

**A SUMMARY OF THE MINUTES OF THE  
GLEN RIDGE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
HELD VIA A VIDEO CONFERENCE**

**October 6, 2021**

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**OPMA & Roll Call**

Chair Herrigel called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and Ms. Hickey read the Sunshine Act Notice and called the roll.

This meeting was held via a video conference.

PRESENT: Chair Herrigel  
Vice Chair Vande Stouwe  
Colello  
McMahon  
Moriarty  
Switzer  
Yewaisis

Margaret M. Hickey, Consultant to the Historic Preservation Commission

ABSENT: Darby

**Introduction and Hearing of the Applications**

Chair Herrigel briefly described the hearing process to the members of the public.

**170 Hawthorne Avenue**

**Douglas Snyder**

Chair Herrigel called for the application. Doug Snyder, Owner, presented the application for approval of as-built conditions for two attic-level windows at the north gable end. The two window sashes are of different sizes and therefore do not align, which was flagged by the HPC Consultant after the construction was complete. Mr. Snyder noted that in order to change the windows, he would have to rip out substantial construction on the interior. The proposed remedy is to change the trim around the windows so that one all-compassing trim at the head, jambs and sill would be installed to enclose both windows and that the new trim align but the sashes stay as is. There was some discussion between the Owner and the HPC members about the measurement differences between the window openings. Mr. McMahon noted that the two windows look substantially different where the approved drawings show two of the same windows, grouped with a singular trim around both sashes. Mr. Switzer also noted that the siding between the windows, which is blue and the trim is white, also emphasizes the difference between the window openings. There was an extensive discussion on the solution ending with the recommendation that the windows be enclosed by a singular trim around both

sashes at the head, jambs, and sill and that the space between the windows be infilled with trim.

On a motion by Mr. Herrigel, seconded by Mr. Colello, the application was approved as submitted with the following condition to be reviewed by subcommittee.

1. Provide a drawing to show how the trim will be installed so that it is at the same height at the top and bottom, and the area between the windows infilled with trim.

|         |        |                   |     |              |     |
|---------|--------|-------------------|-----|--------------|-----|
| Colello | Yes    | Moriarty          | Yes | Herrigel     | Yes |
| Darby   | Absent | Switzer           | Yes | Vande Stouwe | Yes |
| McMahon | Yes    | Yewaisis (Alt. 1) | Yes |              |     |

### **558 Ridgewood Avenue Patrick and Sheryl Southern**

Chair Herrigel called for the application. Patrick and Sheryl Southern, Owners, and Jonathan Perlstein, Architect, presented the application to demolish an existing house and construct a new house; this application is a return from the September meeting where the HPC requested additional information to justify demolish the existing house. Mr. Southern explained that he engaged a structural engineer and conducted an environmental study that showed the house exhibits rot from years of neglect, there is tree damaging the existing foundation, and there is mold in the basement impacting indoor air quality. Ultimately, Mr. Southern argued that since the house has problems the site is best utilized with a new home. As part of the new submission, Mr. Southern also noted that they showed examples of other similar properties and does not think that this house would be missed within the district. He noted that throwing good at bad is not the proper approach for this property and desires to enhance the property with a new building.

Mr. Switzer began the conversation noting that the HPCs purview, first, is to the historic nature of the property, but also discussed the reports provided by the Owner. He noted that the Professional Condition Assessment prepared by the structural engineer is used for the assessment of commercial properties and not for residential properties. Therefore, the criteria for evaluation are not the same. The report is written as if nothing is repairable and does not mention anything about the historic nature of the home. Mr. Switzer noted he disagrees with the entire report and, in his opinion, was not the proper approach for justifying demolition. In addition, he was concerned about some of the statements in the report, such as a leaking sewer pipe, since people are living with a potential health hazard. He also noted that every condition mentioned appears to be repairable. Mr. Switzer noted that the report clearly states that no physical investigations were performed, which would be needed in order to determine more thoroughly what the structural issues are. Mr. Southern countered that since someone lives there, he could not open up walls, etc. making conditions worse for the occupants. He also thought that the HPC would look at the documentation provided regarding the other similar properties in the district in an effort to show this building is lacking in uniqueness in the district, that there is other many similar properties in town, and as a builder-grade house would not justify the expense of the investment given there are other worthier examples in the district. Mr. Switzer returned to the discussion on the report findings, particularly the statement the building is beyond repair and demolition is recommended; Mr. Switzer disagrees with the

statement based on the contents of the report and that the structural engineer was not using the correct benchmarks for this conclusion.

Mr. Switzer also reviewed the findings of the environmental report which note there was black mold in the basement and rodent excrement. He said that if someone is living in the building now, these issues need to be addressed. However, he also noted that the report provides relatively easy solutions to address these issues. Mr. Southern noted the report has been shared with the tenants. Mr. Switzer noted that none of the issues in either report discuss the historical nature of the property and that the reports only discuss aesthetic, structural and environmental issues that are primarily money issues and the conversation should return to the historic nature of the building. Mr. Switzer also mentioned the letter provided by the Glen Ridge Country Club noting it focuses primarily on aesthetics. Mr. Switzer's opinion is the arguments made are not strong enough to justify demolition to build a new, larger house despite liking the design concept of the new house. Mr. Switzer is having a hard time justifying demolition of a house that has been sited by address as a good example of this style of house in the neighborhood. He noted that people are drawn to Glen Ridge because of the rich historical character that exists in the Borough. Mr. Southern countered that to retain the house at the price of acquisition and to rehabilitate the house is more expensive than new construction and the work cannot be done over time because of the condition of the house.

Chair Herrigel noted that under the recently prepared design guidelines, there is guidance under the section covering demolition. The bullet points in this section include a review of the historical value to Glen Ridge, the architectural value of the resource, and an evaluation of whether a property's loss would be a detriment to the district. He noted that the HPC received a letter from a local architect whom mentioned that this house was one of the first to be built in the north end of the Borough and that the house adds to the understanding of how the Borough developed. However, another bullet point in the guidelines is the HPC may look at the structural integrity of the property against the economic feasibility of rehabilitation. As such, Chair Herrigel noted there is a mechanism for the HPC to review / consider the economic feasibility for rehabilitation. He mentioned that there is a struggle between the criteria for review but that there is the ability to review the request for demolition against economic feasibility. Chair Herrigel also noted that he questions the conclusions made by the evaluation reports submitted for review; however, there is no indication of the cost so there is a struggle on determining how much of a factor the economic problem is to justify granting demolition.

Brian Sharrock (255 Forest Avenue) spoke. Mr. Sharrock is a friend of the Southern family and a builder in Hudson County and New York City working on historic homes and has presented to landmark commissions on other properties. In his opinion, if one or two main components of a building, such as the foundation, roofing, floor systems or the exterior envelope, are in need of full or mostly replacement, rehabilitation can be viable economically. However, when a property owner needs to address more than two main building elements, rehabilitation is rarely a viable economic option. In his opinion, the Owners would be dealing with all four of these systems at this property making rehabilitation not a feasible option. He noted that he does not have the actual costs as he has not seen the proposed plans but feels that the difference between the two, economically, rehabilitation would be on the negative side

compared to new construction. Chair Herrigel thanked Mr. Sharrock for his statements and asked if any other member had additional comments on the application.

Alan Lambiase (60 Gray Street) is a neighbor to 558 Ridgewood Avenue and asked to speak to the existing conditions of the house since he has been a neighbor since 1994. He noted that since he has lived at his current address, he has asked the neighbors to do maintenance on the property. There was a recent incident with a tree branch causing damage to his fence that made him aware of the Southern family's plans. He noted with specificity that since 1994 the house has not been painted, the roof has not been replaced, the trees are not maintained, and the driveway is in disrepair. He also noted that he is not surprised to hear that there are issues with the interior given the lack of care at the exterior. Mr. Lambiase gave his opinion that it is an unreasonable burden to ask a new owner to restore a property that for years has not been properly maintained.

Chair Herrigel asked again if any HPC members wanted to share their opinion on this application. Mr. McMahon noted that he is in agreement with Mr. Switzer and the HPC is duty-bound to see to the retention of historic properties in the district, that the case has not been made for the building's demolition, noted that the existing systems were not part of the investigations, and the pictures in the reports were not convincing as to the poor condition of the property. Having 35-years of experience in construction and an understanding what it takes to rehabilitate a property, the reports are not enough justification for demolition. He noted that given the current conditions, these types of houses are being repaired readily by people interested in doing that kind of work. Mr. McMahon noted that he thinks the proposed design is quite nice but the HPC is dutybound to maintain these historic structures.

Mr. Switzer noted, as he had at the last meeting, he is looking for a compelling reason to support this application but nothing provided thus far has given him a different view about this property. He finds the property to be outstanding, and is surprised there has been no information about the history of house provided by the Owners because it was requested at the September meeting the Owners find out more about the house specifically. In the accounting of the 13 other properties provided by the Owners for comparison there may be nine or 10 that are similar style houses, but this is not enough to provide a compelling argument for demolition. As an architect, he understands a clients' desire to see the highest and best value for their property, but this particular house, it's situation on the property and the impression given when driving by, the HPC needs to be careful about setting a precedent about tearing down houses that create an image of and define the character of the Borough.

Mr. Southern asked what would be the alternative? Mr. Switzer noted that gut rehabilitation is a possibility. Mr. Southern noted that he is not interested in this approach and all of the new construction in the Borough of late has been mediocre. He is looking to create something positive in the Borough and is not interested in putting money into this existing house. He also does not feel rehabilitating the property is as easy as the HPC members are thinking it would be. Mr. Southern explained that the amount of money to have to put into the house is too much to justify its rehabilitation explaining that it may cost up to \$1.25 million in repairs and upgrades but he would not end up with a property of that value in the end where total costs including the purchase would be \$1.6 – \$ 1.8 million for a 2,500 square-foot home. As such, it

will be difficult to find someone willing to make that investment and the Borough may end up with a vacant property on Ridgewood Avenue. Mr. Southern noted that he wants to make this highly visible corner better with the new construction proposed. Chair Herrigel noted that he believes the HPC understands what Mr. Southern is saying but asked again for the opinion of other HPC members.

Ms. Yewaisis asked since the Owner has no interest in rehabilitating the house to a livable condition, how does that impact the HPC members decision on the economic value of putting money into it. Since there is no wish in making that investment, where does that leave the HPC members in their decision making. Mr. Southern countered it is not the wish but the idea that he would be putting good money after bad money, making rehabilitation not economically feasible. Ms. Yewaisis countered that there may be someone who would be interested in making the investment to rehabilitate the property. Ms. Yewaisis, Mr. Switzer and Mr. Southern discussed how different people may look at such an investment where there may be someone willing to spend more to retain the property; however, Mr. Southern, who stated he is a real estate broker, noted that that person may not be able to get the financing from the bank to make that investment. Mr. Switzer asked how do we make a decision; Chair Herrigel said he wants to make sure the HPC hears from all members wanting to make their opinions heard as well as members of the public.

Mr. Perlstein, Architect, state he has experience with these types of properties in Glen Ridge and does not believe the Borough would be a poorer place if this house disappears. There are many other examples in the Borough and if the Borough is interested in keeping track of its history through its buildings it has ample other examples. The other issue is if the house is as good as people think it is, why not put something better on the property? He feels the property deserves a better house. He also asked about the garage and whether, that should be torn down since it lacks a foundation and, in his opinion, is ready to fall down. Mr. Perlstein believes that in order for a historic district to be successful it does not need to keep every house. Also, why can't the HPC look at a project where what is proposed is better than what is currently on site and make their decision based on that approach.

Mr. Switzer referred to the letter received from Karin Robinson, Architect, that speaks to the historic significance of the house and asked that it be made part of the public record. This letter speaks about historical significance where the emphasis of the discussion should be rather than on the economics. Chair Herrigel noted it will be part of the record and included in the application materials of record will also be the Glen Ridge County Club letter and the reports provided by the Owner.

Chair Herrigel asked if a motion could be made on the first part of the application.

Vice Chair Vande Stouwe asked of the longer-serving members of the HPC about the history of why the property on Ridgewood Avenue (near the intersecting street of Cambridge) was allowed to be demolished. This is the property where one house was demolished and two houses built in its place. Chair Herrigel thought that the house may not have been a contributing resource and there were structural issues that lead to the demolition of that house. Mr. McMahon recalled that the house was not greatly contributing.

Mr. Southern returned to the point about bringing up the economics of rehabilitation verses new construction noting only because the Chair mentioned it as a consideration. Ms. Hickey noted that the issue is somewhat muddled because the first line of the engineer's report states that the purpose for the investigation is to generate costs for rehabilitation but none are provided. In addition, she noted that Mr. Southern has made a lot of points about the costs of rehabilitation but, again, the documents provided to the HPC do not address costs in any way. Mr. Southern acknowledged that the process is unfamiliar to him and had not thought this type of information would have been needed otherwise he would have come to the meeting better prepared. He also acknowledged there is a difference of opinion about the historical value of the existing home between himself and many of the members on the HPC.

Vice Chair Vande Stouwe noted that everyone on the HPC believes this house has historical value but that she is sympathetic to the fact that the damage has been done and the building has not been maintained. She clarified that in order to exercise the provision in the design guidelines for the HPC to consider costs, costs need to be provided on paper, and to make it a point of discussion. Mr. Southern noted that he can do that but is hearing mixed reviews and is getting the impression that most on the HPC members feel the building is worth saving. Mr. Southern said that providing additional information on costs is something he may consider doing and returning to the HPC; however, he would want clear direction on what to do because the materials he provided for this meeting were contested and is concerned about going another month dealing with the HPC and adding expense only to have the application rejected. Not having an understanding of whether taking this extra step is worthwhile, he would prefer the HPC vote on his application now and then figure out what he would like to do next.

Chair Herrigel noted that there are some members amenable to having a greater understanding of the cost ramifications for rehabilitation but cannot speak for all. He asked if any of the HPC members would want to weigh in on this aspect; however, there is no way to say now how someone would vote next month with additional information.

Jonathan Perlstein posed another question about what happens when the building is renovated and all aspects of the building are modified or upgraded, what is left that is historic? Is there a point where the rehabilitation has gone too far for the building to no longer be considered historic; are you saving a caricature of the house and what is it that the HPC members are looking for? Mr. Switzer noted that is a contextual issue and the house reinforces this context for which the district is significant.

Chair Herrigel would like to give the Southern family direction. The question is if the lack of structural integrity and the resulting cost for repair are justified with additional information would that have an impact on HPC members' decision? Mr. Colello said yes as long as we saw the cost difference between rehabilitation of the existing and the cost of new as envisioned. Mr. Switzer noted that the costs would have to follow established standards for preparing cost estimates for residential construction, for which there are many resources available to the Owner and his consultants. Mr. McMahon also noted that Mr. Perlstein made a good point; what would the work scope be, what is it that will need to be done to the house to make it livable. Vice Chair Vande Stouwe said she was open to considering quality new

construction when rehabilitation is not economically feasible. Ms. Moriarty noted that she is a bad example because she has rehabilitated houses in worse condition so the economic argument may not be enough for her. Mr. Southern would consider going through this exercise if he thought that he could sway a majority of the HPC members but did ask for some guidance on what materials would need to be presented and who the HPC thinks he should consult with. Chair Herrigel noted that the HPC cannot make explicit recommendations on the approach or who to consult. He noted that the HPC members are detail-oriented and that Mr. Southern would need to gauge his approach on the feedback received at this evening's meeting. Chair Herrigel noted that he thought a number of the members could be swayed to approve demolition if supplemental information was provided that better proved the applicant's argument for demolition.

Chair Herrigel opened the meeting discussion for public comment and asked Mr. Southern if he wanted a vote on his application or a continuation. He noted that in order to go to the planning board on an appeal, the application would need to be voted upon. Mr. Southern requested a vote on the application as he recognized he has two options, either return to the HPC with the supplemental materials or go to the planning board for an appeal.

Matthew Trevenen (443 Ridgewood Avenue) asked if the HPC had ever approved the demolition of a contributing resource. There was some discussion about one property on Ridgewood again that led to the construction of two modular homes but it was unclear if that house was a contributing resource when it was approved for demolition. Ms. Hickey said that she would investigate this question and provide insight to the HPC members prior to the next meeting.

On a motion by Ms. Yewaisis, seconded by Ms. Moriarty, the application to demolish the existing building was denied.

|         |        |                   |     |              |         |
|---------|--------|-------------------|-----|--------------|---------|
| Colello | Yes    | Moriarty          | Yes | Herrigel     | Yes     |
| Darby   | Absent | Switzer           | Yes | Vande Stouwe | Abstain |
| McMahon | Yes    | Yewaisis (Alt. 1) | Yes |              |         |

*Lynne Vande Stouwe recused herself from the next application.*

### **38 Clinton Road**

#### **Jason Sun and Alice Huang**

Chair Herrigel called for the application. Jason Sun, Owner, presented the application to rebuild his front porch and make related repairs at the front of the house after a tree fell on the property causing significant damage. This is a return from an earlier application presented in August 2021. The related work includes new windows at the existing dormer, repair of the existing siding in-kind and making some roof repairs. The front porch includes all new porch piers, deck, framing, and roof and includes expanding the porch to be wider a wraparound porch including incorporating a new inset stair off the driveway. Mr. Sun reviewed some of the changes from the previous submission including: increasing the size/proportion of the columns; provided two options for the railings; and noted that the porch design matches those of the neighbors. There were a number of points about the design that were discussed in detail. The

first is the delineation of the columns, which do not match the existing in that the brick piers extended to above the deck and smaller columns sat on the piers to support the roof where the proposed design includes full-height columns. Mr. Colello noted this change changes the overall proportion of the house elongating the front façade verses what was there. He asked whether the Owner investigated returning to the old configuration; the Owner thinks, based on the different types of bricks found at the existing piers, that this configuration was a later change when the porch was rebuilt as a wraparound porch. Ms. Moriarty thought that although the current design is an improvement over the previous submission, she still prefers the taller brick piers. Mr. Switzer concurred.

Chair Herrigel confirmed with Mr. Sun that all of the repairs at the main building other than the front porch work were in-kind repair.

There was also a discussion about the choice of materials for the porch where there is a heavy reliance on composite materials for the decking, trim, and the railings; Ms. Yewaisis noted and the HPC members concurred that a composite material for the trim and railings was inappropriate at the front of the house where wood is preferable. The HPC members also noted that the lattice should be wood and framed.

On a motion by Mr. McMahon, seconded by Mr. Colello, the application was approved as submitted with the following conditions to be reviewed by subcommittee:

1. Provide a drawing showing the railing detailing including the materials, which shall be wood; and include the dimensions and spacing of the balusters.
2. Revise the existing drawings to show changes in materials and provide more detailed dimensions.
3. Provide lattice that is wood and framed.
4. Confirm that the new side stair is to be concealed within the porch.
5. Show on the drawings the steps are to be a composite material.

|         |        |                   |     |              |        |
|---------|--------|-------------------|-----|--------------|--------|
| Colello | Yes    | Moriarty          | Yes | Herrigel     | Yes    |
| Darby   | Absent | Switzer           | Yes | Vande Stouwe | Recuse |
| McMahon | Yes    | Yewaisis (Alt. 1) | Yes |              |        |

*Lynne Vande Stouwe returned to the meeting.*

### **346 Ridgewood Avenue**

#### **Amanda and Michael Mazza**

Chair Herrigel called for the application. Amanda and Michael Mazza, Owners, and Courtney Rombough, Architect presented the application to remove two windows from the side elevation as part of a kitchen renovation. Mr. McMahon mentioned that this would be the opportunity to remove the line-set from the A/C units and bury them in the wall; the Owners agreed.

On a motion by Mr. McMahon, seconded by Mr. Switzer, the application was approved as submitted with the following condition:

1. Move the existing A/C line-set to within the exterior wall.



|         |        |                   |     |              |     |
|---------|--------|-------------------|-----|--------------|-----|
| Colello | Yes    | Moriarty          | Yes | Herrigel     | Yes |
| Darby   | Absent | Switzer           | Yes | Vande Stouwe | Yes |
| McMahon | Yes    | Yewaisis (Alt. 1) | Yes |              |     |

## 264 Ridgewood Avenue

### Anna Ellis and Benjamin Zimmerman

Chair Herrigel called for the application. Anna Ellis Zimmerman, Owner, and her mother-in-law Ellen Zimmerman presented the application to remove four (4) double-hung sashes and install two new casements sashes further back on the side elevation as part of a kitchen renovation, and reconfigure the roof to include a simple gable over an existing rear addition installed in 2000. The HPC confirmed that all changes would be visible from the street as this is a corner property.

On a motion by Mr. Switzer, seconded by Ms. Vande Stouwe, the application was approved as submitted.

|         |        |                   |     |              |     |
|---------|--------|-------------------|-----|--------------|-----|
| Colello | Yes    | Moriarty          | Yes | Herrigel     | Yes |
| Darby   | Absent | Switzer           | Yes | Vande Stouwe | Yes |
| McMahon | Yes    | Yewaisis (Alt. 1) | Yes |              |     |

## Public Comment

None.

## Adoption of Meeting Minutes:

Minutes for the August 4, 2021 meeting and the September 1, 2021 were approved on a motion by Mr. Switzer and seconded by Mr. Colello.

## Subcommittee Reports

222 Ridgewood Avenue - Blue Foundry Bank (signage) – Subcommittee were provided drawings for new signage at the ATM at the rear of the bank building. This was only recently sent so no decision has been made.

## Old Business

Homeowner Workshop: Is on hold for the foreseeable future.

Ordinance: The HPC members further discussed potential changes to the Ordinance, such as the loss of stained-glass windows, half-timbering, and other defining features that get lost in the existing ordinance. The next step is how to bring these concerns to the Borough to make the necessary changes.

**New Business**

New Members: Chair Herrigel mentioned that Mr. Grisafi has resigned from the HPC and he has had conversation with Joaquin Fernandez, an architect who lives in town, who is interested in joining the HPC; Chair Herrigel will make a recommendation to the mayor. Chair Herrigel also mentioned that Mr. Darby may also have a potential new candidate to replace Mr. Switzer who will be leaving the HPC at the end of the year due to other professional obligations.

The HPC moved into Executive Session.

**Adjournment**

On a motion by Mr. Switzer, seconded by Mr. McMahon, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret M. Hickey, AIA  
Consultant to Glen Ridge HPC