

CHATHAM BOROUGH HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
July 19, 2022 7:30 p.m.

Commissioner James Greener called this Regular Meeting of the Chatham Borough Historic Preservation Commission to order at 7:30 p.m. This was a virtual meeting. Commissioners and applicants were present by way of Zoom.

Names	Present	Absent
James Greener	X	
Catherine Chin		X
Council Member Dempsey	X	
Lynn Magrane		X
Council Member Truilo	X	
Karen Franklin	X	
H.H. Montague		X
Liz Holler, Recording Secretary	X – arrived on the screen at 7:55 p.m.	

Our thanks to Borough Administrator Steve Williams for hosting this Zoom meeting.

Public Comment

There was none.

Motion to Adopt Meeting Minutes

Council Member Truilo made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 21, 2022 Historic Preservation Commission meeting as submitted. Council Member Dempsey seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken. The minutes of the June 21, 2022 HPC meeting were approved as submitted.

Discussion Items

Presentation for the expansion of Charley’s Aunt Restaurant

Michael Miller, Esq., introduced himself as the attorney for Charley’s Aunt.

Attorney Miller introduced Jake Decker and his father Ken Decker. Also present was Architect Thomas Bijak, who is filling in for Brian Siegel.

Jake Decker stated that the address for Charley's Aunt is 8-10 South Passaic Avenue. Mr. Decker explained that the Borough and the Health Department have requested that the restaurant install a grease trap. This installation would require Charley's Aunt to expand into a vacant store unit next door. The restaurant's dining room will also be expanded.

Attorney Miller asked Mr. Decker what were the plans for the exterior of the building. Mr. Decker answered that the front part of the vacant store will be bumped out so that it will be even with the entire façade of the existing restaurant building running along South Passaic Avenue. Mr. Decker believed that these proposals will blend in okay the architecture and the history of the building. New windows will be installed. Mr. Decker stated that there will be a sign installed on the corner of the building that will service Main Street.

Council Member Truilo asked if the main reason for the expansion was because of the grease trap. Mr. Decker explained that the restaurant currently does not have a grease trap. Currently, Charley's Aunt does not have a basement. Therefore, the floor in the vacant store has to be jackhammered open. New bathrooms will be installed.

Council Member Dempsey confirmed with Mr. Decker that the current façade of the existing vacant store, next door, is recessed from the existing façade of Charley's Aunt. All the windows running down the front of Charley's Aunt will be uniform all the way down South Passaic Avenue.

On the Zoom screen Mr. Greener put a photo of the existing conditions of the front of Charley's Aunt. Mr. Decker pointed out the area of the vacant store which will become flush with the existing brick façade.

Council Member Truilo asked if the grey of the building area above will remain. Mr Decker answered yes.

Mr. Bijak pointed out that currently Charley's Aunt has no handicapped bathrooms. He described the current cramped conditions of the men's room. Handicap bathrooms will be installed in the vacant unit, as well as the needed grease trap. A punch-thru will be made through what separates the stores now. Another fire egress will be created for the back alley way. The dining area will become larger with the façade being pushed out to line up with the existing façade.

Mr. Bijak put the proposed drawings on the Zoom screen. He pointed out the existing brick pillars that run down that section of South Passaic Ave. Those pillars will be kept. The new windows will allow more light into the building. The front entry-way will be re-worked.

Mr. Decker noted that another reason the bathrooms need to be re-done is because the bathroom waste-lines need to be put in after the grease-traps. Everything flows northward on Passaic Ave. when it comes to sewage.

Mr. Greener reminded Mr. Decker and Mr. Bijak that they do not need to justify the reason for their expansion to the HPC. The HPC is interested in what will be the view from the street if this expansion was approved and constructed. This is an architectural review tonight. The HPC's focus is on what is being proposed for the façade.

Mr. Decker understood Mr. Greener's point. He felt that Mr. Siegel and Mr. Bijak have tried hard to maintain the historic integrity/appearance of the building with this new proposed façade.

Council Member Truilo asked that the proposed façade be enlarged on the Zoom screen. For Council Member Truilo, Mr. Bijak described the proposed thin brick veneer that will be used. The proposed light fixtures will match the light fixtures that are already existing on either side of the current restaurant sign. Mr. Bijak stated that the existing awning space will remain. Council Member Truilo and Mr. Bijak discussed the lighting above the restaurant's sign.

Mr. Greener asked for information on the new windows. Mr. Bijak answered that Marvin windows will be installed within the opening. A smaller squared-off entrance to the restaurant will be created, replacing the current double doors. Currently one of the double doors is inoperable. This squaring-off of the entrance-way would allow for the dining area to expand.

Council Member Truilo asked for more details on the proposed blade sign. On the Zoom screen, Mr. Bijak pulled up the proposed blade sign on the drawing plans. Mr. Decker stated there will be "very easy-going" lighting for this blade sign. It will not distract any motorists. Council Member Truilo pointed out that most towns prohibit blade signs due to safety concerns. He had concerns about the stability of this particular sign. Mr. Bijak explained that the purpose of the sign is to catch the eye of people driving down Main Street to look down South Passaic Ave. and discover the restaurant.

Mr. Greener asked if any thought had been given to the future of the restaurant's current outdoor dining if these proposals were approved and constructed. Mr. Decker said no contemplation had been done on this situation. Also, the solid fencing no longer exists. The only purpose for the solid fencing was to serve as wind barriers when customers did not come inside during the pandemic.

Mrs. Franklin asked if the bump-in belonging to the vacant store unit had always been there? She noted that steel columns were in place, supporting the second floor.

Mr. Decker answered that since 1970, when his grandfather purchased the building, those steel columns have been in place. He wasn't sure if the second floor had needed more support or if there was some other reason for these columns. He wasn't sure of the age of the building.

Mr. Greener brought up the wide trim, the Aztec trim for the windows. Mr. Bijak believed that flat Azek panels will probably be used. Mr. Greener didn't recommend white for these window panels. Mr. Decker clarified that the Marvin windows, which will be coming from the factory, will have black trim.

Mr. Greener suggested Mr. Bijak and Mr. Decker think about installing a darker, flanking trim board. Maybe they could do a trial run on this shade.

Mr. Greener asked Mr. Bijak which Borough entity would be the next to hear these plans. Mr. Bijak answered the Planning Board.

Mr. Greener noted that the HPC will be sending a report to Fran Boardman, the Administrative Secretary for the both the Planning and Zoning Boards, giving the HPC's views on this application. This report will be based on the upcoming vote the HPC will take tonight. Mr. Greener pointed out that Charley's Aunt is designated as a non-contributing building which happens to be located in the Borough Historic District. It was Mr. Greener's opinion that Mr. Decker and Mr. Bijak had definitely approached the design with diligence and respect, which is what the HPC requires.

Mr. Greener felt the proposed blade sign could be decided on by the Planning Board. Possibly a small banner-type blade sign, made of material, could be Plan B.

Council Member Truilo stated that he could accept the proposed façade. He could not support the blade sign. He doubt it could be seen from Main Street. He didn't want to see blade signs becoming a new trend in the historic downtown. Council Member Truilo was satisfied with the other proposals.

Council Member Dempsey made a motion that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the façade design as presented. Mrs. Franklin seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken. All Commissioners present voted aye.

Mr. Greener informed Mr. Decker and Mr. Bijak that he will be sending a report to the Planning Board giving the views expressed tonight by the Historic Preservation Commission. The Borough Sign Committee will also be reviewing the proposed plans for the signage.

The Commission thanked Mr. Bijak and Mr. Decker for their presentation and wished them well.

Mr. Greener reminded Commissioners that the next HPC meeting won't be until September. Hopefully, by then, in-person meetings can be held.

Flag Award contenders

Mr. Greener felt that there will be contenders for the HPC's Flag Award – both for residential and commercial buildings. This can be discussed again at the September meeting. Mr. Greener pointed out that Brian Dempsey has created some beautiful Flag designs that could be awarded in the future. Council Member Truilo pointed out that the winners of the Flag Award can now have the pleasure of keeping their flags.

Commissioners discussed two possible candidates for the Flag Award – one home on North Hillside Avenue and another on upper Fairmount Avenue. They reviewed Google photos of these two homes.

At Mr. Greener's suggestion, Council Member Dempsey will approach the owners of the Fairmount Avenue residence to learn more about this recently renovated home and to see if the owners would be receptive to a Flag Award from the HPC. Mrs. Franklin will approach the owners of the North Hillside Ave. home with the same mission. Perhaps even leaving a note in these homeowners' mailboxes explaining the Flag Award process and see if they would be interested in receiving it. A phone number could be included in this note.

Regarding the histories of these possible candidate homes, Mrs. Franklin noted that she is in charge of the house histories researched by the Chatham Historical Society and by interested homeowners. She wasn't sure whether a home history report had been done on either of these two homes. Probably not.

Mr. Greener felt it would be nice to have the history of these homes; however, it's not entirely necessary. The architecture of these homes is more relevant.

Before adjourning, Council Member Truilo brought up the Garden Terrace application. He reminded Mr. Greener that there may be a Planning Board meeting in a couple of weeks. The Planning Board will need a report from the HPC giving their views on this application. Mr. Greener reported that some of the Commissioners have submitted their comments on this application. Council Member Truilo will be sending his comments. Mr. Greener will also be writing a report from the HPC giving their views on the application for 350 Main Street recently submitted by architect Tim Klesse. He would welcome any additional comments, submitted as soon as possible, from Commissioners.

At 8:35 p.m. the meeting adjourned.

The next Chatham Borough Historic Preservation Commission meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 20, 2022, 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Liz Holler
Recording Secretary