

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 16, 2024

4:30 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Sophia Cunha-Vasconcelos, Chair
Hope Benik, Vice Chair
Anthony Ferrantello
Russ Fleming, Alternate

Staff Present:

Evan Clements, Planner

Members Not Present:

Louise Zerba
Councilor Catherine Workman
David Bergeron, Alternate
Peter Poanessa, Alternate

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos called the meeting to order at 4:35 PM. Roll call was conducted. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked Mr. Fleming to be a voting member. Mr. Fleming agreed.

2) Minutes of August 21, 2024

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the August 21 minutes are not ready for voting, but the HDC needs to re-do the vote on the June 19 minutes. She continued that when the HDC voted on the June 19 minutes, only three members voted; the fourth abstained because she was not present at the June 19 meeting.

Mr. Fleming made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of June 19, 2024. Mr. Ferrantello seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Public Hearing

A) COA-2024-04 – New Entry Addition, 33 Center St. – Applicant Dan Bartlett, on behalf of owner William Brown, proposes to construct an ~60-sf addition to the existing ~1,156-sf building located at 33 Center St. (TMP #568-015-000). The parcel is 0.10-ac in size and is ranked as a Contributing Resource in the Downtown Transition District.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos introduced COA-2024-04 and asked to hear from staff regarding the completeness of the application.

Evan Clements, Planner, stated that the applicant requested an exemption from supplying mortar, brick, or other material samples. He continued that after reviewing this exemption request, staff made the determination that the requested exemptions would have no bearing on the merits of the application. Staff's formal recommendation is to accept the application as complete.

Mr. Fleming made a motion to accept the application as complete. Mr. Ferrantello seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked the applicant to speak.

Dan Bartlett stated that he is the applicant and the project's architect and he is here with William Brown, the owner.

Mr. Brown stated that he has a letter to give to the HDC, with photos that he thinks will help. He continued that the old part of this house at 33 Center St., the brick part, was built in 1820. It has a symmetrical floor plan typical of federal-style neoclassical architecture. The addition in front of it is what you see from Center St. About 15 years ago, it was added but not finished. The top photo shows the area of discussion. The east side of the addition, which includes the brick, is what they want to turn into the main entrance, with a modern, metal and glass extension.

He continued that the photos below, taken in prior decades and kindly provided by the Historical Society of Cheshire County, show the old porch that filled roughly the same footprint as the current addition. The porch allowed a view from the street of the exterior wall and historic main doorway. Walking by, you could see the brick. The exterior stairs and porch entrance were aligned with the historic main doorway, symmetrical like the rest of the house design. It is a straight shot out the front to the street. Looking at the photo of the current addition, you see that the front exterior stairway is not unsymmetrical; it is high up, at the first floor level, but then the stairs turn into a 90-degree angle and go out. It looks like a back door. It is the front of the house. It is ugly and unwelcoming. The photo below, of the house during the demolition of the porch, reveals a lot about the house's structure. Note how high up the front door is. The basement is barely a basement. On the east side, the basement floor is only 1.5 feet below ground level. The first floor and the main doorway, with what was probably a semi-circle fan decoration above it, looms almost a full story high above the ground. It is an odd setup. He has not seen any local houses of the same era with a similar (setup).

Mr. Brown continued that (the questions are) how to give this house a better main entrance and make the historic door and wall more visible to the street, and how to include stairs down to the basement level where the kitchen is, which will be living area. Plan A was to rebuild the addition entrance like the 1960s porch entrance. He envisioned a half flight of exterior steps

extending straight out toward the sidewalk, with a landing with a glass door and maybe side lights, through which to view the historic door and side. Unfortunately, the setback boundary allows no room for such a staircase extending toward the street, so that plan is impossible. The main addition entrance has to be relocated. Therefore, they cannot make it match the house's symmetrical design. Setback boundaries only allow additional room at the eastern driveway or western ends of the structure. The driveway side seems the more logical site.

Mr. Brown continued that Plan B is to put the main entrance on the east side, replacing the addition's current front door with a big central window so the historic front door can be seen from the street. Adding a new front door cannot be done by simply installing a glass doorframe at ground level. You would bump your head; it is right at the first floor level. That would put the front door at head level. Excavating down to basement floor level for a main entrance is not appealing. The other options are to remove a section of the first floor at the doorway to create enough space for an entry and steps up and down, or to build an extension with entranceway at ground level, plus steps up and down. The design Mr. Bartlett came up with has a little of both options. It also creates an atrium and a sun parlor. The large areas of glass allow glimpses of the old part of the house from the sides. Essentially, it is a three-sided glass case.

Mr. Brown continued that putting the main entrance on the side is completely at odds with the house's federalist neoclassical symmetry. Since they have no choice, and since the addition is non-historical and nondescript, he thought they should embrace being at odds, making the entrance extension contrastingly modern, but in a way that showcases the old part of the house. What came to his mind was the New Hampshire School campus his grandfather worked at in the 1960s. The 19th century brick buildings were integrated with modern ones. They used a lot of glass. Even if you were inside a modern building, you were in sight of venerable brickwork. He wanted it to look innovative, intentional, and respectful to the old architecture but not "faux historical."

Mr. Bartlett stated that that was the historical background and the decision-making process that led them to where they are. He continued that he came in to make this work in architectural terms and in ways that they can actually build. He will talk a little about the architecture. Mr. Brown comprehensively covered the main gist, which is that they are trying to intentionally contrast with both the existing historical and the existing non-historical, by creating something that is decidedly of its own era yet compatible with brick. The glass is very important for being able to catch a glimpse of the corner of the historical building and then possibly through the front glazing.

Mr. Bartlett continued that trying to expose the original brick as much as possible is an important part of the project. In addition to the glass, they also have to use some material for structural and aesthetic reasons. He proposes using Corten steel siding, also known as weathering steel, because it is meant to go from a copper color to a verdigris green. Corten is meant to go from a metal-looking color to a rust, and to rust not catastrophically, but to form a patina that becomes protection. It gives a natural character that he thinks is very compatible with brick in color and

in variation. He thinks it is a wonderful material in a historic district. They are using a lot of glass, which he will put in black frames so it clearly has a sophisticated, modern look, but he thinks the Corten is very respectful of the brick in the neighborhood. That was the main architectural decision he thinks needs to be presented to the HDC.

Mr. Bartlett continued that they are doing that as described on the east side, a fairly large addition, and then will repeat that motif in a smaller version on the front of the house, to sort of tie and embrace the existing new addition with something that is consistent. In the packet, he provided examples of the Corten steel. They will probably go with a “western reveal,” which is what he was thinking of. He has tried to use this material (in the area) in the past, and for various reasons, it has not worked out. His concern is availability and cost, and whether there is someone who can install it. It is just metal, like any other metal siding, but he is nervous about it being something they can readily do for this particular project in this area. He wants the HDC to know they have a backup plan if necessary. Rather than come back before the HDC, he wanted to present that material (now) so they could do it administratively later on if they find out the Corten will not work out. He knows it is rather unusual. He asked if that is something he can do, or if the HDC wants to rule on the Corten and they can change it later if necessary.

Mr. Clements replied that the core of the application is for the addition itself. He continued that as long as the proposed material is listed or there are examples of it within the district that meet the historic intent, he thinks that at least from a strict regulations perspective that documenting that material change as an administrative application would be okay, if the HDC is comfortable with that. Mr. Ferrantello replied that it would be approved on a condition of (using) terra cotta, metal, or the acceptable wood, metal, or cement clapboard.

Mr. Clements replied that that is what staff would be looking at, so his recommendation would be to make a decision on the application as proposed with the weathering steel. He continued that then, if the applicant needs to change that material without changing the addition, the material change could be handled administratively.

Mr. Fleming asked what the proposed backup material is. Mr. Bartlett replied that he has a Corten sample to show the HDC, but it is straight from the mill and thus not weathered yet, so it just looks like metal. He has photos of the material in use on a house.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that he included some images of what the Corten would look like a little patinated, but Mr. Fleming’s question was what the alternative material would be. Mr. Bartlett replied that the alternative is “this” (item he was holding). He continued that he misspoke earlier. In the packet, on the last page of the manufacturer’s information, he highlighted the Western Wave 7/8” Deep Wave Panel, A606-4 (aka Corten). That has a profile quite similar to “this” (metal panel he is holding). He continued that this (material he is holding) is a more standard metal panel that he used on Perry Family Dental, which is not in the Historic District, but you can see it on West St. This corrugated metal siding would be the backup. It is

not Corten, but the profile he proposes in the Corten is very similar to this profile, this shade. It would look like this, but more rusty as opposed to red.

Mr. Fleming stated that he is from Pittsburgh and remembers when the US Steel Building was built out of Corten steel in 1971. He continued that Corten dropped a lot of oxidation around the area. He asked if it is correct that there is lawn all the way around the (subject) building, which would absorb that. Mr. Brown replied that there is sort of a lawn, but more of a driveway, unpaved. Mr. Fleming replied that he just wanted to make sure Mr. Brown was prepared for that rust dust. Mr. Bartlett stated that it might drip a little in the rain as well. He continued that it might stain the gravel underneath it. Mr. Ferrantello replied that it takes a while for it to get its permanent patina. He asked if the striations will be vertical or horizontal in the second option. Mr. Bartlett replied horizontal, to kind of reference the look of clapboards. He continued that he thinks the renderings depict the horizontal pattern. Mr. Fleming asked if it would be that way regardless of whether it was Corten. Mr. Bartlett replied yes. He continued that the difference between the two is that the (alternate material) has color painted on, while the Corten is a natural rusty color. He wanted to go with what went best with brick, but he thinks this alternate material goes well with brick as well.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she wanted to go over the standard that the HDC is looking to meet, before they get too far into the discussion. She continued that the first standard is, *“Additions shall reflect the context of surrounding historic buildings or structures and not detract from the overall character of the Historic District.”* The staff report states, *“The form and massing of the proposed addition ‘echoes’ the two-story bay window and porch structures that can be found throughout the neighborhood. The new addition matches the height and shape of the existing building while being delineated by a change in materials. The Board will need to determine if this standard has been met.”*

She continued that the other standard is, *“Materials used for siding on additions shall be compatible with existing materials on the building and shall be those that are common in the Historic District. Acceptable materials include brick, stone, terra cotta, wood, metal, and cement clapboard.”* (The staff report states), *“The applicant is proposing to use a weathering steel siding to provide contrast between the brick façade of the historic resource and the vinyl siding of the non-contributing addition. Metal is an approved material in the Historic District. It appears that this standard has been met.”*

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that it sounds like the real question before the Board is whether they feel the first standard has been met. Staff’s advice is that the other standard has been met. She asked if that is correct. Mr. Clements replied yes, metal is an accepted material in the Historic District. He continued that changing from the weathering steel to the other corrugated product (would be fine, as) both materials are allowed. The applicant proposed the weathering steel in the application. As he said earlier, making a decision on that product would be germane. Then if they want to use the other product, for whatever reason, that can easily be captured in an administrative application.

Mr. Clements continued that he will add that the property itself is ranked as Contributing. However, the addition with the vinyl siding is a non-contributing resource. Section 22-3 of the Land Development Code (LDC) classifies this work as a “Major Project,” which is why the applicant is before the HDC tonight.

Mr. Brown stated that before Mr. Bartlett continues the presentation, he needs to correct the record. He continued that it is not vinyl siding; it is wood clapboards. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if that changes staff’s position at all. Mr. Clements replied not really. Mr. Brown replied that it is not historical wood.

Mr. Bartlett stated that he would like to direct the Board’s attention to the packet that shows a picture of 13 Center St. just up the block, which shows the bay windows. He continued that those two-story glass structures are a very common architectural feature. They (he and Mr. Brown) are echoing that in size and scale. They are reinterpreting it in a more contemporary context, but there is precedent in the neighborhood for this kind of two-story, glass (oriel window). He also shows a picture of the subject property as viewed from the Planned Parenthood, seeing that same kind of two-story addition. He was standing at 14 Middle St. The brick building with the balconies is on Center St. That is another context reference. The final context reference is the former Senior Center, which shows a use of glass in a solarium-type structure directly abutting a historic structure. The final picture shows the fire station. Again, they used a storefront material in a building that certainly conforms to the standards of Keene. Thus, there is neighborhood precedent and neighborhood context for this notion of storefront glazing units being used. He thinks they match in scale and functionality.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if the Board had questions for the applicant.

Mr. Fleming stated that he has a question about the existing siding. He continued that whether it is Corten or the alternative material, his question is whether there is a plan to paint it in a similar fashion, or what color scheme is proposed for the existing wood siding. Mr. Brown replied that they had not gotten that far. He continued that it would probably be something light-colored. The old photos show white or cream color.

Mr. Fleming stated that putting this new material around the bay window would highlight that on the front of the building. He continued that the bay windows he is used to are symmetrical, whereas this seems to be non-symmetrical. He asked if that is correct. Mr. Bartlett replied yes, and it is also pulled in a direction of a contemporary or modern flavor, to work with the contemporary or modern flavor of the addition. It actually protrudes at a slight angle.

Mr. Fleming asked how far out it projects. Mr. Bartlett replied that it does not extend beyond the dripline of the roof above, which is fairly deep, about 18 inches. He continued that the proposed bay window pops out maybe 16 inches at the deepest, and angles back to meet the face of the existing building. That is the plan now.

Mr. Fleming stated that his other question was, with regard to the Corten or the backup, if availability is what will make that decision, or if he has concerns about the Corten. Mr. Bartlett replied that it is only about cost, availability, and ease of installation. He continued that this is a fairly small quantity of material, and if they have to pay a premium to ship it from far away, the shipping might (be too much). He just does not know all the logistics of using this material. He believes it is available locally but he has never really procured it. He wants to make sure Mr. Brown is comfortable with the budget. He did not want to get locked in to this material, and if they find they cannot use Corten, they would then defer to a secondary material. It is strictly about cost, availability, and the contractor's ability to pull it off.

Mr. Ferrantello stated that as he looks to the east elevation, the southeast corner, right now without the addition, he sees the full 1840 brick. He continued that if they then put a four-foot abutment that is 12'x15', 60 square feet, a pedestrian cannot see the fenestration and the original brick. It blocks the pedestrian's view. He asked if they have considered taking that four-foot protrusion and bringing it in so they have a clear line between the brick and the vinyl [sic], so that if you are standing on top of the second floor, it is not open to below. And the stairs would go north as well as parallel with the ones going downstairs. There is kind of a six-foot landing. That would decrease the open area and compact both stairs together, one going down and one going up, without the open area, and that could afford that going inside so there is no distraction taking away from the view from Center St.

Mr. Bartlett replied that part of the design intent was to create a glass corner on the northern part of the addition. Not only will you be able to see the existing south wall of the brick, but also, you should be able to look through both layers of glass and see the existing corner. He continued that it depends on where you stand. If you walk back a few feet, he would argue that you would see most of the east side of the building. Again, the salient point is that they would show the corner of the existing brickwork through this glass structure, even if it is four feet out.

Mr. Ferrantello replied that even if it were inside, they could still have that fenestration. Mr. Bartlett replied yes. Mr. Ferrantello replied that they are sensitive to detracting from the original fabric. He continued that he noticed that in terms of contextualization, Mr. Bartlett looked at the fire station and the senior center, but the ancillary building there is fine white collonades peppered with wooden glazing, and what they have here (in the proposal) is very modernistic expression. He wonders if that is appropriate, and if they are making the non-contributing more non-contributing as a "free for all" for anything. He knows Mr. Bartlett is using commercial contextualization, but on Middle St. you will find nice, vertical fenestrations with columns. That is part of the neighborhood, across from the west side of the building. That is a residential to residential comparison, not commercial to residential. His question is whether Mr. Bartlett has considered more of that kind of residential to residential contextualization.

Mr. Bartlett replied yes, they considered many things. Mr. Ferrantello replied that the reason he asks is that he thinks it detracts from the original brick. He continued that looking at the east

elevation again, he sees a hard transition between the brick and the metal. Sometimes with historic preservation or renovation, there is a buffer between the two elements with a recessed glass portion or maybe a metal portion, so you clearly know which is the original and which is not. To him, this is like a commercial application in a residential place. He thinks it distracts from and disrupts the historic fabric.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if the Board had any questions for staff at this time. Hearing none, she asked for public comment.

Paula Sousa of 22 Middle St. stated that she lives directly across the street. She continued that she and others in the neighborhood are thrilled that someone is actually paying attention to this house and has a sense of its historic value. It would be interesting to see these contrasting architectural styles. The details are to be left to the owner, the HDC, and Mr. Bartlett, of course, but she applauds the intent behind it. She is glad they are giving attention to this neglected house that deserves more.

Peter Espieffs stated that he lives next door at 29 Middle St. He continued that he has no objections to any improvements as long as they meet the requirements of the Historic District. Section 20.14 specifies that the architectural and visual appearances should jibe. There should not be any great transitional differences. They discourage the use of glossy finishes and reflective surfaces. As long as there is a civilized (addition) that fits in with the present structure and it does not get too glitzy, it is okay.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if there was any more public comment. Hearing none, she closed the public hearing and asked the Board to deliberate.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos read the first standard: *“Additions shall reflect the context of surrounding historic buildings or structures and not detract from the overall character of the Historic District.”*

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that staff has given the Board some context from the application: *“...the proposed addition abuts the non-contributing resource and is seen from the south and east corner of the building and preserves the historic façade which is made of brick and is best viewed from the west and north side.”* She continued that staff also note, *“The form and massing of the proposed addition ‘echoes’ the two-story bay window and porch structures that can be found throughout the neighborhood. The new addition matches the height and shape of the existing building while being delineated by a change in materials. The Board will need to determine if this standard has been met.”*

Mr. Ferrantello stated that he does not hear that “echo,” because it is either post-modernistic or by definition has no reference to the past. He continued that it is a juxtaposition of very modern stuff to some simple brick and wood framing. He wonders if there is another way of doing it. He thinks it is too much of a contrast.

Mr. Fleming stated that he has less of a problem with the east façade than he does with the south façade. He continued that that bay window really throws him. He wonders if there is an alternative to that aspect of it, to try to fit in better with the neighborhood. He is completely sympathetic with the functional need for this new entryway, and he agrees that the glass sometimes can be worked in. He knows what they are trying to do, not just have it on that east side but also throw a little thing in the middle of the south façade, but it just seems too disruptive to the neighborhood.

Ms. Benik stated that she agrees with Mr. Fleming regarding the bay window, the lack of symmetry, and how the angle at which it comes out does not agree with the existing façade. She continued that she thinks it does throw off any historical reference.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she echoes those thoughts. She continued that she is not a fan of that bay window and she does not see how it is consistent with the rest of the architecture in the district. The Board was provided with (photos of) 13 Center St., showing a couple of bay windows that are comparable in size, but the character of those windows is completely different. She has trouble seeing how those are echoed by the modern glass structure being proposed.

Mr. Fleming stated that the plan says “two-story bay window.” He asked why it is considered such. He continued that to him, a two-story bay window would be a window that encompasses two stories of the building. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that maybe they meant “second story bay window.” Mr. Ferrantello asked if that is a reference to the east elevation or to the bay window. He continued that if it is the east elevation, that is two stories. Mr. Fleming replied that is not a bay window. Mr. Ferrantello agreed.

Mr. Ferrantello stated that he knows a lot of effort has been made not to mimic or copy, but it seems like in trying not to do that, they went to the other end of the spectrum. He continued that he wonders if there is a sweet spot in between, something more in keeping with the residential neighborhood.

Mr. Fleming stated that the question to the applicant and architect is whether they considered alternatives to that particular bay window. He asked if he is allowed to ask them to respond.

Mr. Clements replied that he suggests the Board finish their deliberations and then Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos could reopen the public hearing so Mr. Bartlett or Mr. Brown could have the opportunity to address the Board’s concerns. He continued that he has a question to consider. If it is just the bay window that is the biggest detractor, versus the addition, and if the Board is more comfortable with the addition, maybe there is a way to work on changing that bay window.

Mr. Ferrantello replied that he has an issue with the east elevation jutting out four feet, and with seeing a commercial application juxtaposed on the 1840 brick. He continued that he would like

a reconsideration, perhaps, on pushing that in and making it flush with the existing brick, as an option.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she thinks the space in the floorplan is necessary to make the inside work; she thinks that is what was communicated. She continued that they can ask for that clarification when they reopen the public hearing. Mr. Fleming replied that it is a fairly small house as it is. Others agreed.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she is personally not too worried about the protrusion, but she is concerned that it is extremely modern as compared to everything else. Mr. Fleming agreed, and continued that the other thing about that bay window is that the applicant stated that you can see the old entryway through it, but he does not think anyone will really see that. He continued that to him, the downside outweighs the upside of that bay window.

Ms. Benik stated that when she first started paging through the application, without having read anything and just looking at the renderings, she thought it was going to be a commercial space now. She continued that her first inclination was that it looked like a commercial entrance. Then she read that it was going to maintain residential.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she is hearing that the Board is not in favor of approving this application at this point. She continued that she is not asking for a vote right now. She asked what questions the Board has for the applicant before they reopen the public hearing.

Mr. Fleming stated that he was asking the applicant about considering alternatives to the bay window because the HDC cannot approve the new entryway leaving the front of the building the way it is right now, with the door coming out and the awkward staircase. He continued that that is why there would have to be some other proposal for the south elevation.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that her understanding is that if there were another proposal they would have to go through the application process again or submit those to the HDC again, at least, in continuation. Mr. Clements replied that there are a couple of options, such as a conditional approval with a change in style of that bay window, if that is really the sticking point the Board is struggling with. He continued that procedurally, he does not think that is something staff could approve, so the applicant would need to come back (to the HDC) to get final approval with the new design. A continuance to the next meeting to design would probably be better than conditional approval in that case.

Mr. Fleming stated that the photo handed out tonight shows the south side with a door between two windows, which match the other existing windows. He continued that theoretically, they could say to just slide that door over. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if he means, 'slide over the door entirely; do not create a bay window.' Mr. Fleming replied that it would keep the two existing small windows, while sliding the doorway over. He continued that it might not be as

attractive a space from the inside of the building, but he thinks it would not be an awkward look from the outside.

Mr. Clements stated that they could do a conditional approval with a very specific design type, such as ‘a bay window that has the same grid muntin as the other windows on that façade.’ He continued that if they give a specific design type that the applicant is comfortable with, the Board could approve this with that condition. That is something staff could check off the checklist. However, if the condition is subjective, it is the Board’s responsibility to either approve the change or not.

Mr. Fleming replied that maybe the Board does not want the bay window, or would prefer the applicant to come back if they have a bay window proposal at all. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that that is why they would do a continuance. Mr. Fleming replied that he is saying they could do a conditional approval of the entryway side, which he personally has no problem with, with the stipulation that until/if the applicant returns with an alternative to the bay window, they just close off that doorway.

Mr. Ferrantello stated that the east elevation somehow can read off the residential scale of the existing windows rather than all that glass, so that there is a connection or common denominator somehow. He continued that the interpretation can be a bit more soft. That is rather poetic, but to Mr. Clements’s point, it would be coming up with an option with more scaled fenestration that mimics the neighborhood on the east elevation. If they want to throw Corten in there because it is an approved metal, they can also accommodate that. However, it seems to him like a storefront, commercial thing. The stark contrast is too abrupt in his mind.

Mr. Clements stated that once they get into comparing the existing neighborhood and scale and design, staff cannot do that. He continued that the Board could, for example, say that instead of it being a two-story, all-glass window, it should have a metal divider between the window on the second floor and the window on the first floor.

Mr. Ferrantello replied that that is an interesting idea, having metal in between. He continued that that would reduce the size of the glazing. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that she does not think it would make it look any less commercial. Mr. Ferrantello replied that it definitely would. He continued that another interpretation where the Corten steel can actually hide some of that expansive glass at the bottom rectangles, and that might make it read better.

Mr. Clements replied that the Board would have to give very specific design instructions. Mr. Ferrantello further explained what he was thinking of. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that Mr. Clements is saying that if the Board wanted to give such instructions, the Board would need to vote on it, not give it ad hoc. Mr. Clements replied yes, it would be a conditional approval with that design change, and they would want to make sure the applicant was comfortable with it before the Board voted.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that it sounds like the Board takes issue with the bay window. She continued that it sounds like Mr. Ferrantello is not comfortable with the east elevation, for a few reasons. It sounds like Mr. Fleming does not have any concerns with the addition on the east side.

Mr. Fleming replied that he thinks allowing that would be a big improvement for the neighborhood over the way the building looks like now. He continued that he wants to hear what Mr. Ferrantello has in mind for the spandrels. He continued that in looking at the east elevation, he is a little confused by the gray material there. Mr. Ferrantello replied that is a canopy over the entrance. He continued that what he was suggesting was making the spandrels at the openings Corten, which would break up the monotony of the full glass from top to bottom.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that it would give the front of the building a 1970s feel. She continued that it would still look very commercial, in her mind. Mr. Ferrantello stated that he is taking cues from across the street in the west elevation on Middle St. and fine colonnades with glass. That is what the residential contextualization tells him, and he does not find that in the east elevation. Mr. Fleming replied that across the street on Middle St., that is the other side of the building. He asked if it is correct that this side of the building is facing the courthouse. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied yes.

Mr. Ferrantello stated that 29 Center St. on the east side is brick and has windows that are an aluminum surface and colored patina green. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that in the picture of 13 Center St., you can see 29 Center St., the brick building in the distance. She asked if that is what Mr. Ferrantello is talking about. Mr. Ferrantello replied that 29 Center St. would be on the east side of the building. He continued yes, there is that brick building before you see 29 Center St. On the side, it is full of old brick and the windows are very residential.

Mr. Fleming stated that he thinks one of their obligations is not to do anything that would allow neighbors to say, "Look, you let them do this, so I can do whatever I (want)." He continued that to include the senior center in this packet is a little far-fetched, because he does not think the senior center, in this day and age, would ever have received permission to put that addition up.

Mr. Ferrantello replied that was his initial assessment - if you have a non-contributing, non-conforming portion of a building, how much more non-conforming can you make it? There is obviously not a standard allowing the HDC to control that. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that the standard is clear: "*Additions shall reflect the context of surrounding historic buildings or structures and not detract from the overall character of the Historic District.*" Mr. Ferrantello replied yes, that does give guidelines. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that the question is whether this addition detracts from the overall character of the Historic District. Mr. Ferrantello replied that his assessment is yes.

Mr. Fleming stated that he found a better picture in the packet, of the building Mr. Ferrantello was trying to find, on the third page from the back. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied yes,

opposite the picture of the senior center. Mr. Ferrantello agreed. He continued that it is wonderful historic brick and the fenestration is very residential, in keeping with the neighborhood. It reflects everything to scale. He does not see a justifiable interpretation to make a storefront top to bottom as shown in the east elevation (of the proposal). This (other building) is right next to it. He would think they would take cues from that one.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she hears that Mr. Fleming does not have a problem with the east elevation addition, but Mr. Ferrantello and Ms. Benik do. She continued that she herself is not in love with it. If the vote were held right now, it would fail. Perhaps they should discuss what they would like to see instead.

Mr. Fleming replied that he thinks he can summarize it by saying they would like an addition for a new entrance that fits in better with the neighborhood. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that effectively what the Board is asking the applicant to do is go back to the drawing board. Given that, there were questions for the applicant, which she is not sure are relevant after the discussion. She asked if the Board wants to hear what the alternatives are, or if they want to vote to reject the proposal and send the applicant back to the drawing board, or do something else. Mr. Fleming replied that he wanted to hear the alternatives on the bay window, because he was willing to go along with the east side, but the other Board members are not, so he supposes that is a wasted effort.

Mr. Clements stated that at this point he would recommend giving the applicant some clear advice on what the Board is looking for, and then either continue the application to the November meeting to give the applicant time to make those adjustments, or vote now to approve or deny. He continued that he does not think a conditional approval is appropriate, based on the Board's deliberations.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the question is whether the Board is prepared to give some guidance for a continuation until the next meeting, or if they want to reject it and tell the applicant to go back to the drawing board. Mr. Fleming replied that he would think there is incentive for the owner to get this moving, so he would rather continue this to the next meeting. Mr. Ferrantello replied that he does not want to reject it, either. He continued that he wants to see options with a more residential flavor.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if the Board is looking for something more in keeping with the rest of Center St. She asked, regarding the bay windows, if the Board is objecting to the materials, or something else. She continued that Mr. Ferrantello objected to the glazing. Mr. Ferrantello replied that is right, he objects to the extensive use of glazing that is more appropriate for commercial application. That is mimicked by the fire station and other commercial buildings in the area. He thinks the scale should be tailored down a bit to a more residential window with some space vertically between the windows. That space can be Corten steel, brick, metal that matches the canopy over the entrance; it is a free-for-all for being innovative with the possibilities. He just does not have a good feeling about this being a good fit with the

commercial application of the east side as right next door 29 Center St. has this beautiful scale and massing that is very appealing. With that kind of glazing, you can still see 29 Center St. through the windows. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if it is correct that he is looking for something more traditional. Mr. Ferrantello replied yes.

Ms. Benik stated that they could revisit it and bring in more influence from neighboring homes, something that is more in keeping with the period of the house and the way the windows are represented. She continued that she does not have a problem with the metal siding, but the window styling and framing needs to take on more of a historical reference to make it blend better with the neighborhood and the house itself. That would work better.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that regarding the bay window, she thinks the sentiments are echoed, with the added guidance of Mr. Fleming's suggestion that the door simply be sided over, which she does not think anyone on the Board would object to. Mr. Fleming replied that there are two windows there, and he is looking at the interior floor plan, and it does not seem to interfere with either of those two windows.

Mr. Ferrantello asked if Mr. Fleming is looking for a traditional diagonal, like in the neighborhood pictures where it is diagonal on two sides and straight in front. Mr. Fleming replied if they want to use a bay window. He continued that he is not sure. The south elevation does not bother him, if they had the existing two windows instead of that eccentric bay window. Mr. Ferrantello replied that there are different flavors and sizes of bay windows, and some are three-sided, and some people put posts underneath them to make it look like they are supported.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos re-opened the public hearing and asked if the applicant wanted to respond to the Board's discussion.

Mr. Brown stated that regarding the bay windows, they have talked about various types and various approaches. He continued that the first thing they did was more traditional, and it looked "faux historical" like it was just tacked on. He wanted to do something a little more creative, which is how they eventually ended up with the design that they did. Other options they discussed were putting the window in the shape of the historical door, which might work, or something that would open, which means that in the summer you could definitely see the inside of the house. They talked about possibly indenting it, but that creates issues with rain coming in and he did not want to get into that. He is certainly open to exploring other alternatives for that bay window. He was the one who suggested taking some of that material and putting it on the side of the house so they have a repeat of that color and texture somewhere else, but he is not married to that.

Mr. Brown continued that he heard them describing alternatives, but he did not quite understand from the comments what alternative place they have for putting a door. Mr. Ferrantello replied that he was saying that if they take cues from the residential contextualization of the neighborhood, if they were to make the bottom spandrel area either Corten steel or whatever

siding Mr. Brown decides, it would break up the industrial/commercial look of a full top to bottom glass. He continued that specifically, he would like to break that up, but explore different options than a metal frame for the windows, or mimic wood or fiber wood, or hearty plank, or something that is not as cold. He is thinking of breaking up that storefront element into two pieces.

Mr. Brown asked if he would leave the outline in the same place. Mr. Ferrantello replied that it is Mr. Brown's creative, innovative way of doing it. He continued that metal is an approved material. Just the positioning of the geometry reads commercial, so if he could separate the vertical, expansive glass it might read better, and it might be more mimicking of [unfinished sentence.] He understands that Mr. Brown does not like to mimic and wants to do something different, but the neighborhood tells them to have something more traditional than commercial. Mr. Brown replied that he knows what he means; it is nice to walk up the street and see the bay windows and the porch area on the brick house next door. He continued that however, the setbacks do not allow them to come out.

Mr. Ferrantello replied that keeping the four-foot bump-out is okay. He continued that he understands they cannot do it on the inside. He is just saying they can rethink the treatment of the surfaces and a smaller version of the glass opening that better mimics 29 Center St. and other residential windows in the area. Some of them have the bottom sill and some have a top element, but that can be wood, fiberglass, granite, or something else. (It is just about) breaking up the expanse of the large glass area.

Mr. Fleming stated that the large glass is a little confusing. He continued that regarding the east elevation, when you see the person on the lower level, that is because the floor is below grade, but the person on the upper level is actually set back a ways, because that is a two-story atrium. You get to see the brick of the front of the house through that glass. He thinks that is actually a nice feature on that side, having a lot of glass to see the brick as you go toward Middle St.

Mr. Bartlett replied that they showed the picture of 29 Center St. to emphasize the porch in the front, which is a two-story structure that includes an entry and large areas of what is now open air. He continued that they have taken that form and just glassed it in. The example was meant to emphasize the screened porch of the neighboring building, not the residential feel of the west side of 29 Center St. Thus, he supposes it depends on which part of the historical building you are looking at that you want to either ignore or copy. They chose to mimic the front entry.

Mr. Bartlett continued that they did try (other things). He has drawings that show traditional scale windows on the first floor and second floor. It was a poor choice. It was like it was trying to look like a historical building, but it did not. The casings matched, the molding could match; that does not matter. The point is that these residential scale windows on the side of this building, which is "a ludicrous addition to begin with," to repeat that did not do the job any favors at all, so they rejected that. He would take a dim view of going back and dusting those drawings off to produce this faux/mimicking the neighborhood (design).

Mr. Bartlett continued that he will point out that MoCo Arts is in the Historic District. It is commercial, obviously, but it is clearly a contemporary building. That came before the HDC, and the argument was that the windows line up with the windows on the adjacent buildings, and the basic massing of the scale of the building matches. Thus, there is a way for contemporary architecture to mimic or be compatible with the historical context that it is in, without resorting to faux techniques that are not good architecture. The Secretary of the Interior's standards on rehabilitation for historic structures go out of their way to discourage trying to create a false sense of history. In other words, (not) trying to use things to lure people into thinking it has always been there or something like that. They recommend making new work of its time, and they say it is meant to contrast with the historic structures so that future historians can differentiate and understand when each of the additions was built. He is reluctant to go back to drawings that they have looked at/tried and that he feels are bad architecture. He would not want to have his name associated with them. However, he is not the owner.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that she does not think anyone is asking Mr. Bartlett to do that. She continued that the Board is not asking them to go faux historical. She thinks that finding something that is modern and harkens back a little bit more to the residential flavor of the neighborhood is what they are asking for. Mr. Bartlett asked if that is what faux historical is. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that she does not think so; she thinks there is a middle ground.

Mr. Bartlett stated that the building they are calling "residential" is not residential. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if he means the brick building. Mr. Bartlett replied yes. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that her understanding is that it started as a residential building and then there was Planning permission requested to put three residential units in it. She is not sure where that landed, but if it is not currently residential, the intent of it will be. Certainly, its appearance is perfectly in keeping with the residential buildings. She is not sure there is much ground to be made there.

Mr. Ferrantello stated that he wants to go on record saying that no one is forcing the applicant to go "faux historic." He continued that the applicant has the capacity for innovation. The Board is just saying to come up with some options that will allay the feeling of having a commercial feeling right next to a residential area. The Board is not forcing it one way or the other. They would like a different option that is a better fit for the neighborhood. He thinks that in not trying to mimic or do faux architecture, the applicant swung to the other end of the pendulum by doing ultra-modern. That is the issue.

Mr. Fleming stated that it is true, that is not a residential building next to it. The courthouse is right there. He continued that it is almost the transition from the commercial to the residential area. That is why the glass does not bother him. Looking at the glass on the east elevation, if you have a two-story atrium, you are actually glimpsing into the historic character of the building with the brickwork that is there. You are seeing that. That is why he would just board over the old door. The proposal was to rework the windows on the lower floor level, too. Right now,

they line up with the windows on the second floor, along the south elevation. It is very bland, but that is okay, because the focus of this, then, would be on that east side. That would be the highlight. No one would even notice that south façade. It would just be a bland, residential area that goes into the older residential area.

Mr. Ferrantello replied that is the issue - that 4' by 15' abutment visually obstructs your view of the historic brick. He asked if that is something the Board should consider. Mr. Fleming replied that he thinks it actually opens up the view of the historic brick. Mr. Ferrantello replied on the inside, but not the outside. Mr. Fleming replied that it is a transition, though. If it is glass, you will see the inside and part of the outside. Mr. Ferrantello replied that he is saying to make the glass more miniaturistic, to still be able to do what Mr. Fleming is saying, to see the inside brick. It (the proposal) is too expansive and too commercial.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she is not super concerned about the amount of glass. She continued that she is more concerned about the way it is presented and the structure around it. It feels too modern. To her, it feels more modern than the courthouse. It would become the most modern building in a four-block radius. Mr. Ferrantello replied that it tries to go to the other (end of the) pendulum of not mimicking what is there, maybe too much so. Ms. Benik replied that it is a harsh juxtaposition.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that they have been discussing this for a long time and they do not seem to be near a resolution. She closed the public hearing again, and asked the Board if they want to continue this to the November meeting and give the applicant the opportunity to come back. Mr. Ferrantello replied yes, he would prefer to do that than to reject the application.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked Mr. Clements if the Board has provided enough context to do that, and if there is anything else the Board needs to add to their instructions. Mr. Clements replied that to him, it sounds like the Board is not opposed to a more modern addition. He continued that not trying to mimic an existing historical feature, as the applicant said regarding the Secretary of the Interior's standards, is reflected in the HDC's own regulations (which say) new additions should be contrasting but complementary to the Contributing Resource. It sounds like the Board feels the proposal is too commercial and has perhaps gone too far in an attempt to contrast, and asks if the applicant is willing to dial it back a notch or two, if possible. He thinks the best course of action would be to continue to a date and time certain, which is the November 20 HDC meeting at 4:30 PM here in Council Chambers. That gives the applicant the opportunity to either revise the design, choose not to revise the design and come back in for final determination, or withdraw. It gives the applicant the flexibility to do what is in their best interest.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she will not be at the November 20 meeting. She continued that that is not a problem, as there is a vice chair, but there is the question of quorum. Mr. Clements replied that Louise Zerba is also an HDC member, so they could still have a four-

person board. He continued that Councilor Workman is a member but her schedule conflicts right now and she cannot meet at this time.

Mr. Ferrantello made a motion to continue this hearing to the November 20, 2024 meeting of the Historic District Commission. Mr. Fleming seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4) **Staff Updates**

A) **2025 Meeting Schedule**

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the 2025 meeting schedule is on the last page of the agenda packet. She asked if anyone had concerns about the dates presented. Hearing none, she asked for a motion.

Mr. Ferrantello made a motion to accept the 2025 meeting schedule. Mr. Fleming seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

B) **COA Minor Project Application Update**

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that Mr. Clements mentioned there are no Minor Project applications to update the HDC on. Mr. Clements replied that is correct.

5) **New Business**

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if there was any new business. (No).

6) **Upcoming Dates of Interest**

A) **Next HDC Meeting: November 20, 2024 – 4:30 PM, TBD**

B) **HDC Site Visit: November 20, 2024 – 3:30 PM (to be confirmed)**

7) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos adjourned the meeting at 6:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reid, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Evan J. Clements, AICP
Planner