

MINUTES OF THE HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD (HARB)
HELD ON THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 2021,
VIA ZOOM DUE TO THE COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC

The meeting was called to order at 4:24 p.m. by the chair, Mr. James Mohn.

Members present via Zoom: Mr. James Mohn, Mr. Joseph Zemba, Mrs. Gretchen Pawloski, Mrs. Elizabeth Sykes, Mr. Denis Ranalli, Mrs. Belinda Thompson, and Mr. Phil Hundley. Also present were Mr. Nathan Briggs, Interim Borough Manager/Secretary, Ms. Alyssa Golfieri, Assistant Borough Solicitor, Ms. Megan O'Hara, consultant with Urban Design Associates, and Ms. Ashleigh Walton, consultant with Urban Design Associates.

Others present via Zoom: Dr. Thomas Pangburn, 271 Scaife Road; Mr. Jeff Bresch, 319 Scaife Road; Mr. Charles Brandon, Millcraft Ideas; Mr. Lucas Piatt, 404 Ferry Road; Mr. Michael Wetzel, Victor-Wetzel Associates; Mr. Ben Simpson, LGA Partners; Mr. Jonathan Glance, LGA Partners; Mrs. Ashley Roethlisberger; Mr. and Mrs. Ken Roethlisberger, 475 Scaife Road; Mr. Frank Cservak, 174 Barberry Road; Mr. Bill Childs, William Childs Architects; Mr. Dan Roberts, William Childs Architects; Mrs. Jenny Topol, 258 Scaife Road; Mr. Ben Simpson, Eichenlaub Inc.; Mr. John Nicodemo, 638 Backbone Road; Ms. Shalu Singh, 169 Country Club Road; and Ms. Verna Corey, 889-895 Blackburn Road

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 announced that the February meeting minutes will be approved at the April meeting.

Review of Walking Tours

Piatt, 404 Ferry Road: The HARB members present on the walking tour reviewed the submitted information and listened to a presentation on site. Mr. Hundley stated that the walking tour did exactly what it was supposed to do, as it revealed that much of the proposed new addition was in the fifty foot to one-hundred-foot setback, and that part of it was in the zero foot to fifty-foot setback. He then stated that the design team would need to take another look at the design in order to mitigate those issues.

B&B Trust, 475 Scaife Road: The HARB members present on the walking tour reviewed the submitted information and listened to a presentation on site. Mr. Hundley stated that the project would have outstanding views. Chairman Mohn stated that the siting of the proposed house is fantastic and applauded the applicant for taking a good look at the natural grade, and the general siting, including the location of the septic field. Chairman Mohn went on to state that at the April meeting, HARB would expect further development of the design drawings.

Mr. Glance expressed his thanks and stated that the design team would incorporate the comments received on the walking tour and be prepared for the April HARB Meeting.

Pangburn, 271 Scaife Road: The HARB members present on the walking tour reviewed the submitted information and listened to a presentation on site. Chairman Mohn stated that the additions to the existing barn are very close to the property line, and that the location of the additions will be reviewed in greater depth by the HARB executive committee. He further stated that the committee would follow up with additional information and recommendations on how to proceed.

Bresch, 319 Scaife Road: The HARB members present on the walking tour reviewed the submitted information and listened to a presentation on site. Chairman Mohn described the character of the site and the

existing carriage house, the historic nature of the area, and how the presence of the barn would greatly impact the existing estate.

Mr. Hundley stated that he appreciated that the proposed siting is no longer within the setback, which he stated would be a positive step forward for the project.

Chairman Mohn stated that the project was both interesting and compelling and went on to describe the carriage house and its relationship to the primary estate as a beautiful accessory structure that was well maintained.

Chairman Mohn went on to state that he was concerned about the dialogue and cohesion between the context of the carriage house and the proposed barn structure and asked about the functional aspects of the proposal. He continued by asking if there had been any alternative concepts to expand the carriage house, rather than place a new structure.

Mr. Bresch stated that he had not considered it and stated that he saw an addition as a disservice to the structure.

Chairman Mohn stated that it would be significant to determine appropriate separation between the proposed barn and the existing house. He went on to state that siting the barn too close to the house might feel out of character, particularly if the height and scale of the barn exceeded the existing house. He further stated that given the topography of the site, it might be appropriate to move the barn further downhill, then resolve the parking court between the buildings.

Applicants

Sykes, 44 Pink House Lane: Mrs. Elizabeth Sykes presented the progress on the driveway, parking court, garage door, and shed renovations and updates. She noted that the parking court drawings have not been updated yet and confirmed that the edging on the golf course side of the parking court will be flush with the existing grade.

Mrs. Sykes presented the specifications for landscape lighting, to be the lowest voltage, warmest lights from Kichler. The lights will be made of copper and will age over time. The two ornamental trees will have subtle up lighting. Mrs. Sykes confirmed that the lot impervious and building coverages are below the allowable percentages and noted that the designs for the possible pillars and walls need to be developed.

Mr. Zemba asked about the soldier course edging, and Mrs. Sykes responded that the site plan drawing does not yet reflect the Belgium block edging or the wall and pillars.

Mrs. Thompson asked about the posts and whether lights would be located on top of the posts. She suggested to Mrs. Sykes that she wire the pillars, even if lights are not planned at this time. Mrs. Sykes indicated that they have not decided whether lights would be located on top or on the faces of the piers.

Ms. O'Hara asked about the timing of the projects. Mrs. Sykes indicated that they would like to start the shed renovation as soon as possible and would like to get all of the work completed in time to get grass to grow, and in time to open the pool by June 1st, 2021.

Chairman Mohn asked Mrs. Sykes if she had considered the surface of the driveway. Mrs. Sykes responded that she preferred the surface not be blacktop (asphalt). The applicant's preference is modified tar and chip with brown pea gravel. Mrs. Sykes mentioned that she would need to talk with her neighbors about the shared section. Chairman Mohn also suggested considering snow removal and selecting a practical material. He provided positive reinforcement that the project was headed in a good direction, but that the drawings need to be updated to reflect the intended design, including the pillars and wall design. Mr. Mohn complimented the

light fixture selections. Mrs. Sykes indicated that she would submit a fully detailed landscaping plan with tree selections (adding 10 trees) and the small entry options to define the court.

Chairman Mohn proposed that the garage door and shed improvements be voted on for a COA, and the parking court and driveway return to HARB in April.

Motion by Mrs. Gretchen Pawloski, seconded by Mr. Zemba, to recommend approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the garage door and shed improvements for historical purposes only and subject to submittal of necessary engineering and stormwater management plans being submitted to and found acceptable by the Borough Engineer, was approved. Mrs. Elizabeth Sykes recused herself from the vote.

Singh, 169 Country Club Road: Mr. Bill Childs and Mr. Dan Roberts of William Childs Architects presented progress on the proposed demolition and new house at 169 Country Club Road. They reported that after the working session with HARB members Chairman Mohn, Mr. Zemba, and Urban Design Associates, the Singhs had made some updates to the program and layout of the house. Mr. Roberts highlighted changes that were made to respond to comments during the working session, including lowering the eaves to create a one-and-a-half-story massing and simplification of the stone and brick detailing.

Ms. O'Hara summarized that the project is in Step 1 of the HARB process – Siting and Access. Ms. O'Hara also reminded HARB that there has been a walking tour, but that would be scheduled in the upcoming April HARB meeting. Mr. Hundley affirmed the value of the walking tour and mentioned that they are critical to agreeing on the most appropriate plans and designs.

Chairman Mohn shared that he appreciated the modifications to the roof, which give the house a sense of compression. He also appreciated the elevations color-coded by massing to help communicate the proposal. Mr. Mohn asked about the projecting soffits. He noted the distinct French Norman style, and suggested that an eave line much closer to the wall of the house, rather than project, would be most appropriate for this style of architecture. Mr. Childs and Mr. Roberts responded that they feel the overhang softens the style and makes it more like a French country house. Chairman Mohn suggested looking at Lutyens for country home examples.

He added that the Singhs are investing in masonry and that the architects should work to make the expression of those materials as simple as possible and less formal. He referenced the Sunnymead and Chalfont historic houses in Sewickley Heights, which have similar massing, steeply pitched roofs, and do not have projecting soffits. He asked whether a flared (radius) eave had been considered for the change in roof pitch, rather than a dual pitch.

Mr. Roberts responded that they looked to a range of European examples, to differentiate the house, rather than to emulate other examples in the Heights and Western Pennsylvania. Mr. Mohn responded that the level of eccentricity is likely something that would likely be discussed in future meetings. He repeated the usefulness of Lutyens as a master of eccentricity, masonry details, and vaulting.

Ms. Walton noted the juxtaposition of two different styles (Tudor and Classical) asked about the inspiration for the round form of the master bathroom, given that octagonal forms are used elsewhere in the design. Mr. Roberts responded that the materials would tie these forms together, and that this shape would act as a lantern at the approach to the house.

Mrs. Thompson found the architecture to be beautiful and reminiscent of architecture in Europe. She pointed to turrets on the historic Hillside and Treetops estates.

Mr. Hundley noted that this is one of the most important projects HARB has seen in 31 years of its existence. He recognized that the architects are making progress but stated that it still feels like a combination of styles, rather than a consistent expression of one design idea. He encouraged the architects to relate the architecture to the landscape and the character area.

Ms. Walton asked about access to the proposed garages. Mr. Roberts acknowledged that it has not been addressed yet. Mr. Mohn asked if there was a landscape architect involved in the project. Mr. Childs responded that Joel Le Gall would be the landscape architect and that an updated survey was completed in February.

Ms. Walton stated that HARB would need to understand how the wider body of the house would relate to the existing grades. She also pointed out that the fourth car garage was the most proud element of the house. She reminded the professional team that the landscape and grading would need to be shown on site plans.

Mr. Mohn asked if the garden masonry walls would be impacted. Ms. O'Hara asked about the relationship of the historic walled garden to the interior rooms and access from the house.

Mr. Mohn discussed the proportions of the proposed house. He recommended elongating the roofs of the dormers to make them more vertical and similar to the other roof pitches (given that they would look flatter in perspective when standing on the ground). Ms. Walton asked about the drawing conventions and whether a ridgecap was intended. Mr. Roberts confirmed that a copper ridgecap would be used that would age over time.

Chairman Mohn reiterated that the Singhs intend to build a house of great quality and that HARB will continue to work with William Childs Architects on the massing and details.

Nicodemo, 638 Backbone Road: Mr. Bill Childs of William Childs Architects presented a proposal for an addition to the cottage at 638 Backbone Road. He highlighted the use of the stone materials in the addition, tying back to the original house, confirmed that the impervious surfaces and building coverages are well below the allowable percentages, and described how the massing of the addition works with the existing topography and levels.

Chairman Mohn complimented the sketches, saying they were lovely, and applauding the way that the structure tells a story and narrative about how the house would have grown over time.

Mrs. Pawloski asked Mr. Childs whether the trees above the wall seen in the front elevation would remain. Mr. Childs confirmed that they would remain.

Chairman Mohn asked whether drawings had been made for the other elevations of the addition. Mr. Childs replied that they had not developed those drawings yet and wanted to get HARB's input before doing so. Mr. Mohn said that this was a good example of keeping the proposal simple and working out the proportions before moving too far ahead.

Mrs. Sykes said that she loves the direction, and that the addition is charming.

Mrs. Thompson complimented the attention to detail, in particular the relationship of the chimney height to the cupola and the detail of the windows.

Ms. O'Hara thanked Mr. Childs for bringing early sketches to HARB and for respecting the process.

Mr. Mohn commented that there should not be anything complicated related to stormwater management, and asked about issues related to septic. Mr. Childs confirmed that only living spaces are being made larger, but no bedrooms are being added to the house.

Topol, 258 Scaife Road: Mrs. Jenny Topol and Mr. Ben Simpson from Eichenlaub attended the meeting to present an overview of the planting plan in front of the house and at the driveway entrance. Mr. Simpson described that the intention was to establish a traditional perennial English garden that would have seasonal color and would add texture and variety. Mr. Simpson gave a thorough and detailed presentation of the species proposed in the plan in each location.

Chairman Mohn praised the proposal for including such a robust and thoughtful planting plan. He cautioned that some of the species may not be deer resistant. Mr. Simpson confirmed that Eichenlaub will be doing regular maintenance with an aggressive deer resistant repellent.

Mrs. Pawloski echoed Mr. Mohn's comments, stating that the variety of season color and texture are very appropriate for a rural setting.

Mrs. Thompson complimented the proposal, stating that the timing of the seasonal colors is impeccable.

Mrs. Sykes mentioned that the gardens will be beautiful.

Mr. Hundley also complimented the proposal on the combination of colors and textures. He also warned about the abundance of deer in this part of Sewickley Heights. Mr. Simpson

Motion by Mr. Zemba, seconded by Mrs. Gretchen Pawloski, to recommend approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for historical purposes only, was unanimously approved.

Report to HARB on Administrative Reviews for Ratification

There were no reports on Administrative Reviews for ratification.

Comments from the Public Regarding Items Not on the Agenda

There were no comments from the public regarding items not on the agenda.

HARB Meeting Adjourns

The meeting adjourned at 6:32 p.m.