

VILLAGE OF BALLSTON SPA, NY
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MAY 25, 2023

The Ballston Spa Historic District Commission met at 9:20 AM on May 25, 2023 at 22 West High Street, First Presbyterian Church. Members Carrie Chapman, John Cromie, Stephen Springer and Gary Stephenson were present with Peter Martin from the church and Jim Koines, contractor. The purpose of the meeting is to review an application for a building permit dated May 17, 2023 to put in an ADA handicap ramp. There were no drawings or descriptions provided.

Jim Koines explained the proposed ramp would be accessed from a five-foot wide, concrete sidewalk commencing from an existing sidewalk leading to the north side of the double staircase at the front of the church. It would be placed between the mature maple tree and the staircase newel, over the area presently occupied by an overgrown yew. It was noted there are modern methods available to protect tree roots when installing sidewalks and to minimize disruption by roots.

He further explained the sidewalk would continue for fifty feet essentially parallel with the north side of the sacristy. [Note: The effect of snow sliding off the slate roof of the church was not considered by the Commission until after Peter and Jim left.] He noted the sidewalk could rise at least by $\frac{1}{4}$ inch to a foot without needing banking.

The handicap ramp would begin at the end of the fifty-foot run of sidewalk and enter the church at an approximate $3\frac{1}{2}$ -foot wide door, which appears to be original to the construction of the chapel but was patched with plywood at the bottom. It was noted the door could be replaced with a door similar in design to the doors at the front of the chapel, but with windows.

Currently, a large block of concrete steps lead up to the door with a step up to the door sill. The door swings out. The steps terminate at a landing.

The cost of an aluminum commercial grade ramp is prohibitive and is not an option. The church expects to build a pressure treated superstructure with Trex® decking and vinyl handrails. It was suggested by Commission members that the rails be of a dark color, preferably brown. White railings would visually compete with the white details of the building's trim and detract from the building's appearance. It was also noted by Commission members the location of the ramp, in the shadow of the church, will make

it highly likely moss and mold will grow on the deck, making it slippery when wet.

It was noted the visual impact of the ramp from the street will be minimized if shrubs like spirea, which grow to a specific height, are planted on the crest of the yard in the area of the existing vinyl fence.

Commission members suggested a lift at the side of the concrete steps may be a more unobtrusive, cheaper and less problematic solution than the construction of a ramp. The proposed sidewalk could be extended to the lift. A cover may have to be built to protect it from the weather. The Church will look into using a lift. If it decides to go in that direction, a new application for a building permit will be necessary. The commission promised rapid action.

After discussion, The following was moved by Gary Stephenson and seconded by Steve Springer:

1. That the proposed handicap ramp is to be accessed by a five-foot wide, concrete sidewalk, commencing at the foot of the northern set of stairs at the church's front entrance and continue in the side yard of the sacristy for at least fifty feet, with a rise of no less than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch to a foot. Care is to be taken to minimize damage to the maple tree by the front entrance. The height and distance of the ramp will be dictated by the distance between the end of the sidewalk and the sill of the large door on the west side of the chapel addition.

2. The ramp will be built, to be ADA compliant, of pressure treated superstructure, Trex® decking, and railings to be as unobtrusive as possible.

3. The entry/exit door may be replaced with a door of the same style as the front doors of the chapel and of the same width as the existing door. The door may have a window or windows.

4. Shrubs are to be planted along the rise of the yard facing Bath Street, by the existing vinyl fencing. The fence may remain. Shrubs shall be planted at recommended spacing to eventually grow into a hedge. It is recommended to select shrubs which will grow to a specified height of 3 to 4 feet and not require high maintenance.

The motion was passed. Meeting ended.