

**CHESHIRE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING AND REGULAR MEETING HELD ON
MONDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2020 AT 7:30 P.M.
CHESHIRE TOWN HALL - 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
VIRTUAL MEETING**

Commissioners Present:

Chairman Joseph Dattilo, James Vibert, Sr., Lisa Franco, Helen Wilson, Gayle Nidoh and George Pawlush

Commissioners Absent:

John Torello

Staff Present:

Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator
Catherine Donegan, Assistant to Economic Development Coordinator

Others Present:

David Veleber, Town Council Liaison
Assistant Town Manager Arnett Talbot
Benny Huang
Hugo (Leo) Jordan
Corey Nash
Ron Bergamo

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Dattilo called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

The roll was taken for the meeting.

III. SEATING OF ALTERNATES

Chairman Dattilo seated all alternate commissioners for voting tonight with the Historic District Commission.

IV. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

A quorum was present.

V. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

VI. PUBLIC HEARING (Continuation)

- A. Certificate of Appropriateness #2020-008
25 Church Drive
Min Zhen Zhang
Replace Roof and a Window, Paint, Porch Repairs, New Fence,
Driveway & Parking Lot and Basement Repair**

The public hearing was opened at 4:44 p.m. Mr. Sitko stated there were several communications regarding this application and read them into the record. Said communications are attached as exhibits to these minutes. Mr. Huang and his associate, Mr. Jordan addressed each item of work that has been done or will be done at 25 Church Drive.

1. Replace Roof/Chimney/Flashing

Mr. Jordan stated the back portion of the roof has already been replaced but the chimneys need to be torn down and rebuilt. Mr. Huang stated the original bricks will be used. Mr. Jordan stated the flashing will be copper. There was a brief discussion.

2. Paint

Mr. Huang stated he intends to paint the exterior with an ultra white semi-gloss enamel exterior paint consistent with the historic style of the house. Ms. Franco asked if the paint has been tested for lead. It has not been tested. Mr. Dattilo stated special care should be taken when working with the trim. Mr. Ron Bergamo stated the issue of potential lead paint falls under the Chesprocott guidelines.

3. Window

Mr. Huang and Mr. Jordan showed the Commissioners the proposed fabricated window to replace the ocular window that was removed. Mr. Corey Nash asked if Mr. Huang is working with a licensed contractor. He is not currently working with a licensed contractor. Mr. Sitko stated that no building permits were pulled for any of the work done to date. Since no building permit was pulled for the window, Mr. Huang was not referred to Mr. Sitko for guidance on historic district procedures and guidelines.

4. Fence

Mr. Huang stated he intends to install fencing around the side and back yard with a combination of vinyl and stockade fencing. Mr. Sitko stated the fence at the back of the property does not belong to Mr. Huang. Based on Diane Calabro's email communication (attached hereto), Mr. Sitko will let her know the fence at the back of the property back does not belong to the Applicant. Mr. Nash asked if a property survey has been done. Mr. Huang stated a property survey has not been done.

5. Driveway & Parking Lot

Mr. Huang stated he intends to lay an asphalt driveway/parking lot in the back of the house. Mr. Nash asked how many spaces will be in the parking lot. Mr. Huang stated the driveway/parking area will be big enough to fit 6-8 cars. Mr. Vibert stated the issue of drainage will need to be addressed. Mr. Sitko stated the public works department has confirmed 6-9 spaces can comfortably fit in the proposed area. Mr. Nash asked if Mr. Huang intends for this property to be a multi-family house. Mr. Huang stated it will only be a single family home, but may become a rental in the future.

6. Front Porch

Mr. Huang showed the new corbel to replace the damaged one on the front porch. Mr. Dattilo stated the second floor porch was replaced with plywood, a material not consistent with the historic style of the house. Mr. Huang stated the porch was in disrepair and presented a hazard. Mrs. Wilson asked if the work that has been done to date would fall under repair and maintenance. Mr. Dattilo stated only if like-kind materials are used. The second floor porch was added to the house in the 1970s.

7. Back Porch

Mr. Dattilo stated the back porch is a shed style and not historic to the house. The back porch was not appropriately permitted or approved when it was added. Mr. Jordan stated the back porch is in disrepair and needs to be reinforced and repaired.

8. Basement Repair

Mr. Huang stated he intends to put up walls and replace the electrical wiring. Mr. Huang already replaced a small basement window. Interior repairs are outside of the purview of the Historic District Commission.

MOTION by Mrs. Wilson to close the Public Hearing at 5:42 p.m.

SECONDED by Mr. Vibert and passed unanimously.

VII. REGULAR MEETING

1. Approval of Minutes - Public Hearing and Regular Meeting November 16, 2020

MOTION by Ms. Wilson to approve the minutes of the public hearing and regular meeting on November 16, 2020 as submitted.

SECONDED by Mr. Vibert and passed unanimously.

2. Election of Officers

There was a brief discussion.

MOTION by Mr. Pawlush to nominate the following candidates to serve for another term: Mr. Dattilo as Chair; Mr. Vibert as Vice Chair and Ms. Franco as Clerk.

SECONDED by Ms. Nidoh and passed unanimously.

3. Communications

Mr. Sitko stated there were several communications regarding Certificate of Appropriateness #2020-008 and read them into the record. Said communications are attached as exhibits to these minutes.

4. Business

- A. Certificate of Appropriateness #2020-008
25 Church Drive
Min Zhen Zhang
Replace Roof and a Window, Paint, Porch Repairs, New Fence,
Driveway & Parking Lot and Basement Repair**

1. Replace Roof/Chimney/Flashing

Since the work has already been completed on the roof replacement, the Building Office must inspect the roof, chimney, flashing and gutters. Mr. Vibert stated it is important to take time to ensure the chimneys are correctly restored.

MOTION by Ms. Franco to approve rebuilding of the chimneys with the following stipulations:

- a. Must be rebuilt to historic standards
- b. Historic bricks must be used
- c. Type N mortar mix and
- d. Old tooling on joints
- e. Copper flashing

SECONDED by Ms. Nidoh and passed unanimously.

2. Paint

MOTION by Ms. Wilson to approve exterior painting with the following stipulations:

- a. Office of the Interior Preservation Brief #10 must be adhered to. Mr. Sitko furnished a copy to applicant.

SECONDED by Mrs. Franco and passed unanimously.

3. Window

MOTION by Mr. Vibert to deny without prejudice the new window that was installed without proper permitting and require Mr. Huang to submit a new application for a COA with a plan satisfactory to the HDC to remediate work already done within 45 days.

SECONDED by Mr. Pawlush and passed unanimously.

4. Fence

MOTION by Ms. Franco to approve the fencing as proposed.

SECONDED by Ms. Nidoh and passed unanimously.

5. Driveway & Parking Lot

MOTION by Mr. Pawlush to approve the parking lot/driveway with the following stipulations:

- a. Be no larger than 41' x45'
- b. Must be asphalt as proposed by applicant.
- c. Must include a proper driveway as shown on applicant's drawing.
- d. Screen as much as possible.

SECONDED by Ms. Wilson and passed with one nay vote from Mr. Vibert.

6. Front Porch

MOTION by Mr. Vibert to deny without prejudice the front porch that was repaired without proper permitting, and require Mr. Huang to submit a new application for a COA with a plan satisfactory to the HDC, to remediate work already done to within 45 days.

SECONDED by Mr. Pawlush and passed unanimously.

7. Back Porch

MOTION by Mr. Vibert to approve the back porch as proposed.

SECONDED by Ms. Nidoh and passed unanimously.

8. Basement Repair

Mr. Dattilo stated that interior repairs are outside of the purview of the Historic District Commission and no vote is needed.

The Commission encouraged Mr. Huang to get professionals involved and use other available resources, such as Preservation Connecticut.

B. Committees

1. Regulations/Rules

Mr. Sitko stated he will set up a meeting with Preservation Connecticut.

2. Chairman's Report.

Mr. Dattilo stated the only notable item on his Chairman's report is the retirement of Catherine Donegan. The commissioners thanked Catherine for all of her hard work and dedicated service to the Historic District Commission and wished her well in the future.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Ms. Franco to adjourn at 6:17 p.m.

SECONDED by Ms. Nidoh and passed unanimously.

Attest:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen M. Gill" with a small "co" at the end.

Karen M. Gill
Recording Secretary

Donegan, Catherine

From: dcalabro@cox.net
Sent: Monday, December 07, 2020 9:25 AM
To: Comments
Subject: Dec. 7, 2020 HDC Meeting #2020-0008 25 Church Drive
Attachments: PXL_20201207_124240756.PORTRAIT.jpg

From:

Diane Calabro, President
Cheshire Historical Society
43 Church Drive

(Residence address: 1731 Peck Lane)

Attachment: photograph of 25 Church Drive, the building on the right, from the book titled, "Old Historic Homes of Cheshire Connecticut with an Account of the Early Settlement of the Town" compiled by Edwin R. Brown in 1895.

To the Commission,

The Cheshire Historical Society, neighbor to this property and housed in the 1785 home built by Rufus Hitchcock, has watched the decline of 25 Church Drive for the past decade. We have seen the deferred maintenance and overall neglect and had hoped that someone would purchase this building and restore it to the architectural gem it once was.

We want to share the feasibility of restoring such a property, the relationship of this property to ours, some of the history of this property and our opinion that this property needs to be refurbished and maintained within the guidelines of Historic District Commission regulations.

It is interesting to note that in the 1935 Cheshire Tercentennial Celebration book that likely 43 Church Drive, the current home of the Cheshire Historical Society, was in the same state of disrepair that the new owner has found 25 Church Drive. In this anniversary book, 43 Church Drive was listed only as "House on the Green," with no owner of record. The preceding three decades reflected an aging owner who died in 1903, a quit claim in 1907, and then the use of our building as a rooming house.

Does this sound familiar with what has occurred at 25 Church Drive? I think it does.

In the 1930s, Cheshire Academy purchased our building and converted it into off site dormitory rooms for their school. During the same time, the Academy leased 25 Church Drive for the same use.

In 1972, the Town bought our building and leased it to the Cheshire Historical Society. The Society spent most of the early 1970s refurbishing 43 Church Drive into the house museum you see today. This was done with tremendous volunteer effort primarily from Dr. Robert Craig, local dentist and founder of the Cheshire Historical Society, and from Warren Van Almkerk. We have photographs that show the poor state of the building when the Society took this on. But from this, with all volunteer support and a great deal of fundraising, 43 Church Drive was gently and carefully restored to its present condition.

I mention the Society building's history because it is very possible to take a building with a great amount of deferred maintenance and needed interior and exterior repairs and make it exceptional, indeed museum quality. And, to do that with no commercial interest, only volunteer support and fundraising, and with repairs organized and orchestrated by a dentist.

The history of 25 Church Drive is significant.

From Landmarks of Old Cheshire published in 1976, this building is listed as the Moses Bradley House.

"Moses Bradley built this Victorian house, with its distinctive gothic lines, in the last quarter of the 19th century. It replaced a cape codder which probably dated from the mid 18th century but burned to the ground in 1875. Eliakim Hitchcock [father of Rufus Hitchcock] had purchased the original house from Simeon Grannis in 1781. Hitchcock was a noted silversmith who reportedly trained Levi Doolittle, the New Haven engraver. At his death the house and a small outbuilding to the east passed to his son's Eliakum, Jr. and Rufus. Undoubtedly Hitchcock had used the little building on the property for his silversmithing; his son Elijah converted it to a shoemaker shop. Antoinette Johnson purchased the property in 1903; after her death, the Academy leased it for 40 years. Today it is owned by Cliff Podaras."

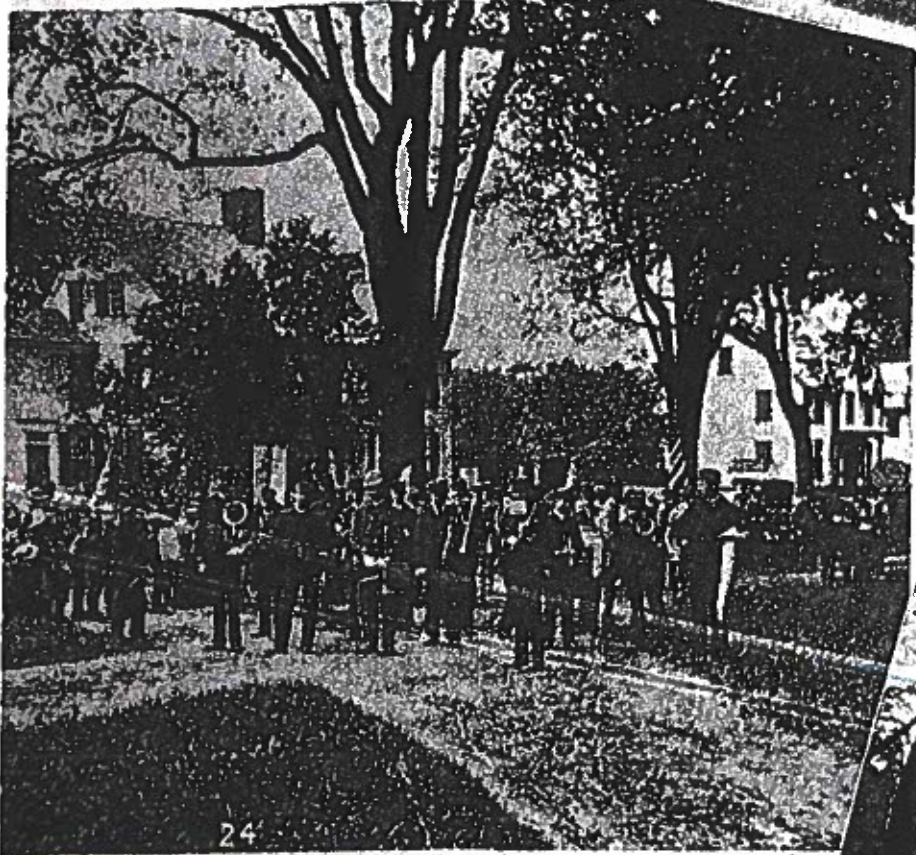
The Society would like to stress that the 25 Church Drive building is located in a special part of town. The Church Green has many splendid architectural examples, a rich history, and has been the focus of several walking tours including an app developed by our Town Historian that received an Award of Merit from the Connecticut League of History Organizations. Buildings in this area have been well maintained through the years. We hope that the new owner of 25 Church Drive will restore and maintain this fine Victorian house right down to its great gothic revival bargeboards.

When we give tours at our house museum, we point to this property as it is part of the family history of the former residents of our building. Indeed, our 1810 over the mantle painting in our dining room shows this property in detail.

The new owner has purchased a building that has its own remarkable history and Cheshire story. This is a large responsibility. And it is an important responsibility. Twenty-five Church Drive is one of the jewels in the crown of the Cheshire Church Green. The owner must comply with and follow the legal regulations from the Historic District Commission.

As a final note, we expect to see the Oculus window restored. We recommend Christopher Wuerth, a New Haven County historical restoration specialist, for this effort.

Sincerely,
Diane Calabro, Cheshire Historical Society President



43 Church St

25

Donegan, Catherine

From: Ron Bergamo <ron@impactprod.com>
Sent: Monday, December 07, 2020 1:51 PM
To: Comments
Subject: 25 church property

Hi

Cheshire is a town with much heritage and as it has grown we have watched the historical portion of our town dwindle in the name of progress. However, we have a designated historical district that is set up to persevere what history is left and monitor the buildings within the district to ensure proper compliance to the standards our community wishes to uphold.

In this case, I am confused how they could have gotten a building permit without the historical district sign off on the work. And maybe they did not get a permit, which is yet another problem. As someone on the board of a property looking to be restored, our hurdles with respect to zoning, historical compliance, fire, wetlands and epa have been great but we continue to willingly follow the rules and make progress.

I see no reason for this property to be allowed to flaunt those rules.

I hope you will make sure they adhere to the standards for building codes, fire codes, and historical preservation our town has endorsed and successfully enforced with others over the years.

Regards
Ron Bergamo

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Donegan, Catherine

From: Marshall Robinson <mkrobinson318@att.net>
Sent: Monday, December 07, 2020 4:19 PM
To: Comments
Subject: 25 Church Drive

There exists the remnants of a fence that separates the property at 25 Church Drive from that of the Cheshire Historical Society.

While it may not sound like much, it is a blight on a very historic part of our town. Since this property is on the agenda this

evening, I am asking that you require the current owner to do something about it. It might be removal or replacement, within

the guidelines of the Historic District Commission. Since I mention the Historic District Commission. May I say that the replacement of a window in front of the house is a disgrace and certainly not in compliance with any regulations that are in place by the Historic District Commission.

Marshall Robinson
937 Prospect Rd.
Cheshire

Donegan, Catherine

From: Ilona Somogyi <isomogyi@ballandsocket.org>
Sent: Monday, December 07, 2020 5:53 PM
To: Comments
Subject: Regarding 25 Church Street

I listened in the Historic District Committee meeting on December 7th. It is very clear that the new owner of 25 Church Street lacks proper basic construction experience, let alone the skills and experience required to restore and now repair the damages done to the house on the town green. If there is any way to legally prevent him from doing further work until a consultant can be brought in to assess the damages and make a plan for the historically correct restoration of the building's exterior it should be done swiftly.

The house is right in the middle of our town - we must stand behind the historic commission and maintain pride in our past and actually take concrete action to preserve it. This town was named in the top places to live in America. This sort of wonton disregard for our historic landmarks does not fit what we are. It should not be allowed.

Thank you,

Ilona Somogyi
Co-Founder and Treasurer
Ball & Socket Arts, Inc
isomogyi@ballandsocket.org
917-414-4020