

MINUTES OF THE HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD (HARB)  
HELD ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2021,  
VIA ZOOM DUE TO THE COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC

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The meeting was called to order at 4:15 p.m. by the chair, Mr. James Mohn.

**Members present via Zoom:** Mr. James Mohn, Mrs. Gretchen Pawlowski, Mrs. Belinda Thompson, Mr. Phil Hundley, Mr. Thomas McCargo, Mr. Joseph Zemba, and Mr. John Nath. Also present were Mr. Nathan Briggs, Borough Manager/Secretary, Ms. Alyssa Golfieri, Assistant Borough Solicitor, Ms. Ashleigh Walton, consultant with Urban Design Associates, Ms. Megan O'Hara, consultant with Urban Design Associates, and Ms. Lily Xing, consultant with Urban Design Associates

**Others present via Zoom:** Ms. Heather Wildman of Wildman Chalmers Design, LLC Mr. Frank Cservak, 174 Barberry Road, Mr. Michael Riordan, 512 Backbone Road, Mrs. Verna Corey, 889-895 Blackburn Road, Kosta Bounos, Mrs. Julie McMullen, 505 Spanish Tract Road, Mr. Austin Lankford, Ms. Lisa Buchser, 505 Scaife Road, Ms. Sara Moore, Mr. Fritz Baehr

Chairman Mohn made an announcement regarding the Borough's public meeting procedures during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Chairman Mohn then opened the meeting for public comment on matters on the agenda.

There being none, Chairman Mohn called for a motion to approve the August 12, 2021, meeting minutes. The meeting minutes of the August 12, 2021 regular meeting were unanimously approved.

## APPLICANTS

### **Riordan, 512 Backbone Road**

Mr. Riordan presented plans provided to him by Mr. LaQuatra and Ms. Wildman, including the restoration of an accessory structure ("Potting Shed"), walled garden, and a landscape and tree removal plan. The restoration plans involved repainting the Potting Shed to match the existing home and repairing the Potting Shed's chimney and flashing, existing windows, and cleaning inside and out. The plan includes removing the existing lattice and the concrete slab within the walled garden, repairing the cap on the walled garden and the wooden piers at the entrance to the walled garden, and removing dead and damaged trees around the Potting Shed and walled garden. The removed dead and damaged trees will be replaced with red maples. The plan also indicates that a second accessory structure ("Cottage") would be demolished, but that the Cottage's hand cut foundation stone would be re-used in the pool house landscape plan to incorporate earlier retaining wall ideas presented by Mr. LaQuatra.

Chairman Mohn expressed that the concept was terrific and commended the applicant on the plan to be a good custodian of the historic accessory structures and property. He further stated that the modified plan would improve the pool house as well.

Mrs. Pawlowski stated that the concept looked good and agreed that the demolition of the Cottage is likely the right decision. She further expressed that she was happy to see a good use for the Cottage's foundation stones. She asked if the partial outer wall beyond the walled garden would be removed, as it doesn't appear to be part of the Potting Shed or walled garden.

Mr. Riordan stated that neither he nor Mr. LaQuatra could determine a use for the secondary wall but expressed that removing it could provide additional material for the repair of the walled garden.

Mrs. Pawlowski agreed that that made sense and that the secondary wall was interesting but not a critical part of the structure. She commended the applicant for using the secondary wall for additional repair material.

Mrs. Thompson agreed with Chairman Mohn and Mrs. Pawlowski and expressed elation to hear that the character of the area with the small accessory outbuildings and greenhouse would be preserved. She further stated that she loved the plan and progression.

Mr. Hundley echoed the previous comments, stating that the plan was an elegant solution to a difficult problem, and that reusing the Cottage's foundation walls and repairing the Potting Shed and walled garden would be a win for everyone.

Chairman Mohn asked how the timing of the work would coordinate with the ongoing work of the pool house.

Mr. Riordan stated that the Potting Shed rehabilitation was the furthest along as the timing of the pool house hinged on digging the pool. He further expressed challenges with access from Backbone Road and stated that most construction would take place on the plan between now and mid-November.

Mr. McCargo made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Pawlowski to recommend an amendment to the Certificate of Appropriateness for historical purposes only subject to necessary engineering and stormwater management plans being submitted to, and found acceptable by, the Borough Engineer, was unanimously approved.

### **Buchser, 505 Scaife Road**

Mrs. Buchser presented landscape plans provided by Mr. LaQuatra, indicating revisions since the August HARB meeting, including modifications to the landscape to add walkways from the house, the location of the septic field and back-up field, pool equipment location, and extended fencing plan.

Mr. Baehr, the architect for the pool pavilion, presented his design.

Ms. Walton asked why white was chosen for the pavilion material. Mr. Baehr stated that the intent was to complement the house, deck, and barn on the property. He further stated that plain wood was fine but that it felt more rustic.

Ms. Walton commented that the design intent of the pool was for it to be a natural-looking pool and that a white pavilion could be a departure from that intention. She then provided several precedent images from other pavilion projects in Sewickley Heights.

Ms. Walton then provided a variety of design ideas to Mr. Baehr, including decreasing the size of the posts to eight inch posts, potentially doubling the posts, and dropping the beam of the pavilion to eight feet – six inches. She further recommended different roof lines such as a gable roof. She then asked for clarification on the end detail of the pavilion and if it was an open truss or closed barrel ceiling.

Mr. Baehr stated that his intent was to create a more formal garden folly with a closed barrel-vaulted ceiling.

Ms. Walton suggested that if that was the intention to instead try a pediment front, paired columns, and a lower pitch on the gable end.

Chairman Mohn asked if the triangle shape on the drawing was an open truss or closed panel. Mr. Baehr stated that it was a closed panel with a wooden barrel vault through the structure. Chairman Mohn further asked if

both the front and rear elevations would be the same. Mr. Baehr confirmed that they likely would be. Chairman Mohn stated that, for final approval, all four elevations of the structure would need to be submitted.

Ms. Walton stated that it would be necessary to see the elevations, an overall height of the roof to the uppermost ridge of the roof, and that it would be helpful to see sections through the structure.

Mr. Baehr stated that the size of the pavilion was predicated by the landscape plan.

Ms. Buchser stated that she was open to resizing the pavilion to have a smaller structure. She stated that the half-moon of the barrel vault mimicked windows in the house and barn. She stated that she was open to adding more posts but that the dock is the essential part of the plan.

Ms. Walton stated that if the structure was to be more formal to consider a more formal and symmetrical location for the dock, but that the best use of space might include a more informal arrangement.

Chairman Mohn stated that the structure was not small and asked about the length of the dock.

Mr. Baehr stated that the dock is 20' long per the landscape site plan.

Mrs. Thompson stated that the pavilion might feel larger in real life and that she would like to see the relationship in real life on a walking tour to ensure the pavilion placement didn't make it seem too large.

Chairman Mohn stated that a walking tour would be great and requested that the applicant place flags where the building would be located. He further stated that nine feet was high for the pavilion and that it might be able to be brought down some.

Mrs. Thompson stated that it didn't look like in the drawings that the pavilion was sitting on the ground and that it appeared raised.

Mr. Zemba stated that he echoed Ms. Walton's comments and that he loved the idea of asymmetry for usability. He agreed that the formal intention of the architecture was at odds with that. He suggested removing the barrel vault, lowering the beam, and vaulting the entire ceiling. He further stated that attempting to mimic the arch could be overdesign.

Chairman Mohn stated that he liked the idea of pulling in the window arch, but for material of the structure emphasized that anything white becomes dominant while anything in a darker color recesses more into the landscape. If the structure is a folly, as suggested, it might need to come forward in the landscape, but because of the natural design of the pool, he stated that it might be a better fit blending in.

Mrs. Thompson stated that a light stain would be another option.

Ms. Bucsher asked if the roof material could be the same as the barn, an asphalt shingle green blue in color.

Chairman Mohn stated that he saw no reason to change the material, but to explore different roof form designs based on the prior discussion.

Ms. Walton reminded the applicant that sketches for that level of exploration would be appropriate.

Mrs. Thompson stated that there could be better feedback if HARB could see the site.

Mr. Briggs asked if the walking tour would be at a regular meeting or a separate outing. Ms. Buchser stated that she was happy to host a walking tour but would be out of town the first week in October.

**McMullen, 505 Spanish Tract Road**

Ms. Wildman and Ms. Moore presented their design intent for 505 Spanish Tract Road. Ms. Wildman stated that she had done three porches on the home about five years ago and that it was always intended to have additional landscape design with a courtyard feel. Ms. Moore did the original landscape design for the porches. Ms. Wildman went on to present the intention for the new recreation accessory structure, including recreation space, an outdoor kitchen, and gym. For the design intent, the simple gable lines and fenestration would be like the existing home, with large groupings of windows to take advantage of the southern views. Materials would be primarily white brick on the bottom and white siding on the top.

Ms. Moore described the changes to the landscape, including selective clearing of the existing trees along the woodland line that falls off the hill. The only trees removed would be the ones in the building footprint. She then indicated other elements of the landscape plan, including a firepit, and koi pond.

Chairman Mohn asked if the pool or pond indicated on the drawings was existing.

Ms. Moore said that it did not, but that their desire was to accommodate a cascading waterfall and a pond.

Chairman Mohn asked about the selected materials for the landscape. Ms. Moore stated that materials had not yet been selected, but that they would likely remain in the family of the materials on the existing property.

Chairman Mohn asked about the elliptical shape shown on the drawings. Ms. Moore stated that it was an elliptical path that would likely be removed from the concept.

Ms. Wildman stated that the walks might be steppingstones, as the homeowners currently walk on grass.

Ms. Walton asked about the steps on the porch and if they would match the steps on the existing porches.

Ms. Moore stated that, due to the dramatic grade, steps would likely not run all the way along the porch.

Chairman Mohn asked if there would be tree removal close to the structure.

Ms. Moore indicated that they did have a survey and would grade as close to existing grade as possible.

Chairman Mohn asked if trees would need to be cleared for the firepit area.

Ms. Moore said likely not, given that tree clearance would begin at the selective clearing line indicated on the drawing. The intention of the firepit would be to have seat walls and plantings and to be nestled into the forest.

Chairman Mohn suggested flagging any potential trees to be removed. He further stated that the architecture looked nice and elegant, expressing that he liked the tripartite window with the transom.

Mr. McCargo stated that it was great to create a new structure rather than just an add-on to the house.

Mrs. Pawlowski stated that the current house would pair nicely with the new accessory structure.

Mrs. Thompson stated that the new structure was almost mini and that she liked that it was detached.

Chairman Mohn stated that the tertiary volume was nice.

Mr. Hundley stated that he liked the current proposal.

Mr. McCargo stated that the new structure was complementary and would make the site better with its location. He commended the applicant for putting together a good design team.

**Ratification of COAs Issued by Administrative Review (no applicant attendance)**

Ms. Walton and Mr. Briggs provided HARB members with an overview of, and an update on, the various administrative review projects that the HARB Executive Committee reviewed since the last HARB Meeting. The following projects were presented to the HARB for ratification of a recommendation of approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for historical purposes only:

- Shannon, 810 Persimmon Road — COA Amendment window replacement/modification
- Welge, 201 Scaife Road — Roof replacement
- Riordan, 877 Blackburn Road — Roof replacement
- Fetterolf, 576/528 Scaife Road — Roof replacement
- McGranahan, 321 Merriman Road — Window replacement (with French doors)

Motion by Mr. Zemba, seconded by Mr. Hundley to recommend approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for historical purposes for the listed projects above, subject to necessary engineering and stormwater management plans being submitted to, and found acceptable by, the Borough Engineer, was unanimously approved.

Mr. Briggs provided an update on the Kowcheck fence project, stating that the applicant had difficulty procuring the necessary materials, but that the materials have finally been received. Mr. Briggs further noted that the fence's installation is scheduled for next week and Mr. Briggs will be onsite to observe the installation and confirm design and fence location are consistent with all Borough approved plans.

Chairman Mohn then opened meeting for public comment on matters not pertaining to the agenda.

Mr. Cservak made several comments related to recycling and an ongoing dispute regarding Duquense Light.

There being no further comments from the public or HARB members, Chairman Mohn adjourned the meeting.

**HARB Meeting Adjourns at 5:32 pm**