

Chaplin Historic District Commission

Minutes

Special Meeting and Public Hearing

Tuesday, July 26, 2022

A. Chairman W. Church opened the hearing at 7:03 P.M. Regular members present were P. Peifer, C. Smith, D. Cox; alternate members L. Ricklin, P. Siege. The applicant Jerome Allen was present and member of the public S. Peifer. Mr. Church read the legal notice dated July 11, 2022 and published in the Willimantic Chronicle regarding the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness by Mr. Allen to install 18 solar panels on the roof of 103 Chaplin St. Mr. Allen explained he looked into getting solar panels because of high electricity costs. The roof on his house is in good shape and the company he contacted, Vision Solaric of Turnersville, N.J. created a plan that would install 18 solar panels on the four roof hips and trim and remove trees as necessary to allow maximum solar gain at a reasonable lease cost. His lease would have a 25 year term. Mr. Peifer noted that the panels would be visible from the street on three of the roof sides that would create a distraction and questioned the amount of solar gain as it is a narrow and shady lot. Mr. Allen said he got the figure of 48% to 56% solar draw from the company. Mr. Peifer asked if a ground array was possible and Mr. Allen said it would only be efficient in the front yard and that was unacceptable and things like life style should matter. Mrs. Cox asked if he was aware his house was in a Historic District when he bought it and was aware of HDC regulations regarding appearance from the street. Mrs. Smith said it would be nice for people to have what they want but we have to enforce regulations and we try to guide your decisions. Mr. Church mentioned the high bar to reject solar panels unless there is no alternative because of Ct State regulations. Mrs. Ricklin asked about bringing a solar representative to the hearing as others have done. Citizen Mrs. Peifer said installing solar on the front of the house would set a precedent on the street and asked how high his electric bills were that such an array would be feasible; removing trees is very expensive and would the company include this work in the price. Mr. Allen said his monthly bill is \$360.00, he has had an energy audit. Mrs. Smith asked if he used electric heat because of the high monthly cost, Mr. Allen said their heat is pellet. It is Mr. Allen's understanding the electricity the panels generate goes to powering his daily use directly and any extra would be saved for future use as needed, that there would be no meter. Mr. Siege asked if the lease rate was 25 years of fixed cost or does the rate change. Mr. Allen said the lease makes it affordable and the company would be responsible if any damage occurred to his roof by the panels or if falling trees damaged them. Also the company would be responsible for the removal cost at the end of the lease. Mr. Siege asked how old is the company and added that if you don't have a solar storage battery and back-up generator you are still on the grid and have an electric meter. Mr. Allen said Vision Solaric is about 10 years old. In response to questions by Mrs. Smith and Mr. Siege, Mr. Peifer read CT PA 81-326 which says the C of A must be approved if the array doesn't substantially damage the historic character and appearance and that some panels can be installed unobtrusively. Mrs. Smith asked if there were photos of the actual panels. Mr. Church said there was nothing to show the color just drawings of the layout and it would be helpful to see actual photos and a computer generated picture of the roof installation. Mr. Allen agreed to ask Vision for additional photos and see if a representative could attend a meeting. Mrs. Ricklin said as the house is set back on the lot, it is not as obtrusive as some houses directly on the street. Members thought additional information is needed and Mr. Church continued the hearing at 8:07 P.M. to Tuesday, August 2, 2022 at 7:00 P.M. in the Chaplin Library Conference Room.

B. 1. Business meeting called to order at 8:10 P.M. Members seated were W. Church, D. Cox, C. Smith, P. Peifer and alternate L. Ricklin for absent J. Givens.

2. Approval of May 3, 2022 minutes. Mr. Peifer moved to approve the minutes, L. Ricklin seconded, vote was unanimous to approve.

3. Audience for citizens: None

4. New Business:

a. Certificate of Appropriateness for Installation of Solar Roof Panels. No action as hearing is continued.

5. Correspondence. No written correspondence was received besides a Preservation CT magazine.

Mr. Church has been in contact with First Selectman Juan Roman to work on the Federal Historic Grant for the Chaplin Museum. Sally Zimmerman has been helping write the grant and Mary Dunn from the State has been helpful.

Mr. Siege addressed the confusion on his membership on the HDC. He thought he had resigned, but no letter was received by the HDC Chairman. Mr. Siege's term expires in August and Mr. Church received information from the First Selectman that he has a replacement candidate.

6. Adjournment. Mr. Church adjourned the meeting at 8:31 P.M.

Respectfully submitted, Susan Peifer- Recording clerk- HDC