



TOWN OF OLD SAYBROOK  
**Historic District Commission**

*William Childress, Chairman  
Barbara Harms, Vice Chair  
Alan Cantor, Secretary*

[www.oldsaybrookct.gov](http://www.oldsaybrookct.gov)  
302 Main Street  
Old Saybrook, CT 06475  
860-395-3131

*Diane Aldi DePaola  
Laura Gray  
Alan Cantor  
**Alternate Members**  
Richard Peters  
Paul Knierim  
Erin Sliva*

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
HYBRID MEETING  
Tuesday, September 19, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.  
Town Hall 2<sup>nd</sup> floor conference room  
302 Main Street, Old Saybrook**

Public Zoom Link:

<https://zoom.us/j/98163391842?pwd=YUJJOVmnNBVEtwNm8zT2hiT0Q3R1FTdz09>

Meeting ID: 981 6339 1842 Meeting Passcode: 302302

Teleconference Dial-In: (929) 436-2866

One Tap Mobile: <tel://9294362866,,98163391842#>

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair, William Childress called the meeting to order at 6:05pm

**II. ROLL CALL**

**Present:** William Childress, Chairman; Barbara Harms, Vice Chair  
Diane Aldi DePaola (arrived at 6:10pm); Laura Gray (arrived at 6:28pm); Richard Peters (left at 6:10pm); Paul Knierim; Erin Sliva

**Absent:** Alan Cantor, Secretary

**Guests:** Attorney Michael Cronin

**Staff:** Lynette Wacker, Assistant Town Planner; Krista May, Recording Clerk

**III. NEW BUSINESS**

A. **Presentation** and discussion of roofing materials for historic buildings by Point One Architects.

Presentation postponed. To be rescheduled.

IV. **REGULAR BUSINESS**

A. **Minutes** – August 15, 2023

Edit change spelling error from Peter to Paul (Knierim).

**MOTION** to approve the regular meeting minutes of August 15, 2023 as presented; **Made by:** R. Peters; **Seconded by:** B. Harms; **In Favor:** W. Childress, B.Harms, D. DePaola; | R. Peters; P. Knierim **Opposed:** None; **Abstained:** None. **APPROVED:** 5-0-0.

B. **Correspondence**

No correspondence

C. **Committee, Representative and Staff Reports**

L. Wacker effective on October 1st on the website

V. **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

A. **Application for Certificate of Appropriateness as to Exterior Features** to replace wood shingle roof with asphalt roof on house and garage.

64 Cromwell Place (Map 32/Lot 18)

*Applicant/Owner: Deborah Gowrie*

*ACTION: Filed 8/31/2023; open public hearing, decision by 10/17/2023(NLT 11/3/2023)*

*Three (3) Commission members were seated for this application:*

Barbara Harms, Vice Chair

Rich Peters in place of Alan Cantor

Paul Knierim for Laura Gray

William Childress, Chairman - abstained

*Commission members not seated:*

Diane Aldi DePaola

Laura Gray

Paul Knierim

Erin Sliva

Presentation on behalf of the Gowrie application made by Attorney Eric Callahan, Suisman Shapiro, New London.

Ms. Gowrie sent the Application for Certificate of Appropriateness on August 31st. Mr. Callahan has just been appointed by Ms. Gowrie so he, therefore, withdraws the application, without prejudice, and will seek to reapply in the future.

B Harms thanked Attorney Eric Callahan for his time and looks forward to receiving a new application. It is hoped that through the measures to come the Commission can come to a conclusion on this matter. P. Knierim asked about a timeline because the application should have been submitted before the work began. P. Knierim asked Mr. Callahan when he intends to submit an application for exemption or for a certificate of appropriateness. Mr. Callahan responded that it would be within 10-15 days.

There was no motion because the application was withdrawn by the Attorney.

**A. Application for Certificate of Appropriateness as to Exterior Features** to construct an outdoor kitchen & fireplace.

68 North Cove Road (Map 31/Lot 15-1)

*Applicant/Owner: Roderick & Heather Lavallee*

*Agent: Waterview Landscaping*

*ACTION: Filed 9/5/2023; open public hearing, decision by 10/17/2023 (NLT 11/8/2023)*

*Five (5) Commission members were seated for this application:*

William Childress, Chairman

Barbara Harms, Vice Chair

Diane Aldi DePaola

Paul Knierim is seated for Alan Cantor

Erin Sliva is seated for Laura Gray

*Commission member not seated:*

Laura Gray

Richard Peters left at 6:18

Home owner Heather Lavallee presented to the Commission. Ms. Lavallee explained that it is her understanding that there are three issues with their application: 1) the height of the fireplace; 2) setting a precedent for future applications and 3) how this application fits the guidelines set by the Historic District Commission. H. Lavallee addressed each of these issues:

Ms. Lavallee reported that Waterview Landscaping have made adjustments to the height of the fireplace. It has been lowered by 2 feet and moved back by 4 feet. The new structure will be approximately 6foot 5inches high.

With regard to setting a precedent for future applications, there is an existing fireplace constructed by the pool that was approved by the Commission when it was built. Neighboring homes include pools with 10foot structures.

Regarding the criteria and guidelines by the Commission, Ms. Lavallee explained that her kitchen remodel had very specific guidelines about doors, windows, etc.. With landscaping, the guidelines leave a lot to interpretation. How does this fit within the types of architecture in the neighborhood and with a structure that already exists in the home. Mood and character leaves a lot for interpretation.

The application was open for questions. Waterview landscaping had no comments.

Ms. Lavallee was asked why they wanted an outdoor fireplace? She responded that her family had an outdoor fireplace in a previous house and they like to “live” outside. She believes the feature will add character and value to the property.

Laura Gray entered the meeting at 6:28pm.

There were more questions. P. Knierim stated that he appreciates the presentations and the information relating the application to the HDC criteria. B. Harms commented that there is a difference between structures to the front of the property and structures to the back of the property. Ms. Lavalle responded that she wanted to be a resident in the District and to be good neighbors. They found a design for their outdoor space that they like – a new way to use the home and a way that will hold its value.

Paul Connelly (60 North Cove Road) asked to make a public comment. It is clearly better to avoid the situation where there is a structure built before permission is given. He wants to keep the character of the District and limit the height of structures.

P. Knierim made a motion to approve the application and asked if there is a second. There was no second. Motion denied.

B. Harms stated that she would approve part of the application with the exception of the fireplace chimney - the structure above the sitting wall. She has no problem with the sitting wall. D. Aldi DePaola agreed that the problem is with a chimney that is visible roadside and waterside.

H. Lavalee proposed to remove the fireplace but leave the knee wall and use the existing fire pit. She will take the chimney out, leaving the knee walls and cook top. If that is the case, B. Harms would propose to approve the application with the exception of the chimney structure. D. Aldi DePaola said she would second that motion.

P. Knierim wanted to comment. He thinks the Commission is overstepping. The owner has done a reasonable job in meeting the criteria. He has a concern that this is a matter of substituting taste against what a homeowner has presented. B. Harms told the applicant that the Commission appreciates her making the presentations and her willingness to come to a successful conclusion to the project.

<p><b>MOTION</b> to approve application for Certificate of Appropriateness as to Exterior Features to construct sitting walls but not a fireplace chimney structure of any size for 68 North Cove Road; <b>Made by:</b> Barbara Harms; <b>Seconded by:</b> Diane Aldi DePaola; <b>In Favor:</b> W. Childress, B. Harms, D. Aldi DePaola, P. Knierim, E. Sliva. <b>Opposed:</b> None; <b>Abstained:</b> None. <b>APPROVED:</b> 5-0-0.</p>
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- B. **Application for Certificate of Appropriateness as to Exterior Features** to add railing to existing front porch and replacement of screens.

142 North Cove Road (Map 32/Lot 60-8)

*Applicant/Owner: Paul Knierim & Gregory Nickett*

*ACTION: Filed 9/7/2023; open public hearing, decision by 10/17/2023 (NLT 11/10/2023)*

*Five (5) Commission members were seated for this application:*

William Childress, Chairman

Barbara Harms, Vice Chair

Diane Aldi DePaola

Laura Gray

Erin Sliva is seated for Alan Cantor

Paul Knierim abstaining as the applicant.

P. Knierim reported that this application is a minor revision to the certificate approved in April. The sole focus to the revision is to the porch area, facing the street. The 4foot extension that was included in the earlier certificate will be eliminated. Mr. Knierim is proposing to add a low railing across the porch in an effort to have a more traditional appearance. The porch would still be screened but designed that the screens can be removed three seasons of the year.

Questions and comments were requested. D. Aldi DePaola likes the proposal and thinks it makes the house look more traditional.

**MOTION** to approve application as is for Certificate of Appropriateness as to Exterior Features to add railing to existing front porch and replacement of screens for 142 North Cove Road **Made by:** D. Aldi DePaola; **Seconded by:** L.Gray; **In Favor:** W. Childress, B. Harms, D. Aldi DePaola, L. Gray, E. Sliva. **Opposed:** None; **Abstained:** P. Knierim. **APPROVED:** 5-0-0.

## VI. **OLD BUSINESS**

- A. **Historic Ghost Sign interpretive sign – D. Aldi DePaola**

There is nothing new to report. The narrative for the sign needs to be written and they will do that soon.

B Harms reported that she spoke with SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office) about applications regarding roofs and the use of asphalt shingles on historic homes. It was suggested that the Commission hold a workshop about artificial materials and the use in historic homes and districts. Ms. Harms asked members if a workshop would be useful for just the HDC or should it be opened to the public. D. Aldi DePaola suggested inviting Chris Costa.

The question was should the workshop be for the Commission and homeowners in the district or for the whole town. Discussion followed and it was agreed that education is important. D.Aldi DePaola suggested inviting the historical society.

B Harms said she is not sure when the workshop can be scheduled. L. Wacker asked where the event would take place – the Library, the 1st floor conference room or a larger venue?

There was a general discussion with counsel, Atty Michael Cronin. Advice on applications was not offered but there was comment about the expense of materials for historic homes. Costs have gone very high and availability had changed. This discussion was spoken in generalities not specific to any application.

P. Knierim liked the idea of the workshop and supported sending invites to residents in the Historic District specifically. It might help to pull people together and create an identity. The HDC is encouraging historic buildings to be maintained – historic buildings should not deteriorate because of the cost of materials.

B. Harms will make a call to Mary Dunn from SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office) to schedule the workshop. The invite list will include Commission members plus homeowners in the Historic District. M. Cronin is concerned this will not be productive and not progressing in a logical way. He suggested finding out about the materials first before encouraging a general discussion to take place.

After this workshop takes place, an architect should be invited to come to talk specifically about roofing.

P. Knierim suggested that 10-minute introduction on the structure of HDC procedures and criteria should take place at the workshop.

L. Wacker asked about other historic districts. B. Harms responded that the focus should be on the North Cove Historic District. It is the only Historic District that applies to guidelines. One point would be to help North Cove property owners better understand the guidelines and criteria of the HDC. P. Knierim thinks the workshop should be open to the public. HD residents should be primary focus but if other historic homeowners want to attend they would be welcome. This was agreed. Recorded or other materials will be shared. Historic Homes tax credits is a topic option as well. B. Harms will look into this.

## VII. ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION** to adjourn the meeting of September 19, 2023 at 7:17 pm to the next regular meeting scheduled for Tuesday, October 17, 2023, at 6:00 pm, Town Hall, 2nd Floor Conference Room.

**Made by:** W. Childress; **Seconded by:** D. Aldi DePaola; **In Favor:** W. Childress, B. Harms, D. Aldi DePaola, L. Gray, P. Knierim, E. Sliva. **Opposed:** None; **Abstained:** None. **APPROVED:** 6-0-0

NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED  
HYBRID MEETING

**Tuesday, October 17, 2023 at 6:00 P.M.**  
**Town Hall 2<sup>nd</sup> floor conference room**  
**302 Main Street**

Check our website for dial in information  
and additional meeting documents.

[Historic District Commission web page](#)