

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 18, 2016

4:30 PM 2nd floor Committee Room

Members Present:

Hanspeter Weber, Chair
Dan Bartlett, Vice Chair
James Duffy
Anita Carroll-Weldon

Staff Present:

Tara Kessler, Planning

Members Not Present:

Thomas Powers, Councilor
Joslin Kimball Frank

SITE VISIT: In advance of the meeting on May 18, 2016 at 3:30 p.m., Commission members Chair Hanspeter Weber and Anita Carroll-Weldon, and staff, Tara Kessler, attended a site visit at 185 Main Street, St. Bernard Church. At 3:45 p.m., Chair Hanspeter Weber and staff, Tara Kessler, attended a site visit at 12 Eagle Court, the Monadnock Makerspace. At 4:00 p.m., Chair Hanspeter Weber, Dan Bartlett, and Jim Duffy attended a site visit at 38 Roxbury Street, the former YMCA.

1. Call To Order and Roll Call

Chair Weber called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM and roll call was conducted.

2. Approve Meeting Minutes of April 20, 2016

Mr. Duffy made a motion for the Historic District Commission (HDC) to approve the minutes of April 20, 2016. Mr. Bartlett seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3. Public Hearings

a. COA-2015-07 Mod. 1 – 185 Main St. – St. Bernard’s Church

Applicant, J. Michael Davis, on behalf of owner, Roman Catholic Bishop Church of Manchester, proposed façade restoration improvements to the building at 185 Main Street, St. Bernard Church. The property is Tax Map Parcel 048-03-003. The building is ranked as a Primary Resource.

Chair Weber asked for staff’s recommendation on the completeness of the application. Ms. Kessler replied that staff recommends the HDC accept the application as complete.

Mr. Duffy made a motion for the HDC to accept the application as complete. Mr. Bartlett seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Chair Weber opened the public hearing at 4:32 PM and invited Mr. Davis to speak.

Mr. Davis, Chair of the Finance Committee at the St. Bernard Church, Parish of the Holy Spirit, stated that the Church is in the middle of a major restoration project that involves both interior and exterior improvements. He continued, noting that the goal is to bring the Church back to what it looked like historically and to make it a showpiece of the Historic District. He stated that it is a three-fold project. First, they will repair and rebuild the four crosses on the church, using the same materials and design present today. Second, they will paint all of the exterior wood white, and will do repairs where needed using matching materials. Third, in many areas, the mortar has fallen out of the brick, and they will repair this and make the color match the existing mortar. He continued, stating that at the discretion of the contractor they intend to hire for this project, Mr. Robert Morgan, they propose washing the brick in some areas. Some of the brick has been stained and brick on the west-facing elevation has been painted. They want the mortar to match the existing mortar color, which is a rust color, as possible. He continued, noting that they also want to restore the front doors, which were installed in 1962, to as close to their current appearance as possible. If this is not possible, they would like to replace them with door that look similar to the existing. They also want to install a cornerstone or dedication plate, as the 125th anniversary of the Church is in 2017.

Mr. Davis continued, stating that they would like to install a gutter at an eave where water is running off the roof and damaging the window sills on the south side of the Church. Also, the back of the church is a significantly different color than the sides and they hope to power wash this wall at a low pressure. They would like for the color of the sidewalls to match the color of the back wall. Other planned work includes installing a new heating system, capping the chimney, replacing the exterior lights (currently in rather bad shape) with LED lights, and replacing broken glass in the stained glass windows.

Mr. Bartlett asked if they have chosen a brick. Mr. Davis replied that they have not and that they plan to prepare a mockup of the brick and mortar for the HDC Chair to review before moving forward with the work. Mr. Bartlett asked if there is a stain on the brick. Mr. Davis replied that there is a stain coating the brick on all sides of the Church. He continued, stating that the east, south, and north elevations are coated with the same material, but the west elevation does not match. Mr. Bartlett asked if they would attempt to coat the new brick. Mr. Davis replied that they would not.

Chair Weber asked about the condition of the granite front entry stairs. The Church received a Certificate of Approval to re-caulk these stairs in the fall of 2015. Mr. Davis replied that when the stairs were moved to re-caulk them, they discovered that the concrete underpinnings were deteriorated. The stairs were reviewed by an engineer and they are installing 8-inch angled steel for the granite stairs to rest on. Following this work, they will re-caulk the steps.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon asked if they will be replacing bricks. Mr. Davis replied that there are some areas where brick has been damaged by plows that need to be replaced. Ms. Kessler stated that many of the bricks proposed for replacement are on the rear of the building, out of sight from the public right-of-way.

Chair Weber asked if all of the crosses on the roof would be restored. Mr. Davis replied in the affirmative, noting that they will rebuild the bases and re-gild them.

Chair Weber asked for comments from staff. Ms. Kessler replied that staff considers most of the proposed work to be ordinary maintenance, since the applicant is not changing the material or color of the wood trim or the crosses. She continued, stating that her staff report focuses on the masonry re-pointing and the potential replacement of front entry doorways. She stated that Mr. Davis addressed most of the information she included in the staff report. She discussed the applicant's proposal to pressure wash the exterior surface of the masonry. Ms. Kessler noted that she spoke with Mr. Davis about the HDC

standards regarding cleaning and washing masonry surfaces and that she shared the National Park Service's recommendations for pressure washing brick. It is recommended that a lower pressure wash of 100 psi be used and that there be a gradual increase of pressure, not to exceed 300 or 400 psi. Ms. Kessler stated that Mr. Morgan would be using a very low pressure wash and would not exceed 300 psi. Also, he would not treat the wood trim with water.

Ms. Kessler continued that the applicant has yet to decide whether they will be replacing the front entry doors. They intend to rehabilitate them to be more energy efficient. However, if this is not possible they will select a door material and design that matches what is present on the site. She recommended that the Commission consider including a condition to a motion for approval, if they are so inclined, that grants the HDC Chair and Planning staff the ability to review and approve any modifications related to the front entry doors. If either the Chair or staff feel the proposed changes are significant the application would be reviewed by the full Commission. Ms. Kessler continued, stating that she would advise the Commission to have the applicant share a mock-up of the proposed mortar color and type before any re-pointing work on the building is conducted.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon stated that she is concerned about replacing the doors, mainly because of the picture included in the report shared by the Applicant. Mr. Davis replied that they do not intend to use the type of door design included in the photograph. He continued, stating that their goal would be to match the doors present on the building today. Ms. Carroll-Weldon stated that although the doors on building are not original, they are from the 1960s, which is in the 50-year period of significance. She emphasized the importance of reproducing the doors to match how they appear today, if they need to be replaced. Mr. Davis replied that he agrees and the goal is to not replace them.

Chair Weber asked if anyone from the public would like to speak. Hearing none, he closed the public hearing at 4:46 PM for deliberation by the Commission.

Mr. Bartlett stated that he thinks this project respects, maintains and improves the existing fabric of the Historic District. He continued, stating that this is wonderful project and sees no reason not to support it fully. Chair Weber stated that he is in full support of the project and the proposed approach.

Mr. Duffy made the following motion, which was seconded by Mr. Bartlett.

By a vote of 4 to 0, the Historic District Commission approved COA-2015-07 Modification 1 submitted by J. Michael Davis, for façade restoration improvements at 185 Main Street as described in the report prepared by Robert Morgan Steeple and Building Restoration for St. Bernard Church dated April 2, 2016 with the following conditions:

1. Approval of the Planning Department and HDC Chair of a mock-up of the mortar color, thickness, and type prior to conducting any masonry repointing.
2. Approval of the Planning Department and HDC Chair of the replacement entryway doors prior to installation.

Mr. Duffy stated that he concurs with what Mr. Bartlett said. He continued, stating that St. Bernard's has been before the HDC before. He appreciates the effort and hard work they are all doing.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Davis thanked staff for their assistance in the application process.

a. COA-2016-04 – 38 Roxbury St. – MoCo Arts

Applicant, MoCo Arts, Katie Sutherland on behalf of owner, MGJ Realty LLC, proposes to demolish the building at 38 Roxbury St and build a new 17,000 square foot building. The parcel is TMP# 017-07-016. The existing building is ranked as a Primary Resource.

Chair Weber asked for staff's recommendation on the completeness of the application. Ms. Kessler replied that staff recommends the HDC accept the application as complete.

Mr. Duffy made a motion for the HDC to accept the application as complete. Mr. Bartlett seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Chair Weber opened the public hearing at 4:53 PM and asked Katie Sutherland to speak.

Katie Sutherland stated that she is an architect in Keene, hired by MoCo Arts to design their new building. She continued, stating that she is working with H3 Hardy Collaboration Architecture and Brickstone Land Use Consultants. MoCo Arts is a 25-year-old non-profit organization that fosters children's arts education. It is outgrowing its space on Railroad Street and they want to rebuild on Roxbury St.

Ms. Sutherland continued, stating that the first part of the application is to demolish the current building on Roxbury St, which is the former site of the Keene YMCA. MoCo Arts staff and her structural engineering staff visited the building a month ago to conduct an interior site visit. The oldest part of the building was built in 1875. The majority of the building was built in the 1970s and is not considered historically or architecturally significant. Thus, the structural engineering report is focused on the older part of the building, which undergone some demolition. The interior has been stripped and this portion of the structure is structurally unstable. The roof is collapsing, and in some areas it is possible to see daylight through the mortar. Ms. Sutherland noted that the structural engineer states that it is unsound. MoCo Arts would like to demolish the existing building and build a new, modern building. She asked Dave Bergeron to walk through the site plan.

Dave Bergeron stated that he works for Brickstone Land Use Consultants. He reviewed the site plan and indicated where it shows the existing building and the shape of the lot, and where the older portion of the building is. Mr. Bergeron continued, stating that the plan is to construct a new building. They are proposing to locate this new structure closer to the street than the original structure. The design includes about 23 parking spaces for clients and employees. It is a two-story building with more green space on the site than what is present today. The front of the building has a landscaped lawn area for people to sit in before performances and practice. This area will be surrounded by an aluminum fence, which will separate it from a large courtyard near the main entrance. He showed where cars will be parked and how they will travel through the site. He noted that there will be a travel lane that will allow vehicles to stack around the backside of the building. He stated that there will be some lights on low poles in the parking area with LED fixtures. He explained that there are some grading issues with the site; however, they have resolved these issues by having the building be a little higher than the street. They addressed the slope by increasing the grade around the back, using the building as a retaining wall.

Ms. Sutherland reviewed the floor plans. She reported that the first floor will have a 200-seat black box theater that needs to be windowless, and will have exterior brick walls. They intentionally located this portion of the building to the back of the site. The primary façade will have a glass entryway on the first level with a Kawwall system located on the second level. Kalwall is a translucent wall system that provides natural light and will help reduce the carbon footprint. She showed where the dance studios will be located, and noted that they have proposed windows that work well with the other buildings in the district, in terms of overall proportion and scale. They wanted to design a building that does not mimic

the historic district around it but complements it. She continued that the material proposed for the facades is red brick and she showed a sample to the Commission. The windows will have an aluminum frame, similar to others on Main Street. The reduced width of the windows along the south-facing elevation is intended to express movement and a transition from the downtown to a more residential area.

Ms. Sutherland showed other images of the proposed building elevations. She stated that zoning allows the building to be up to six stories high and for the frontline to come all the way to sidewalk. She noted that they did streetscape studies to show how this proposed building relates to the scale of the other buildings on Roxbury St, Main St and West St. She stated that many features of the proposed design reflect and complement the surrounding architecture.

Ms. Sutherland showed samples of the materials to be used on the site including the proposed brick, paver material, and other masonry that will be used on the exterior of the building. She noted that the porous paver will be used in the front courtyard. She continued, stating that they wanted to use a color similar to concrete sidewalks so that the courtyard seems like an extension of the public space. Ms. Sutherland showed a sample of the aluminum storefront system windows, and an aluminum wall panel for the back of the building. She also displayed a color photo of a translucent wall system, noting that it has a gridded system that breaks down the scale of the front façade.

Mr. Bartlett asked her to describe the grassy front lawn space. Mr. Bergeron stated that one of the studios is on the first floor and the grassy space will be an extension of that for use in nice weather. Ms. Sutherland added that it will be flat and fenced, so that children cannot go in the street. It will be a nice place for children to spend time outside. It has southern exposure and engages the street, as people can see what is happening inside the building.

Chair Weber stated that he noticed that there is very little horizontal delineation in the building. If you look at the streetscape, most other buildings have strong horizontal lines. He noted that even the windows of the proposed building design do not have lintels. Ms. Sutherland replied that since they would not be structural lintels they thought it was important to be honest about expressing the structure of this new brick building in a way that complements the other buildings. Also, it would be expensive to hang a lintel behind a brick façade. She noted that they have the horizontal lines via the gridded effect of the Kalwall system.

Chair Weber replied at that first when he looked at the design it struck him as a little stark. However, he continued, noting that the Historic District does have some modern buildings and he is appreciating them more and more. Ms. Sutherland replied that they want to have the crescendo build towards Main St and that she feels the proposed design has a lot going on visually, and putting decoration on it might diminish it. Mr. Bartlett stated that he appreciates Ms. Sutherland's explanation. He stated that many of the buildings in the Historic District have some sort of cornice or termination at the top. He asked what type of treatment would be used on this building. Ms. Sutherland replied that they will have a simple aluminum cornice cap at the top. She continued, explaining that to build out cornices today you have to get fiberglass ones that attach. Because you can only build the brick wall out so far when you have a veneer wall system, it is hard to do a cornice out of actual masonry, unless you are doing a true load-bearing wall.

Mr. Bartlett stated that one brick sample is darker than the other. He continued that they have a bifurcated program, one volume with a black box theater and one with the rest, which he feels is fantastic. He asked if they were going to use the two different brick colors in this way. Ms. Sutherland replied that they had not planned to use two brick colors but she would not be opposed to it. Mr. Bartlett encouraged her to think about it.

Mr. Bartlett asked if the MoCo Arts Board has discussed keeping just the brick façade of the original 1875 structure, and/or saving any portion of the structure. Ms. Sutherland replied that they talked about it briefly, but when they started talking about the programming, and getting all of the necessary spaces and the lobby in there, it did not work for any particular room or function of the building. Also, cost was a factor. They are working hard to stay on budget. She continued, stating that to re-build the existing brick walls they would have to be completely repointed and this is not feasible on either financially or programmatically.

Chair Weber replied that this is one of the few examples he has seen of a building that has to be demolished due to neglect.

Mr. Duffy asked if there are photos of the building when it was in better condition. He asked if there are portions of the building that are significant and would not be costly to remove. Ms. Sutherland asked if he means for salvage. Mr. Duffy replied in the affirmative. Ms. Sutherland replied that some of the brownstone base might be salvaged; however, the bricks are in bad condition.

Chair Weber asked for staff comments and findings.

Ms. Kessler replied that staff agrees with the engineering report that was submitted by the applicant, which indicates that the building is in unsound condition and cannot be inhabited. She continued that their concern is that if it continues to be neglected it might have to be demolished to prevent a public safety hazard. She noted that the report is specific to the 1875 structure but the regulations allow the HDC Committee to consider the demolition of the newer portion of the building without needing an engineering report. She feels the applicant was very thorough in addressing how the proposed building meets the HDC Regulations specific to new construction. She also noted that the applicant has provided a significant amount of detail and samples related to the proposed project for the Commission's consideration. She continued, providing a review of relevant HDC standards and how the proposed projects meets these standards.

Ms. Kessler read from Section XV.D.2.b)1)

“New buildings or structures shall be sited so that the existing pattern of the historic streetscape – setbacks, spacing, lot coverage, scale, massing, height, orientation – in which they are located is not disrupted.”

She stated that in reviewing the proposed design, the applicant plan to bring the front line of the structure closer to the streetscape and create a more consistent form with the surrounding structures than what is there today. She noted that this is a unique area in that it provides a transition from dense, large urban form to a mixed-use zone of residential and limited commercial uses. There is a field at the site of the former Keene Middle School that is located between the existing building and where the transition to residential/limited commercial development occurs. She noted that the applicant did a notable job of trying to make this building be a transition from the urban downtown core to a more residential, mixed use area. They did this through the height and scale of the proposed building, which will be 38-feet at its highest point, which is similar to a three-story building and what is present on the site today.

Ms. Kessler continued to the next standard:

“The shape, scale and fenestration of new buildings or structures shall respect the established historic and architectural character of the surrounding area.”

She stated that the applicant emphasized their consideration for the features of the surrounding streetscape and historically significant buildings in the area and other areas of downtown. Ms. Kessler reviewed the features that the applicant included in their proposed design that complement the surrounding buildings.

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Ms. Kessler read the next standard:

“Exterior cladding shall be of materials that are common in the district. Acceptable materials include brick, stone, terra cotta, wood and metal.”

She noted that the applicant proposes to use brick and, in some small places, aluminum and split-face masonry, as primary exterior materials. The Kalwall has a grid pattern that breaks up the massing of the structure and provides relief from the masonry.

Ms. Kessler read the next standard:

“For new construction...every effort shall be made to locate parking behind the building(s). Parking shall be located to the rear of the backline of the building or the backline of the main block of the building, as applicable.”

She continued that the former YMCA building does not have parking on site. MoCo Arts proposes having most of the parking in the rear and along the east-facing wall of the structure. They propose installing landscaping to screen this parking from Roxbury St. She noted that adjacent to the building is a field.

Ms. Kessler continued that all of the lighting meets the City’s standards for full cut-off, LED fixtures. The proposed fence mimics the style of historic fences but with a more modern take using aluminum finish with the bollards as posts. All of the HVAC equipment will be hidden from view on the roof. Ms. Sutherland added that there is a parapet wall on the back of the building. She showed its location and continued, noting that the HVAC equipment would not be visible.

Ms. Kessler recommended a motion for the HDC Committee to consider.

Chair Weber asked if there were more questions. Hearing none, he opened the public hearing at 5:34 PM. He read a list of names of people who have written letters of support for this project: Erin Meenan, MoCo Arts Board of Director and local attorney; Joshua Meehan, Executive Director of Keene Housing; Patricia Gallup; Stephen Jones, President of Antioch University New England; Christian Sy; Tamara Sy, Capital Campaign Committee Member; Ted McGreer, MoCo Arts Advisory Board Member; Philip Suter, President of the Greater Keene Chamber of Commerce; James Putnam; Jane Stabler; and Michelle O’Clarke.

Chair Weber asked for public comment.

John Bolster praised MoCo Arts’ work and stated that modern architecture is designed to be efficient, practical, and cost effective. In contrast, the subtle embellishments incorporated in brick historic structures had the purpose of breaking the tension of harsh lines, creating a softening effect. He asked if MoCo Arts’ budget allows for some subtle ways to relieve a little tension, so pedestrians see not just harsh edges, but an organic sense of movement.

Anne Henderson, long time citizen of Keene and MoCo Arts Board Member, stated that she is fully and completely behind this project and this design. She continued, stating that MoCo Arts has done due diligence and has been working on this project for over a year. It was important to keep MoCo Arts downtown. The kids are exuberant and talented. In that sense, the building is organic and the kids are an interactive component between the inside and outside. She looks forward to the interaction with kids and the community and a building that can be economically viable, and the most technical building they can afford. They need to have some technical spaces. She stated that Ms. Sutherland and H3 Hardy have done an amazing job. It could have embellishments and other nods to the past but she thinks it is a

building that will have historic significance as a future building of interest that will age well and give everyone years of service.

Josh Meehan, Executive Director of Keene Housing, stated that he already wrote a letter of support, but his letter did not talk about the design. He continued, stating that Keene Housing abuts the proposed property. He feels the design of the proposed MoCo Arts building makes a lot of sense to him and flows well as it transitions from dense and urban out into the neighborhood. He would welcome this building and feels it would be a vast improvement to what is there now.

Mike Blair, of 175 West Surry Road, President of the MoCo Arts Board of Directors, read his letter out loud. [This letter is attached to the meeting minutes]

Chair Weber closed the public hearing at 5:44 PM and asked for HDC deliberation. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Duffy stated that he thinks demolition is necessary. He continued that the design fits the HDC guidelines. He likes the design of people coming in, picking up and dropping off, but that it is a very unsafe area with or without the proposed building. A child was injured very seriously a number of years ago. Traffic from the intersection/Central Square is high volume, high speed. He knows that MoCo Arts has been trying to stay in Keene for more than a year. He does not think that this is a safe space for children until the streetscape is altered and serious traffic calming occurs. However, he noted that it is easy for him to vote in favor of this project following the HDC's standards. He stated that the City needs organizations like MoCo Arts to stay downtown and keep the area vibrant. This in and of itself will help preserve the Historic District and help it thrive.

Mr. Bartlett stated that he would be very pleased to see this building in Keene. He continued, stating that he is proud of the District's architectural heritage, but thinks we need buildings that place a marker in the present day so that people in the future will remember this period. He stated that this building is clearly of its own time. The abundance of glass facing the public way allows pedestrians to engage with what is going on inside. He feels this is critically important to the success of their relationship to the community. He noted that he is pleased with the choice of brick and the lack of reference to another time. He is pleased with the orientation to the city as a transition. He especially appreciates the glass receding in size, and feels it gives the building liveliness. He noted that he is entirely in favor of this aesthetically and as a contribution to the Historic District.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon stated that she thinks it is very important for MoCo Arts to stay in downtown Keene. Having community and cultural assets in the downtown affects its vibrancy and the lives of people who come downtown to enjoy the area. She feels that the site as it now stand is a liability and that it is extremely unfortunate that the historic portion of the existing building has fallen into such abject condition. She feels that the site design for the proposed building is excellent. Although, Ms. Carroll-Weldon comments that she feels the design is startlingly contemporary. She continued, noting that once Ms. Sutherland explained how it ties into the design of the surrounding area, she was able to understand the thought process. However, if she were visiting Keene for the first time, she would think that it stood out in contrast to the rest of the Historic District. She noted that she is very much in favor of the project.

Chair Weber stated that he did have a little shock in the beginning when he saw the building's design. He continued, stating that the proposed design has a glow and a lot of light, which he likes very much. He commutes on Roxbury St and has been watching the former YMCA building fall into more and more disrepair. He is very pleased that MoCo Arts could find a home here and he is pleased with the design. It is modern and he knows it will keep growing on him.

Mr. Bartlett made the following motion, which was seconded by Mr. Duffy.

On a vote of 4-0, the Historic District Commission approved COA-2016-04 for the demolition of the existing structure and the construction of a new 17,000 square foot building and associated site improvements at 38 Roxbury Street as described on the “Building Elevations” prepared by Katie Cassidy Sutherland Architects, PC and submitted to the Planning Department on May 5, 2016 and the “Site Plan” prepared by Brickstone Land Use Consultants and dated April 22, 2016 with the following condition:

1. Any minor modifications made to the aesthetic/architectural appearance of the building or site will receive prior approval of the Planning Department and HDC Chairperson, unless the modifications are determined to be major, warranting review and approval of the HDC.

c. COA-2014-03 – 12 Eagle Ct. – Make It So

Applicant, John Bolster, on behalf of owner, Ellis Robertson Corporation, requests the installation of an outdoor recreation area, which will include a mini-golf course and performance space, adjacent to the building at 12 Eagle Court. The parcel is TMP# 023-02-007.

Chair Weber asked for staff’s recommendation on the completeness of the application. Ms. Kessler replied that staff recommends the HDC accept the application as complete.

Mr. Duffy made a motion for the HDC to accept the application as complete. Mr. Bartlett seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Chair Weber opened the public hearing at 6:02 PM and recognized John Bolster.

Mr. Bolster stated that in addition to the documents he already submitted with his application, he has additional documents to submit that help clarify the proposed materials and the design of the proposed performance structure. He distributed these materials to the Commission.

Mr. Bolster stated that his goal is to create a natural space that stands out in contrast to the brick and mortar surrounding the area. He proposed taking a space used for snow storage on the site at 12 Eagle Court and making use of it in the non-winter months as a minigolf area, performance space and meditation garden. The putting greens will be designed by local artists and sponsored by local organizations. The performance space would have a stage and the focus would be acoustic music, although there may be opportunities for electric music in the future. The venue would hold about 50 audience members.

Mr. Bolster continued, stating that the site plan includes two removable walls. The southern wall/fence would be removed annually to make room for snow storage. They would likely remove the wall abutting the landscaped median next to Cypress St. He proposed having a mobile structure, such as a concessions stand/caddy shack, in the space. The mini golf greens would be modular and could be stacked and stored during the winter. Around the four corners of the space there would be openings framed by Japanese style arches. This space is frequently a crossroads for people coming from the Monadnock Food Co-op and the parking lot, and they want to be sure not to impede people’s daily routines. The goal is to create well-being, not agitation. Mr. Bolster noted that he wants to keep the space open but increase the experience for people passing through, similar to a Japanese shrine that honors the unknown and the infinite.

Mr. Bolster addressed landscaping, and noted that he would like to plant a clumping style of bamboo. They have yet to decide whether the bamboo would be placed in planters or in the ground.

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He noted that clumping bamboo is non-invasive and non-threatening, as it increases in density within the clump, as opposed to spreading out.

Mr. Bolster stated that he would like to install full cut-off light fixtures along the northern wall. The northern wall would be a permanent structure, providing a sound buffer from the late-night music from adjacent establishments. The attempt to create a buffer would be resolved with structural foam insulation blocks with plywood covered in stucco and a cedar shingled roof segment that runs the length of the structure. He noted that he shared a photo that shows upward facing light and he acknowledges that that is not ideal without further approval and information, so he proposes to retract this lighting from his request. He noted that they might have some full cut off lighting located above the foliage.

Chair Weber stated that it seems like he has changed his plans for the fencing. Mr. Bolster replied in the affirmative. He noted that he is changing the material from dead bamboo to live bamboo. He continued, stating that he is open to the Commission's suggestions for what type of fence material should be used. However, he prefers to avoid wrought iron. He would like to use something softer, woodier, and handcrafted.

Mr. Bartlett asked if it would have to be removable. Mr. Bolster replied that at least the south-facing side would need to be removable.

Mr. Bolster stated that he would prefer to use a natural stone as a paving material. He stated he will be making the pathways as ADA accessible as possible. He will attempt to create a perimeter pathway that is accessible so everyone can access all mini-golf elements, the audience area and egress. He stated that granite or slate are the two potential options for stone material.

Mr. Bolster shared a photo of the type of bamboo he plans to use. He noted that it can grow to a maximum of 10 feet tall and can be thinned out to improve visibility. He is leaning towards planting the bamboo in a planter with benches in the front.

Mr. Bolster stated that a portion of the wall that opposes the zen area will have to be demolished. He will make plans to use that space in other ways. The remaining portion may have a mural to complement the space. He will submit drawings of this proposed mural.

Chair Weber asked Mr. Bolster how he sees the stage being used. Mr. Bolster replied that it would be used for acoustic performances, theater and performance art. He continued, stating that when it is not being used in this way it can be used for meditation, yoga, tai chi, etc.

Mr. Bartlett stated that a 6'x10' stage is small. Mr. Bolster replied that he wanted to be careful not to have the stage take over the entire space as this is meant to be a for-profit mini-golf business. He continued, noting that the structure will not cost much to build, and they can expand if they need to.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon replied that she was going to ask if the mini-golf was a business. Mr. Bolster replied that Maker Space is for-profit. He continued that this is an example of a commercial endeavor they would have.

Mr. Bartlett asked if it will be a combination of a zen garden, mini golf, and performance art. Mr. Bolster replied yes, with the acronym ZAPP – Zen, Art, Putt, and Play.

Chair Weber asked for the staff report.

Ms. Kessler stated that According to Section III.D.2 (“Construction of a new building or structure”) of the Historic District Commission (HDC) Regulations, this work is classified as a “Major Project” for review by the HDC. However, it is important to note that the HDC Regulations are not designed to adequately address the unique nature of this proposed project; especially, considering the ranking of the resource as a Non-Contributing Resource, and the architectural context of the surrounding area. In her staff report, she tried to apply the standards as best as possible.

Section XV.D.2.b)3)

“New buildings or structures shall take into account the historic relationships of existing buildings and site features on the site.”

Ms. Kessler stated that the proposed design is clearly influenced by Asian architecture, which is not necessarily compatible with what is present in the Historic District. However, this area is not the most architecturally or historically significant. The existing building at 12 Eagle Court and the surrounding buildings are either non-contributing resources or the rear facades of Contributing Resources. The nearby Co-op is a newer structure, and it has a distinct aesthetic. According to the HDC standards, the applicant’s proposal does not necessarily draw on the historic features that are on site because there are not a lot from which to draw. As a whole, the district does not have a lot of Asian architecture or design.

Section XV.A.2.b)2)

“New fences shall be simple in design and shall complement the materials and design of the building(s) on the site and the character of the site itself. Fences and walls along the street frontage shall be no higher than four feet...”

Ms. Kessler stated that her initial review of the application, which was documented in the staff report, responds to a design with a bamboo fence, and that the applicant had not yet proposed the material type of the permanent wall on the north side of the property. Regarding the proposed fence material, she noted that there are not many fences in the immediate area of the site in the Historic District. In looking at the District as a whole, bamboo is not a known material for fencing. She noted that the applicant has amended their proposal, and without having this material in advance it is difficult for her to adequately analyze how it conforms with the HDC standards.

Ms. Kessler continued, noting that it is important for the applicant to share specifications on the dimensions, placement, and material type of the proposed wall. This information would be included in the City’s record of approval and would be used by staff to ensure that the project is constructed according to the submitted plans and project description. She noted that the applicant has proposed changes to the site plan and renderings that were initially submitted and it is important for the applicant to submit a revised plan documenting these changes, if they are approved by the Commission. Mr. Bolster replied that he is able to provide updated site plans to show the proposed changes.

Section XV.D.2.b)1)

“New buildings or structures shall be sited so that the existing pattern of the historic streetscape – setbacks, spacing, lot coverage, scale, massing, height, orientation – in which they are located is not disrupted.”

Ms. Kessler stated that right now the design encompasses an area of about 2,600 square feet that is currently vacant with some vegetation growing on site. It is primarily used for snow storage. The proposed outdoor space will have a south-facing fence that would be aligned with the front line of the building and would continue this front line along to the roadway. She noted that the scale and massing of the proposed structure is compatible with the building present on the site.

She stated that a recommendation for a motion was not included in the staff report because she was hoping to learn more about the material used for the wall. She stated that the applicant has proposed a number of changes to the site and the materials that will be used at this meeting, and that are not

compatible with the submitted site plan and elevations. She feels it is important for the Commission to ensure that the plan they approve is the same plan that Mr. Bolster intends to carry out. She stated that if the Commission approves the application, it would be important for Mr. Bolster to submit a modified site plan and rendering that reflects what they discussed tonight. She noted that it is up to the HDC to decide whether they are ready to give formal approval at this meeting or continue the public hearing.

Mr. Duffy stated that he likes the concept of the project, but with respect to the HDC's standards, he does not feel able to make a decision at this meeting. He continued, stating that he leans towards placing this item on more time. The question of lighting has not yet been answered and the applicant has not provided specific information or details.

Chair Weber stated that having been at the site, he sees this project as an improvement over what is currently there. He continued, stating that he would seriously consider supporting the project on the condition that Mr. Bolster submits a clearer, more specific site plan to the Planning Department.

Mr. Bolster stated that is not necessary for ZAPP to operate after dark in the summer, so that would make lighting less important. He continued that regarding fencing, their intention is to put in planter boxes that would grow bamboo. It is not entirely necessary to have perimeter fences, and it would be up to him/the owners to secure the elements inside. He noted that most mini golf places do not have fences. Thus, they could just remove the two sections of fence at this time, and if they decide they want to install them, they could come ask the HDC again. If it is getting late in the season and they decide they need lights, they could come talk to the HDC about those terms.

Mr. Bartlett stated that this is a small site on an underused back corner of the city. He continued that this unique project could fall under a separate category, similar to an outdoor sculpture. Its small scale and unique nature makes it a novelty in this area of the District. He is in favor of giving more latitude to the applicant to proceed, especially if they agree to the landscaping, removal of lighting, and the stage design as presented, and require a clearer site plan if they want to add anything else. He is in favor of this project and wants to see it move forward. He asked if it is possible for the HDC to approve a piece of it tonight and have Mr. Bolster come back.

Mr. Duffy stated that he is in favor of this project but is confused. He continued that the HDC has standards to follow and he is not clear on the details here. Partly it is because what they are deciding on has shifted a couple times this evening, and has, he thinks, shifted from the original site plan. The HDC has three choices, and one is to place this topic on more time.

Ms. Kessler stated that if the HDC agrees that they are comfortable with the stage being located in the corner of the site plan as shown, staff is okay with that, and the applicant would just submit a site plan with the revised location. They approve modifications on a regular basis. If Mr. Bolster receives approval tonight for certain elements he could return and ask for modifications at a later time.

Mr. Duffy asked if this has to go to the Planning Board. Ms. Kessler replied that Mr. Bolster received approval from the Zoning Board for recreational use. She continued that the Planning Department determined that the development standard most impacted by this project is that related to aesthetics and architectural appearance. For projects in the Historic District, this standard is reviewed by the HDC instead of the Planning Board. Thus, staff does not think it needs Planning Board approval right now.

Chair Weber suggested they narrow it down to the elements they can agree to allow, and then if there are further enhancements Mr. Bolster can come back. He continued that what seems like essential elements are the stage, the stones and pathways, the setup of the mini golf course, the gates, and the wall on the north side. The planter is a question because they do not really know what they look like. Mr. Bolster

stated that there is a rendering of the wall on the north side that shows the roofed wall section. He continued that the only thing that would be omitted from that is the portion that is alongside the existing wall of the building, on the northern side of the golf course.

Mr. Duffy stated that he thinks they should approve the project. He continued that aesthetically, this is a Zen garden, and he does not want to get too detailed in telling the petitioner what to do, like where exactly to locate a planter. He suggested that the Commission is in a position to approve the request, as long as it ends up being consistent with what has been described by the petitioner and the HDC tonight. If Mr. Bolster ends up with something entirely different, "like a UFO dome," then yes, he needs to come back.

Ms. Kessler stated that most of the features being proposed are temporary structures that will be in place for the outdoor season. When winter comes, the area will be used for snow storage. She continued that there would be some permanent structures, like the stage and the north-facing wall. The concession stand is movable.

Chair Weber noted that they are excluding lighting and the bamboo fences from the approval at the request of the applicant. Mr. Duffy agreed that having the applicant take the lighting out of the proposal means that the HDC is in a position to approve or disapprove of the project at the meeting.

Ms. Kessler suggested wording for a motion.

Mr. Bartlett made a motion for the Historic District Commission to approve COA-2014-03 Modification 1 for the installation of an outdoor recreation area at 12 Eagle Court as described in the project narrative and shown on the drawings, "Site Plan," and "Elevation" prepared by John Bolster, and submitted to the Planning Department on April 29, 2016. Mr. Duffy seconded the motion.

Mr. Bartlett stated that he would like to add the condition that no lighting be installed without approval. Mr. Duffy stated that he agrees. Discussion ensued about whether it was necessary to amend the motion, and how. Mr. Duffy withdrew his second and Mr. Bartlett withdrew his motion. Ms. Kessler recommended wording for an amendment. Ms. Carroll-Weldon made the following motion, which was seconded by Mr. Bartlett.

On a vote of 4-0, the HDC approved COA-2014-03 Modification 1 for the installation of an outdoor recreation area at 12 Eagle Court as described in the project narrative and shown on the drawings, "Site Plan," and "Elevation" prepared by John Bolster, and submitted to the Planning Department on April 29, 2016 with the following condition:

1. No lighting shall be installed without prior approval of the Planning Department and the Historic District Commission Chair.

3. Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Weber adjourned the meeting at 6:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted by
Britta Reida, Minute-taker

Reviewed and edited by
Tara Kessler, Planner