HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD
CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE

WORKSHOP
107 PINE STREET

TO: Chair Benson and Members of the Historic Preservation Board

FROM: Rob Wiener, Historic Preservation Compliance Coordinator

DATE: July 27, 2017

RE: August 2, 2017 **Workshop** – Preliminary Review of Garage Addition (Second Workshop)

Address: 107 Pine Street

Applicants: Nancy and John Butman

Architect: John Whipple, Wipple - Callender Architects

Introduction

The owners of 107 Pine Street, Nancy and John Butman, and their architect John Whipple have requested a workshop review of plans for a new attached garage to replace the existing one. In June, 2016 the Butmans' previous architect, Jeffrey Fleming appeared before the Board with preliminary designs for the replacement of the existing, flat-roofed garage with roof deck that was constructed in 2004. Having now lived in the house for several seasons, the Butmans seek a new approach to the design with Mr. Whipple. Both the existing and the proposed garage additions adjoin an existing, one-story, wood-framed, rear ell, with the newly proposed footprint projecting less far from the house but overlapping some of the existing garage footprint. The current garage is in poor condition because of water infiltration, and the design created problematic access to the rear entrance which the owners have found very difficult to keep clear in winter.

The proposed garage has extra storage space on the rear side, and a new, covered entrance vestibule will provide an enclosure over the rear entry stairs between the new garage and rear of the main block of the house. Also proposed is a new, shallow porch, stairs, and door on the rearmost west wall of the main house, where an original, large double-hung window currently exists. In addition the applicants propose to reconfigure the existing iron fence in the rear of garden near the garage, and add a trellis for vines to help obscure the driveway. Mr. Whipple has provided a scope of the proposed alterations in an email, along with four pages of drawings, renderings and photos. Staff has added several photos of existing conditions, but recommends a visit to the site to refresh mental images of the context and existing configuration.

Subject Structure

The subject property is the west half of a brick Second Empire style double house constructed in 1869. A large and imposing residence, the main block is 49 feet deep. Decorative cedar shingles have replaced slate on the exteriors of the mansards. Though third floor windows have been replaced, most of the existing windows appear to be original, with the wider, tall windows having a 2/2 configuration. The one-story clapboard rear ell is recessed several feet back from the sidewall of the principle structure, and the existing 2004 garage is attached to its west wall. A narrow set of existing stairs leads between the brick house and the garage to a rear entrance in the ell.

An existing driveway off Pine Street separates the subject property and the grand Fassett house next door; the drive provides access to parking at 107 Pine, as well as the neighboring properties, continuing behind the block to eventually intersect with West Street. A large, carefully landscaped garden between the west side of the house and the drive is enclosed by an iron fence. Pine Street curves at this point, making the west side of the house potentially quite visible, but the plantings in the garden provide ample screening from several angles during growing season.

Proposed Addition

The proposed design adapts the simple visual language of the existing, wood-framed rear ell for the garage and entry:

- Low, rectangular forms
- Flat roofs (the existing ell has a shallow hipped roof)
- Similar siding, trim, overhangs, and cornice

While the garage is proposed to extend a few feet beyond the side wall (west side) of the main house, it is substantially less projection than the existing garage, and it will also be partially hidden by the proposed shallow porch on the side wall of the main house. Because of the height of the first floor, the entry alcove can have high windows above the lower garage / canopy roof, to add natural light. (The entry encloses two rear facing, original windows, without interfering with the openings at all.) The storage projection with a door to the outside - on the rear side of the garage - is set back enough to be rendered invisible from most perspectives.

New stairs down to the garden are proposed at an angle to the front corner of the shallow, arced porch. Because the first floor of the house is substantially raised above the street, all of the entrance stairs need multiple rises – six to eight – to gain the landings, as is the case with the original stone front steps.

Staff Comments

Although John Whipple was not the architect of last year's garage proposal, a number of Board comments from that June 15, 2016 workshop seem to have informed the current approach to design. In response to the earlier design, Board members recommended:

- Simple geometric forms, to be compatible with the simple, large mass of the house
- Simple roof forms, not broken up by articulation and multiple roof types

Mr. Whipple's proposal appears functional, and its simple approach does not challenge the primacy of the existing house or call attention unnecessarily to the garage and rear entry. In adopting the palette and quiet style of the rear ell, the addition emphasizes compatibility.

Staff wonders if the proposed addition of a porch, a door, and stairs to the main house may generate more discussion, in that they are attached to the original structure in a location that is potentially quite visible. The garden undoubtedly provides some vegetative screening, but the height of the house makes for a visible deck, railing, and flight of stairs – calling for a simple, quiet treatment, not a grand descent to the garden. That said, there is nothing in Mr. Whipple's concept that indicates intent to call attention to the new element, but staff believes a recessive approach is called for.

A number of details will have to be finalized before a final review can be performed:

- Garage door choice
- Window and door choices and specifications
- Final trim dimensions and proportions
- Railing, trim, and skirt detail for the new porch (the drawings do not show any skirting for the deck or stairs at this point)
- Details on the rear fence changes and the proposed trellis.

Applicable Review Standards

(1) Every reasonable effort shall be made to provide a compatible use for the property which requires minimal alteration to the character-defining features of the structure, object or site and its environment or to use a property for its originally intended purpose.

(2) The distinguishing original qualities or character of a structure, object or site and its environment shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.

(5) Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize a structure, object or site shall be treated with sensitivity.

(9) Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant cultural, historical, architectural or archeological materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property, neighborhood or environment.

(10) Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to structures and objects shall be undertaken in such a manner that, if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property would be unimpaired.

Attachments:

1. Architect's description of the project
2. Plans, elevations, photos, and renderings supplied by architect
3. Elevation drawing from May, 2016 proposal (by a different architect)
4. Photos supplied by staff
5. 1924 tax photo of the property