Town of Groton

**173 Main Street**

**Groton, MA 01450**

**Historic Districts Commission**

**May 23rd, 2023**

**7:30 pm**

**ZOOM**

**Members Present:** Peter Benedict, Maureen Giattino, Jennifer Rand

**Others Present**: Luke Kenney, Katie Kenney, Akash Vallecha

**Administrative Assistant**: Amanda Urmann

**Meeting Called to Order at 7:30 pm by Chair Peter Benedict and announced this zoom meeting is being recorded, members introduced themselves.**

**58 Hollis Street Public Hearing Continuation-**

**Chairman Benedict read aloud the public hearing notice:**

58 Hollis Street,

Assessors Map 112-113

In accordance with the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40C, the Groton Historic Districts Commission (GHDC) will hold a Public Hearing on **Tuesday, April 25th, 2023, at 7:30 pm at The Groton Town Hall, First Floor Meeting Room, 173 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450. This meeting will be held** to consider the application submitted by owners, Luke and Katie Kenney, seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness for 58 Hollis Street**, Assessors Map 112-113** to install a fieldstone retaining wall**.** Copies of the application and supporting materials are available for review by contacting the GHDC via the Land Use Dept, 2nd floor of the Town Hall.

Chairman Benedict requested a few pictures of the property to be pulled up. These pictures showed what the location looked like before the work was done and then after the work was completed. The work that has been done was a retaining wall.

Applicants Luke and Katie Kenney were the presenters for this public hearing.

Ms. Kenney said that this has already been done and that they would also like to add cobble on the side to clean it up because they currently use this as a parking area. They ceased all work until this was approved.

Mr. Benedict asked what would be happening with the stone driveway going down that is located to the right of this retaining wall. He also asked if this would be temporary or if it was a permanent feature. Ms. Kenney explained that they had work done in their backyard, so this was where the landscapers were entering the backyard for this time period. She also explained that they needed to re-grade the backyard so that the water runs off more efficiently because it currently pools. Following this, Mr. Benedict asked if this would be returned to grass and Ms. Kenney said that she thinks it would be neatened up and be returned to grass once everything was completed. Mr. Kenney added in that all of the parking area would be grass. They were open to making the parking area itself grass too and mentioned that they have tenant parking on the side of their driveway too.

Chairman Benedict brought up how Katie and Luke had done work a while ago and did not come before the board because they were unaware they had to. He noted that this projected should have also come before the board before the work was being done. Mr. Benedict also brought up how that they had done some work to the left of their main driveway, where there used to be grass, which has also been converted to more parking. Mr. Kenney asked if the previous application was available and it was not currently easily accessible, however Mr. Benedict did have the minutes from that meeting and said that there was nothing mentioned about additional parking to the left and the new retaining wall. Mr. Kenney was confident that it was a topic of discussion and noted that the gravel was already there because of drainage problems since they moved in and this was created to help that drainage issue. Mr. and Ms. Kenney are open to any recommendations to make these areas look nice while still sticking to HDC regulations. Mr. Benedict remembered a brick walkway being approved during their last approval, but doesn’t recall anything they are proposing at this meeting. Mr. Kenney said that the HDC denied the fence on the left and the garage doors, but approved “everything on the left” and the walkways that haven’t been completed yet next to the porches, but he said that his children were already parking in these locations and that the base was already down and said that you should not be able to see what is there.

Member Rand asked if the parking on the right would be used by his children and if it would be used all the time. Mr. Kenney agreed that all of his children do use this parking area. Ms. Rand recalled that Mr. Kenney said that they were going to be planting boxwoods here and wanted to know more about this. Mr. Kenney said that they stopped all work when they received the notification that was sent out about needing to come before the board, but that the plan was to add boxwoods and grass and Ms. Kenney said that they are open to adding all grass or lawn instead. Member Giattino asked where these boxwoods would be located and Mr. Kenney said that they would encase the retaining wall, one each side and the back. Ms. Rand wanted to verify that this was for drainage and Mr. Kenney said that this was all originally graded towards the basement of their house, so they have been working to lessen this and since they’ve installed this cobble, they have experienced less flooding because it allows it to flow appropriately. Ms. Giattino understood that they need to get the water away from the house and asked about how the flow of the water operated and Mr. Kenney said it did not go against the fence because the fence is at a higher grade. Ms. Giattino thought that by cobbling it up until the street, it would tidy it up but wasn’t sure on the boxwoods. Ms. Kenney thought about just putting cobble or cobbling up until the grass and letting it look like a lawn from there but leaving the retaining wall to keep the water from going to the house.

Further discussion was made on how to make this appear better but also ensuring that the applicants home does not get affected by the water runoff.

Member Giattino would be in favor of adjusting the grading the left side of the retaining wall because it would take away the severity of the corner of that wall.

Chairman Benedict asked if the cobble went all the way to the property line and Mr. Kenney said it was not entirely to the property line and viewing the picture of this shows that it did line up.

Ms. Kenney said that they can regrade the left side with the grass and then also putting more grass on the right where the cobble currently is so it looks continuous but so that the water stops pooling by the house as well.

The board members present were on board with this plan.

Member Giattino made a motion that the HDC approve the application for the certificate of appropriateness for 58 Hollis Street, Assessors Map 112-113, to add for the existing retaining wall to the right of the building, the cobbles along the street and raising the grade to the left of the retaining wall and for the whole area to be graded and seeded. Member Rand seconded the motion. The motion carried 3-0.

Chairman Benedict reminded Mr. and Ms. Kenney that by being in the Historic District, should any work need to be done on the house or within the property, any repairs need to be done exactly as it was being repaired. If the work is being changed from the previous work, this needs to get approval from the Historic Districts Commission. Ms. Kenney said that with further changes, they will be sure to come before the board.

**General Discussion:**

Akash Vallecha came to this meeting to informally present and ask questions about work that he would like to possibly do at his house/property, 123 Farmers Row. He will be changing some, if not all, of the windows in his house and said that they would be the same color, look and feel, with minor differences, but wanted some insight before these were purchased. Mr. Vallecha had previously discussed these windows with Mr. Benedict and Mr. Benedict recommended bringing pictures of the windows that he plans to replace and Mr. Vallecha agreed that he would do this. Mr. Vallecha proceeded to ask about removing a chimney and if it was possible to get approval for this at the same time and Mr. Benedict said that they have approved these in previous times but it usually is a case-by-case basis. Mr. Vallecha mentioned that he would bring this to the board when he comes forward with the window changes and they can discuss more about the chimney removal at that point. Mr. Vallecha asked if one were to get denied, would they both get denied and Mr. Benedict said that this would not be an issue. Mr. Vallecha asked for clarification if he needed to get approval for something that wasn’t visible from the street, and Mr. Benedict said that as long as it is not viewable form the street, the HDC does not have say in it.

**Commissioner Updates – None**

**Approval of Minutes:**

Member Rand made a motion to approve the April 25th, 2023 meeting minutes as submitted. Member Giattino seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously. 3-0

Next meeting to be held on June 20th in the first-floor meeting room located in Town Hall.

Member Giattino made a motion to adjourn. Member Rand seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously 3-0.

**Meeting Adjourned: 8:10 PM**

Respectfully Submitted By: Amanda Urmann