

SALEM HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MINUTES
October 4, 2023

A meeting of the Salem Historical Commission was held on Wednesday, October 4, 2023 at 6:00PM via **Zoom Virtual Meeting**. Present were: Larry Spang (Chair), Milo Martinez, Mark Meche, Kelly Tyler-Lewis, Rebecca English (arrived late). Staff: Patti Kelleher. Not present: Vijay Joyce.

143 Derby Street—continuation

The applicant requested an approval of revised plans.

Stefano Basso of SV Design was present. Mr. Basso discussed meter locations for the new construction building, specifically those in the fire alarm cabinet. Revised drawings were shown. Gas meters closest to the street were shown, as well as electrical meters closest to the driveway, and a composite panel utility cabinet in the middle. Mr. Basso noted that no sprinkler hookup currently exists. The common electrical house panel and the fire alarm enunciator will be located in the utility cabinet. Because there is no common space in townhouse building, these would be located outside of building in cabinet. Mr. Martinez asked what types of shared electrical service would be included, to which Mr. Basso noted lighting. Chair Spang noted that a side view and elevation were being shown. Mr. Basso stated that these devices would be on south side of building visible from Daniels Street. The utility cabinet would likely be PVC material, with a shingle roof. Mr. Basso noted that gas meter hookups would be run under slab. Chair Spang clarified that this was the final item to resolve on this project, which Mr. Basso affirmed.

Mr. Martinez questioned if the added units would be painted with white trim to match, which Mr. Basso affirmed, adding gray for clapboard siding.

Mr. Meche asked for clarification on what would be in the middle panel, to which Mr. Basso identified fire panel and common house electrical panel. Mr. Meche called attention to “size TBD” on the drawing for the utility cabinet, which needs to be made clear in a motion (i.e. no larger than a size to be determined). Mr. Meche and Chair Spang also noted that any conduit should be hidden in the wall since it does not show on the drawing. Mr. Basso noted that hookups would likely be coming from underground and stubbing up from the bottom; and clarified no runs are going up and across the building. Chair Spang reiterated that everything should be painted to blend into the wall. Mr. Basso noted that the likely size for utility cabinet would be 6’ wide by 5’ tall.

No public comment.

VOTE: Mr. Meche motioned to approve changes as submitted with additional criteria that gas meters’ load side distribution will be hidden; the composite panel utility cabinet as shown should be as small as is practical (6’ by 5’ + 5%; or else the applicant must resubmit for review); and electrical panels’ load side distribution to be hidden in walls, including to the house panel. Ms. Tyler-Lewis seconded the motion.
Roll Call: Martinez, Tyler-Lewis, Meche, Spang were in favor and the motion so carried.

1 Pickering Street—continuation

Joseph Locke requested to amend C of NA to a Certificate of Hardship to alter perimeter walls.

Joseph Locke was present on the call. Chair Spang noted that a miscommunication had occurred on previous Saturday for a planned site visit. Chair Spang noted having taken photographs of the property. Chair Spang noted that applicant would generally like to replace existing wall with fence, and questioned whether alterations could be approved incrementally. Chair Spang confirmed that the wall was failing in a number of locations. Photographs showed extensive areas where wall had failed and been removed. Another section of wall was shown and said to be in rough shape, particularly at the corner. Chair Spang surmised that a past repair had been attempted on top of wall, whereupon wood and concrete caps had been placed atop the top. These repairs were said to have not helped the wall's long-term viability. Broad Street side of wall was also shown to be failing. Chair Spang said that a piece of wall on Warren Street (admittedly a short piece of wall) was "okay." Chair Spang also showed area of wall that has been replaced with wood fence. Mr. Locke noted that sections of the wall that divides this house and neighboring property are "peeling off" and failing.

Chair Spang noted that without braces or vertical ties, the wall as a whole is not likely to be salvageable.

Chair Spang questioned whether pieces of wall could be kept; could or should segments be kept; whereas others that are failing or have failed should be removed. The other question raised was whether to separate two decisions on keeping and removing parts of walls.

Mr. Locke added that a large vertical crack exists on Broad Street interior wall; the wall is "peeling" behind secondary structure on property; and bases of sections of wall are no longer subterranean but up and at an angle (Mr. Locke expressed concern about the wall's foundation). Chair Spang noted that most of Broad Street and Pickering side should get taken down, though sections further down Broad were a little stronger if the Commission wanted to make a consideration to phase the wall's demolition. Mr. Locke expressed concern for pets on property upon taking segments of walls down.

Mr. Meche apologized for missing the site visit, and expressed the view that brick fence wall would be best for this property. Mr. Meche referred to the state of the property's wall as demolition by neglect. Mr. Meche was not of the opinion that a fence replacement would be as good as this wall likely was at some point. Mr. Meche also lauded the history of the wall and expressed dismay for its current state. Mr. Locke agreed that brick looks "wonderful" but cited financial hardship of spending tens of thousands of dollars on a replacement brick wall. Ms. Tyler-Lewis questioned clarification on what seems salvageable, percentage-wise. Mr. Locke noted that all masons consulted have advised tearing the wall down completely and building back up, with the exception of short section by the oak trees (newer than rest of wall) as well as portions along property line.

Public comment:

Elizabeth Padjen called this a conundrum in noting that a parabolic not stable wall now exists. Ms. Padjen noted that a compromise solution may involve retaining or rebuilding a few sections. Ms. Padjen noted that past application drawings had proposed replacing granite with brick, which would not be appropriate. Ms. Padjen expressed agreement with Mr. Meche's comments in wishing to see something "elegant."

Chair Spang noted that Mr. Locke has proposed removing wall replacing with wooden fence, a specific design to be determined.

Pamela Hartford, Orne Square, noticed that first application mentioned part of the issue was the trees on property. Ms. Hartford conducted a walk around property to look at trees, i.e. ones that are significant/worth saving versus those that are not. Ms. Hartford offered extensive notes on specific trees extant on the property. For instance, saplings and trees left to grow along back of property should be taken down (such as along Broad Street); a white pine and evergreen screens were referenced as not in need of being taken down; the dark yew was said to be a solid tree; yellow wood were identified as rare trees (said to be planted by Harland Kelsey); a wild cherry tree suggested to have been planted by a bird would need to go away if placing a new fence there. Several “volunteer” trees were identified as in need of removal, many of which are invasive Norway maples. Arrangements were made to deliver Ms. Hartford’s comments to the applicant.

Chair Spang asked if Commission members were ready to vote on removal without having a planned design for a replacement. Drawings of Pickering Wall redesign were shown, arranged by preference. Ms. Tyler-Lewis questioned if pickets would extend to the ground and incorporate masonry, to which Mr. Locke noted that the drawings were meant as more of an idea for comment than a concrete plan. Chair Spang noted that the preferred proposal would replace entire brick wall as wood fence (or pickets) without much detail to get full approval (typically). At the street corners of fence are new brick pilasters as well as at the front door entrance corners. The scheme labeled “more brick” was identified as an attempt to keep bookended corners.

Mr. Martinez noted that Mr. Locke already has an approval to build a wall from prior application. Mr. Martinez was in favor of removing the wall in order to replace it. Mr. Martinez noted that more momentum was needed from applicant in order to flesh out design details on fence. Ms. Tyler-Lewis expressed agreement with Mr. Martinez. Mr. Locke noted an estimate of \$250,000 to repair/replace the wall in kind. Mr. Locke was open to keeping the Pickering side to maintain existing aesthetic. Mr. Locke cited 35 Warren as having a stone base with wooden fence atop. Mr. Locke preferred brick base with granite pillars with wood on top for his property. Mr. Meche noted that mitigating the hazardous portions was supportable. Mr. Meche was most desirous of seeing something replace the Harland Kelsey fence in a respectful way.

Chair Spang noted that brick houses and wall types at 35 Warren could be options to consider in consultation with Ms. Kelleher. A Google Street view of 35 Warren was shown, featuring brick wall at corner, followed by wood fence with granite base, and then pieces of brick wall on other end of property before transitioning to brick pillars with low brick fence. Chair Spang questioned how much of this fence was authentic to period (of Colonial Revival) versus re-creations. Ms. Padjen had previously noted that fence/wall likely predates the house, having featured around a garden or nursery. Mr. Meche clarified that the house was built for Harland Kelsey. Ms. Kelleher noted that previous Commission guidelines provided guidance on Colonial Revival-style fences. Ms. Tyler-Lewis noted that 35 Warren and 1 Pickering had similar construction dates – cited period photos at Philips Library known as the Tantine block. Ms. Kelleher noted that a rebuild in kind approval was previously granted via Certificate of Non-Applicability. Ms. Kelleher suggested that the Commission could grant a Certificate of Hardship to remove wall given its condition, with a caveat that the applicant to work with Commission to come up with alternative fence design. Mr. Martinez specified that a date limit should feature on the motion/approval, proposing that a design should be finished by the first Commission meeting of 2024 (nearly three months).

VOTE: Mr. Martinez motioned to approve a Certificate of Hardship to remove wall given its condition, with condition that applicant work with Commission to come up with alternative fence design, to be completed by first January 2024 meeting; and replacement fence installed by October 1, 2024. Ms. Tyler-Lewis seconded the motion. Roll Call: Martinez, Tyler-Lewis, Meche, Spang were in favor and the motion so carried.

149 Federal Street—continuation

Joseph Archambault submitted an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for paint colors and fencing.

Documents & Exhibits:

- Application: 3/20/23
- Slideshow/photographs

Chair Spang noted that resolution on the paint would likely not be attainable until porch issues are resolved.

VOTE: Mr. Martinez motioned to continue application to next meeting. Ms. English seconded the motion. Roll Call: English, Martinez, Tyler-Lewis, Meche, Spang were in favor and the motion so carried.

149 Federal Street—continuation

Joseph Archambault submitted an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for rear entry porch (after the fact).

Documents & Exhibits

- Application: 3/20/23
- Slideshow/photographs

Chair Spang noted that what was built looked different than what had previously been discussed. Joseph and Kathy Archambault were present on the call. Ms. Archambault noted that porch redesign had been submitted in interim between prior hearing and this one. Ms. Kelleher corroborated that a dimensional sketch had been submitted. Chair Spang questioned if the porch was being replaced, to which Ms. Archambault expressed confusion about the photograph of porch being shown. Ms. Archambault noted that diamond lattice would be replaced with square. Ms. Archambault noted that contractor had not built what was intended. Mr. Archambault noted that railing was not required according to Building Department personnel/building code permissions. An annotated markup of the built porch was shown. Ms. Archambault questioned why the railing needs to be moved forward a few inches, to which Chair Spang cited historical appropriateness to the house and the historic district, cited a concern raised previously that the porch as built was far more modern than those typically seen in the neighborhood. Ms. Kelleher's annotations to an image shown made suggestions for modifications to make it more consistent with house style and district. Ms. Archambault noted that a past railing/porch (since torn down) had the same setback. Ms. Archambault noted that the setback was meant to accommodate parking vehicles.

Chair Spang noted concern among Commission members to arrive at a resolution on entry porch before moving forward on fencing.

No public comment.

Mr. Meche expressed concern that the existing porch was “not well done,” reiterating that Mr. Archambault’s drawing is not what features. Mr. Meche noted that it would not be hard to improve. Mr. Meche expressed reluctance to move forward with approval without Mr. Joyce being present, given Mr. Joyce’s past involvement with this porch/planned installation. Mr. Martinez and Ms. English expressed agreement with Mr. Meche’s comments that the existing porch was not approvable in its current state. Chair Spang asked to be put in touch with Mr. Archambault (with Mr. Joyce’s potential participation) to collaborate on a design that was more consistent with drawing. The applicants noted that they could not see any images shown during the meeting due to being on a phone. Mr. Martinez advised the applicants that the previously approved porch (with roof) could be built.

VOTE: Mr. Meche motioned to continue application to next meeting. Mr. Martinez seconded the motion. Roll Call: English, Martinez, Tyler-Lewis, Meche, Spang were in favor and the motion so carried.

303 Lafayette Street

Renewal Ventures LLC submitted an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for fire alarm installation.

Documents & Exhibits

- Application: 9/15/23
- Slideshow/photographs

The applicant was not present. Ms. Kelleher noted that the fire alarm was proposed to be replaced with a new system, showing a photograph of the property. Mr. Martinez clarified that a Knox Box features on the property, that is, a device provided by the fire department with keys to units featured on outside of property to save the doors. Ms. Kelleher showed a product sheet of the planned System Sensor product. Ms. Kelleher noted that a device may be swapped out for a different one rather than replacing in kind. Mr. Meche clarified that a surface-mounted box is planned for installation. Mr. Martinez questioned the placement of this device behind a pillar. Chair Spang proposed continuing the application given Commission members’ questions to applicants. Ms. Kelleher noted that because this is a life safety issue, she recommended that the Commission could make a motion approving the application as presented and the applicants could come back if a change was necessary. Mr. Meche questioned whether the building currently has fire alarms, to which Ms. Kelleher noted that interior renovations were ongoing. Chair Spang registered the expectation that a beacon would have been used on the front of this property.

No public comment.

VOTE: Mr. Martinez motioned to approve application as submitted to install new Knox Box and fire alarm beacon strobe at location of existing Knox Box, the new beacon strobe be recessed and conduit hidden from view in existing exterior wall. Ms. English seconded the motion. Roll Call: English, Martinez, Tyler-Lewis, Meche, Spang were in favor and the motion so carried.

Request for Comment on FY24 Community Preservation Plan

Ms. Kelleher noted past language that had been used regarding projects that were public non-private entities, prioritizing CPA funds to serve vacant and underutilized buildings. Chair Spang questioned if new work was proposed. Ms. Kelleher noted that a plan is carried out each year, including summary of completed work as well as list plans the City has completed that could be prioritized as action items, such as for historic preservation and resources. Ms. Kelleher noted that funding allocations vary based on past years' data. Full funding per year is approximately \$1,000,000. Chair Spang questioned if funds are used for planning and design or just construction, which Ms. Kelleher said could vary. Chair Spang expressed the desire to raise more concerns regarding Winter Island, indicating that buildings are continuing to deteriorate. Mr. Meche proposed contributing a list of priorities while noting that CPA has a limited capacity to be proactive. Mr. Meche also suggested making a list of endangered properties to receive priority attention. Ms. Kelleher proposed cc'ing the Mayor's Office, Parks and Rec, and Planning Department (Tom Daniels).

VOTE: Mr. Meche moved to approve drafting a letter. Ms. English seconded the motion. Roll Call: Tyler-Lewis, English, Martinez, Meche, Spang were in favor and the motion so carried.

Other Business19 Chestnut Street

The owners requested an extension of Certificate of Appropriateness to replace doors on rear carriage house, extend another year.

VOTE: Mr. Martinez motioned to approve. Ms. English seconded the motion. Roll Call: Tyler-Lewis, English, Martinez, Meche, Spang were in favor and the motion so carried.

Commissioner Reappointments and Abutters' Notices

Mr. Meche noted having received invitation from City Council to be reinstated as a Commissioner until 2026. Ms. Tyler-Lewis and Mr. Martinez noted disparities between delivery times on abutters' notices.

Adjournment

VOTE: Ms. English motioned to adjourn. Mr. Martinez seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion so carried.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Dan Graham, Historical Commission Clerk