

Certificate of Review
for 125 Chestnut Avenue

HPC2007-06-19-01

A building permit application to add porches was submitted to the Town Office on June 7, 2007, by Robyn Renas, Architect, on behalf of homeowners Margaret Cavenagh and Mark Dubnick, and forwarded by the Planning Commission for review by the HPC at its monthly meeting on June 19. The plan was presented by Ms. Renas, and the homeowners were present.

HPC wishes to point out that Ms. Cavenagh had also discussed the project with the HPC during two early consultations over the last months.

General Description: The scope of the project includes a new shed roof over the basement areaway and a gable-roofed covered porch entry on the Chestnut Road side. On the Chestnut Avenue side of the house, a new gable-roofed closed porch and open front porch entry are contemplated.

For the rear entry (Chestnut Road side), the proposed construction addresses the issues of safety, protection from the elements, and the homeowner's desire to clearly identify the entrance to the home. To address the safety issue of the open areaway, a new curved brick wall, pierced by a wood railing at the south end, will be built. A new wood gate is planned for the top of the existing basement stairs (which are directly adjacent to the rear entrance). A shallow open porch with an asymmetrical gabled roof will be built over the existing patio. Two fixed windows are included in the gable end of this structure. It is noted that this gable is significantly lower than the roof ridge of the existing house.

Front porch addition (Chestnut Avenue side) - this includes a closed porch (with interchangeable screens and storm windows) accessed from the living room of the existing house and an incorporated, offset open entry porch with a wide staircase leading to the Chestnut Avenue walkway. An awning window has been included in the gable end of the closed porch. This structure also has three large window openings (screen/storm) facing the avenue, with one similar screen/storm window opening (each) on the north and south elevations. A flagstone floor is specified, and a hip roof has been designed for the open entry porch.

Adequacy of the Documents Submitted: The documents submitted were quite adequate for the HPC's review. In addition to the permit application and plat, the applicant provided photographs of existing conditions. Elevations of the proposed front and rear porches, including side elevations, were included. The architect's cardboard model was brought to the meeting, which was very helpful in quickly visualizing the proposed additions.

Visibility from public ways: The new construction will be visible from Chestnut Road, Chestnut Avenue, and Oak Street.

Contributing structure: The house, circa 1963, is not a contributing structure.

Nearby Contributing structures: There are a number of contributing structures within sight of the applicant's residence. The closest include 115, 120, 121, 123 and 127, 128 and 202 Chestnut Avenue; and 118, 122 and 124 Grove Avenue.

Compatibility with the existing structure: The additions are modest in height and in scale and are entirely compatible with the existing house.

Compatibility with the historic district: The addition of porches is most compatible with the historic district, and is strongly encouraged. The front porches reinforce the relationship with the walkway and emphasize its status as the symbolic primary entrance.

HPC Recommendations: The HPC commends the architect and homeowners on the project, which incorporates many of the HPC's design guidelines: The overall height of the porches is modest. They incorporate multiple roof lines, thus breaking up the scale of the roof surfaces. The selection of a variety of natural materials throughout (brick, flagstone, cedar shingles and siding) and the attention to detail exhibited (brick piers, detailed exposed rafter tails, gable windows, and appropriate trimwork) should ensure a pleasing result that will enhance the house and town.

Emilia A. Styles
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, John McClelland
Mayor John Compton
Town Clerk, Kathy Lehman