South of the Green Milford Historic District No. 2,

Minutes of Regular Meeting and Public Hearing – Via Zoom – February 14, 2024

Present: Chris Bishop, Maria Henley, Liz Kennard, Andy Kozlowski, Marc Muller, Walter Ortoleva, Art Stowe

Also Present: Brian Yeakel, Kristin Leibrock applicants, Marilu Medina, Joshua Mercado, Denmar Lawrence representatives of Venture Solar,

Ms. Kennard convened the meeting at 6:33 p.m. and declared Mr. Kozlowski voting member if need arises for this meeting. Mr. Stowe and Mr. Ortoleva made and seconded a motion to recess to public hearing at 6:34 p.m. for the purpose of Consideration of Certificate of Appropriateness Application by Brian Yeakel and Kristin Leibrock, 17 Green Street. (tabled 12/2023 meeting)

Ms. Kennard explained we have had the request from residents at 17 Green Street for past several months and in the past few days we have received information on the backyard as was part of our request.

Joshua explained for this project we moved the panels as far back on either side of the home as possible in keeping the integrity of the customer in mind as well as electric power consumption. He referred to the shade view and noted there is some “play room” to move a panel. As well he referred to another neighbor who has panels that are quite visible from the street.

Ms. Kennard explained when the trees are in bloom it may have had affected the area farthest back.

Mr. Bishop agreed and stated it would block sun for close to ½ day as well he stated the homeowners want to keep the tree as it provides shade on their house.

Joshua stated primarily they are trying to determine how far back we can move the panels He asked if any neighbor had voiced opposition to the solar panels.

Ms. Henley asked to see the street view (eastbound) and Joshua explained the panels are black on black and are very sleek and hard to see. He stated going east we would try to move them back as far as possible.

Ms. Henley pointed out when you refer to one home vs another there are differences as one is close to the street and when walking down the street you see the whole roof.

Joshua noted the neighbor’s panels are far more visible and he questioned how did the approval of the neighbor’s panels happen.

Ms. Kennard asked what is the profile line and Joshua explained 3-4 inches off the roof and the panels are about 2 inches wide with black racking which he stated is virtually invisible.

Mr. Ortoleva noted at one time all the streets in the District were lined with maple trees and one by one they have all gone away and eventually that will happen to these trees as well. He added he tries not to play too much into whether a tree is there or not. He asked if it is a fact that homeowners considering solar panels are trying to eliminate electric bills. Mr. Ortoleva also felt that there is hardly any difference in the two plans submitted.

Joshua stated we base the savings on what the home’s electric bill is and over the course of time the electric bill could be eliminated.

Mr. Muller asked if 5-6 panels were removed it would still bring down the electric bill.

Mr. Ortoleva felt cutting a bill in half seems like a good plan.

Joshua stated if we cut the number of panels it would extend the project timeline as they would have to start from the beginning and develop a new design which would be a hassle for the customer and the company’s goal is to make it as easy as possible. He explained if the plan is not approved there are many other factors to be considered.

Ms. Kennard asked why is the front of the garage not considered as part of the panel location.

Mr. Ortoleva has offered the suggestion of putting panels on the back of the garage.

Joshua stated the owners do not want the panels back there adding the building may not be structurally sound to hold the panels. He added the roof of the garage is not in the best condition and there is a lot of shade in the rear of the garage.

Ms. Kennard noted that 2 of the trees in the back of the property were recently taken down and that is the Historic Society property.

Mr. Ortoleva explained the point of rescheduling this meeting was to see if the panels could be relocated to the back of garage.

Ms. Kennard reviewed the original plan.

Ms. Medina stated the first plan have more panels on 1 side of the house and subsequently we tried to make the number of panels almost even.

Ms. Leibrock explained her understanding is we pushed everything back as far as they could go and as much off Green Street as possible.

Ms. Kennard stated the members also were wondering about the 2 roofs over the addition.

Ms. Leibrock stated there is a big tree closer to the deck that shades that entire area.

Ms. Kennard asked if the homeowners had considered the garage as potential space for panels. Ms. Leibrock added the price they were quoted was $8,000 for electrical work and they could not afford that.

Mr. Lawrence stated they were thinking about the garage as a possibility but he was concerned as to how many panels could fit on the garage.

Ms. Kennard added the homeowners had expressed their concern about the additional cost to use the garage.

Mr. Ortoleva stated the solar panels try to get 100% of the bill eliminated and perhaps with less coverage there could be some part of the bill lowered.

Marilyn stated in the summer, even with shade, those roofs may still generate power.

Mr. Yeakel explained what occurs with the electric bill noting you still need to pay a nominal amount to the UI but their goal is to create a scenario to not pay UI anymore.

Ms. Leibrock stated they are trying to be responsible .

Mr. Bishop also noted this Commission has also learned to be more aware of the profiles and that colors are important.

Ms. Leibrock noted there are more black solar panels in the neighborhood and Mr., Bishop explained some did not get permits before solar panels were installed.

Mr. Ortoleva added solar companies put up solar panels without going through the necessary process.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact this area is a Historic District and how that had been overlooked in the past.

Ms. Kennard stated she understands the frustration of the homeowners and added this particular home is closer to the street and this roof sticks out farther than the other houses referred to; as well there are other neighboring homes with solar panels that are on the back of their homes. She added other neighboring applicants have been required to move their panels to the back of their home and that is what this Commission is trying to work out with 17 Green Street and not cause any additional hardship.

Joshua asked if there is anything that could be done to override this such as letters from neighbors and it was explained neighbors have been notified twice regarding this application and nobody came forward in favor or in opposition.

Joshua offered the suggestion of the company putting one panel as a mock situation to see what the panel might look like.

Ms. Kennard explained this Commission has been charged with keeping the historical integrity of the area and that is what we are trying to do with this 2nd conversation with the homeowners and Venture Solar.

Joshua asked about the possibility of getting verbal support and Mr. Yeakel added they have heard neighbors’ supporting their plans.

Mr. Muller stated this body is charged with holding the statues that our jurisdiction falls under.

Mr. Yeakel stated he did not think the neighbors care.

Ms. Kennard asked the members if they felt we had sufficient information from the homeowners and the representatives from the solar installation company.

Ms. Leibrock interjected if getting neighbor’s support is something that is needed they would do that. She added they cannot financially afford to put panels on the garage and the company has pushed this back as far as they could.

Ms. Kennard asked the homeowners if they cared if the panels were put on the back roof and Ms. Leibrock stated she would not but it was her understanding they could not.

Joshua explained if the panels were moved there would be some saving in consumption.

Ms. Kennard asked how many would we want to see moved back if it was possible and Mr. Muller offered the suggestion of 6 panels.

Mr. Yeakel noted there is a clearance issue on those smaller rear panels.

Ms. Kennard asked if it seemed reasonable for the company to go back and see how far the panels could be moved to provide homeowners with some savings as we are trying to work with the homeowners to meet their needs as well as meeting the charge of this Commission.

Joshua offered to send a redesign and resubmit that to this Commission.

Ms. Leibrock felt financially and environmentally it makes sense to do this project.

Ms. Kennard suggested the company go back to redesign and resubmit with the consideration of our request for panels being less visual.

Mr. Stowe explained members are requesting removing the 3 panels on the west side of the home that are closest to the street and repositioning them.

Mr. Bishop referred to the diagram (Roof A) noting it reflects a different number of panels (8 vs. 11) and Ms. Kennard noted the request is to move those 3 panels to make it work.

Mr. Bishop stated he would like to see all 9 of the panels moved.

Further discussion regarding how moving those 3 panels to the back would be impact total savings as well as moving panels for aesthetics vs. consumption.

Ms. Leibrock added they are willing to look at what can be done to get more power and not paying more money.

Mr. Bishop was pleased with the willingness of the homeowners to submit another plan.

Ms. Kennard explained when an application is submitted it must be considered by this body within 60 days.

Mr. Ortoleva referred to the comment about $8,000 cost for electrical work to bring the panels to the garage an actual cost or a guess.

Joshua offered to get the resubmission back within two weeks and Ms. Kennard explained our meetings are scheduled for once a month and therefore we can review the resubmitted plans on Wednesday March 13, 2024.

Before closing public hearing applicants and representatives from Venture Solar were invited to remain on the meeting but could no longer participate in any further comment/questions.

Motion was made by Mr. Bishop and seconded by Mr. Muller close the public hearing at 7:34 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion made by Ms. Henley and seconded by Mr. Muller to table the request for Consideration of Certificate of Appropriateness Application by Brian Yeakel and Kristin Leibrock, 17 Green Street and revisit a 2nd resubmission on March 13th with a redesign from Venture Solar based on Commission’s request of removing the 3 panels on the west side of the home that are closest to the street and repositioning them. Motion carried unanimously.

Consideration of Minutes – Motion made by Mr. Stowe and seconded by Mr. Ortoleva to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2024 meeting as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Chair’s Report including Correspondence – Ms. Kennard referred to the Notice of Intent to Demolish with regard to 147 Broad Street which she distributed to members earlier in the day.

Mr. Stowe explained Metro Star who was the developer of the apartment complex behind Cody-White and other buildings on N. Broad Street now wants to take down the building which was formerly law offices (next door to former Smith Funeral Home) and has submitted Notice of Intent however Milford Trust has submitted a request to put a hold on the 30-day demolition and it has been extended because the demolition delay ordinance has been invoked.

Ms. Kennard asked if she should write a letter on behalf of the Commission explaining our displeasure with demolishing another historical home on the Milford Green.

Mr. Bishop asked if anyone knew the history of that particular house; i.e. has it always been an office building and it was explained it was a residential home at one time.

It was further noted the house is clearly more than 75 years old and that is not noted on the notice of demolition.

Mr. Muller added the house had been rezoned in recent years.

Ms. Kennard also noted the house next door to 147 Broad Street, previously owned by Key Realty, was recently sold which could lead to the fact that it may not be too long before that property will be considered for demolition.

She added she would draft a letter, hopefully with some research on this house.

Mr. Muller asked if any other historic groups have voiced concern on this. He added the Green is not included within any historic district but we do have a Historic Preservation Commission who might step in on this. Mr. Stowe felt more than one appeal from this Commission might speak more volume than one letter from our Chair.

Ms. Kennard agreed having more than one letter from members of this Commission would be a good idea.

Mr. Muller added he spoke with Mr. Griffin (Permitting and Land Use) regarding Phase I of this development who explained it is not fully occupied and they are using empty units as Air BNB and he will be looking further into that. As well he discussed this possible demolition with Mr. Griffin and was told anyone who has an appeal or opinion should reach out to the City Historian.

Ms. Kennard felt the letters should be sent to the developer, Mayor Giannattasio and Mr. Griffin as well as representing aldermen.

Mr. Muller explained the developer’s plans are for two 3-story condo buildings to be built on the property next to former Smith Funeral Home.

Clerk/Treasurer’s Report – Mr. Ortoleva stated there was no change since last month and the balance remains at $6,908.19 as of 2/14/2024.

Unfinished Business

1. Updated property list – remain on the table
2. Attny. Berchem’s advice on Air BnBs, ground mounted satellite dishes and signage – remain on

 the table

1. Solar panels – Ms. Henley stated this Commission has to have standard answers so we can answer residents’ questions.

Ms. Kennard asked Ms. Henley if she could draft guidelines for solar panels and Ms. Henley noted there were guidelines from another request but she thought it necessary to look at similar town’s guidelines.

Ms. Kennard added it is necessary to look at the approvals previously given to houses in the District and note the agreements the Commission came up with or amendments to the original plan.

Mr. Ortoleva noted the composition of this Commission is different than the group that approved the neighbors of the Yeakel’s.

Ms. Kennard explained the state information offers the suggestion of modification and that was

what we were trying to do tonight.

Ms. Henley felt the representatives from Venture Solar did not understand what we were concerned with.

1. Replacement and expansions of driveways and parking areas. – remain on the table.

New Business – none

Ms. Kennard thanked members for their opinions and suggestions.

Being no further business to discuss, motion was made by Mr. Stowe and seconded by Mr. Muller to adjourn at 8:02 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Recorded by Diane Candido