



TOWN OF WATERTOWN
Historic District Commission
Administration Building
149 Main Street
WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02472

Harvey Steiner, Chair
Linda Sternberg, Vice Chair
Jonathan Merin, Secretary
Peter Kuzmic, Member
Elizabeth K. Hayes, Member

Susan C. Jenness, Assistant
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MINUTES

Meeting Date: Thursday, May 23, 2019, 7:00 PM- Philip Pane Lower Hearing Room

Members Present: Harvey Steiner, Linda Sternberg, Jonathan Merin, Elizabeth Hayes

Absent: Petr Kuzmic

Staff Present: Gideon Schreiber, Susan Jenness

Also Present: Scott Hoyt, Donald McDermott, Sarah McCord (Adopted 6/14/2019)

Steiner opened the meeting May 25, 2019 Historic District Commission (HDC) meeting.

- 1. Public Hearing Continuation-** 20 Palfrey St.- To replace slate roof with asphalt shingle, including necessary repairs. Applicant; Donald McDermott, Owner, Scott Hoyt

Don McDermott, the contractor from RFS Roofing appeared to review the project on behalf of Mr. Scott Hoyt, the owner of 20 Palfrey St.

McDermott explained that slate tiles have been falling from the roof at 20 Palfrey St. with increasing frequency. He said that the current condition exists as a result of water leaking in to the interior of the roof. The origin of the leak he explained appears to be the result of a prior rehab when closed cell insulation was used, rather than baffle, which gives better ventilation between the home and roof. The result McDermott explained is that moisture has and will continue to get trapped, rotting the wood in the roof system which ends up loosening the slate tiles which become loose and fly off more easily.

McDermott showed some marketing materials from Berkshire Shingles, who manufacture roofing tile products made by Owens Corning. He showed an asphalt shingle Hoyt is proposing to use as a product to re-tile the roof in this proposed project.

Steiner asked McDermott to tell the HDC what the cost comparison is between shingling the roof with slate compared to the asphalt tiles being proposed.

Total Slate Repair Cost- \$33,500.00 Berkshire Slate Repair Cost- \$16,000.000

Hoyt explained that given the existing damage to the roof, slate tiles have been flying off the roof and become more of a safety concern he has for his surrounding neighbors and passersby using the walkway around his house.

Merin pointed out it costs up to around \$2,500.00 a year to maintain a good slate roof properly.

McDermott showed a sample of the asphalt roof material and mentioned that it has been used on some roofs in the Back Bay.

Steiner brought the conversation back to comparing the cost between slate and imitation slate products. He asked McDermott which neighborhoods in Cambridge were using the Berkshire products to replace slate. McDermott responded it was Brattle St., Fayerweather St, and other areas around Harvard Square.

Sternberg asked if there was a way to vent the roof properly. Mc Dermott said at this point that would not be helpful. He said there will always be a moisture problem no matter what. He said he plans to use stainless steel nails when he re-shingles the roof so that the nails will not deteriorate in their capacity to hold the shingles in place.

Public Comments

Sarah McCord appeared in support of Shawn Hoyt and the project proposing an alternative roofing project. She mentioned that the neighbors, children, postal workers are all being put at risk with the slate tiles falling off this roof. She said that while higher cost may be a concern, the concern with illness and injury is the main problem here.

She mentioned the increase in excessive winds in Massachusetts and said that all condominium owners are threatened by the issue as it remains today. She pointed out that the building was a very tall one, and the tile will not be greatly visible to passersby, but at least everyone will be safe.

McCord said she was advocating on behalf of Mr. Hoyt, and for this particular product as the material of choice to re-shingle the roof at 20 Palfrey St.

McDermott passed around marketing materials and showed some slides on a projector to share with the HDC. Hoyt explained that he chose this particular product because he said it looked so much like slate to him.

Steiner asked if they could focus on finding a product that cut straight across in the same fashion slate would. He explained to Hoyt and McDermott that he lived on Marshall St. and would never use this product on his house because it looks too fabricated for him.

Merin said he saw this as a very unique issue with a slate roof losing tiles directly over a public way. He explained that slate is the highest quality way to keep water out of a house, and your main concern is injury from falling slate tiles. He said he has slate on his roof and did not think asphalt is a good roof cover. He pointed out that an asphalt roof will automatically lower the value of the home, and the appearance of the home as well.

Sternberg said she agreed with Merin and said she felt this was a different conversation about what the Guidelines for the Historic District say about roofing. The guidelines encourage staying with slate roofs and that asphalt changes the character of the roof. Sternberg emphasized that this was similar to the idea around changing out fencing materials.

Schreiber spoke as the Senior Planner and said that repair and replacing materials in the Historic District is meant to be in kind. Synthetic materials are not normally approved but may be considered on a case by case basis.

Merin said his work as an architect is done on larger buildings, and not on residential homes. He said he did not feel he was in a position to approve asphalt, but not ready to say no to the project overall. He said he would like to discuss this dilemma with a colleague who has a great deal of professional knowledge about working on houses, and will reach out to him for additional opinions.

Schreiber pointed out that we have a lot of buildings with slate on the roofs and if this was such a dangerous problem, we would be dealing with it regularly and we are not. He said there must be much more information up on the Secretary of State web site under Historical Preservation about what other materials may be used in substitution for slate tiles.

Hoyt said he would work with McDermott over the next couple of weeks exploring options for other materials to use. McDermott said he would look forward to conducting additional research, and to establishing a very good working relationship with the HDC.

Steiner pointed out that Mr. Hoyt has a concern for safety, and on that note he asked members of the HDC to come up with a date before the next scheduled meeting which was not until June 27th. Members of the commission asked the clerk to set up a meeting on June 13th at 6 PM.

Motion: A motion was made by Sternberg to continue the public hearing on 20 Palfrey St. to June 13th, 2013 at 6 PM in the Philip Pane Lower Hearing Room. Merin seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached continuing the meeting to June 13, 2019 at 6 PM in the Philip Pane Lower Hearing Room.

After the public hearing on 20 Palfrey St. Ryan Etheridge from 34 Marshall St. stepped forward to explain that he had an old shed on his property in the Historic District and that he would like to plan to do something with. He said he was coming to the HDC for advice.

Schreiber explained that the shed was clearly visible from the public walkway. He explained that they would need to determine if the shed as on the property when the Historic District was voted in. He told Mr. Etheridge he should be on the agenda in compliance with the open meeting laws to step forward and speak to the members of the HDC about his proposed projects. He also invited him in the alternative to feel free to stop by the Planning Department to talk about options that would be available.

2. Minutes- from April 25, 2019 meeting.

After a brief discussion a motion was made to accept the minutes of the April 25, 2019 meeting.

Motion: A motion was made by Sternberg to accept the minutes from the April 25, 2019 meeting. Merin seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to accept the minutes from the April 25, 2019 meeting.

Motion: A motion was made by Sternberg at 8:15 PM to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Merin.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 PM.