



Town of Woodbury
Historic District Commission

281 Main Street South
Woodbury, CT 06798
203.263.3467 • www.woodburyct.org

MINUTES – October 2, 2023
Work Session / Special Meeting
6:00 PM –Shove Building, 281 Main Street South, Woodbury, CT 06798

MEMBERS PRESENT

Maureen Donnarumma, Chair
Susan Cheatham, Vice Chairman
George Messier
Lois Y. Fiftal

MEMBERS ABSENT

Robert S. Kolesnik, Jr.

ALTERNATES PRESENT

Judith Kelz
William Hickey (arrived late)

ALTERNATES ABSENT

Marc Kroll

NOTED OTHERS PRESENT

Thomas Arras

OPENING OF MEETING

- **Call to Order**
Chair Donnarumma convened the workshop meeting session at 6:01 pm.

MEETING WORK SESSION DISCUSSION

- Chair Donnarumma explained the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Historic District Regulations in other towns.

Alternate Kelz covered the City of New Haven and the Town of Newtown.

New Haven did not have a lot to offer regarding their historic district. Newtown however has three historic districts and they do have a handbook of the regulations that is mailed to each owner and when there are amendments the property owners are made aware of them.

The procedure Newtown uses to keep the New England, early town feel is that they encourage residents to meet with a committee member and the Zoning office before filing an application, this way the applicant knows exactly what the Historic District is looking for. They don't automatically go on an agenda and then to a public hearing.

She also informed the commission that they are more interested in maintaining the historic and architectural character than they are about being precise about like for like. They let the residents know how to file for an economic hardship and a lot of applications are approved because of it. Chair Donnarumma gave an example of how the economic hardship could work. The example given was if the owner has a slate roof and they applied and were granted an economic hardship they could then replace it with the asphalt roof.

Kelz went on to say that their windows regulations state that they should use wood windows where possible but artificial materials may be acceptable alternatives provided the materials are of good quality in appearance, detail, and finish.

They also regulate color in their regulation. They don't have specific colors, but it must be within the neighborhood and the colors surrounding the property.

They are specific regarding their exemption and hardships.

Member Fital followed up with the owners can also use Preservation Connecticut grants as an option for a hardship.

Member Messier covered the Town of Essex and the Town of Stonington.

Messier did not have any luck finding information on these towns and one didn't even have a commission. He did have an in-person meeting with Preservation New England. During the meeting they made a lot of interesting points. The first point is that repairs should be done at any cost. Their interpretation for like for like is not materials. It's design because when they are repairing, they use materials like epoxies and other materials. When they talk about design they are concerned about if the muntin's stay the same and the window viewing stays the same size.

They recommend seeing clear pictures of every window that is being proposed to see the materials that are defective and/or deteriorated. They also, recommend identifying 3 to 6 repair specialist and give list to each property owner. The commission should also require a specialist to perform a repair assessment to come out to the property before the application is filed. Vice Chair Cheatham suggested this too for a cost analysis, so the property owner knows what the cost would be when repairing versus replacing. They might find it more cost effective to repair.

The Commission discussed replacement windows, noting it hadn't taken into consideration if they are putting in an insert or making the window smaller which would then dramatically change the design of the house because the window is smaller. You could lose 10%-20% of the natural light.

Member Fiftal covered the Town of Westport.

They have on staff a historic district administrator. This person is not the chair of the commission. They have a 180-day demolish ordinance for buildings 50+ years or older. They approve all work that is not visible from a public street, place, or way in the absence of planting.

Vice Chair Cheatham covered the Town of Fairfield.

Fairfield has many areas in historic districts. They are very strict on holding onto architecture. More information on her finding will come at the next meeting.

Chair Donnarumma covered the Town of Washington.

Washington dedicated their regulations to George Krinsky who served on the Commission for many years and was a journalist, so he helped in writing the regulations. Their purpose is to preserve their history as it has become a core value of the community. They are trying to reach a balance between Washington's history and architectural integrity along with construction technology.

Their historic districts are products of different times and tastes that span over three centuries. They acknowledge the transition of architecture. The external change to a structure is in their purview if it's in view of a public way.

They have a whole section on definitions, and everything is clearly thought out and spelled out.

They do not have the authority to review structural elements of landscaping like fences, walls arbors or any feature that is permanently affixed to the land.

The three districts were developed by evolution based on the building styles, function, and materials rather than the role it played in the community. The evolution falls into new construction at which they are looking for something that will fit the landscape in scale and proportion but will also be something new without being too modern.

Chair Donnarumma continued with more of the regulations as to the time the structure was built and if the design is true to the times based on the time-period and scale of the district. For example, shutters are only necessary at the owner's discretion if the structure was built prior to 1840's.

They also have regulations regarding the gravel for the driveways and the width of them. They need to be in scale to the underlying district.

Secretary of Interior standards re incorporated into the regulations.

There was also discussion about landscaping and tree ordinances. Newtown requires a landscaping sketch because they want it to fit into the neighborhood. Vice Chair Cheatham asked under what legislation are they doing this under because Woodbury used to have this in their regulations but there was nothing to back it up. Hickey was able to expand on how a tree ordinance works. If the town was to adopt a tree ordinance, then the historic district would be able to follow what that ordinance says, but since Woodbury does not have one then we are not eligible for grants or the historic district to follow.

Alt. Member Hickey covered the Town of Wethersfield.

He stated that every residence is given a handbook. They are not necessarily rules but more for the vibe. There is no question on what is covered and what is not.

They also have an optional pre-application meeting for involved additions and new homes so they would have a clear understanding what the district wants and how to make it work.

The timeframe for their historic district is the 1600's to early 1950's. If there is new construction, it needs to fit into the district by the same shape and style of the district.

When it comes to roofing, they don't have a definite standard on the materials used. They would like what's on there now to be used but they are not opposed to other materials.

When it comes to windows, they give a history of the evolution of windows through time. They understand that as time went on the windows have changed. They want to know what is in before saying what they can replace it with. They do have standards in which they encourage the restoration of existing sashes, like for like materials are preferred and replacement may be approved if it is in keeping with the design of the original. Replacement of true divided light, snap and grilles or grid between glass are inappropriate.

They really have a holistic view in structuring the district. They also have some town ordinances to back everything up. An enforcement officer is on staff for the historic district, and they can issue an immediate stop work order if work is done in violation of the historic district regulations.

To wrap up the work session Alternate Kelz stated that she really likes that Newtown is clear on their timeline and how it all works. Member Fiftal likes the idea of getting the information out to the applicants before coming to the commission or sitting down with the applicants beforehand. The realtors really need to know that they are selling in a Historic District and to let their buyers aware and that there can be restrictions. Member Messier thinks that Woodbury should create guidelines and regulations for the people.

Vice Chair Cheatham suggested that they should go the State to ask to help bring the dates up to date. Chair Donnarumma agreed with this but would like to have a panel and talk to the Land Use office before starting.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.

RECEIVED & FILED
IN WOODBURY, CT
This 13th day of Oct 2023
at 9:55 o'clock A M
Maria M Mancini
Town Clerk