

***Heritage Commission
Special Meeting
August 21, 2006***

The Heritage Commission held a special meeting in the City Council Chambers at 37 Green Street, Concord, NH on Monday, August 21, 2006 at 4:30 pm.

Present at the meeting were James McConaha, Chairperson; Philip Donovan, Vice-Chairperson; Carol Durgy Brooks, Frederick Richards and alternate members Elizabeth Durfee Hengen and Stephen Shurtleff. City Planner Douglas Woodward and Administrative Specialist II Denise Taschereau were also present.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson McConaha at 4:40 pm.

1. Chairperson McConaha opened the meeting by stating that the purpose of this special meeting was to hold a public hearing on the application by the NH Political Library to construct a stair tower on the west side of the existing barn at the Franklin Pierce Manse at 14 Horseshoe Pond Lane as well as modification of the south façade of the barn connector to include a new public entrance, and permanent suspension of the use of the existing southwest door on the Manse. This meeting will be recorded in order to assist with creation of the minutes if needed. Notices were sent to all residents of the Historic District.

Chairperson McConaha next described the purpose of the Historic District and the role of the Heritage Commission. He stated that the decision of the commission would be forwarded to the Planning Board. Chairperson McConaha asked the members if anyone felt that their participation in this application was a conflict of interest. No member indicated a conflict. Chairperson McConaha stated that the public hearing would start with a presentation from the applicant, questions and comments from the public, and deliberation.

Ms. Hengen asked if the alternate members would be seated as voting members for this meeting. Chairperson McConaha responded that they would and proceeded to seat Ms. Hengen and Mr. Shurtleff for this meeting.

Christopher Carley, architect and agent for the applicant, presented the project. He gave the history of the Franklin Pierce Manse and the attached barn. He stated that the purpose of this expansion is to be able to use the space in the barn, which is presently not used. The project would consist of the installation of stairs on the west end, raising the roof level of the connector, establishing a new public entrance on the south side, parking modifications, paved handicap parking area, replacement of windows, capping of chimneys, and the installation of wood and glass doors in new entrance. The back door will stay but will permanently closed with the area landscaped. Mr. Carley commented that adding the stairway to the inside of the barn would take up too much space, defeating the purpose of getting more space. He also said that because of various regulations, the stairway could not be added to any other location.

Chairperson McConaha asked if Mr. Carley was the only presenter. Mr. Carley answered that yes, he was the only presenter for the applicant.

Ms. Brooks asked where the stairs were located on the floor plan. She also asked why there were so few windows in the proposed stairway addition and commented that they were not in alignment with the others. Mr. Carley responded to the location of the stairs and explained that because of the stairs, more windows would appear in an irregular pattern on the inside.

Ms. Brooks asked if they could build it so it appears to be windows on the outside, but not showing on the inside. Mr. Carley responded that it could be done, but he would prefer not to.

Mr. Richards asked how the Commission was going to reach a consensus. Chairperson McConaha responded that all questions would be answered, any additional information would be provided, and the Committee would deliberate.

Ms. Hengen asked about the configuration of the window panes. She indicated that there seems to be different styles used on the plans. Mr. Carley responded that it was an oversight that will be corrected.

There was some discussion about between Mr. Carley and Ms. Hengen regarding the door that will be permanently closed. The discussion was regarding the appearance and the materials.

Mr. Carley described the new entrance area. There will two sets of doors. When the building is open to the public, wooden doors will slide open, covering the square windows, and revealing glass doors. When the building is closed, the wooden doors would be closed over the glass doors, revealing the windows. These windows will allow natural light to enter the entranceway.

Ms. Hengen asked if the raising of the roof would change the footprint. Mr. Carley responded that it would not.

There was extensive discussion between Ms. Hengen and Mr. Carley regarding the roofline changes and what it will look like. Mr. Carley acknowledged that the plans seem to show an error in the way the rooflines will line up.

Mr. Richards asked about the removal of the granite step at the southwest door. Mr. Carley responded that the granite step will not be removed.

Mr. Shurtleff asked if the stairway building could be shaped like a silo. Mr. Carley responded that the purpose of the building is to accommodate stairs. The shape of a silo would draw attention to the addition. The applicant is trying not to be aggressive. They looked at different shapes, and they have decided to stick with the basics.

Mr. Donovan asked if the stairs in the addition will be used everyday. Mr. Carley responded yes.

Chairperson McConaha asked about the access to the barn from the house. Mr. Carley responded that once the barn space is utilized, groups of visitors will be able to move freely between the two sections.

Chairperson McConaha asked about the current headroom of the current stairs and the proposed headroom of the proposed stairs. Mr. Carley responded that the current headroom is 6 ½ feet and the proposed is 7 ½ feet.

Chairperson McConaha asked if the railings on the new entryway will be custom built. Mr. Carley responded that they will be custom built, with simple pickets to meet code requirements.

Ms. Brooks asked if the doorways will be handicapped accessible. Mr. Carley responded that the new barn entrance will be handicapped accessible. If someone is unable to walk up the stairs, like someone in a wheelchair, they will only be able to access the first floor.

Mr. Richards asked if the new windows will be true divided light windows. Mr. Carley responded that they will probably not be.

There was some discussion between Chairperson McConaha and Mr. Carley regarding the investigating of an alternate location for the stairs. Mr. Carley stated that the location of the property line and the location of the Shoreland Protection District along Horseshoe Pond made it difficult to locate the stairs elsewhere.

Chairperson McConaha asked if a circular stairway was looked into. Mr. Carley responded that a circular stairway would not meet code requirements.

Ms. Brooks and Mr. Carley had some discussion regarding the size of the stair landings, and the relocation of the windows.

The Committee had no further questions for Mr. Carley. Chairperson McConaha then asked for comments from the public.

Mr. Eric Steinhauser of 11 Horseshoe Pond Lane addressed the Committee. He is opposed to the entire project. He is very concerned about the future use, and has heard that this is just one of many phases of changes proposed for the site. He said that the inconsistencies need to be addressed and corrected. He needed to provide specific information regarding the materials for his project when he applied to the Committee. That should be the same for all applicants. He stated that the applicant has obtained 10 variances in the past. He feels that the applicant should pursue other variances. He has also heard that an elevator has been proposed. Mr. Sturtleff asked Mr. Steinhauser about the phases. Mr. Steinhauser responded that the applicant has zoning approval for a visitor's center.

Ms. Sherri Morrill of 278 North Main Street addressed the Committee. She stated that she lives in the historic district with historic homes. She stated that her home is considered a gothic style cottage. She's sure that she would not be allowed to change her roof if she wanted to. She remembers when she bought the house, the realtor gave her 5 – 6 pages of regulations for living

in the district. She feels the additions don't fit and that it will change the neighborhood. It will have no economic benefit to the district. She also has parking concerns. She feels that it's the Committee's job to protect the neighborhood. Ms. Hengen asked if she could get a copy of the regulations she got from the realtor. Ms. Morrill was not sure where they were, but would locate them and forward her a copy.

Mr. Les Sherman of 221 North Main Street addressed the Committee. When houses were built years ago, windows were placed for use inside the house, not for looks outside. He feels the applicant should obtain a variance to build on the other side of the barn. The Historical District is maintained by the residents. This project is a violation of the district. This addition will be the first thing you will see and it has no historical value. Mr. Sherman presented the Committee with a letter from a neighbor who could not attend the meeting.

Chairperson McConaha read the letter submitted by Mr. Sherman.

“To Whom It May Concern:

We object to the NH Political Library's intent to construct a stair tower on the west side of the existing barn at the Franklin Pierce Manse at 14 Horseshoe Pond Lane, as well as modification of the south façade of the barn connector to include a new public entrance and permanent suspension of the use of the existing southwest door on the Manse.

We feel it will adversely effect the character and intent of the Historic District and will negatively impact our neighborhood. The City of Concord is paying close attention to requirements and regulation of the Historic District in the upgrading and renovations of the sidewalks.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Sincerely,

Anne. E. Field
Walter R. Field

274 ½ North Main Street
Concord NH 03301
603 224 5807”

Mr. Carley addressed the Committee and the public to answer the questions raised. He stated that it would be very unlikely to obtain other variances. The applicant has had long discussions with Code Enforcement regarding this project. The inconsistencies that have been identified will be corrected. Material choices will be submitted to the Committee for review and approval.

Mr. Richards asked Mr. Carley about the elevator. Mr. Carley replied that there is no elevator in the plan. It would be a possibility in possible future development.

Chairperson McConaha asked if the applicant considered an elevator instead of stairs. It would take up less space and could be put in a better location. Mr. Carley responded that regulations do not allow an elevator to be to only means of egress.

Chairperson McConaha asked if they could have an elevator and the existing stairs. If the current stairs do not meet Code Requirements, request a variance.

Mr. Donovan asked if there were stairs going to the second floor of the barn. Mr. Carley responded that there are. They are very steep and have little headroom.

Chairperson McConaha and Mr. Carley had some discussion regarding parking and open space.

Mr. Charlie Clough from 18 Horseshoe Pond Lane asked if the NH Political Library owns any land or building. Mr. Chaney responded that the Pierce Brigade and the NH Political Library have a formal affiliation. The Pierce Brigade is the legal owner of the Pierce Manse.

Mr. Clough asked if the Pierce Brigade was not involved in the application. Mr. Chaney responded that they were, because they have a joint board with the NH Political Library.

Chairperson McConaha asked if anyone else had any comments. No one responded so the public hearing was closed. Mr. Sherman then asked to make another statement. Chairperson McConaha allowed Mr. Sherman to speak.

Mr. Sherman stated that the Committee can say no to the request, and that the applicant should seek a variance.

Chairperson McConaha asked that City Planner Douglas Woodward speak regarding the application. Mr. Woodward stated that there are several applications for this project with the City. The Zoning Board has granted variances, there is a Site Plan application before the Planning Board, and the Heritage Commission has authority over changes in the Historic District.

Chairperson McConaha closed the public hearing. It was agreed to take a five minute break.

After the break, Chairperson McConaha reconvened the meeting.

Ms. Brooks opened discussion by stating that there was a lot of information presented tonight. She requested that the applicant provide revised plans that will show the corrections to the inconsistencies. She also requested that discussion be tabled until the Committee's next regularly scheduled meeting.

Chairperson McConaha asked if that was a motion. Ms. Brooks responded that yes, it was. The motion was seconded by Mr. Shurtleff.

Ms. Hengen stated that the Committee needs to be shown how the roof pitch will look in order to make a decision.

Chairperson McConaha added that the Committee needs specific information regarding the features on the outside of the building. He requested that this information be available at the next meeting.

Chairperson McConaha asked for discussion on the motion.

Mr. Richards responded that from what he can see, the neighborhood residents would like to see no change, or that the stairs be located in a different location. Mr. Carley believes that the applicant would not be granted a variance to locate the stairs in a different location. Mr. Richards feels that the variance option was not fully explored. He would like it looked into further.

Chairperson McConaha stated that the responsibility of the Committee is to evaluate the proposal to see if it meets the criteria. If it does, it should be approved. If it doesn't, it should be denied. The change of design is the responsibility of the applicant, not this Committee. Only those people present at tonight's meeting should be at the next meeting.

Mr. Richards stated that he thinks that it should not be tabled.

Chairperson McConaha asked for a vote. Four members voted in favor to table the item. These four members were Mr. Donovan, Ms. Brooks, Ms. Hengen, and Mr. Shurtleff. Mr. Richards voted against the item being tabled.

Chairperson McConaha requested that the applicant provide plans that correctly show the elevations.

Ms. Hengen requested plans showing the south elevation from the public viewpoint.

Mr. Carley reviewed the requests from the Committee members so that he will be sure to get the information that the Committee is asking for.

Committee Members also asked that the applicant bring in the specs for the windows and brick pavers. Mr. Carley responded that he will try.

Ms. Brooks made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Richards seconded the motion.

A unanimous decision was made to adjourn at 6:40 pm.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST:

Denise Taschereau
Administrative Specialist II
Community Development Department