

HPC Review

HPC2010-19-21-02

for 415 Grove Avenue

An application for building permit dated September 29, 2010, was submitted by (John) Kent Williams for alterations to an accessory building on his property at 415 Grove Avenue. It was reviewed by the HPC at its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, October 19, 2010. Mr. Williams was present at the meeting to explain his project and answer the HPC's questions.

General Description: The proposed project consists of lowering the roof on the accessory structure from 21'4" to 20'. The building houses a garage on the first level with a full-height "attic room" above.

Adequacy of the Documents Submitted: The documents submitted were sufficient for the HPC's review of the project. They included the building permit application, a house location survey, drawings of all elevations, and floor plans of the existing structure. The change in roof height and pitch was clearly shown on the drawings.

General Scope of Project: The property owner explained that his building permit application was in response to the letter he had received from Mayor Darrell Anderson shortly after he purchased the property, wherein he was advised that the structure was in violation of Town ordinances. Mr. Williams stated he was told that he would either have to connect the structure to the house or lower the roof to 20' (from the current 21'4".)

Mr. Williams did not include a copy of the mayor's letter with his building permit application; however, Joli McCathran, new Council Liaison to the HPC, subsequently obtained a copy of Mayor Anderson's letter dated January 29, 2010, and distributed it to HPC members.

Visibility from public ways: The accessory building is visible from Grove Avenue, Johnson Alley, McCauley Street, and Fourth Avenue.

Contributing structure: The residence, ca. 1894-1915, is a contributing resource.

Nearby Contributing structures: 415 Grove Avenue is surrounded by contributing resources on Grove Avenue (402, 404, 406, 411), Fourth Avenue (404, 408, 410, 412, 414, 417, 419) and 407 Acorn Lane.

Compatibility with the historic district and/or existing structure: The accessory building has approximately the same enclosed area as the residence. The structure is not clearly "subordinate to" the main building, nor is it compatible with the residence or the neighborhood. The barn-like design of the accessory structure "reads like" a 2-story building (rather than a 1-1/2 story structure specified in the ordinances). Apparently the gambrel roof allows this structure to be defined as 1-1/2 story.

HPC does not feel the visual scale of the building could be improved by changing the existing exterior materials (weathered T-111 sheathing).

HPC feels that lowering the roof on this accessory building (by flattening the pitch and the height of the roof by 1’4”) will do little to make it more compatible in scale with either the residence or the neighborhood.

HPC Recommendations: Especially when one considers that there are additional ordinance violations (setback) that the proposed roof-lowering option does not address, HPC would recommend that the Town work with the property owner for a more creative solution that could be beneficial to both the town and the property-owner. HPC sees little value to the Town in lowering the roof ridge of this structure by 1’4” while the “read” of the front and rear elevation wall planes remain unchanged. Similarly, the property owner sees little value accruing to him by virtue of this change.

Emilia A. Styles
for the Historic Preservation Commission

Date: November 2, 2010

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

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.