



Town of Fairfield
FAIRFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES
October 14, 2020

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3pW-CYpc-0>

Virtual hearings were held through WebEx beginning at 6:00 p.m. Notice of this Hearing was published in the Saturday, October 9, 2020, edition of the *Connecticut Post*

Call to Order: Chairman Klyver called the meeting to order at 6:12 p.m.

Designation of Voting Alternates: James Bohan

Commissioners Present: Adam Klyver, Rosina Negron, Christopher Shea

Commissioners Absent: George Clark, Arthur Gravanis, Margaret Kufferman

1. Presentation on solar panels in historic districts, by State Historic Preservation Officer Mary Dunne.

Ms. Dunne began the Solar Technology PowerPoint presentation citing Statutory Authority 7-147f considerations in determining appropriateness of applications. She said to always review the work in the context of your design guidelines, ask what other appropriate treatments have been taken to improve energy efficiency and then review placement options.

The four solar technology placement options are ground mount, auxiliary building, roof mounted or solar shingles. Ways to mitigate impact were examined.

Ground mounted placement should be minimally visible using using vegetation to reduce the visual impact.

Auxiliary building panels should be placed on roof of outbuilding or on new construction.

Roof mounted panels should be minimally visible and placed to avoid altering the architectural character and damaging historic materials and ensure roof is strong enough. This is usually the applicant and contractors preference. These can be removed when the owner sells the home and the Commission can add a stipulation in the COA approval.

Integrated shingles is the State's least preferable option because it is not reversible. She suggested the Commission invite the contractor to attend the hearing to explain how they propose to install to ensure historic materials are not damaged and to supply specifications and photos. The product should be uniform and not shiny or glossy.

A Resource Guide was provided in the backup including emails for the the State Historic Preservation Office, National Park Services and Solar Panels on Historic Properties.

Discussion:

Mr. Klyver asked for guidance with the Tesla solar shingles application the Commission received. He shared a product sample that was submitted and stated the scope of the project was misleading. Ms. Dunne said the Commission would address it as a change to the architectural feature. He said the asphalt is in disrepair and needs to be repaired. She said if it never had slate on it shouldn't be replaced with slate or simulated. Some Commissioners looked at a house in Westport with the Tesla product. Ms. Negron reported there are three types of Tesla shingles and they are very different from the sample that was supplied to them. Ms. Dunne said you need to know what it looks like when it's installed. She said to take the solar out of it and decide whether it is appropriate as you would with a door or a roof for a tax credit. She said the Commission has the right to know what your reviewing and making a decision on and if you don't get a satisfactory response within 65 days to deny without prejudice and ask them to come back with the appropriate materials to make decisions.

Ms. Dunne suggested they look into a federal non-matching grant to revise their handbook. Mr. Klyver said they would be very interested. She explained they could update the entire handbook or sections and specify if you need a solar section added. She would provide a list of qualified preservation consultants to hire to add the solar section to the handbook. Mr. Klyver mentioned one of their Commissioners is a phd and has the qualifications and inquired if that person can write it. Ms. Dunne will check with Park Services on whether it is a conflict of interest. Mr. Shea requested a few names from her so they can reach out. Ms. Negron also added the Commission was considering rewriting the painting section of the handbook. Ms. Dunne offered that if there are issues that aren't addressed you can apply for a handbook update and explained the grant application and reimbursement process. She noted the funding can be used for the consultant and/or printing. She will supply the grant information for the handbook and consultant names.

Mr. Shea addressed the question of a roof's structural integrity and whether it can support solar technology. Ms. Dunne said they can ask if an engineer has evaluated since you don't have the knowledge.

Mr. Bohan asked Ms. Dunne if she has had experience with Tesla applications in historic districts. She commented that the Commission should research the product, understand it and that certain integrated solar shingles are not as efficient technology as other materials.

Adjourn

Commissioner Negron motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:56 p.m. Commissioner Shea seconded the motion which carried unanimously, x-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila Tesei
Recording Secretary