

Town of Newcastle
Historic Preservation Ordinance Committee
Meeting Date 5/24/23 at 5pm
At the Town Community Room (Fire Station)

Members Present: Ben Frey, Karen Paz, Catherine Burke, Tor Glendinning, Bonnie Stone
Also Present: Isabelle Oechsle (Consulting Planner), approx. 24 members of the public

Minutes

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Tor Glendinning called the meeting to order at 5:03pm.
2. **Review of minutes of previous meeting: April 26, 2023:** *Ben Frey moved to accept the meeting minutes as presented. Karen Paz seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.*
3. **Overview of Historic Preservation Ordinance, Draft 4:** Prior to beginning this item, Chair Glendinning addressed members of the public regarding process for this meeting, noting that while this is not a formal public hearing, an opportunity for public comment will be provided following the conclusion of the Committee's business regarding Draft 4.

Discussion on Draft 4 focused specifically on Article 5: Standards for New Construction and Additions, Article 7: Establishment of Historic Districts and Article 8: Establishment of Local Landmarks.

Regarding Article 5, it was discussed that height and width should not reference the Core Zoning Code so as not to give applicants the impression that the Historic Preservation Review Board reviews Core Zoning Code standards. It was clarified that the Review Board is only tasked with reviewing the standards of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Ben noted that this needs to be clarified in the Ordinance further, perhaps under the Authority & Compliance section. Returning to the height and width discussion, Ben suggested that perhaps this is redundant to the Core Zoning Code, which regulates height and width throughout the Town. Isabelle asked the Committee if they felt that there was value in requiring applicants to drill down to the neighborhood level to ensure that, for example, if the three houses in a row are all 1.5-story Capes, the new construction would not be a 3 story Federal. The Committee agreed that it was worthwhile to review this on a lot by lot basis. It was suggested by Committee members to return to language more like Draft 1 for this section: "Applicant must demonstrate that height and width of the proposed structure will be visually compatible with neighboring structures and the neighborhood as a whole." In addition, it was suggested to combine C.1.a, C.1.b, and C.1.c all into one statement regarding height, width and proportions (scale and form) of new construction. Regarding C.1.d.2 of the draft, it was suggested that this should refer to rooftop decks not simply rooftop additions, which could include dormers, cupolas, etc. which we do not want to prohibit.

Regarding Articles 7 and 8, Tor suggested combining these articles into one and referencing the section of the Core Zoning Code which already outlines the required Planning Board and Selectboard processes for zoning amendments. The Committee agreed that this would be simpler to read. Ben noted that he and Isabelle have been working together on reorganizing the draft to fit into the Town's InDesign format for Ordinances. It was suggested that changes to

drafts continue to be presented in red-lined Word format, and that once a final (or close to final) draft from the Committee is ready, Ben would put it into the InDesign template.

4. **Opportunity for public comment:** David Levesque, resident: Asked the following questions of the Committee:

- Why does the Committee exist given the Core Zoning Code and associated standards?
- Why is the draft more restrictive than neighboring Damariscotta regarding renewable energy systems? Can that be changed?
- What is the reference to the Planning Department? Does the Town have a Planning Department? How do they decide on applications?
- What is the reference to Permitting Authority? Shouldn't that just say Review Board?
- Article 9 seems to not allow changes while the property is under review? Why?
- How will the Town fill the Committee when it is currently difficult to find volunteers?

Allison Raiser, resident: Expressed concern that this Ordinance will be burdensome to homeowners and cost prohibitive. When creating "rules for the Review Board," there needs to be rules for recusal and conflict-of-interest standards. Also, if someone cannot afford to fix up their homes, can we do a low-interest loan or some other incentive to fix it up?

Adrienne Zoner, resident: Expressed concern about this being prohibitively expensive for owners. Asked how the openings on this Committee were advertised and how were Committee members chosen? Asked if there was any thought given to protecting entrance areas into the community from Rt. 1? Noted that they feel that the document should stand on its own rather than requiring applicants to hire a consultant to help Review Board review applications. Noted "should" versus "shall" concerns, asking that the document be more prescriptive. Noted concern about escrowing money to install a fence.

Becky Warner, resident: Indicated that the residents of these neighborhoods have already been working to preserve their own structures without this Ordinance in place. Expressed a general concern about what is considered historic and architectural integrity.

Jada Cavanaugh, resident: Expressed that they feel that this document puts the desires of the public over the needs of homeowners in the districts, and that the draft is frightening to a homeowner. Why are Ring doorbells and security cameras regulated?

Jason Erbauss, resident: Noted that they feel that the "structural maintenance" provisions [in Article 10] feel too open-ended as written.

Nina Angiotis, resident: A definition for historic preservation itself is needed, as well as terms used throughout the Ordinance.

5. **Discussion of Next Steps:** An additional meeting was set for June 8th at 5pm to review Draft 5 of the Ordinance, incorporating changes discussed this evening.

6. **Adjournment:** Adjourned without objection at 7:30PM.