

HPC Review
for 302 Ridge Road

HPC2008-11-18-01

Property-owner Mike Schank presented his plans to renovate the residence at 302 Ridge Road to the HPC at its regular meeting on September 16, 2008. Mr. Schank expressed the hope that we would review his plans and send our review on to the Planning Commission so that it could approve and stamp them at its next meeting during the first week in October.

General Description: The original structure is that of a farm house from the early 1900's. The original proposed plans were to modify the roof of the house and construct a new roof with dormers and three symmetric gables. The gables were reminiscent of pointed gables like those in some of the original Grove cottages. Combined with the dormers they provided additional living area under the roof. Mr. Schank explained that his goal was to increase the living space in the house and that the modified roof structure would accomplish this goal.

Adequacy of the Documents Submitted: The documents submitted included a building permit application, site plan, house location plan, and CAD generated views showing the roof structure from above (aerial view), four perspective views, and elevations showing the existing house and the addition. There were also plans for the foundation, the first floor, and the second floor. These plans were adequate for the HPC's review. Mr. Schank was present and was able to answer questions about details such as materials, dimensions, etc. not shown on the drawings.

Visibility from public ways: The newly renovated home will be visible from a public way, namely Ridge Road.

Contributing structure: The existing house is a contributing structure due to its age and its character. The original farm house style building has been preserved over many years. Alterations to the structure have occurred in the past. They were in scale and to the sides of the original structure and contribute to the farm house nature of the building. The original structure is still clearly discernable.

Nearby Contributing structures: There are nearby contributing structures to the rear and to the side of 302 Ridge Road located at 300 and 306 Ridge Road.

History

As stated above, the plan for the addition was originally submitted to the Town on Sept. 11, 2008. The addition was entirely within the footprint of the existing house and raised and modified the entire roof structure. The members of the HPC reviewed the plans for that renovation at that meeting. Our comments were as follows:

- The scale of the resulting renovation would radically change the character of the existing modest house.
- Members explained that the house contributed to the historic district because of its age and its character. The original structure is still discernable and the past additions were in scale and clearly enhanced the farm house nature of the building.
- We advised that with the proposed renovation Mr. Schank and the Town would very likely lose that character.
- We suggested that rather than going up to achieve more living space, he place the addition to the side of the existing structure. He said that he was working on an alternative plan that was similar to the HPC suggestions and he would like to show the members that plan instead.

Several members of the HPC agreed/volunteered to meet informally with Mr. Schank and his wife to discuss their alternative plan. The members also offered to write a review of the original plans submitted with the building permit application and send that review on to the Planning Commission before its next meeting on October 1. No request was made to the HPC to write the review of the original plans.¹ Further, we explained that if we were to review a new set of plans, we would have to review them at our regular meeting on October 20.

A new application was submitted to the Town by Mr. Schank for the PC meeting on October 1 it included the application, elevations, drawings from the original application made in September as well as a set of more explicit plans for an entirely different addition than that discussed at the HPC meeting on Sept. 18. On October 1, the PC reviewed and approved the new plans without the HPC review.

The New Plans

The new plans preserve as much of the original house as possible.

- In order to do this they have located the addition to the rear and slightly to the right side of the house. The purpose was to minimize the bulk of the addition and to minimize the visual impact on the original structure and the surroundings.
- In principle the ability to restore the original structure has remained.
- The owners have resolved in the new plan to preserve as much as possible of the features of old structure.

Compatibility with the existing structure:

- **Scale:** The size or volume of the addition is almost the same as the original structure. By making the addition so large one loses the sense of modest scale of the original structure. From the rear and sides of the structure the view will be dominated by the large addition. HPC members suggested at the informal discussion with the owner that the negative aspects of the addition could be mitigated by breaking up the mass of the addition into smaller volumes more in scale with the original structure. Historically, until very recently, these multiple but smaller volume additions to houses in Washington Grove have been typical. The plans submitted to the PC do not take this issue of scale and mass into consideration.

Compatibility with the historic district: Compatible features were cited above in the general description. It should be noted that the style of the house is that of a farm house. It is unique and provides a special historic character to the lower Ridge Road corner of the Town and at the same time complements the style and character of the Historic District. It remains a gentle reminder of the farm(s) that once bordered that side of the Town.

HPC Recommendations:

At the informal meeting with some members of the HPC various ways were suggested to accomplish the HPC recommendations.

- Unfortunately, no exterior materials are indicated in the plans submitted, but at the September meeting the owner suggested various materials for siding. We encouraged him to remove some of the current siding and see what lies beneath. He said that he had found some of the original wooden siding under the current exterior. We encouraged him to restore as much as possible.
- Members encouraged Mr. Schank to use compatible wood siding on the addition, not necessarily the same as that on the original structure, so as to differentiate the new addition from the original structure.

¹ The applicant stated that he wanted to get moving on the project in order to get his family moved in before winter weather set in. The HPC members suggested that the alternative plan could provide a more reliable way to achieve his goal because they could move into the house while the construction was taking place. Replacement of the roof system could delay making the house habitable before winter.

- We also encouraged him to break up the scale and mass of the addition through the addition of porches and/or compatible architectural detail.
- The goal that the HPC was striving for was to be compatible with the existing house and Town in general, and to maintain a sense of modest scale consistent with the historic district.

One of the HPC's functions is to provide owners with guidelines to help preserve historic elements. The HPC realizes that changes may add to cost, but also stresses that they can add significant long-term value and livability to a home in the historic district.

David B. Neumann
for the Historic Preservation Commission

Date

Please note that the Historic Preservation Commission acts only in an advisory capacity to both applicants and the Planning Commission. The reviews undertaken are designed to assist homeowners in their projects, to provide input to deliberations of the Planning Commission and, more generally, to contribute to historic preservation in Washington Grove.

Further information regarding the scope, powers, duties, and structure of the Historic Preservation Commission may be found in Article XV of the Code of Ordinances of the Town of Washington Grove. Section 5 (a) of Article XV describes the powers and duties of the Historic Preservation Commission in the building permit process. This section reads as follows:

The Commission shall review all applications for building permits filed with the Town Planning Commission which would involve any change to a structure or site visible from any public way for historical accuracy, integrity, or compatibility with the neighborhood and improvements therein. The Commission may recommend to an applicant alternative historical designs, materials and sources for the same which may be more historically compatible. The Commission shall forward its recommendations regarding the same, if any, in an advisory capacity, to the Planning Commission for consideration by the Planning Commission within thirty (30) days from the Commission's receipt of the application from the Planning Commission.

cc: Applicant
HPC members
HPC Binder
Web site, Bill Saar
Planning Commission members and Chair: John McClelland
Mayor Darrell Anderson
Town Clerk, Kathy Lehman