

**Town of Fitzwilliam
Historic District Commission
Working Session Minutes
January 27, 2022**

Members Present: John Fitzwilliam, Chairman; Bill Davis; Pat Deyo; Ken Beckwith; and JEF Craig, Selectmen's Representative.

Members Absent: Marcia Camden

Staff Present: Lori Nolan, Land Use Coordinator.

Others Present:

Call To Order The Chairman opened the working session at 4:00pm.

Chairman Fitzwilliam stated the purpose of the working session is to discuss and review the guidelines surrounding siding. He felt there are three options:

1. Allow vinyl
2. Not allow vinyl
3. Allow a hybrid version – clapboard in front; vinyl in back

Pat Deyo commented that replicated products are now available. He felt a synthetic material should be allowed if you cannot tell the difference from a distance. Chairman Fitzwilliam stated there is precedent for a synthetic material with a house on Robbins Road. The homeowner used a high quality vinyl that looks similar to clapboards. However, he felt the guidelines should remain as is – vinyl not allowed. Mr. Deyo challenged the Commission by asking if vinyl could be allowed if money is not an option. Bill Davis felt if there is an existing historic structure, wood should be used. However, if for a new structure, new synthetic products could be allowed as long as the design is compatible with the District. Mr. Davis spoke in regards to the current application with the Fougères. They went to great lengths to design an appropriate house with properly spaced windows, adding a garage, etc. If using a quality product and looking from a distance, you cannot tell the difference, that product should be allowed. Mr. Davis does not want to allow the vinyl that has the unsightly seams though. He still felt it is important to maintain the visual integrity of the District but also be with the times with the availability of comparable synthetic materials. Chairman Fitzwilliam felt that trim is always a dead giveaway for vinyl. He was open to some flexibility but would want the guidelines to remain the same. Mr. Davis suggested requiring a building be trimmed out with traditional materials. Ken Beckwith felt that is a slippery slope if vinyl is allowed. Chairman Fitzwilliam steered the conversation back to siding in general, wanting to keep discussion of any specific cases to the public hearings.

Mr. Beckwith motioned to keep the existing guidelines as is in place in regards to siding. Mr. Deyo seconded.

Mr. Davis wanted to pursue modern materials that are available that look like wood. Mr. Beckwith commented that the current guidelines state no vinyl or aluminum is allowed. Mr. Deyo felt the Commission needed to make a short term decision (Fougère application) and a long term decision (guidelines). He is okay keeping the existing guidelines but wanted the Commission to make a decision tonight. Mr. Davis felt the Commission needed to address the alternate products that are available now.

The Commission then voted on the motion on the floor: Mr. Beckwith motioned to keep the existing guidelines as is in place in regards to siding. Mr. Deyo seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Yes: 4 [Fitzwilliam; Davis; Beckwith; Deyo]; No: 0; Abstained: 0

Mr. Davis motioned to investigate contemporary wood look-alike materials for possible inclusion into the guidelines. Mr. Deyo seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Yes: 4 [Fitzwilliam; Davis; Beckwith; Deyo]; No: 0; Abstained: 0

Mr. Craig stated that the BoS is open to investigating the tax incentive for house revitalization but there is not much precedent at the town level. Mr. Davis felt that the guidelines are never finalized and always a work in progress as the town is constantly evolving. But the BoS must take the lead on house/building improvements. Mr. Craig stated that the BoS are listening but must weigh fiscal responsibilities as well. Mr. Deyo felt there must be a carrot (tax credit) and not just the stick (enforcement).

Mr. Deyo motioned to finalize the guidelines by the March 10, 2022 Historic District Commission meeting. Mr. Fitzwilliam seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Yes: 4 [Fitzwilliam; Davis; Beckwith; Deyo]; No: 0; Abstained: 0

With no other business to discuss, **Mr. Beckwith motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Deyo seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

Yes: 4 [Fitzwilliam; Davis; Beckwith; Deyo]; No: 0; Abstained: 0

The meeting was adjourned at 5:01pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Nolan
Land Use Coordinator

Minutes approved as written on February 17, 2022.