

STRATHAM HERITAGE COMMISSION
Minutes of Meeting, May 17, 2018
Old Town Hall
151 Portsmouth Ave.

Present: David Canada, Nathan Merrill, Rebecca Mitchell, Members;
Jennifer Goodman, Beverly Thomas, New Hampshire Preservation Alliance;
Mark Perlowski, Kyle Perlowski, Persimmon Homes.

Convened: 11:35 AM

Chairman Canada opened the meeting and turned the floor over to Mr. Merrill.

Mr. Merrill said that the purpose of the meeting was to bring together the three parties involved in the rehabilitation of the Old Town Hall, hopefully to be protected with a preservation easement. He said that the goal of the meeting is to clarify the possible terms of the easement. The group agreed to start with a walk around the exterior.

Mr. Perlowski began by discussing the various options he is considering for the treatment of the foundation. Also discussed were various siding options and options for replacing the decorative trim work on the exterior. At the rear of the building he said that the present rear addition has a water infiltration problem. He plans to remove the addition, excavate, and pour a new foundation. He proposes a new shed-roofed addition with the ground floor providing a 4-car garage. This would require the addition to extend six feet beyond the Old Town Hall original footprint at the southwest corner of the building. The upper level of the addition would provide bathrooms and outside deck space for the two main floor apartments. Secondary access to those apartments would be from an outside staircase on each side or from a single staircase leading to a common deck area. He said that secondary access using the rear of the addition would not be possible with four garage bays.

12 PM: all attendees moved inside for a brief walk through all three levels of the building. In the lower ground level area there was a discussion of the pros and cons of exposing the brick inner foundation walls and the need for insulation.

The meeting continued with all attendees seated in the main meeting hall area. Ms. Goodman began with an explanation of the Preservation Alliance's state-wide role and its record of involvement and experience with helping communities preserve landmark properties. In these efforts the starting point is identifying the important features of the building fabric.

Mr. Perlowski said that given the needs for new systems and conversion to apartments, he plans to take the interior "down to the studs." He plans to remove the interior window trim and replace with exact replicas. He plans to remove and replace the original windows with units that are white PVC on the exterior with artificial muntins on the outside of the glass.

Ms. Goodman said that the Preservation Alliance ordinarily approves projects that replace original building elements using like materials. In such projects once key elements are identified the goal is to retain as much of the original materials as possible.

Mr. Perlowski reviewed his preference for using vinyl siding, but the Town Center code prohibits the use of vinyl siding. He argued that putting cedar siding back on the building is not a viable option for him. He argued that using Hardie board is preferable to cedar.

Ms. Goodman questioned how that would interact with other elements of the building such as the foundation and the windows where loss of profile can be a problem.

Mr. Perlowski stated that with his process the windows would be rebuilt so there would be no loss of profile. He claimed that nobody uses pine and that he can find a Fypon replica to approximate the appearance of the current exterior trim. He described it as a foam-like material with a hard shell. He further stated that the soffit needs to be removed and rebuilt.

Ms. Goodman stated that original windows can be rehabilitated to a satisfactory R value. Loss and replacement of original building elements could be problematic for the Preservation Alliance Easement Committee.

Mr. Perlowski asserted that with the replacement materials he proposes he can make the building elements look very similar to the original, and would "give you that historical look." He further asserted that the majority of people driving by would not detect any difference.

When asked, Mr. Perlowski said that he plans to apply for RSA 79E tax relief. Mr. Canada asked what is the criteria for the extension of relief under RSA 79E, and what is “the killer” for the Preservation Alliance.

Ms. Goodman said that the Preservation Alliance understands the financial needs of project developers and is not opposed to the use of new material when it makes sense. In this instance it would be important to get figures for all the elements.

Ms. Thomas read from Section 79-E: 5 that the duration of tax relief may be extended for 4 years for substantial rehabilitation conducted according to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.

Mr. Canada said that after informal discussions with the Town Assessor, using hypothetical assumptions, the assessment for the rehabilitated building would possibly be in the range of \$600,000 - \$700,000. That being likely, RSA 79-E yields significant savings.

Ms. Goodman asked Mr. Perlowski what his schedule is.

Mr. Perlowski said that he would like to have some agreement at the end of 30 days.

Ms. Thomas said that the NHPA Easement Committee would want to know about the plans for the other buildings and the overall site plan. Ms. Mitchell said she would get those from the Planning Office and forward them.

At approximately 12:45 Ms. Goodman, Ms. Thomas, and the Perlowskis left the meeting. The meeting continued with Mr. Canada, Mr. Merrill, and Ms. Mitchell present.

The group was in agreement that the brick foundation must remain and be visible. With other elements of the building, replacements are likely.

Mr. Merrill suggested that the garage addition be reduced to provide parking for 2 cars, with an entrance door and stairs to the upper level in the center.

Ms. Mitchell said that would keep the addition subservient to the original building and would eliminate the need for exterior stairs that would be difficult to keep clear and accessible in snowy weather.

The group agreed that a special meeting of the commission should be held as soon as possible, and Wednesday, May 23, at 7PM was settled upon.

The meeting adjourned at 1:05 PM