

**Hollis Historic District Commission
Minutes of the October 3, 2019 Meeting**

Call to Order

T. Cook called the meeting of the Hollis Historic District to order at 7:10 p.m.

The following were present: Tom Cook, Chairman; Jessica Waters, Vice Chairman; Peter Jones, Michael Bates; Regular Member.

Members absent: Frank Cadwell, Selectmen's Representative

HDC2019-019

The application of the Congregational Church of Hollis, property owners, to construct a new front entrance, construction of an fire rated stairways on east and west sides of the existing structure, create walk-out patio on the east lawn, removal and replacement of any significant trees and the re-location of the existing sign, located at 3 Monument Square, Map 052, Lot 053.

Thomas Hildreth, attorney and member of the church presented HDC2019-009 on behalf of the property owners. Dennis Mires, Architect, and Caroline Morel, Mires, assistant were also in attendance.

Hildreth said on February 2, 2019 the Historic District Commission (HDC) agreed to have a conceptual meeting concerning the church project. During the meeting the HDC brought up concerns regarding the roof line for the east side addition, the size of the amphitheater patio area and the church boundary lines.

The concerns of the HDC have been addressed; the east side addition roof line has been re-designed, the size of the amphitheater has been reduced and the church boundary lines have been verified and the entire project will be constructed on church property. It was also determined during the investigation process that the stone wall located on the boundary of the cemetery was in fact built in 2007, is not historic but it is the intention of the committee to preserve and re-install as much of the wall possible.

Since, the HDC conceptual meeting the following approvals have been granted;

1. Cemetery Trustees and Board of Selectman authorization (6/10/2019) for excavation and construction within 25' of the cemetery;
2. Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) approval (5/23/2019) on account of the non-conforming nature of the building and lot;
3. New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) approval (5/30/2019) of proposed driveway realignment and additional curb cut;
4. Planning Board (PB) approval (7/16/2019) for changes to the site plan of a non-residential use; and

We also presented the project to the Heritage Commission (6/25/2019) and the members presented agreed the plans will preserve the integrity of the site.

In 2017, the Church formed its Building Our Vision (BOV) Team to explore ways that upgrades to the Church's facilities could help further the goals of the Strategic Plan. At that time the Church learned from Rick Towne, Hollis Fire Chief, its building, as currently configured, is not in compliance with important requirements of the Life Safety Code. So, the BOV Team updated its metaphor and is now building the four pillars of Welcome, Worship, Learn and Serve, on a foundation of Safety.

T. Hildreth presented historical pictures of the site which showed some changes which occurred such as; removal of porches on west, east and front of the Church, the east and west side of the church had carriage building, 1923 Church fire, Church rebuilt in 1925 and even a picture showing the Church sign in a different location. Prior to the final design, the committee visited Churches in Concord, MA and Andover, Ma which has similar patios and drop off areas as shown in the supplied pictures. The BOV has spent a substantial amount of time researching there

proposal and felt the final design address the needs of the congregation; grow its membership, expand its mission and action in the wider community, and the design will ensure the Church's survival and relevance into the future. With the proposed renovations within and outside of the Church. The Church can grow and offer more activities which would benefit the town and the congregation. The patio area would be a great addition to allow outside activities for Church events as well as expanded areas for town activities which are currently located on the town green. Without the proposed egress changes the basement area would no longer be able to be used for public events or town events per the Hollis Fire Chief.

Hildreth turned the presentation to Dennis Mires. D. Mires said he appreciated the informal meeting with the HDC held previously. The meeting was helpful with the new design and the HDC comments on the design hopefully have been addressed. D. Mires showed the HDC the existing site plan and the proposed site plan;

The proposed plan includes; (see file for existing conditions, proposed demolition plans and new site plan with all proposed changes)

1. Modification to the driveway between the Library and Church;
2. Add an additional curb cut for a drop off area;
3. Eliminate the dog house on the west side;
4. Construct a new front entry which would include a vestibule area for security, an administration office and would allow direct access to the sanctum;
5. Construct a curved amphitheater on the east side;
6. Construct an east side egress entry;
7. Removal and replacement of trees;
8. Extend the sidewalk within the state right-of-way.

P. Jones asked would the original sidewalk remain if the proposal is not granted. T. Hildreth replied yes. J. Waters asked would the drop off area be one way. D. Mires replied yes. T. Cook asked would there be a do not enter sign installed. D. Mires replied the approved engineered designs including the required signage was approved by NHDOT and the PB. D. Mires said he anticipates 2 stop signs and 1 one way sign.

D. Mires said the materials being used for the east side amphitheater floor would be concrete pavers in 3 different colors of gray, amphitheater seating 21' high, 4' deep techo block riser with 2" granite coping, with grass in between each riser, new retaining walls structural concrete faced with dry stacked fieldstone. Step lights would be installed in the retaining walls. East side proposed changes also include; 2 new windows aluminum clad wood with simulated divided light, single door with full lite and transom and 1 new aluminum clad wood with simulated divided lite and half transom. A shed roof would be added over the new egress door, windows and shingles will match existing and the removal of the existing walkway located in the east lawn.

The existing front dog house would be moved forward and to the left; siding wood clapboard painted white, corner boards white azek, windows aluminum clad wood with simulated divided lite to match existing pattern with pulping profile glazing, exterior double front door led-wen clad wood with bottom raised panels & simulated divided lite to match windows. Two trees would be removed to accomplish the addition. The west side dog house would be removed and replaced with an egress window.

North side (Back) proposed changes 2 additional windows located in new addition aluminum clad wood with simulated divided light and 2 fixed 1 new aluminum clad wood with simulated divided lite windows with custom arced transom.

D. Mires showed scaled views depicting what the site will look like once of the project is completed. J. Waters asked were the views accurate because they seem to be a wide angle not representing the actual site. C. Morel the view is a 90% angle and the church is actually slightly higher than town hall. D. Mires said the east lawn does slope downwards. T. Cook asked if the proposed drainage swale cause any issues with Memorial Park. D. Mires replied the swale would be 2' from grade with outfall pipe to the existing street drain. Once the new pipe is installed the area would be graded back to the existing grade.

T. Cook how many trees in total are being removed. T. Hildreth replied 5 in total 2 small memorial trees, 2 small trees in the front and 1 large maple tree. M. Bates said the number of replacement trees seems to be excessive. The

trees would block the view and create a barrier. C. Morel replied the trees can be minimized. The landscape plan was developed using the guideline of the district which states 1 tree per 50' of frontage.

P. Jones asked the HDC to consider discussion on each section of the project individually. The HDC members agreed. P. Jones said in actuality the site is only losing 2 mature trees and 3 younger trees. T. Cook said at least one of the trees is significant and should be discussed. P. Jones said the large maple tree would be removed regardless to meet Life Safety codes for egress. M. Bates asked was it a fact the Fire Department said the basement area could not be used anymore without the change. T. Hildreth replied during the annual fire drill all of the Life Safety codes emerged.

T. Cook asked why the proper egress couldn't be constructed without the dramatic change to the east lawn which would be compliant to the fire code. D. Mires replied one of the points of egress is to access the stairs to the upper level, the patio area is to have on grade egress from the lower level. T. Hildreth said currently there is an egress on the east side a set of stairs leading to the upper level and other leading down to Hardy Hall. The current configuration fills up with snow, ice and is practically unusable. The organizations which make pies and shortcakes are going up and down the stairs and it is a safety issue. The subpar construction is barely used. During the fellowship hour after services the only way for the fellowship to gain access to Hardy Hall (lower level) is to go out the front, go around to the side, and navigate the maze of space within the existing handicap access. The access is confusion and uninviting. The purpose for the changes are to make a more inviting and welcoming entry situation for both levels of the church.

M. Bates asked what the measurement was from the end of the patio to the street. D. Mires replied roughly 38 feet. M. Bates asked what type of lighting will be used for the steps and when would they be on. T. Hildreth replied the lights would run the same time the Church lights are on. M. Bates said since fieldstones from state to state vary in color and texture. M. Bates asked from what state the fieldstones will be purchased. D. Mires replied either New Hampshire or Northern Massachusetts.

J. Waters said the Design and Guidelines book of the HDC references the Monument Square area as being the oldest area within the town and changes should be minimal regarding the visual impact. The proposed plans seem to be congested on the east side in J. Water's opinion. D. Mires said there has always been change to the Church property. The proposal is just another evolution of change to address the needs of the Church. J. Waters asked how an amphitheater would correlate with the age of the church. D. Mires replied examples were shown of other Church's with the same design. The project is being presented not only for a Church resource. It is also a way to introduce people to the other activities offered at the church. We have received favorable reaction from those who use the east lawn for community events. The east lawn proposal is taking advantage of a fire code issue to provide a resource that is more useful to the community and the BOV has been encouraged to proceed with the project. There has been no negative reaction to the proposal. T. Cook asked if those in favor were church members. T. Hildreth replied no the ZBA, PB, Heritage Commission all of these boards approved the project and found no adverse effect on the area. If there was a church member on any of the boards, they did not vote on the cases. M. Bates asked what the seating capacity was for the amphitheater. D. Mires replied approximately 90 people. M. Bates stated in his opinion the amphitheater is designed in a tasteful way and if the depiction is accurate once the project is completed. M. Bates has no issue with that portion of the project. D. Mires said the highest priority of the Church is not only life safety. The look and design are highly important and the depiction of the amphitheater is as close as it can be.

M. Bates said his biggest concern with the proposal is the new front drop off area being 2 lanes and black asphalt. The drop off area would change the front look of the church dramatically and there would be nowhere to place the nativity during Christmas time. Losing 70 to 80% of the grass along the front is not appealing in M. Bates' opinion. P. Jones said he is generally in favor of the proposal. The east lawn change would benefit the Church and the community. However, the new drop off area would have a negative impact to the area. T. Cook asked if the new drop off area was being requested due to convenience or a safety concern. T. Hildreth replied the Church has received complaints from their older membership. With the new area there would be room for an attendant to help people access the Church and a safe and confident way. M. Bates asked would there be a parking area. T. Hildreth replied no. The HDC discussed the drop off area and concluded even if the materials used were to change the design was not aesthetically pleasing with two lanes. The applicant may want to consider changing the drop off area to one lane.

T. Cook said the HDC members should keep in mind the proposed changes could impact the Monument Square area and the Church is on the National Register of Historic Places. If the HDC approves of the proposal the Church does

not have to receive any further approvals and can proceed. In the event of a denial the applicant has the option to appeal the decision to the ZBA. T. Hildreth said in 1990 the HDC did deny an application and the Church did appeal to the ZBA.

Recessed at 9:00 pm
Reconvened at 9:10 pm

P. Jones asked could the HDC approve the application without the drop off area. T. Cook asked if the members were in favor of the amphitheater area as displayed, the walk out and the new entrance on the east. M. Bates had no issues with those portions of the application. J. Waters said the changes are too the east lawn area are too dramatic and is not in favor of the application. The depiction of the amphitheater is hard to determine the scale and the visual impact the project will have. T. Hildreth said the amphitheater is approximately the size of Hardy Hall. D. Mires said the actual size is roughly 34' x 60' and is 38' from the sidewalk. T. Hildreth said if the visual impact was the main issue trees could be added to block the view from the street. M. Bates said to many trees would block the view of the church.

T. Cook asked the members if they have any concerns on the actual additions. P. Jones said the addition designs were acceptable, the applicant did change the roof line from the original depiction as requested. J. Waters had concerns with the outside lighting as well. T. Hildreth replied the lighting would be down cast under the new roof and the seating lighting would be minimal.

The HDC decided to table the application for a site walk to help determine the scale of the project.

P. Jones moved to table HDC2019-019 until Tuesday, October 15, 2019 at 9am for a site walk and meeting to follow in the community room.

M. Bates seconded.

Motion was carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

T. Cook moved to approve the minutes of September 5, 2019 as submitted.

P. Jones seconded

Motion was carried unanimously with Bates abstaining.

T. Cook moved and P. Jones seconded to adjourn. Meeting was adjourned at 9:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Lee Setaro, Building and Land Use Coordinator.