

**WETHERSFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
PUBLIC HEARING  
NOVEMBER 11, 2003**

The Wethersfield Historic District Commission held a public meeting on November 11, 2003 at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Conference Room of the Town Hall, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, Connecticut.

Members present:

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

Members absent:

John Toomey

Also Present:

Robert Cook, Wethersfield Historic District Coordinator

Commissioner Miglus called the hearing to order at 7:30 pm as Vice Chairperson Ovian was detained and Clerk Wolf, read the Legal Notice as it appeared in the Hartford Courant on October 31, 2003.

Vice Chairman Ovian arrived at this time.

**APPLICATION NO. 3154- 03.** Town of Wethersfield seeking to convert landscape island to four parking spaces at 100 Marsh Street.

Mr. Robert Cook representing the applicant appeared before the Commission to explain that the Physical Services building is being renovated to become the new home of the Maintenance Personnel for the Board of Education. There is an existing parking lot across the street but it was decided that there would be a need for visitor parking adjacent to the building to eliminate potential safety hazards associated with crossing traffic. He explained that the Town is proposing 4 parking spaces on the side of the building where a grass area is located. There are access roads and a sidewalk on both sides already and it would just be a matter of removing the grass and replacing it with 4 parking spaces.

Commissioner Ovian said that he had had occasion to visit the building and at that time had to cross snow islands during the winter; he thought it would be convenient to have parking besides the building.

Commissioner Miglus asked if these spaces would be labeled for visitors only or occupied by employees. Mr. Cook said that they were intended for visitors. Chairperson Ovian said that they could certainly stipulate the signage. But pointed out that the new public parking signs in front of the Keeney Center which the Commission had reviewed and given input into were larger but the lettering had not been enlarged along with the board size and the hoped for effect of greater visibility was lost.

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

**APPLICATION NO. 3155-03.** Elizabeth Slemmer seeking to replace four basement windows at 16 Howard Avenue.

Ms. Elizabeth Slemmer 16 Howard Avenue appeared before the Commission and submitted photographs of her home showing views of the 4 basement windows which she was proposing to replace with vinyl hopper windows. She told

the Commission that the 2 windows on the driveway side are the only ones that can be seen. The upstairs windows in the home had been replaced with vinyl windows by the previous owners. She explained that the drafty wooden basement windows were currently covered with plastic to keep the wind and elements out.

Commissioner Ovian said that although the Commission does not regulate the interior of homes he was curious to know if the basement was occupied. Ms. Slemmer answered that it is partially finished, with a family room and a bathroom, and that one of the main reasons they need to replace the windows is because the refrigerator hose had leaked into the basement causing water damage. They could not repair the walls and ceiling until the window was set.

Commissioner Ovian asked if she had brought any pictures that would show the front of the house and its windows. Ms. Slemmer replied that she had not since there were no basement windows in the front of the house but that it had a large bay window. Commissioner Logan commented that it was most definitely a vinyl window.

Commissioner Miglus asked what color the windows would be. Ms. Slemmer answered that she wanted white to match the other windows.

Commissioner Logan asked if the applicant had considered tan instead of white to help it blend in better. Ms. Slemmer pointed out that the foundation is painted grey and that they hadn't thought about tan because they had thought white would match the other windows.

Commissioner Miglus explained that since these are secondary windows the tan was suggested as a way to mute the bright white of vinyl windows so as not to call additional attention to them.

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. 3139-03.** Paula & Klaus Larsen seeking to construct an addition at 271 Main Street.

Mr. Cook pointed out that the Commission must act tonight on this application because it was the last date to do so. He also wanted to say that he had been getting regular phone calls from the public asking to review the plans for this application prior to the meeting. However the plans did not arrive until late this afternoon and there had been no opportunity for them or even him to view them.

Mr. Klaus Larsen 271 Main Street stepped forward and apologized to everyone for taking so long to get the plans to them, he sighted difficulties with employee illnesses. That said, he presented renderings of the proposed plans which showed the existing house and the existing detached garage which he said was not quite falling over but needed a great deal of work to get it working.

Mr. Cook asked if he could view a duplicate copy of the plans and Chairman Ovian suggested that he share them with the public as Mr. Klaus gave his presentation. In this way everyone concerned was allowed access to the plans.

Mr. Klaus said that he proposed to knock down the existing garage and build another garage which would be attached to the house. The new garage would be 24' wide with 4 car bays, 3 dog house dormers on both the south and north sides on top, with a clapboard face, clipped corners around the doors, and a simple gable design which would have a steeper pitch than the main house. The new garage would be reoriented to face south instead of the current, east/street facing garage and he would replace the gravel drive with pavers that would continue up the walkway to his front door. Phase 2 of the plan, which he wished to be voted on tonight as well, called for the construction of an 80' long sunroom to be built beyond the garage continuing the almost unbroken face of house and garage. The sunroom would not be connected to the main house, but accessed through the garage. Mr. Larsen said that he did not call it a greenhouse because it did not have the overhead windows of a traditional green house and it would be heated. The side walls would be solid walls of glass made up by a series of 8' high sliding glass doors. The length of the sunroom was approximately the same length of the combined lengths of the house and the garage.

Mr. Cook said that Town Staff had quickly viewed the plans and they commented that it would have to go before Planning and Zoning for a variance, because the buildings are too big for the lot.

Commissioner Ovian asked if the face of the garage came out as far as the south wall of the house. When it was inspected it was found to come out farther than the house and Commissioner Ovian pointed out that the drawing was not to scale since the house appeared to be longer than the garage but was actually the other way around.

Mr. Cook asked if the proposed construction would be used for his business. Mr. Larsen said that it would not be.

Commissioner Ovian pointed out that the application said that it would be used for business and the applicant could correct that today if he wished to. He also added that whether or not it is to be used as a business is not the chief governing factor of what the Commission does, however Mr. Cook needs to make sure the application reflects the actual proposal. Mr. Larsen repeated that it would not be used for his business.

Commissioner Ovian asked if the sunroom stepped back from the garage and was told that it would. He asked if the siding and roofing would match the house. He was told that the siding would match but he would be redoing his roof and the asphalt architectural shingles might be a pre-approved color. The 4 garage doors would be, 4 X 4, 16 panel wood.

Commissioner Ovian asked about the windows in the doghouse dormers and the sunroom. He was told that they would be wood 6/6 double hung windows. The back of the sunroom would be the same windows as the doghouse windows. The end wall of the sunroom would be clapboard sided with a center glass swing door and a palladium topper. The 80' long wall would be solid glass, made up of 8' sliders with 20 light divisions.

Commissioner Miglus asked who had drawn up the plans. He was told that an employee of Mr. Larsen had drawn up the plans. Commissioner Miglus suggested that the plans he submitted to the building department for permits would look substantially different from the plans they were looking at here tonight. He said that an 8' wall of glass in a 12' ceiling would need substantial headers and that the drawings here did not leave room for this. He added that they were not even being shown a cut sheet for the double hung windows.

Commissioner Logan said that she thought the applicant would have to change the application if he did not intend to use it for business. Chairperson Ovian said that while he had that option he did not have to change it. Mr. Larsen preferred not to change it.

Mr. Larsen said that he also wanted to erect a fence on the north and west boundary of his property. The fence would start at the back corner of the main house where the new garage would begin, continue to the back border then turn and run along the back. It would be replacing a fence that was largely falling down he said. He showed a brochure and indicated his preference as a 6' solid panel fence with lattice top.

Ms. Kathleen Ahern 15 Hartford Avenue stepped forward and explained that she was the neighbor on the north and western side and would see most of the new construction and she had several concerns. A section of her property was directly behind the Larsen property and she told the Commission that the drawings shown could not possibly be drawn to scale so that they should not be deceived by the buildings that are drawn on the plot plan. She said that her garden behind the property was 18' wide to give them some idea of the scale. She added that part of the fence that Mr. Larsen proposed to replace was on her property and another section belonged to a different neighbor. She told the Commission that the view from her backyard was of open land with trees, she was worried about how the proposed plans would destroy the view and she was concerned about exterior lighting that would be used for the greenhouse which she felt would not only affect her but the other neighbors as well. Commissioner Ovian said that there were no details shown on the plans that indicated any lighting. She told the Commission that she had lived in her home for 13 years and had spent a lot time, effort and expense in restoring her home to historic specifications. Mr. Cook mentioned that her home had been featured in a restoration magazine. In conclusion she said that she was opposed to this application which would be 3X the size of the existing property, because she felt it was just too big for the property and it would not leave enough green. She believed it would devalue her home and her property and the neighborhood.

Ms. Shirley Alderman, 267 Main Street, stepped forward and explained that she was the abutter to the south. She said that the 4 car garage proposed irked her because when she had tried to get approval for a 2 car garage 9 years ago she had been told that it was too large and was only allowed to construct a 1 1/2 car garage. She said that the entire

Commission had made 2 site visits to her property to make sure it was not too massive for the property and they had ended up redesigning the entire building; the approval process had taken some 7 months. She said that she couldn't see the reason for a 4 car garage unless it was to park the business trucks in. In addition she said that the turn around is currently right up against her property line and she didn't think the proposed plan left room for any turn around at all unless cars were backing up into the garage in order to turn around. She said that she had put her front door on that side at some expense in order to make it look nicer for the neighbors and his new driveway would now be within 8' of her front door!

Ms. Alderman then brought up several questions concerning the zoning of her property and the zoning of the Larsen property. Vice Chairperson Ovian pointed out that the Historic District Commission was concerned solely with the appearance of the property and had no jurisdiction over matters of zoning.

Ms. Alderman said that her home was part of historic Old Wethersfield and mentioned that the man who had invented anesthesia had lived there. She was worried that the Larsen's new proposed driveway would ruin the look of Main Street. She already had problems with snow and ice sliding off the steep pitch of her roof because of the way she had been forced to build her roof and the location of her driveway. She was concerned about lighting also. She was afraid that if big lights were installed in the rear of the Larsen property they would shine into her bedroom.

Commissioner Wolf assured her that there were Town ordinances to control such things.

Commissioner Logan explained that they needed to get Mr. Larsen in before the deadline. They had not seen the plans before tonight and that was why there had been no site visits to the property.

Ms. Alderman said that she was not opposed to all plans for the property she was simply against the size of the proposed plan. She felt it should be smaller.

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  
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NOVEMBER 11, 2003**

**APPLICATION NO. 3154- 03.** Town of Wethersfield seeking to convert landscape island to four parking spaces at 100 Marsh Street.

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

1. The parking spaces shall be identified for "visitors only".

Commissioner Miglus felt that the changes that the Town was asking for would make little or no impact on the district and little physical impact on the facility.

Aye: Logan, Miglus, Wolf, Hart, Garrey

Abst: Ovian

**APPLICATION NO. 3155-03.** Elizabeth Slemmer seeking to replace four basement windows at 16 Howard Avenue.

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

1. The color preference of the window to be determined by the homeowner.

## **INFORMAL DISCUSSION**

The Commissioners discussed the idea as to whether the windows would make less impact if they were a neutral color like tan. Some felt that because the upper windows were already older white vinyl that they might not match the basement windows because they were of a different manufacturer. However it was ultimately considered that between the asphalt of the driveway, the grey color of the painted foundation, and the tan color of the vinyl siding a difference in the shade of white might not be noticed. In addition there was consideration that by stipulating tan windows it might create interior decorating problems for the homeowner.

Aye: Miglus, Logan, Garrey, Wolf, Hart

Abst: Ovian

**APPLICATION NO. 3139-03.** Paula & Klaus Larsen seeking to construct an addition at 271 Main Street.

Upon motion by Commissioner Miglus, seconded by Commissioner Wolf and a poll of the Commission, it was voted that the subject application be DENIED Without Prejudice. The

Reason for Denial being that the Commission did not have advance opportunity to see the plans and view the property.

Aye: Miglus, Garrey, Wolf, Logan, Hart

Abst: Ovian

## **INFORMAL DISCUSSION**

Commissioner Miglus did not feel comfortable approving the application without time to see the plans. He had serious doubts that the buildings could be built as drawn and he felt that if the applicant had time to reconsider a more cohesive and thoughtful plan could be composed. Commissioner Logan had problems with the massing. She thought the proposal was huge for the property. She also was greatly bothered by the prospect of tearing down the garage and losing it entirely. Commissioner Ovian agreed about the size although he was intrigued by certain the separate parts of the project if viewed alone. Although he thought that the sunroom design resembled a chicken coop he thought he would like to see what design would come forward if given the chance. Commissioner Wolf regretted not having the opportunity to see the plan while viewing the property. Commissioner Garrey also had problems with the massing.

## **APPROVAL OF [MINUTES OF: October 28, 2003](#)**

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

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Cook said that the construction company for the Stillman project needed to put up a construction sign. It would be 4' X 4" and would be up for the duration of the project would certainly be longer than the temporary sign limit of 180 days. The Commissioners agreed that although it might be up for a while, it certainly was temporary and they would allow it.

Mr. Cook said that he would bring them information and the final plans when he had them.

Commissioner Miglus suggested that the company might want to hold an informal public hearing to give the neighbors and residents opportunity to comment.

It was decided that they might want to appear informally before the Commission before they formally made an application.

Mr. Cook mentioned that the parking lot at 133 Main Street had gone in even though they had been requested by the building department to stop pending the environmental studies. This began an involved discussion concerning what is allowable for businesses as opposed to residences in regards to parking areas and other physical changes.

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