CHESHIRE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING AND REGULAR MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY, MARCH 1, 2010 AT 7:30 P.M.
CHESHIRE TOWN HALL – 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET
ROOM 210

Commission Members Present:
Chairman Jeanné Chesanow, Eric Anderson, Elizabeth Pratt Fox, Algert Sanders and Joseph Dattilo – Alternate

Commission Members Absent:
Eleanor Herrmann, Caitlin Guelakis – Alternate and John Torello – Alternate

Staff Present:
Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator (departed at 8:50 p.m.)

Others Present:
Peter Taylor of 185 Cornwall Avenue; Larry Pivrotto, contractor for and member of the First Congregational Church (arrived at 7:38 p.m. and departed at 8:15 p.m.); Martha Lape, Co-Chair of the First Congregational Church’s Board of Trustees (departed at 8:15 p.m.); Anne Giddings, Liaison from the Town Council (departed at 8:55 p.m.); Bob Giddings of 915 Boulder Road (departed at 8:15 p.m.); Ford Cole of the First Congregational Church (departed at 8:15 p.m.); Bill Eagleson of the First Congregational Church (departed at 8:15 p.m.); Alan Jarman of 594 South Brooksvale Road (departed at 8:20 p.m.);

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Chesanow called this meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

The roll was called.

III. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

It was determined that a quorum was present.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

V. WELCOME NEW COMMISSIONER ALGERT SANDERS

Chairman Chesanow welcomed Algert Sanders as a new member of the Historic District Commission. Mr. Sanders commented that he has lived in Cheshire 45 years and this is his first
VI. PUBLIC HEARING
Application for Certificate of Appropriateness # 2010-001E/C
First Congregational Church, 77 Church Drive
Remove existing porch and rebuild to same specifications as original

Chairman Chesnow reviewed the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness from the First Congregational Church regarding 77 Church Drive. She also reviewed the procedures of the Public Hearing. Chairman Chesnow noted that the First Congregational Church’s previous application for porch repairs at 85 Church Drive was done under a Certificate of Appropriateness application and Public Hearing, back in August 2009.

Ms. Fox read the Public Notice of this Public Hearing that appeared in the February 18, 2010 Cheshire Herald. Mr. Sitko noted that the notification to abutting property owners has been done, twice by the First Congregational Church, because the original Public Hearing had to be canceled due to the weather.

Mr. Sitko noted that there were no written comments received on this application. Commissioners commented that they received no verbal comments on this application.

Mr. Larry Piviroatto, contractor for and member of the First Congregational Church, was present on behalf of this application. He submitted photographs of the empty side panel at the base of the stairs of the front porch at 77 Church Drive. He stated that these structures may have been used to support the hand rails of the porch stairs but he would prefer not to replace them and proposed using a simple stair railing when the porch is rebuilt.

Ms. Fox asked if there would be lattice around the front of the porch? Mr. Piviroatto replied yes, to keep critters out from under the porch. Ms. Fox commented that that is probably how it was done originally. Mr. Piviroatto commented that the same size and look of the original materials would be used.

Chairman Chesnow asked with the Azek materials, are screws or nails used? Mr. Piviroatto replied that he prefers to use finish nails. She then asked if there are separation problems with the Azek materials? Mr. Piviroatto replied that there is special epoxy glue that works great with the Azek material so there are no separation issues. Mr. Piviroatto stated that he would be repainting the columns white, as they should be, and noted that the Azek can be painted, although they are already white. All the trim on the porch will be replaced and the porch will be re-framed using pressure treated wood. Mr. Piviroatto stated that he would be using the exact same materials built the exact same way as the prior First Congregational Church application at 85 Church Drive.

Public Comments:
Anne Giddings of 915 Boulder Road, a member of the First Congregational Church and Town Council Liaison to the Historic District Commission, commented that the porch in question is quite a distance away from a public way, over 350 feet. Azek materials will
be used on the flat surface on the north and south side of the property and will be very hard to see, with very little visible from a public right of way. She stated that the materials proposed would be safer for the public and looks to be the same as what is currently used but with less decay concerns.

Martha Lape, Co-Chair of the First Congregational Church’s Board of Trustees, commented that the porch at 77 Church Drive is really open to the weather and would deteriorate fast, if replaced with all wood materials.

Mr. Anderson stated that the public view, in the Regulations, also includes private property where the public is invited. He added that the maintenance aspect is not part of the Historic District Commission’s purview. Cost of a project or the ease of maintenance is not for this Commission to decide, even if they sympathize with an applicant.

Chairman Chesanow noted that the appearance with the new materials would be the same look with the same dimensions, just using newer materials.

Ford Cole of the First Congregational Church commented that if the Church put up a "No Trespassing" sign, the porch would not be in the "public view".

Bob Giddings of 915 Boulder Road commented that the Whiting House had extensive renovations in the 1980's and now has vinyl siding on it, which is not an original material of the house. If the First Congregational Church can propose to use materials that look like the original materials of the house, compared to renovations done 25 years ago, shouldn't they be allowed to do so?

Chairman Chesanow commented that there used to be a balustrade on the second floor that was removed some time after 1986 and asked if Mr. Giddings knew if it was removed during the 1980's renovation projects? Mr. Giddings replied that he did not know.

Mr. Anderson commented that the Historic District Commission is supposed to "preserve what is there" per the Historic District Commission mandate.

Mr. Cole questioned if the First Congregational Church is proposing to make the building look the way it was originally and be better, why would this Commission vote against that? Mr. Anderson replied that this Commission was created to preserve architecture and maintain history. It is their responsibility to urge property owners to repair and preserve what currently exists.

Mr. Pivirotto commented that the members of the Historic District Commission seemed OK with the Azek material, when discussed initially, but wanted to see what was under the panels at the bottom of the stairs of the porch.

Bill Eagleson of the First Congregational Church questioned if Mr. Anderson was saying that the rotting floorboards of the porch should be reused rather than replace them? Mr. Anderson replied that if the floorboards can't be mended or if it's a safety issue, than it is OK to replace them.
Chairman Chesanow closed the Public Hearing at 8:00 p.m.

VII. REGULAR MEETING

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Regular Meeting of February 1, 2010

MOTION by Eric Anderson to accept the minutes of the February 1, 2010 Regular Meeting of the Historic District Commission as submitted; SECONDED by Betsy Fox.

VOTE: In Favor – Anderson, Chesanow and Fox  
Opposed – None  
Abstained - Sanders

The motion passed 3 – 0 – 1.

2. COMMUNICATIONS

Chairman Chesanow stated that Jean McKee of South Brooksvale Road contacted her to ask for a letter of support for a Barn Grant that she was applying for. Chairman Chesanow has written up a letter in support of Ms. McKee to the Connecticut Trust for the Barn Grant that she is applying for.

MOTION by Jeanné Chesanow that the Historic District Commission is in support of Jean McKee and her application for a Barn Grant from the Connecticut Trust and it is agreed that a letter of support from the Historic District Commission should be submitted on Ms. McKee’s behalf.  SECONDED by Eric Anderson.

VOTE: In Favor – Anderson, Chesanow, Fox and Sanders  
Opposed – None

The motion passed 4 – 0.

3. BUSINESS

A. Application for COA # 2010-001E/C  
First Congregational Church, 77 Church Drive  
Remove existing porch and rebuild to same specifications as original

Chairman Chesanow reviewed the Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness from First Congregational Church regarding the removal of an existing porch and rebuilding of the porch to the same specifications as the original at 77 Church Drive, referred to as the “Whiting House”, which was built in 1835. She stated that the Commission could vote to approve, deny, approve in part, deny in part or approve with stipulations the application before them from the First Congregational Church.
Ms. Fox commented that this application required a Public Hearing so that a review of the different materials used could be done. She stated that she is OK with replacing what is currently there because it is not safe and is OK with the proposed project by the First Congregational Church.

Chairman Chesanow commented that she is OK with the look of the proposed project. She added that no one has access to the wood we once had and any wood would be a substitute for this project. Chairman Chesanow is satisfied that the porch will look as it did and is happy that the columns will be repaired and kept as part of this project.

Mr. Anderson stated that he is OK with the slight revisions to the stairs of the front porch at 77 Church Drive. He stated that he is opposed to the plastic materials proposed because when moisture starts to get in, you won’t see the early warning signs of rotting paint. He added that the lattice work now is 3 dimensional but the plastic lattice work that is proposed is really only 2 dimensional so it will look slightly different. Mr. Anderson stated that when the porch was repaired 25 years ago, it was done badly but does agree that work needs to be done to repair the porch.

Mr. Sanders stated that he had no problem with the proposed project. The First Congregational Church has done a great job in preserving history for over 200 years and they always thinks “preserve, preserve, preserve” with respect to its properties.

**MOTION** by Jeanné Chesanow that the Application for Certificate of Appropriateness, # 2010-001E, be approved by the Historic District Commission for the First Congregational Church to remove and rebuild the front porch of the Whiting House, 77 Church Drive, a property on the National Register of Historic Places. The porch will be rebuilt as described in the application including photos and samples of materials. We find that the proposed porch reconstruction, which will use as many original materials as possible including the columns will be appropriate. The proposed substitute materials – Trex decking, Azek trim – have practical properties such as low maintenance and moisture resistance and will convey the visual appearance of the original porch. The porch’s final appearance, with its location well back from the nearest public way, will be compatible in design and proportion with the rest of the building and its surroundings. **SECONDED** by Algert Sanders.

**Discussion:** Ms. Fox added that the work on the porch will include the removal of the structures that currently exist at the base of the steps, which will not be redone. Commissioners agreed there was no reason to replace them and that a “normal” set of stairs and railing should be constructed.

**VOTE:** In Favor – Chesanow, Fox and Sanders
Opposed – Anderson

The motion passed 3 – 1.
B. Application for COA # 2010-002C
Alan Jarman
594 South Brooksvale Road
Storage Buildings (Outdoor oven, wood shed & storage shed)

Commissioners reviewed the Certificate of Appropriateness application received from Alan Jarman of 594 South Brooksvale Road for storage buildings on his property. Chairman Chesanow informed Mr. Jarman that any abutting property owners will need to be notified of a Public Hearing and asked Mr. Jarman if he would be available for a March 15th Hearing date? Mr. Jarman replied that he would be.

Commissioners reviewed the submitted plans for an outdoor wood fired oven, a wood storage shed and a garden shed. Mr. Jarman stated that the oven is not really visible from a public right of way due to the ground elevations of his property. He did say that the garden shed would be visible from the street. When asked if the buildings required Building Permits, Mr. Jarman replied that he believed if an out building is less than 144 square feet and less than 12 feet tall, it did not require a permit. Mr. Silko stated that he would confirm this with the Building Official.

MOTION by Jeanné Chesanow that the Historic District Commission accepts Alan Jarman’s Certificate of Appropriateness application for storage buildings located at 594 South Brooksvale Road and set a Public Hearing date of March 15, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. SECONDED by Eric Anderson.

VOTE: In Favor – Anderson, Chesanow, Fox and Sanders
Opposed – None

The motion passed 4 – 0.

C. Chairman’s Report

Chairman Chesanow stated that she had nothing additional to report to the Commission.

D. Education / Community Outreach Committee

1. Sign Report

Chairman Chesanow stated that Creative Dimensions was finalizing the design for the South Brooksvale Historic District signs.

2. Upcoming educational programs
   a. Moore / Clark photographs
Chairman Chesanow and Ms. Fox will meet as the Education / Community Outreach Committee on Monday, March 15th at 6:30 p.m. before the regular Historic District Commission meeting to discuss future project(s) with the historic property photographs from the Clark Collection and WPA photographs.

E. Preservation Committee

1. 1986 Inventory Update

Mr. Anderson shared some photographs from the 1920's and 1940's of the Plaza Block located on the corner of Main Street and West Main Street, which will be torn down to make way for a Rite Aid pharmacy. He also shared a copy of an article relating to the moving and combining of a house on Main Street that until recently was the location of Consignment Originals, which will also be torn down as part of the Rite Aid project. Mr. Anderson contacted the demolition contractor for the project to give them information about a company called Urban Miners out of Hamden, which is a company that will come in and claim historic materials from properties. He also noted that members of the public can purchase, from Urban Miners, historic materials they have harvested.

Ms. Fox commented that she heard back from Mary Donohue at the State Historical Commission who told her that she has no other negatives from the 1986 Inventory Report for Cheshire. Ms. Fox stated that she would be available to scan the best copy, of the properties in the report, that can be found.

2. Borden House Update

There was no update on the Borden House at Cheshire Academy.

F. Rules and Regulations Committee

1. Changes in Regulations & Rules of Procedure

Chairman Chesanow would like the Rules and Regulations Committee to meet soon to review the proposed Fee Schedule ordinance after it is drafted and to discuss changes to the Guidelines regarding permanent coatings. Members of the Rules and Regulations Committee suggested meeting before the April 5th meeting, at 6:30 p.m.

G. Certified Local Government
Chairman Chesanow asked Mr. Sanders to prepare a one-page resume for the Certified Local Government application. Mr. Sitko reported that he had received Ms. Fox’s resume already.

H. George Keeler House and Stove Shop

Chairman Chesanow reported that she is writing an article for the Historic Society newsletter on the George Keeler House and Stove Shop.

I. Signs at 15 South Main Street

Mr. Sitko informed the Commissioners that Cliff Podaras, Jr. has been in the Planning Department and is working with the Zoning Enforcement Officer regarding the sign offenses at 15 South Main Street.

J. Guidelines RE: Permanent Coatings

Chairman Chesanow stated that there is nothing new to report on Permanent Coatings but that she would like to formalize the wording on this subject for the Historic District Guidelines. It was suggested that this topic be included in the annual Spring letter to the Historic District property owners from the Commission.

K. Clerk’s report

Ms. Fox stated that she and Chairman Chesanow are working on the Annual Report of the Historic District Commission and updating the Certificate of Appropriateness Activity Report.

L. Website Update

Chairman Chesanow commented that the Historic District Commission’s web page was fine.

M. Other

Mr. Sitko stated that the Town Manager has said that there are some changes needed to the Fee Schedule Ordinance by the Town Attorney so there will be no Public Hearing on March 9th with the Town Council, but it will be re-scheduled for another date by the Town Council. Councilwoman Giddings commented that she has not seen a revised draft of the Historic District Commission Fee Schedule Ordinance at the Ordinance Review Committee yet.
Mr. Anderson talked about the Energy Credits, up to $1,500, which is available again this year and are available for heat loss reduction and heating source purchases. He suggested that this could be a topic for the upcoming letter to the Historic District property owners.

Mr. Anderson talked about a recent visit to the Smart Living "store" on the Post Road in Orange. In addition to having energy savings products and tips, the Smart Living Center offers regularly scheduled training classes to the public on how to save energy. Mr. Anderson noted that school trips could also be scheduled to the Smart Living Center.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Eric Anderson that the Historic District Commission regular meeting of March 1, 2010 be adjourned at 9:05 p.m. SECONDED by Al Sanders.

VOTE: In Favor – Anderson, Chesanow, Fox and Sanders
Opposed – None

The motion passed 4 - 0.

Respectfully submitted:

Tracey M. Kozlowski
Recording Secretary