

Calais Development Review Board
Minutes July 9, 2020; 7 PM (via Zoom video call)

Present: Denise Wheeler (Alternate DRB member), Walt Amses (DRB member), John McCullough (Asst. Zoning Admin), Donna Fitch, Bob Martin (Zoning Admin), Roth Porter (DRB member), Margaret "Peg" Bowen (DRB Chair), Ryan Edwards (DRB member and DAB Member), Art Edelstein (DRB member), Janet Ancel (Applicant), David Schutz (DAB Member), Linda Schütz, Judy Robert, David Weir, Craig Line, Artie Toulis, Scott Bassage, Clif Emmons, Tim Wheelock, Fletcher Dean, Robert Garcia, Laura Garcia, Aaron Ancel, Richard Jenney, Judy Harden, Meg Dawkins, Naomi Reid, Stephen Reynes (Applicant), Olivia Gay, Mary Eileen Mooney

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:14 PM, following some technical issues.

Review of Ancel Design Review Submittal: The Chair announced that the meeting is in reference to case 2020-18, Ancel and Reynes, 207 Old West Church Road, a design approval for a new single family dwelling in Kents Corner in the Old West Church design control district. This was filed on May 13, 2020. It is a subdivision from the sale of the existing property to build a smaller home on 3.33 acres. Janet and Stephen (the applicants) both attended. Janet explained that the land was acquired in the 1960s and was enjoyed and cared for by her family for a long period of time. The existing home on the property was built in 2002. Janet wants to stay in the property where she grew up and the reason for the application is to get the Town's approval for a much smaller house that suits the needs of herself and her husband as they age.

David Weir, Montpelier house designer, reviewed the site plan with the group, showing how the plan maintains as much open space as possible and puts the home close to Old West Church Road. The majority of the open field has been maintained. The house design is an unassuming simple farmhouse with matching proportions and details that reference nearby structures and the general feel of the district. It is a 1350 sf single story home appropriate for aging in place with attached 396 sf garage and attached porch. There are three major masses: large gable mass on the east, shed form on the west side, and connected garage gable form. (The front porch looks at the Old West Church Road.) The geometry is to mimic an organic farmhouse evolution in alignment with homes in the area. Materials work with historic precedent as much as possible: siding is horizontal wood lap siding (cream color range), roof standing seam metal (charcoal color) or architectural shingle, windows are to be traditional large 6 over 6 double hung spaced evenly along the road side, French doors match the mutton patterns, simple trim details in a farmhouse style, covered porch 6x6 smooth face painted columns and cedar decking boards. The driveway would be shared with the existing home on the property (there is a utility and access easement) and there is no new curb cut or vegetation disturbance. Janet intends to continue to represent the town of Calais in the legislature.

Stephen Reynes commented that the Kents Corner Design Guide was consulted, and the guidelines were met in this house design (as the Calais Design Advisory Board concluded). Judy Robert commented that she thinks it is an excellent design. Naomi Reid asked whether doors that were more historically appropriate could be considered, and commented she is concerned about future development from the buyers of the land. David Weir replied that the front door is not a major design element and the double French door is a compromise between modern contemporary sensibility and use of the house and the historic nature of the district. It maintains the proportions and rhythm as it plays across the elevation

and alludes to the window muttons. It is not necessarily a mimicry of the district buildings; architectural structures have evolved over time. Janet commented that the people who the house is under contract with are a young couple with a child in Maine and the doctor has a job at CVMC; his wife is a teacher. Their interest in the house has a lot to do with the field, woods, and entire property and there's no indication that they are developers.

Olivia Gay commented that she also grew up in Calais (Janet's sister) and that it is in the nature of villages to grow. She noted that Craig's house had more impact in changing the landscape than Janet's would, and she understands the upset of change as new houses go up. Enlarging the scope and vitality of villages includes people building in villages and she appreciated the carefulness of this project's planning. Richard Jenney commented he is delighted this project may happen. Judy Harden commented that she is the closest neighbor on Old West Church Road, and when they bought their house, there were no other houses in the road. She appreciated the style of the new house and stated her support. Scott Bassage commented he thinks the design is sensible and it's terrific to have more housing stock in the town of Calais and appreciated the thoughtful energy that's gone into the project. Aaron Ancel, Janet and Steve's son, and the prospective builder, commented that he looks forward to seeing the home there and he's happy to see them stay at this location. Meg Dawkins appreciated the design and location tucked within the acreage and the garage facing the curb cut. John McCullough commented that the house will fit harmoniously in the district, and the glass doors being a nod to our times and won't distract from the other homes. Donna Fitch commented that she grew up in Kents Corner and her parents said at the first DRB hearing for Janet and Stephen's original home, that when they were growing up, there were no lights on year round, and it's great to have lights here year-round. She supports the plan.

Craig Line commented that 22 years ago, when he bought his land, he had approached Janet about buying part of her land. An ad hoc committee worked with the Historic Society to have the land conserved at time of sale; he had free reign of where to build the house and wanted to use it for agriculture purposes. He stated he doesn't have extreme objections to the house itself, but is clearly opposed to the project. He asked the group to do a site visit to see the elevations and visual impact on the view, which he sees as worthless on the architectural drawings. The view of the mountain range from his driveway will be blocked, and he expressed his concern over changing the view within historic Kents Corner. He noted the owners have reached out to him many times about the project. He contrasted the project unfavorably with his opinion of the development happening currently at Maple Corner. He raised the question of new owners selling off pieces of land when in hard times; his land is conserved and disallows him subdividing. He stated his opposition to permitting this land to be subdivided and his opinion that there is no need for shorter driveways.

David Schütz noted that the DAB had very little trouble with the design and unanimously approved it. It is in sync with the design control guidelines that were established in 2006, including the fact that it should not be mimicking historic design but simply suggesting a 21st century take on the massing and qualities that are distinctive characteristics of the district. Linda Schütz commented that she loves the land and the people and posed the question that as Janet grows older, why shouldn't she have a choice to stay in a community that has been hers and everyone else's, when she comes up with a design that is suitable. Tim Wheelock wished Janet and Stephen the best for their project. Artie Toulis commented that he fully supports the project.

The DAB did meet on site twice. The house has been staked for two months. The designer noted that a break in the landscape was minimized as much as possible by pushing the house to the edge of the site against the trees. The house has been moved back a little further from the road than originally planned. This house uses an existing driveway, it is set against woods to the west and south and not set in the middle of a field.

The DAB submitted a letter to the DRB that recommends acceptance of this new structure in the Kents Corner Historic District.

Craig asked when his questions would be answered. The Board asked him to identify his questions.

1. What are the expected outcomes from tonight?
2. Can a site visit be scheduled?
3. Can all discussions of the Board be open to the public?
4. What criteria will the DRB consider?
5. What power does the DRB have?
6. If I am not happy with the DRB decision, what are my alternatives to pursue the next step?

Stephen noted that there has been nearly two months' notice for parties to check criteria and ask questions. These questions are not a reason to extend the time and not the duty of the DRB to advise anybody rules of enforcement. Naomi Reid commented that she never got a letter or notice and that she had not known about the site visit.

Craig will submit his questions in writing to the DRB via the Town Clerk's office. The DRB decided to have a scheduled site visit on Saturday July 11 at 10 am. The hearing will not be officially closed but be continued to the site visit; at that point, the Board can vote to close the hearing.

Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas