

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MAKEFIELD
HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
MINUTES – JULY 13, 2021

The regular meeting of the Historical Architectural Review Board of the Township of Lower Makefield was held remotely on July 13, 2021. Mr. Heinz called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Those present:

Historical Architectural Review Board:	Stephen Heinz, Chair Kathleen Webber, Vice Chair Jeff Hirko, Secretary Michael Kirk, Member/Code Enforcement Officer (joined meeting in progress) Liuba Lashchuk, Member Jennifer Stark, Member
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Others:	Daniel Grenier, Supervisor Liaison
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Absent:	James Majewski, Director Planning & Zoning
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APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM 5/11/2021 MEETING

Mr. Heinz noted on page 5 of the Minutes, second paragraph, last sentence, he had indicated that there was a gravel driveway; and he has since gone out to the area and it is a bituminous paving that is already there.

Ms. Stark moved, Ms. Lashchuk seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve the Minutes of May 11, 2021.

1700 YARDLEY-LANGHORNE ROAD (Tax Parcel #20-21-02)
Dogwood Skate Shop – Installation of ADA Accessible Ramp
Owner: Rich Van Horn

Mr. Rich Van Horn was present. Mr. Heinz asked Mr. Van Horn if he had any documentation for the Board. Mr. Van Horn stated he had reached out prior to the meeting to see if he needed to submit any more information such as photos or if the Board had viewed it on their own. He stated he is present for approval of the handicap ramp which is the last piece to be approved. Ms. Stark

asked if the Board received drawings, and Mr. Heinz stated he had not seen any formal paperwork on this. He stated since it has been installed, they could go by what is there if everyone has had a chance to view it.

Mr. Van Horn stated the Township “Code Enforcer” was out, and he followed all of his requirements.

Mr. Heinz stated there is now a landing outside the door although it is not the main door. Mr. Heinz stated the Board did not receive a drawing of that.

Mr. Van Horn stated he did not make a separate drawing for that, but he had asked prior to the meeting if he should take photos and send in measurements. He stated he did the work himself, but it was a professionally-made ADA ramp with specs, and he could provide the specs and photos to the Board. Mr. Heinz stated he believes formality requires that the Board have some documentation in order to vote on final approval. He stated he feels that what was put in is “utilitarian.” Mr. Heinz asked if the other Board members had seen it, and a number of Board members indicated that they had not. Mr. Grenier asked Mr. Heinz to describe what is there.

Mr. Kirk joined the meeting at this time. Ms. Stark asked Mr. Kirk if there are photographs that he could share.

Mr. Heinz stated what has been installed is an aluminum, pre-manufactured ramp that goes from the parking lot surface to a raised platform that was on the existing porch. Mr. Heinz asked Mr. Kirk if he has any documentation, drawings, or other presentation that was made in order to approve the Permit for this construction under the historic requirements. Mr. Kirk stated he could look at his past e-mails. Mr. Heinz stated the last time HARB saw something that was drawn it was a platform that was on the east side of the house that extended outside the boundaries of the porch on a raised level, and they would then have to have another step, a railing, and adaptations at the main door. He stated they came back with a drawn-on photograph that showed the ramp behind the screen that was on the west side of the porch, and that is what was installed. Mr. Heinz stated it is behind the screen extending up onto the porch. He added that the base is visible and so is the part that is the raised platform in front of the door. Mr. Van Horn agreed that what Mr. Heinz has described is correct.

Ms. Webber asked if that was done because there was more space on that side, and Mr. Van Horn stated it works more efficiently in many ways. He stated if it had been done on the other side, they would have had to take out the porch railing and do much more construction to make that side work.

Mr. Grenier asked if there is an issue with the visuals relative to HARB, and Mr. Heinz stated it is a “little jarring in terms of the look of it.” He stated there are two ways to go about doing historic adaptation and accommodation; and one is to make it look completely modern and have it as a separate style and not try to match the existing/historic aspects. He stated since it is a modern requirement, that has some validity; although he does not feel it is “the most beautiful of installations.”

Mr. Van Horn stated it does make the most sense right now. He stated he is not “thrilled” with taking away from the face of the property in general, but it makes the most sense and it was the most feasible at the time. He stated it was made by a handicap manufacturer and was gone over with the Township’s “Code Enforcer” to meet the specs for approval. He stated a year or two in the future he does plan to do a backside addition, and they could get out on the side parking lot and go in the backside addition which is level with the floor.

Mr. Heinz stated he does not believe they can have a formal approval if they do not have paperwork or some documentation. Mr. Kirk stated he found a hand drawn document he was provided although that would not show what it looks like material-wise.

Ms. Webber stated she has seen what was installed. She asked if the Code Enforcer has okayed the design, is HARB going to hold up Mr. Van Horn from opening up his business because they do not like the way it looks. Mr. Heinz stated they could discuss the look of it, but in the long run, we have to go with practicality to some extent. Mr. Heinz stated the other consideration is the documentation; however, since they are not meeting in person, they cannot sign any documents. He stated he does feel the Board members should have an opportunity to look at it before they make a determination. He stated the other question is whether the Occupancy Permit is being held up by not having this approval.

Mr. Grenier stated he feels they need to consider this a “lesson learned” and see how they can improve the process next time. Ms. Stark stated she does not know how the process worked since they were not supposed to get a Permit without a COA. Mr. Heinz stated while he agrees, it has already been installed. He stated he would like to see at least a little formality maintained.

Mr. Kirk stated he has available a picture which shows the ramp, and this was shared with the Board this evening. Mr. Van Horn stated he also just e-mailed a group of photos to Mr. Kirk.

Mr. Heinz stated the pre-manufacture handicap ramp and the platform has no impact on the historic fabric of what is existing; and at some point if the ramp is removed, it will go back to the original condition. Ms. Stark stated if it is completely reversible, that is a positive. She stated what was done is an intervention because there was an immediate need. Mr. Grenier stated it is also partially screened by the lattice. Mr. Heinz stated it does run in front of the door. Mr. Heinz stated he had not seen the railing which has been installed, and that does not match the existing railing.

Ms. Lashchuk stated she does not feel what was done “adds to the beauty of the house.”

Mr. Grenier asked if the railing that was installed is wood or PVC, and Mr. Van Horn stated the landing railing is white PVC spindles.

Mr. Hirko asked about the door that is being blocked, and Mr. Van Horn stated that is his personal kitchen door that is still accessible but is not for the business at all.

Mr. Heinz asked Mr. Kirk to speak to the Building Code requirements that make this “the only way to handle it.” Mr. Kirk stated Mr. Van Horn met with the Building Inspector, and the ADA requirements are very specific about the ramp slope, spacing, etc.; and it would be difficult to meet all of those requirements and the HARB requirements. He stated this is not something that the Township controls as it is under State and Federal control, and there are very strict requirements that Mr. Van Horn had to abide by. He added it was okayed by the Township’s Building Inspector for those requirements.

Mr. Grenier asked about the spacing requirements related to the kitchen door, and Mr. Kirk stated the requirement is at least a 3’ clear space to be able to open the door and get out.

Ms. Stark asked if there is a way to approve this with a timeframe on it because this is not the solution HARB would like to see “live on,” but they understand the need to have something so that Mr. Van Horn can open and comply with Federal law.

Mr. Heinz asked Mr. Kirk if this has gotten in the way of Mr. Van Horn’s Occupancy Permit, and Mr. Kirk stated he would not be allowed to open without it since he has to have an accessible means to get into the business. Mr. Heinz stated the Board of Supervisors has to rely on HARB’s judgment that this is reasonable and acceptable, and the Board of Supervisors then has to take on the responsibility of saying that this “something that they want to call historically correct.” Ms. Webber stated historically there were not wheelchair ramps.

Mr. Grenier stated the Supervisors are relying on HARB’s guidance, and they also have to comply with the Ordinances although this is a special case where they are trying to accommodate a more modern requirement than the time period of the building so they need to consider how to balance that. He asked Mr. Van Horn if he could replace the railings that were put in with wooden railings that match the existing railings on the porch and still meet the Code.

Mr. Heinz stated the most “jarring thing about the installation” is that there is an aluminum, pre-manufactured ramp and then there is a modern PVC railing that has nothing to do with the ramp or the house. He stated he feels because the drop-off is less than two feet, and you do not have to have the guardrail be of the condition where you have the limited space between the spindles, they could put a railing in that is the same material as the aluminum and run it continuous. Mr. Heinz stated if there could be a drawing of that sent to HARB prior to installing it, the Board could accommodate their requirement for trying to get it done as quickly as possible. He stated he is most concerned with the railing itself.

Mr. Hirko stated it would have to come across at the “height that it is” with all wood and then come from the existing wooden post from the porch at the height of that railing into the new post. Mr. Grenier asked if that would meet Code. Ms. Stark stated she feels it has to be 42” high. Mr. Hirko stated the existing railing is not. Ms. Stark stated they could not therefore match that height but if they just continued the aluminum railing system it would look more cohesive.

Ms. Stark stated this was not designed with any of our guidelines taken into consideration. She stated there is a ramp at the Mail 'n' More that HARB reviewed twenty years ago which is compatible with the building. She stated the only way she would let this stay would be if they put a timeline on it and state that it has to be removed within twenty-four months because it is not appropriate and sets a very bad precedent. Mr. Hirko and Ms. Lashchuk agreed.

Ms. Lashchuk stated at the end of the aluminum rail there is a vertical post that appears to be tilted. Mr. Heinz stated it is perpendicular to the ramp, and the posts are that way at each end in order to hold up the railing. Ms. Lashchuk stated they are going up to the ceiling. Mr. Heinz stated this is why he stated that if they approve it now, he would want to see the ramp and the railing that contains the landings all be of the same material and not have the set of vinyl posts and rails. He stated he feels they should also take the outside face of the ramp and align it with the post so that there is not the offset that creates a gap which could be a safety issue for children. Mr. Heinz stated the Board could not approve this, approve it with limitations, or Table it and look for something different in the future.

Ms. Lashchuk stated another temporary proposal would be to carry the lattice work all the way to the post, and Mr. Grenier agreed. Ms. Lashchuk stated at the other end of the ramp they could plant evergreen shrubs. She stated this would be a temporary arrangement that would not look as jarring.

Ms. Stark stated with a temporary approval the onus would be put on the Township to enforce the removal when the duration has expired. Ms. Lashchuk stated that would be the removal of this temporary proposal and the installation of some other proposal that would be appropriate, and Ms. Stark agreed.

Ms. Lashchuk stated Mr. Van Horn did indicate that he was proposing removing the ramp from the front and putting it in the back in a few years.

Mr. Heinz stated he still feels that having the two different railing systems is an issue, and he would ask the Board to consider that.

Ms. Lashchuk stated at the beginning of the ramp it lands on asphalt, and that should be taken care of. She stated it needs signage, and they need at least 5' clearance. Mr. Heinz stated this would be a signed striped area at least 5' by 5'. Mr. Kirk stated that was something Mr. Van Horn reviewed with the Building Inspector in reviewing the ADA requirements.

Ms. Webber asked if they could approve this in steps, approving it with the screen and then change the railing so that they look to be the same height, and at the two-year mark, they would remove the aluminum structure and have something similar to what Ms. Stark described that is at Mail 'n' More. Ms. Stark stated that is masonry, and whatever Mr. Van Horn puts in would probably be wood with wood railings to go with the house.

Ms. Stark moved and Mr. Hirko seconded to approve the temporary installation of an ADA-accessible ramp that has lattice extending from the current lattice screen to the porch column, that includes the change out of the vinyl railing system to a tubular aluminum system just like the ramp, and to include evergreen shrubbery in the grass area along the ramp to hide the ramp. This installation would be approved with these modifications for a period of twenty-four months from the date of acceptance by the Lower Makefield Supervisors.

Ms. Lashchuk stated she does not feel it is necessary to have the vinyl railing match the aluminum ramp. She stated if the aluminum ramp railing is left the way it is, it still creates an awkward connection. Mr. Heinz stated they would not be able to reduce the height of the railing as there needs to be a 3' railing; and the only way to get that height in contrast to the existing railing height, which is one of the things that sets it apart, is to just to continue with the aluminum rail; and it will "disappear" in term of looks.

Mr. Grenier stated there is a Township Disabled Advisory Board, and they could get their input over the next twenty-four months.

Dr. Helen Heinz stated she is fine with the aluminum railing.

Motion carried with Mr. Heinz, Mr. Hirko, Ms. Stark, and Ms. Webber in favor and Mr. Kirk and Ms. Lashchuk opposed.

1754 EDGEWOOD ROAD (Tax Parcel #20-014-007)

Informal Discussion of Proposed Plans

Owner: Cameron C. & Olga Jean Troilo

There was no one present to discuss this matter. Ms. Stark moved, Ms. Webber seconded and it was unanimously carried to Table.

Mr. Heinz stated he hopes the Board received the information that he provided about the adjacent Biles Corner house. He stated he feels they need to deal with this carefully. He stated Dr. Heinz, who was one of the people who framed the TND, indicated that there is a 50% limit on the enlargement of any existing house. He stated there would need to be a good reason if they were to get more. He asked that further research be done to see what the TND Ordinance says about that, and he asked Mr. Kirk to work with Mr. Majewski on this when this is discussed in the future. Mr. Kirk stated he will have this information the next time it is on the Agenda.

OTHER BUSINESS

Continuing Education

Mr. Heinz stated he understands that there is a course available in August. Ms. Stark stated Mr. Majewski found this live course which will also be recorded so that people could watch it when convenient. She stated there is also a scholarship program being offered to cover the cost, and Mr. Majewski asked that he be advised of those interested in participating. All Board members were interested in participating either live or to watch at a time convenient for them. Mr. Kirk was asked to advise Mr. Majewski that all members and Mr. Grenier are interested in the course and in getting a scholarship for it.

Discussion of Ad Hoc Property Committee

Mr. Grenier stated the Board of Supervisors has appointed four members to the Committee, but there are still vacancies. Meetings have not yet been held. He asked those interested in applying should submit their interest to Mr. Ferguson through an e-mail. He asked that he be copied so he can follow up on this so that whoever is interested gets scheduled for an interview. Mr. Hirko stated he is interested, and he will go through the process required. Mr. Grenier stated the way the Resolution was written it calls for one former or current member of HARB or the Historical Commission to be on the Committee.

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There being no further business, Ms. Stark moved, Mr. Hirko seconded and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeff Hirko, Secretary