

Members Present: Steve Wagner (SW), Kathryn Scadden (KS), John Thompson (JT), Alan Fobes (AF), Phyllis Halpern (PH)

Staff Present: Dana Orkin (DO), John Field (JF)

Others Present: Attorney Beth Nolan, Patrick and Cristina Murphy, Alicia Primer

Location: online

Link to Recording: <https://weston.vod.castus.tv/vod/?video=0137644e-5ed7-42a2-9d40-dbab8e31de56&nav=programs%2FHistorical%20Commission%20-%20Weston%20MA>

SW called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm and read an open meeting law disclaimer from the Governor regarding remote meetings.

Agenda Item:

1. Public Comments: None

2. 300 Meadowbrook Rd – 1922 – Changes to a previously approved partial demolition and addition with ZBA Special Permit –

This meeting was requested by Attorney Nolan on behalf of the owners of 300 Meadowbrook regarding the “Stop Work Order” due to as-built deviations from previously approved plans.

SW began by recognizing the importance of the house located prominently on a corner in Case’s Corner National Register Historic District. Demolition delay was originally waived for the proposal when it came to the HC in May 2019 because of the way its small additions on the side and back retained the original historical character and scale of the house, used in-kind materials and details, and were subordinate to the existing house. Using the HC determination that the proposal was not detrimental to the house and neighborhood, the Zoning Board of Appeals later provided a Special Permit for the project.

After the HC co-chairs were notified by passersby that the as-built construction deviated from the approved drawings, they asked the building inspector to review construction documents for comparison. Inspector John Field issued a Stop Work Order on February 2nd.

The HC’s intention now is talk about the status of the project and to see how to move forward.

PH discussed the history of the house and described the approved proposal application. She presented the approved drawings as modified and approved administratively in February 2020. The addition design that the HC had approved used the intent, language, forms and materials of the original house. It kept the original house prominent by keeping the additions much lower. It fit well into the neighborhood.

She compared the approved drawings to photos of the as-built conditions. Deviations at the gambrel addition on the north side include a much taller ridge than what should have been built, and a much larger mass. Inflection points on the gambrel are above rather than aligning with the existing eaves, and broad flares or skirts across the bottom of the gable ends were added arbitrarily. Another deviation regarding the gambrel addition is the elimination of the overhangs and bracket at the ends. Other changes include connecting one of the original dormers to the new gambrel addition at the back, changing the low sloped back one-story addition to a tall gable-roofed mass that obscures the back of the existing house, partially blocking two remaining windows, altering the chimney so as to remove its taper, enlarging the mudroom addition roof, removal of the flared shingle-bases throughout that would match the existing conditions, and several fenestration changes. The result is quite different from what we expected to see in this as-built. These deviations prevent the project from fitting with the character of the existing house.

JT asked whether any amended plans that showed as-built changes were provided to the HC. SW said no; the co-chairs had requested these, but the only other plans that were provided were framing drawings which were sent yesterday.

Alicia Primer, former HC member, recalled that the HC was pleased that the original plans so respected the architecture of the house and neighborhood. The as-built has a tenuous relationship to those plans.

Beth Nolan, attorney representing the owners, thanked the HC for convening this emergency hearing as requested just two days ago. She noted that the owners did not begin construction until well after the original demo delay period would have ended. She acknowledged that there are discrepancies between what was originally presented and what has been built. She believes these differences are modest. She called the Stop Work Order draconian. She requested that the HC vote to advise the Building Inspector to discontinue the Order. She referred to her letter to the HC dated on the 8th. She acknowledged the notes on the drawings including Note # 3, which states *"No alteration in the footprint, elevations, and floor area of the approved design is allowed without prior written permission of the Weston Historical Commission, the Weston Zoning Board of Appeals, and the Architect."* She stated that the engineer did calculations believed to be based on original CAD drawings from the architect. Other changes were done on "the builder level." According to Nolan, the homeowner thought these changes were aesthetically pleasing. Many of the alterations are only visible from the back or golf club view. She will appeal the Stop Work Order to the ZBA.

KS asked whether the architect prepared drawings beyond the schematic level. Answer: no, the engineer based framing plans directly on the schematic drawings, with no in-between steps. Then JT noted that it appears the engineer did not pay attention to the drawings. SW would like to get a clear view of where they are going with the design. AF made a distinction between the changes on the back of the house versus the large addition on the end which is out of scale with the original house. PH pointed out that the back of the property is visible from Meadowbrook Rd and still a part of the Historic District. KS asked what can be done, if anything, to make the house look more appropriate?

Primer asked whether the HC would have approved drawings of the as-built conditions? The high roof of the northern addition is not clearly subordinate to the original mass of the house.

SW said he hoped for a dialogue, so that we could discuss what can change from the owner's perspective. Nolan stated that they would not disassemble the as-built framing but could alter window locations. SW noted that we've asked for plans showing the construction intentions, but all that we've seen, besides the schematic drawings that were not followed are framing drawings that came yesterday. The HC has asked for other drawings, but there are none. Where did the changes come from? Nolan said there were on-site decisions, made by the builder and owner. It was pointed out again that the Note #3 on the drawings stated there were to be no changes without prior approval by the HC, ZBA and architect.

SW asked if the rules aren't followed, why do we even have the process? He asked again for drawings to be able to compare. The HC cannot make any decisions without seeing drawings of the as-built with windows, doors, siding and trim. JT noted that the HC had approved a set of drawings, including in-kind details and materials, but what we see at the site is very different.

KS suggested that if the owners hire a new architect and ask him/her to adjust the as built conditions to follow the original concepts more closely than they appear now, that could be a step forward. JT noted details of finish trim and materials make a difference to the character. He acknowledged this painful experience.

New drawings should show elevations, including windows and doors, trim, siding and other details and materials.

Tomorrow Nolan will submit an appeal of the Stop Work Order to the ZBA, but the applicants will try to submit revised drawings to the HC as soon as possible. JT suggested that co-chairs may be able to answer questions in order to move this along as quickly as possible. PH assured the applicants that whenever Nolan says new drawings are ready, the HC will convene again.

Another meeting will be scheduled when drawings are available.

JT moved to close tonight's meeting. AF seconded. All voted in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:26 pm

Respectfully submitted: Phyllis Halpern