

NASHUA HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Thursday, 28 July 2008, 6:30 p.m. – Room 208, City Hall

Members:

Michael Findley
Frank Mellen
Bill Slivinski
Randy Wilbert
Michael Tamposi, Alderman (left at 7 p.m.)

Also present:

Carter Falk, Planning Department

10 Manchester Street – Sheet 67, Lot 27, RB Zone – Mount Pleasant Street School – City of Nashua (owner) – Requesting to erect a 20 square foot non-illuminated ground identification sign with a manually changeable letter board

Laurie Ethier, PTO President

William Barry, Attorney

Diane Fabray, parent

A. David Pierce, 13 Manchester Street

Christine Twombly, 9 Mount Pleasant Street

Bob Carlson, 15 Manchester Street

10 Manchester Street

Ms. Ethier and Attorney Barry spoke about the proposed 2-sided non-illuminated ground sign. Made of a composite material to be weather resistant to cut down on maintenance, the 20 square foot sign would be paid for from funds raised by the PTO (Parent/Teacher Organization). The granite posts are 10' with 3' below grade. The number "10" would be at the top of sign and "Mount Pleasant Elementary School" underneath the number. Below that information would be a changeable letter board with 4 lines with 4" lettering. The sign would be installed 20 feet from the property line, in the front yard of the school and on the northerly part of the property and perpendicular to the school. A copy of the sign plan, proposed pictures of the sign, plus pictures of the front, back and sides of the school were presented. Creative Signs prepared the drawings. In addition, pictures of similar signs in the area were presented. Attorney Barry said the school has become a bilingual school and parents don't necessary get materials sent home. They hope to put information in English and Spanish on the sign. It would list PTO, school, and healthcare events and activities. The majority of the students walk to school. The sign may be illuminated with ground lights at a later date. Although not in the historic district, many of the other schools also have signs. Ms. Ethier felt the sign would help notify the abutters when there is a school event. She said sometimes the events have 200 people.

Mr. Pierce said he is also representing 3 other abutters – Dr. Peppard, 7 Manchester Street, Dr. Gosselin, 4 Manchester Street, and Mr. Daansen 39 Orange Street. Mr. Pierce felt that all HDC ordinances should apply. They (he and the 3 other abutters) are against the location of the sign and don't feel it is needed. If it is approved, they would lean towards compromising and want the sign located on the southeast side where it could be seen both ways. He felt it may have to lowered a bit and be less obtrusive. He felt the sign is out of character and also didn't think it should be illuminated. He said the sign was not a natural landscaping.

Ms. Twombly was very much opposed to another sign at that school. She felt they don't need another sign and there is already a big sign at the top of it (the school). She said there is a

lot of vandalism at the school and said the sign is a perfect target for it. She does not want an illuminated sign and it isn't necessary.

Mr. Carlson's concern is that this is a historic district and we are supposed to be preserving the character and nature of the history of Nashua. He thought this sign, although a small piece, is just another piece of erosion of that history. The school has been a focal point of the loss of the historical nature of the district. He felt the sign as another piece of that legend of that picture of the 1800's school slipping away. He is opposed to the sign on a cosmetic point of view. He has lost both of his granite horse posts in front of his home. He felt the school's charm and character are lost. He felt the illumination was out of time – just a piece of the 20th century landing on the 18th century. He said the wings on the sides of the building were not original. The central edifice used to have a dome. The school never had a sign and doesn't need a sign now.

Attorney Barry said if the illumination is an issue, then they could withdraw that out of their application. He felt the sign was in character to what has been approved in the district – First Church, Sweeney, St. Christopher's, Stark Building. He felt it was appropriate and tasteful and in character in what it would have looked like if it had been there initially.

Mr. Pierce said he was on the HDC when the wing additions were added to the building (1988-89). The HDC had approved all brick. They ran out of bricks and the HDC was caught between a rock and a hard place because they had to accept the stone which destroyed the character on both of those ends (of the building).

Mr. Slivinski felt it was a valid point not to have it illuminated. The primary use of the sign is for messages and for the parents that are bringing/picking up their children. He didn't have a problem with the materials. He didn't examine the site for the location.

Mr. Findley's concern was about denying the sign in front of the school when there are signs all over the HD.

Mr. Mellen said he wasn't against the sign, but against the location and didn't think it should be in the middle of the grass. He would prefer it to be located on the south side of the sidewalk.

The members spoke about tabling the proposal to the next meeting to give them time to go out to the site. Attorney Barry felt if the sign is approved tonight, but the location not determined, then they could order the sign now and decide on the location later.

Mr. Findley made the motion to approve the proposed sign in a location to be determined and the sign would never be illuminated. There was no one seconding the motion. The motion failed.

With Mr. Wilbert making the motion and Mr. Slivinski seconding, the proposed plan to be denied was approved. Mr. Findley disapproved.

Manchester/Hopkins/Merrimack Streets

Ms. Latvis sent an email to Mayor Lozeau with a cc to Mr. Falk. She would like to develop a very small triangular parcel of land. Mr. Falk said the parcel is not in the district, but wanted her to present her ideas to the HDC. It is located 5-6 parcels away from the HD. She wants to increase the historic district's image and have a small garden/large planter, light post and a plaque in the parcel of land. She does not own the parcel; it is a right-of-way. Mr. Falk will email her letter to the members and they will discuss it further at the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.