

NASHUA HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Monday, June 23, 2025, 6:30 p.m., City Hall, Room 208

HDC Members:

Ald. Derek Thibeault
Robert Vorbach
Lisa Law
Chris Barrett

Also present:

Carter Falk, Deputy Planning Manager/Zoning

MINUTES:

April 28, 2025:

MOTION by Mr. Vorbach to approve the minutes as presented, waive the reading, and place the minutes in the file.

SECONDED by Mr. Barrett.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 4-0 BY VERBAL ROLL CALL OF THE MEMBERS.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Michelle Earnest (Owner) Tracy Turmelle, GM Roth Design Remodeling (Applicant) 40 Concord Street (Sheet 67 Lot 99) requesting approval to replace sunroom in back of house into heated living space, and to replace windows on east elevation. RB Zone, Ward 3.**

Voting on this case:

Ald. Derek Thibeault
Robert Vorbach
Lisa Law
Chris Barrett

Tracy Turmelle, GM Roth Design Remodeling, 12 Murphy Drive, Nashua, NH. Mr. Turmelle said that Ms. Earnest recently took ownership of the property, it was set up as a family gathering

space, it's a large room with a bathroom, and then later on, they added the sunroom in the back. He said that the proposed use is for family that comes to visit periodically, sometimes they stay for a length of time, and she wants them to have a space of their own adjacent to her main house. He said that they want to create two bedrooms on the Concord Street side, and they will need to have egress windows, because the existing windows are quite tall, and don't comply. He said that where the sunroom is in the back, they'd like to renovate that space into heated living space, and put a kitchen there. He said that they understand that they'd need variances or other approvals, but the first hurdle is for the Historic District Commission to approve the plans.

Mr. Turmelle said that the windows are too small, and they'd actually be moved around to the back of the house, there's also a slider that goes out to the sunroom, and that will be access to the back yard, so those elements will be reused, and there would be new windows in the front.

Mrs. Law asked if the Commission will discuss the number of units in the building, such as if this is changing into a multifamily.

Mr. Falk said that is more of a Zoning Board issue, whether they go for a duplex or an ADU.

Mr. Vorbach said that architecturally, the details are consistent with what's been done to the house. He said that he doesn't see any issues with the conversion.

Mr. Barrett asked if there will be a change to the driveway pattern.

Mr. Turmelle said no.

Mrs. Law asked if there would be separate parking.

Mr. Turmelle said no, there is quite a bit of parking space available now, and some of the visiting family members will occasionally park on the street, or the side street for access.

Mr. Barrett asked about the heating system.

Mr. Turmelle said that it has its own heating system.

Mrs. Law said that the house is unique, and it nonconforming to the architecture of the neighborhood already, but what is proposed is architecturally fitting in with the house.

SPEAKING IN FAVOR:

No one.

SPEAKING IN OPPOSITION OR WITH QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS:

No one.

END OF PUBLIC HEARING, BEGINNING OF PUBLIC MEETING:

MOTION by Mr. Barrett to approve the request as submitted and presented.

SECONDED by Ald. Thibeault.

MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY 4-0.

2. **The Storer Family Rev. Trust (Owner) Martin Storer (Applicant) 9A Abbott Street (Sheet 67 Lot 51) requesting approval to replace front porch under roof, including steps, decking, framing, structural posts, railings and balusters. RC Zone, Ward 3.**

Voting on this case:

Ald. Derek Thibeault
Robert Vorbach
Lisa Law
Chris Barrett

Martin Storer, 9A Abbott Street, Nashua, NH. Mr. Storer said that the Commissioners should have photos of the porch, he received this information from the contractor.

Mr. Barrett asked if the work has already started, and got caught.

Mr. Storer said no.

Mrs. Law said that it looks like a safety issue at this point.

Mr. Storer said that it's sound as it stands, it's just a matter of having a working front porch as soon as possible, it's ready for inspection upon proper approval.

Mr. Barrett asked if it will be vinyl components except for the posts.

Mr. Storer said that the Commission should have the info on the posts, they' wood, quality materials, most everything else, once the porch is finished, is going to be in character with the neighborhood, it's not going to look substantially different. He said that the balusters will be PVC, and a white vinyl handrail, and the lattice and trim will be PVC. He said that there are several pictures of different perspectives of what the railing material is.

Mr. Barrett asked what will be used for the steps.

Mr. Storer said that they'd be right where they used to be, right in front. He said that right now they're wood, and the new ones would be composite material, they'd be consistent with the decking materials. He said that everything highlighted in the pictures is what they'd use.

Mrs. Law asked if a porch component will be staying.

Mr. Storer said that above the roof, the porch roof is staying, and everything below is going.

SPEAKING IN FAVOR:

No one.

SPEAKING IN OPPOSITION OR WITH QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS:

No one.

END OF PUBLIC HEARING, BEGINNING OF PUBLIC MEETING:

Mr. Vorbach said that the new details are consistent, the columns, the railing has always been unique, and really not consistent architecturally with the style of the house, so, not that it's not unattractive, but replacing it with the vertical balusters is architecturally consistent. He said that the roof is staying intact, that is a positive.

MOTION by Ald. Thibeault to approve the application as submitted and presented.

SECONDED by Mr. Vorbach.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 4-0 TO APPROVE.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Discussion:

Mr. Falk said that the following item is only a discussion, and said he doesn't even know the address, and there are no plans submitted, and nothing for the Commission to vote on, it is just a discussion to give direction.

Jonathan Halle, Warren Street Architects

Amelia Brock, Warren Street Architects

Vanessa Talasazan - owners representative for Harbor Care.

Mr. Halle said that this is just an informal discussion with the Commission for a property on North Main Street, and they are just getting started. He showed the Commission a collage of some buildings that surround this property, it is at the corner of Auburn Street and Amherst Street, it is 10-14 Amherst Street, two lots.

Mr. Halle said that they have an application in coming forward for Bangor Savings Bank, they own the next lot down, which is 1 North Main Street, so there is potential conversations of perhaps they'll do something together, but today, the discussion is just these two lots, which Harbor Care already owns and operates, and is looking to demolish these three buildings and build a 30-bed, social service office space for themselves, and showed the Commission some proposed plans.

Mr. Halle said that they are just getting started, and the thoughts are context in the neighborhood architecturally. He said that they've been advised to look at this at least now, as it will probably get funded and built out, and it's 18-24 months down the road, and the new Zoning code will probably be in place by then, and are looking at it under the new Code, it could be four stories, but the intent is less.

Ms. Brock pointed out the structure facing Amherst Street, and then the one at the intersection of Amherst Street and Auburn Street.

Mr. Halle said that prior to this idea being put forward, Vanessa had a board member help them with a study. He said that early on, a member of Harbor Care's board took a look at what might be a concept moving forward, something that could be buildable, and asked how to get it started. He said that his response was to show the Commission a contextual drawing of what they were proposing, and it would be three stories, the unit count is down, and the footprint is as shown. He said that they'd maintain the curb cut off of Amherst Street, and the entrance is off this side, and

some sketches are in the beginning phase, based upon the vernacular that they're seeing directly in the neighborhood, there would be some sort of outdoor or garden space, something for the residents. He said that the residents don't really need parking, but there would be parking for staff. He said that they'd probably seek a waiver for parking, as the side cannot provide what is needed, and they cannot afford podium parking.

Ms. Brock said that the ratio for low-income housing is lower, it's 0.5 spaces per unit.

Mr. Barrett asked if it would be all apartments, or any retail.

Mr. Halle said it would be apartments on the second and third floor, and apartments and social service aspects of the business, with a small satellite health care center. He said that they were fortunate enough to get some funding, there are some other grants still pending. He said that this wouldn't even be an application to the City until June of next year if they're lucky, so it would be a 2027 construction project, there's a long road to go here. He said it would be mostly one and two-bedroom apartments, there is one five-bedroom apartment that would be more of a group setting unit, so it would be a two/three story component, with a mansard roof to keep the scale down to be consistent with a lot of other structures in the neighborhood.

Mr. Falk said that the first step would be a demolition permit, which would require Historic District Commission review and approval. He said that he's not speaking for the Commissioners, but they'll most likely want to see some kind of report as to the validity of the buildings, what shape they're in, if they're termite or carpenter ant infested, or if the building can't be restored or repaired or reused, that is generally what the Commissioners look at for a demolition of any structure in the district. He said that perhaps the report or study submitted is from a structural engineer, or a firm that looks at buildings to be demolished. He said that the Commission will want to know why the building(s) are being taken down.

Mr. Barrett said that they want to preserve buildings, not tear down. He said it's a big deal.

Mr. Falk said that the District only has 200 properties, and they'll want to know why three are being removed, when the old ones cannot be renovated or repaired, or being put into a current use. He said that whatever team they acquire, whether it's a combination of a real estate broker, and/or a structural engineer, architect, the team will have to write up a report for the Historic District Commissioners to look at, and if they deem that the buildings are obsolete, or no longer viable for residential use, or commercial use, and no sense putting money into it, then the Commissioners may have some reason to support removing the buildings. He said that is how historically the Commissioners have looked at demo work. He said that if they deem it ok to be removed, then any applicant can move forward with a plan with something that will architecturally fit into the neighborhood.

Mr. Vorbach said that they're on the right track, just in terms of contextual. He said that he understands functionally to have three separate buildings, that can be a challenge to make it work, so, hence, the need to have one building that fits context and provides a building for what they're doing. He said the key thing is the contextual fit, even though it's schematic right now. He said if it's a new building and we're losing three older ones, that are not linked, it's difficult to operate out of, and hence, the journey.

Mrs. Law said that there is a lot of empty office space in the downtown that is not being used, and asked if they looked into one of those.

Ms. Talasazan said that they own these buildings without mortgages, and that would enable them to have a project here. She said that these buildings are not being used to their best use, and will require significant work.

Mr. Falk said that the Commission will need to hear valid reasons why the buildings are no longer of use.

Mr. Barrett said that fitting into the neighborhood is crucial and it's in the Charter, and they kill projects if they don't fit.

Mr. Halle said if it comes down to a financial decision, with Harbor Care saying they can only get 12 beds on the property as it exists today, and it requires three million dollars worth of renovation for 12 beds, and they have existing land and buildings, with no mortgage. He said new construction for affordable housing that is well over \$300 per square foot, so how does that work. He said that if the report says that the buildings are tired, they need a certain amount of work, and they want to proceed, and asked what the parameters of the Commission are, can they say no, you can't tear it down, or, no, you can't proceed.

Mr. Barrett said that they can make a recommendation that they want the buildings preserved, they have, and can do that. He said that one property on Concord Street wanted to tear down their house and construct a huge 6-unit building, and the Commission said no.

Mr. Falk said that the reasons to tear a building down cannot be all financial.

Ms. Brock said that the biggest challenge with an old building would be accessibility, that's a big deal, and with organizations like Harbor Care, most of the funding requires accessibility, so to take three separate buildings and put elevators in all three, and ramps in all, it is expensive.

Mr. Vorbach said it's a unique situation where you have the property already, with no debt, with buildings on it that are historic, but do not function the way you need them to function. He said that bringing them up to current code when you go into something like this, and you're changing use or redeveloping the buildings themselves, that can open up a can of worms architecturally and in terms of code conformance, so it's unique. He said that we need a facility that will help us do what we do, and we're dealing with detached historic buildings that are old, and cannot renovate successfully to achieve what they need to do. He said that the Commission does care about historic buildings, but again, architecturally, for him, it's contextual, something that fits.

Mr. Halle said that they understand context, it's balancing and delivering a project that Harbor Care can actually finance and move forward, balanced with the best way forward and the best use of the property. He said that Vanessa has been talking to Bangor Savings Bank, the lot next door, they're challenged with very difficult access at that intersection, and they want to put a branch bank there, and want to do one there, and they'd like some synergy that could work, so perhaps the bank goes in the ground floor, or if it changes the configuration, so this may be a different project, and that lot has easements in the back.

Mrs. Law said that she'd prefer not to see the parking on the street, if that can be managed.

Ms. Brock said it's difficult, the curb cut is so close to the traffic light, and there is another access if the building is torn down.

Mr. Halle asked if they need the Commission's approval before going to the Planning Board.

Mr. Falk said yes.

Mrs. Law asked about the possibility of changing meeting dates and/or times.

Mr. Falk said that the HDC has met on the 4th Monday of the month like this for years, it would be hard to change, as conference rooms are busy at night at City Hall, and everyone has their own personal schedules.

Mrs. Law said that perhaps the meeting time could be moved up a half-hour, so the Alderman can come to this.

Mrs. Law said that she wouldn't mind 6:00, or even 5:30.

Mr. Vorbach said he wouldn't mind 6:00 either.

Mr. Falk said that he is ok with an earlier time, as long as the applicants can make it, and the rest of the Commissioners.

MOTION TO ADJOURN by Mr. Barrett at 7:15 p.m.

CF/cf