Lisa Craig 25 Belmont Street stepped forward to say that she liked what the applicants were trying to do to Old Wethersfield, that more business was a positive thing.

There being no one else who wished to speak in favor or against this application, this portion of the hearing was declared closed.

**APPLICATION NO. 3171-04.** Randall & Lisa Craig seeking to construct an addition to the rear of the house at 25 Belmont Street.

Mr. Randall Craig 25 Belmont Street appeared before the Commission to propose building a 12' X 20' addition to the back of his home. A dilapidated 6' X 8' entry porch would be removed and the new addition would replace it. It would be a single story and they would keep the same roofline as the front porch, there would be one continuous outside wall.

Commissioner Ovian asked how they would deal with the integration of the siding. Mr. Craig answered that the siding would be staggered to look seamless; the return on the roofline would remain.

Commissioner Miglus asked if there would be an overhang, and suggested that the Commission might need better drawings.

There was a general discussion with the applicant as to how the roof return and trim might be treated to reflect the front porch return and trim.

Mr. Cook said that he had visited the property with the Building Inspector and that not much could be seen from the public view. In addition he said that the applicant is very amenable to suggestions or changes and thought that this would be a good opportunity for direction.

Commissioner Miglus pointed out on a photograph of the home that the pool could be seen in the back yard from the front/side view; a 12' addition could certainly be seen from the driveway side and so a sensitive treatment of that side was important.

Commissioner Miglus pointed out that the addition would be built on piers and wondered how they had planned to finish the open area underneath. He said that the project they were proposing would read as a solid house not just a porch, because of that if they were to just box it in with lattice it would be awkward. He suggested nailing up a board and parging it with stucco to appear like a solid foundation without the expense of digging a full foundation. Mr. Craig said that he was agreeable to that idea.

Commissioner Miglus mentioned that the doors and windows would not be visible except to their rear neighbors. But he asked what they would be putting in from the door to the ground. Mr. Craig answered that they would be building wooden stairs.

It was suggested that the applicant check with the Building Department because they might require a landing, depending upon the height of the stairs. Railings would probably also be required, and it was suggested that they take style cues from the front porch for them.

The Craigs said that the front railings were metal. Commissioner Miglus said that the style of their home would merit a

somewhat beefy style of wooden railings.

Chairperson Logan told the applicant that there was a selection of pre-approved roofing colors and if they chose one of those for the roof shingles then they would not need to return here.

There being no one else who wished to speak in favor or against this application, this portion of the hearing was declared closed.

**APPLICATION NO. 3151-03.** Chris & Kathie Monroe-351 Hartford Avenue seeking amendment to the approved Certificate of Appropriateness - installation of a three-tab roof instead of the approved "rubber roof".

Contractor Tim Gothers appeared before the Commission to request permission to use three-tab roofing shingles instead of the rubber membrane that had been previously approved for the back porch area of the home at 351 Hartford Avenue he was working on. There was currently a red color three-tab shingle in some places but now the colors would be uniform and on the addition where the pitch does not allow there will still be rubber membrane but it would match the rest of the house, so that some of the old and some of the new roof would have the three-tab roofing.

There being no one else who wished to speak in favor or against this application, this portion of the hearing was declared closed.

There being no other business to come before the Commission, the public hearing was declared closed.

**WETHERSFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
PUBLIC MEETING  
FEBRUARY 24, 2004**

**APPLICATION NO. 3170-04.** Paula Larsen seeking to construct an addition to the front of the house at 271 Main Street

Upon motion by Commissioner Miglus seconded by Commissioner Ovian and a poll of the Commission it was voted to TABLE the subject application in order to schedule a site visit.

**INFORMAL DISCUSSION**

Commissioner Miglus felt that the door that had been proposed did not match the style of the home. He also was unclear as to whether or not the windows from the home would be reused but he wanted to see every effort made to reuse them.

The Commission then engaged in a discussion as to what window and door configuration would create the best appearance. It was then decided that it was not their place to design the addition for the applicant. In addition there had been no public notice served for the fence and they needed that done before it could be decided upon and there had been no discussion of the sign located on the front of the building.

Commissioner Logan said that she would prefer that the addition remain a single story building, because it practically matched the height of the building next door. She said that she was very concerned about the view and feeling from the street.

The Commission decided that a site visit would be necessary in order to get a better feeling for how the addition would work at the site. They set up a date for the visit and requested that the area of the addition and the proposed fence be staked out.

Aye: Miglus, Ovian, Logan, Wolf, Garrey

Abst: Courchaine, Hart

**APPLICATION NO. 3171-04.** Randall & Lisa Craig seeking to construct an addition to the rear of the house at 25 Belmont Street.

Upon motion by Commissioner Miglus, seconded by Commissioner Garrey and a poll of the Commission it was unanimously voted to APPROVE subject application with the following stipulations:

1. The trim and overhangs shall match the details on the front porch.
2. The foundation shall be parged with stucco.

Commissioner Miglus felt that this was a very thoughtful addition to the existing house.

**APPLICATION NO. 3166-04.** Bobbi Molchan & Wayne Holcombe seeking to install a vinyl fence at 164 Hartford Avenue.

Clerk Wolf read a letter from the applicants dated February 24, 2004, which asked that their application to install a vinyl fence be Tabled until the following meeting. In addition they expressed their dissatisfaction and regret in the Commission's apparent lack of support for the vinyl fence they had proposed. They were in the process of considering alternative products but not a wood fence due to the upkeep, expense and variability. They now plan to keep much of what they already have and add to areas where it is lacking. They may use vinyl fence in areas where it can not be seen as it is removed from the approval process and while they do not like the appearance of chain link it meets the requirements of low maintenance and was apparently approved years ago by the Commission. They thanked the Commission for their attention to this matter and added that it was certainly a challenge to improve property in the District.

**APPLICATION NO. 3151-03.** Chris & Kathie Monroe-351 Hartford Avenue seeking amendment to the approved Certificate of Appropriateness - installation of a three-tab roof instead of the approved "rubber roof".

Upon motion by Commission Garrey, seconded by Commissioner Ovia and a poll of the Commission it was voted to APPROVE the amendment to the Certificate of Appropriateness.

Commissioner Ovia said that what was proposed would be more consistent with what is existing.

Aye: Garrey, Ovia, Miglus, Logan, Wolf

Abst: Courchaine, Hart

#### **APPROVAL OF [MINUTES OF: February 10, 2004](#)**

Upon Motion by Commissioner Ovia, seconded by Commissioner Garrey, and a poll of the Commission, it was voted that the above minutes BE APPROVED as submitted.

Aye: Courchaine, Garrey Ovia, Miglus, Hart

Abst: Logan , Wolf

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

The Commissioners discussed the problem that had occurred at Marsh Street with the extremely insensitive installation of an 8 meter electrical meter box onto the side of a prominent historical home.

Commissioner Ovia said that if a special request was made of the utility company then they would try to accommodate it but he was adamant that if they could regulate anything then they must regulate this.

Commissioner Miglus cited the Commission regulations which stated that exterior utilities were under their purview.

Commissioner Ovia said that they must be made to file an application. Mr. Cook agreed to follow up on it.

Former Chairperson for the Historic District Commission Clare Meade paid a call and discussed the results of the Historic District Survey with the Commissioners.

Commissioner Hart asked what the statute of limitations for jobs done but which had not come in for the Certificate of Appropriateness was. There was general discussion and examples were given of current projects.

Mr. Cook mentioned that the homeowner at 323 Garden Street had still not submitted an application for the vinyl windows they had installed. He was requested to send the homeowner a letter on official letterhead indicating that a mechanical lien would be placed on their property if they did not comply.

Commissioner Logan noted that the home at 14 Wilcox Street had been receiving a lot of improvements and although the home looked considerably better than it had, there had been no applications for the work done.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Jennifer Wolf  
Clerk