

**RECEIVED***By Karen Wilber at 1:12 pm, Aug 03, 2022*

TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

Town Hall Offices • 63 Main Street • Northborough, MA 01532 • 508-393-5040 x7 • 508-393-6996 Fax

May 12, 2022

Design Review Committee

Zoom Meeting Minutes

Approved July 14, 2022

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, An Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency, signed into law on June 16, 2021, this meeting will be conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance by members of the public will be permitted.

Members Present: Amy Poretsky, Chair; Lisa Maselli; David Veron; Dario DiMare

Others Present: Laurie Connors, Town Planner; Bob Frederico, Inspector of Buildings/Zoning Enforcement Officer

The meeting was called to order at 8:33am.

Continue of Review of Guidelines for Two-Family Dwellings; DRC Review Process:

Ms. Connors brought up the edited version of the guidelines. The group continued to edit the draft guidelines with edits made by Ms. Connors in real time.

Discussion began with the changes made under the Introduction. Ms. Connors noted there is no trigger for approval of modifications of two family homes under the Planning Board; because the Planning Board has no jurisdiction, the Design Review Committee does not either. Exterior modifications simply require a building permit. Unless the zoning bylaws are changed, that part of the design guidelines does not apply.

Ms. Maselli mentioned creation of some sort of policy for two family houses to ensure that there is some sort of community behind maintaining the original look of the building. She felt there should be controls in place for the people that live there.

Ms. Connors expressed concern over government entities having control over the choice of colors, etc., on a person's home. Ms. Maselli said two family houses don't really have the type of freedom that single family houses do. She didn't think that oversight from this committee is governmental and overreaching. She suggested something along the lines of a condo association.

Mr. Frederico was concerned about the mechanics behind that. The Town is not involved with the ownership style and framework, it would be a tall order to be able to enforce that.

Ms. Maselli was more concerned with decks and existing walls, not necessarily door colors and thought there should be oversight, suggestions, not direction. Mr. Frederico thought that a suggestion is useless if someone doesn't want to agree with it, there is no enforcement or teeth in the order.

Ms. Connors suggested adding language regarding major modifications to the structure as part of the special permit that the Planning Board issues when a duplex is originally approved. In that case, if a major modification was proposed, the applicant would need to go back to the Planning Board for review. They should specify what major modifications would entail, perhaps enclosing a porch or the construction of a porch, but she didn't think that the Planning Board should get involved with paint colors, which is a personal choice. Any structural change could be added as a condition of approval.

Mr. DiMare agreed with use of the term 'major modifications'.

Mr. Frederico said this committee has been discussing the house itself, landscaping, walkway, layout of the driveway, etc., and asked about the addition of a pool, accessory structure, fencing that is over 7', to what extent do they want to have a say on that?

Ms. Poretsky thought they should be just concerned with the façade.

Mr. Veron asked, do they determine where a pool would go? Or is a pool allowed on one side, not on the other? What are the limitations of this committee?

Mr. DiMare felt that meant anything that was visible from the street. As a side note, he commented that he had noticed that the flowering street trees had just been removed from the property where his office is located. He wasn't sure if anyone had asked permission, they were simply gone; isn't that something that this committee wants to stop from happening?

Ms. Maselli thought so, they are working on a guide meant to show what is important to them.

Mr. Frederico said that once it goes to the Planning Board as part of a special permit, it is no longer mandated, it is a guide.

Ms. Connors, noting that she is still new in her role, said that she planned on adding a condition to every special permit decision that if there is the removal of any landscaping they are required to replace the landscaping in the next growing season. She mentioned that she'd added the language 'in perpetuity' to the last two Planning Board decisions with regard to maintenance of the landscaping.

Mr. Frederico said that is a standard that has been in the book for a long time. When the special permit granting authority issues a special permit, they reference a site plan, or a landscape plan, or a set of plans and maps, that is what is required to be maintained. It is part of the code.

Ms. Connors said that she prefers to add that to the conditions because the average person wouldn't know the landscaping provision in the bylaws.

Enforcement issues were discussed. Mr. Frederico said that when a special permit is approved it becomes part of the zoning code for that particular piece of property, there are fines for zoning violations.

Ms. Connors asked if the committee was on board with this idea, that if there is a major modification to the structure that is highly visible from the roadway, they would have to return to the Planning Board for approval, she assumed that also meant a return before this committee. The committee was in agreement. Ms. Connors said the Planning Board would have to approve the inclusion of this condition of approval when they are reviewing duplex decisions. She will create a draft. A duplex is currently before the Planning Board now and this would be a perfect example of moving this condition forward.

The committee moved ahead to discussion of building height, and then to garage placement and design. Ms. Connors thought movement of the garage doors to the side of the building makes it seem as though the garage is living space. Ms. Maselli had a question about the line specifying a garage door color other than white that matches and remove the 'other than white'? She said they don't want to choose color but now they are saying other than white. Ms. Connors will eliminate that phrase.

Lastly, they next moved to review of the landscape section, discussed at a previous meeting. Ms. Connors said they'd added 'intervals of street tree placement', which she got from National Grid's guidelines. The smallest frontage is 100' which means 2 street trees. Location of the tree placement is depending on the design of the duplex, common sense is applied to those standards. Mr. DiMare suggested using the language of no greater than 50'. Ms. Connors will change it to read approximately 50' intervals.

Ms. Poretsky asked about driveway setbacks. Mr. DiMare suggested use of the term 'impervious surfaces', meaning that that it will be green of some nature, 'driveways' could be challenged. Mr. Frederico said currently for single family homes do not require a paved or concrete surface for parking. Also, the Town has narrow driveway frontage allowances that are down to 50'.

Ms. Connors said if you have a four acre parcel, there could be a circumstance where one is limited to the house placement because of conditions such as wetlands, topography, etc., if there isn't any leeway you are discouraging placement of a side entry garage.

Ms. Maselli said it should be massed smaller if it is that close.

Mr. DiMare said variances could be applied for under certain circumstances.

Ms. Connors will edit that to read there will be no impervious surfaces within 5' of the side property.

Ms. Maselli asked if a checklist will be added for quick reference, it was in the original document. Ms. Connors understood the need for one. She had prepared a checklist for the Planning Board for site plan review, she uses that when receiving applications, but that board requires more than what is needed here.

Ms. Poretsky asked that members read through the draft guidelines one more time.

Ms. Connors asked if they should just add pictures of good examples so as not to offend anyone? Ms. Maselli suggested having some photos, perhaps of what would work in Northborough as opposed to the photos they'd had in the first revision. Ms. Poretsky asked that photos be sent to Ms. Connors, who will place them in the guidelines for review at the next meeting.

Consideration of Minutes from April 14, 2022: Mr. DiMare made a motion to accept the minutes as submitted. Ms. Maselli seconded. All were in favor.

Old/New Business

- Next meeting: Ms. Poretsky would like Ms. Connors to email the committee with the checklist and the latest draft of the guidelines with photos.

Meeting adjourned at 9:47.

Respectfully Submitted,
Michelle Cilley, Board Secretary