TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
Historic District Commission Meeting Minutes
March 18, 2025
Municipal Office Building, Meeting

1. CALL TO ORDER
Chairman Brady called the Historic District Commission to order at 7:35 pm.

2. ATTENDANCE
Historic District Commission Members: Will Brady-Chairman, Christian Miller, David Nelson, Steven Rossi, Joseph Zirlis, Jack Lovejoy and Karl Stofko.

Absent:
Others: George Fellner. Carol Omer?

3. APPLICATION

A. Application 25-01 45 Main Street (property location), Fellner Architects, LLC (applicant), Mary Curry & Jonathan Levine (property owners). Map 26, Lot 001. Window Replacement

Mr. Fellner explained that the George Douglas house, originally believed to have been built in 1862, was constructed in the 1850s by George Douglas and his son-in-law, Thomas Pord, and has undergone renovations, including a 2003 addition. The need for window replacement stems from energy inefficiency and damage, with the proposed Marvin Elevate windows designed to match the original style while preserving the trim. The contractor determined window sizes and selected products that maintain the house's historic appearance, and the clients are committed to preserving its historical integrity. While future additions, such as a bedroom, may be considered, the focus remains on maintaining the house's historical significance. A western addition with a porch and sunroom is in progress, and an unfinished basement has been converted into usable space. Mr. Fellner recommended new windows with simulated divided lights and sealed construction, noting that the original windows were not from the 1850s, and while restoring with storm windows could be more energy-efficient, the owners preferred the new windows.

Mr. Lovejoy, drawing from his restoration experience, suggested the existing windows may not need full restoration. He highlighted that inoperable windows could be fixed by addressing issues like paint or broken ropes. He argued that restoring the windows would be more cost-effective and environmentally friendly than replacement. In response to Mr. Brady's question about price comparisons, Mr. Lovejoy explained that restoring a window, not just the sash costs around $1,800 for their six-foot by four-foot windows. This includes removing, steaming, stripping paint, repairing wood, reglazing with original glass, and reinstallation. He noted that the windows discussed were smaller, so the cost would likely be lower.

Carol Omere, sharing her experience with a historical pre-revolutionary house, mentioned that while older homes can be energy-inefficient without storm windows, she recommended considering a solution like interior storm windows. She referenced a company called Innerglass, which creates nearly imperceptible interior storms that can significantly improve energy efficiency. She suggested that if the existing windows' glazing and condition are good, restoring them might be a better option than replacement.

The preservation tax credit was mentioned, noting that restoration qualifies for a 30% credit, whereas replacement windows do not. There was also a conversation about the practicality of restoring many windows.

Mr. Zirlis wanted assurance that the exterior casing and woodwork around the windows would remain unchanged during the replacement process. Second, he questioned the true condition of the windows, noting that if the frames and mullions are in good shape, reglazing and painting could be viable restoration options. He also pointed out that using interior storms and screens could improve energy efficiency. Lastly, he raised a question about whether the new windows would have the same wavy glass characteristic of older windows or if they would be perfectly smooth. It was noted that wavy glass was typically placed at the back of older homes, as people had wanted to show they could afford smooth glass. It wasn't until the 1960s and 70s that homeowners began moving the wavy glass to the front of the house to signal its age and historical value.

The Commission agreed to schedule a site walk to inspect the windows, discuss practical matters with the contractor, and engage with the owners, with Mr. Fellner arranging the date and time to ensure a fair evaluation before making decisions.

General Discussion:

Mr. Lovejoy discussed several issues noticed during his walks around the village. He mentioned that Society Hall had installed a new white vinyl railing, which he disliked due to its glossy appearance. He also noted that they replaced an attic window and a three-light window with vinyl one-over-one windows, which he found concerning. He speculated that the new railing might be required due to the building's conversion into an apartment from a tavern, which could necessitate code compliance for safety. He also raised concerns about a gas grill placed on a wooden porch, fearing it could be a fire hazard, referencing a previous incident where a gas grill caused a fire. Mr. Lovejoy mentioned that Jim Ventres had been tasked with addressing these issues with property owners but had not followed up. He also noted that one developer, who had previously promised not to make further changes without commission approval, had done so anyway. There was some frustration with the developer's approach and the lack of compliance with commission procedures. The group discussed the need to follow up with Jim to address these matters.

4. Adjournment

Motion at 8:40 to adjourn

Rossi/Nelson Passed unanimously

Respectfully Submitted,

E. Ruth Ziobron
Recording Secretary