

**Village of Skaneateles**  
**Historical Landmarks Preservation Commission**  
**August 19, 2015**

Present: Chad Rogers, Chairman  
Dave Birchenough, Member  
Kathy Dyson, Member  
Lisa Riordan, Member

Dennis Dundon, Clerk to the Boards

Jennifer Ahrens, Bero Architecture, on behalf of the Applicant  
Virginia Searl, Bero Architecture, on behalf of the Applicant  
Becky Coerper, Rector, Applicant  
Rick Burton, Sr. Warden, Applicant

Absent: Ted Kinder, Member

At 7:30 pm, Chairman Rogers announced the application of St. James Episcopal Church to replace the front entry doors for 96 East Genesee Street. Chairman Rogers asked that the Board be presented with the changes from the previous application. Ms. Searl, "Jennifer will address that since she is more familiar with that proposal." Ms. Ahrens, "What we did was to put together a packet that starts you out farther and brings you closer, so you have the context. Really the only things that were changed is that we modified the rail height to be a little tighter and we changed this to a beveled glass, so it's a very thick glass that has the beveled edge right there. So it has more of a heavy formal appearance but it is still clear glazing. Ms. Searl, "That image looks as if it is translucent glass, it is transparent glass that's going in?" Ms. Ahrens, "Transparent glass. It is mainly the edges that we are trying to depict there."

Ms. Searl, "I also think the last time that there were no photographs to illustrate the changes in the doors over time. So Photo 1, is c. 1878 which was dated by information on the church web site. The cornerstone was laid in 1873, the church was consecrated in 1874. We believe this is a very early shot because of the black pigment that was applied to the limestone is still sharp and very dark. There still are some remnants of that on the stone. You will see that there are 2 full-height doors. The doors run from the center up to the apex of the arch. They are two leaves, solid wood doors, rectangular shaped panels at the bottom, arched shaped panels as they go up. Then there is another sort of triangular form, it appears from the image, but it is not straight on, so we can't tell exactly. Photo 2, with the assistance of the Village Historian, we identified the range on this photograph from about 1907 to 1926. You will see that there is an electric pole (electricity came to the Village in 1907), there are trolley lines in the street (rails went down in 1906), and the street is unpaved (street was paved in 1926). So this image is somewhere between 1907 and 1926. You will see that the doors have already changed once. The large arch-shaped panels in the wooden door have been replaced with glass." Member Dyson, "I can't tell from that; are those leaded glass, stained glass? It's important." Ms. Searl, "It is important. We can't tell, but I believe they are ordinary glass, not leaded glass. Fairly quickly there was a desire for more light in the vestibule."

Ms. Searl continued, "Photo 3 is later than photo 2, the street is paved and the grade has changed coming up to the entry. In photos 1 and 2 there are 3 steps coming up to the entry, here there are only 2, and the glass is still in place in those doors. Photo 4 is somewhere between 1926 and 1930, this is the boys' choir. We are able to zoom into the sign, so we know it was Rev. Merriman who is standing there with

the boys and his tenure is clearly known. You'll note that this is just clear textured glass, not leaded glass." Ms. Ahrens, "That type of glass at the time was made through a rolling process." Ms. Searl, "So the original doors, although with modification, were in place at least until 1930. The last image you'll see is somewhere between 1957 and 1960. This is Rev. Gillespie, I believe." Member Birchenough, "I don't think so – Father Miller." Ms. Dyson concurred. Ms. Searl, "When we zoomed in on the plaque, the reverend identified at that time is Gillespie." Member Birchenough, "But that's not him." Ms. Searl, "This may be Rev. Miller, but we believe that the date of the photograph, based in the sign, is 1957 to 1960; and here you see the doors as they exist now. The original historic doors have been lost." Ms. Dyson, "Because we have these doors. These are the doors that we are looking at, not the inner doors." Ms. Searl, "That's correct. But what the point is, this is a totally different configuration. This transom is a completely different configuration. The item to be illustrated here is that the doors have changed over time and the historic original doors no longer exist. The doors that are there now are truly full replacement doors dating from, perhaps earlier, but at least from 1957 to 1960. They changed sometime between 1930 and 1960. So the historic doors are no longer in place." In response to a question, Ms. Searl, "These are the vestibule doors." Member Birchenough, "They are there now." Ms. Searl, "These are the doors that are there now." Chairman Rogers, "Different glass though."

Ms. Searl, "I thought it might be helpful for you to look at a comparison of the existing doors and what we are proposing, side by side. Sorry for the blue corrections; we just went by and measured to be sure that we had the dimensions correct. So you will see that side stiles, as proposed, are ½ inch narrower, The bottom rail we are proposing 1 inch shorter, the panel we are proposing is 4 inches shorter, the center rail is 2 inches shorter, and the window is 4 inches larger. The top rail is 7 inches higher in order to accommodate the operating devices required for accessible entry." Ms. Ahrens, "The bottom rail must be a certain height for cane detection. It must be 10 inches before you hit the panel." Ms. Searl, "Some of the dimensions on the proposed new door are dictated by the ADA code. The reason for replacing the doors is to provide an accessible entrance into the worship space. At the threshold there is a 2 inch drop from the existing entry slab into the vestibule. So the project involves dropping the grade 2 inches so that we can have a flush entry into the vestibule for wheelchair entry into the space."

Chairman Rogers, "So the inside floor in the vestibule is 2 inches lower than the current threshold." Ms. Ahrens, "They have a metal threshold that ramps down very sharply." Ms. Searl, "We recognize that every project involving an existing historic building, there are always competing interests. Accessibility is something that the church strongly wants to provide, even though they are not required to by code. However, with the level of repairs and work being done in this building code could require that 20% of the cost of the work be dedicated to accessibility." Member Riordan, "How are wheelchairs entering the church right now?" Mr. Burton, "Poorly is the funny answer. You may have..." Rev. Coerper, "Over the threshold it's pretty difficult. Generally it takes one person, sometimes two, to get someone in a wheelchair over the threshold." Mr. Burton, "And there isn't another exit without a staircase. So in the floor level of the church is you were go towards Becky's office, you would have to go down a fairly steep staircase to be able to go over a series of thresholds before you can actually get out to an inclined hill."

Ms. Ahrens, "The other thing about accessibility it is not just a wheelchair. Lots of people with sight problems and with walkers..." Member Dyson, "We are talking about the door, but I understood from the original proposal there was also going to be a proposal for an entire wheelchair handicap accessible walkway. That is not in the plan anymore?" Ms. Searl, "That's not what is being presented to you tonight." Ms. Dyson, "But is that in the plan so if that did happen..." Ms. Searl, "There are no documents that exist for that and there has been no application for that." Member Dyson, "So you do not anticipate that there is going to be any such thing? I had heard to the contrary." Rev. Coerper, "When we finish these two projects that we are currently involved in, we are going to have to take a determination of the funds that we have remaining and what we think we are able to do. So it is our hope to be able to do that, but at the moment we are not able to fund it."

Chairman Rogers, "Once you get into the vestibule is there a similar lip at the inner door? Are you going back up to the sanctuary?" Ms. Ahrens, "Actually in the current project, there is a rehabilitation of the church space itself, and they are removing the tile – and maybe there is maybe a quarter-inch, it meets accessibility code right now it's a stone threshold between the inner narthex and the main nave of the church. All that is being removed and flush new tile surface throughout." Chairman Rogers, "The reason for my question was this photo which has got pretty good lighting. It appears like he's on a flush..." Ms. Ahrens, "This has been raised, yes." Ms. Searl, "The stone at the front entry is either not this stone or this stone has been moved. This one." Chairman Rogers, "It almost looks like the floor inside was flush?" Ms. Ahrens, "At that point, yes. And it now goes down to the sanctuary." Ms. Searl, "I feel that none of us sitting on this side of the table can address that issue. All we can tell you is what the conditions are now. How they changed, when they changed, the church has no record of those types of things. We need to deal with the conditions that exist currently."

Chairman Rogers, "The reason is I was wondering if there was something in the vestibule that could be done to bring the vestibule up to the current threshold?" Ms. Ahrens, "That's a good question. One of the main issues with the church rehabilitation is that the pews are set within a poured flooring. So the pews are set already lower. In the 1920s they did a tile, and they just tiled over everything. To go even higher, we have no way of raising the pews." Ms. Searl, "If you are asking can we address that 2 inch change across the vestibule, we don't want a sloped floor across that area. It is not a long distance to try to pick up those 2 inches across that span." Chairman Rogers, "I was curious to hear that you looked at it and there was not another option." Ms. Searl, "And to bring the vestibule floor to the level of the existing sill, that 2 inches would have to be addressed somewhere. They are replacing the flooring in the church, but if they raise the floor every door out of the church would have to be modified." Chairman Rogers, "And there is not space to do it there locally, in the vestibule?" Ms. Ahrens, "It would have to be, like Virginia said, a ramp. We'd have to ramp that floor."

Ms. Ahrens, "So one thing about the process of looking through the historic photos is that we worked with the church in their rehabilitation of their actual worship space, very carefully and for many months – because they were talking about making changes to the interior that affect their congregation. So we have been careful to look historically at how have things changed. We have talked with their committee that's been very involved with both – with the exterior doors and all the interior very sacred things. I believe; I just want you to understand that this has been a thoughtful process, especially interior and out side – the changes that we are making are reflective of the historical time." Member Dyson, "We don't know for sure if the first time that glass was used whether that was leaded, stained or clear?" Ms. Searl, "We don't know. That's correct." Member Dyson, "It's very pretty, the way the doors are shaped and the proportions echo the proportions of the church and the gothic peaks. I think that's very attractive. So there would be no problem with echoing that same shape, correct? That would be more historic, in a sense, if you were to retain that? I understand the problems that you have with accessibility and it is well examined and needs to be done. But the kind of glass that you use will have no bearing on whether a wheelchair gets up or down, correct?" Ms. Searl, "That's correct. Only that the clear light will provide more natural light into the space."

Member Riordan, "And that seems to be the ultimate goal." Mr. Burton, "Well for visually impaired, additional light in that entry point is valuable. We have elderly congregants. It's a key area to make sure it is well illuminated." Member Dyson, "But there are lights that you can put in there that will solve that problem without using clear glass, for those who have trouble seeing." Mr. Burton, "I don't think that anyone would disagree with electrical lighting, but we are also hopeful that we can make it easier for people to see into the church. Research shows that when people know what's inside there's a value." Ms. Ahrens "In working with the master plan, one of the main goals of the mission of the church is to create a welcoming environment. The transparency of seeing in and seeing out." Member Dyson, "With

all due respect, I sometimes think it is the people, it's the welcoming environment you establish; it is people who are most important in that particular aspect, not a door." Rev. Coerper, "That is correct. I think part of what we have talked about in the committee and the design process is that as beautiful as that architecture is, it is very forbidding. It's anecdotal, but people have said to me that they have driven by the church many times before they have gotten up the courage to come in. The possibility of being able to see in, particularly when worship is going on is something that is extremely inviting. I live next door to the church and we can't leave the doors unlocked all the time. There is not a way to do that and maintain the security we need. But I see dozens of people every weekend who come up and try the doors. They just want to see the inside of the church. That's part of the desire and hospitality that we have is that people can see what's going on in there. People can see what's in there; it's part of an invitation that we offer."

Chairman Rogers, "Did you or would you consider going back to the original door shape? I don't know if that's where you were going Kathy. In other words, changing the transom as well? Less costly?" Member Dyson, "Yes it was." Ms. Searl, "We went through a number of; we did a design study on the doors and went through a number of iterations and the option that our client wanted us to pursue is the one that you see. Yes we did look at it." Ms. Ahrens, "And the difficulty of the shape of the door. We couldn't tell if the, we assumed that the door went straight up and down vertically. You can see that there is an arch right here. There's also these little tiny things that are like this, so we believe that it comes all the way up. I just feel that would be very unwieldy to have a closer on. We were concerned about the heaviness of the doors." Ms. Searl, "To answer your question directly, we presented options without presenting prices. So the design decision was not based on cost." Chairman Rogers, "So it was functionality?" Rev. Coerper, "It was also partly a desire to meet our design goals which had to do with accessibility and openness, without changing the appearance of the front of the church very much from what people know. There is a lot of sensitivity within the congregation about those kinds of changes and we felt that if we could achieve our design goals by making minimal changes the it would be a lot easier for people to accept. Also I believe the entryway itself is a memorial. While I don't remember if the stained glass in the doors are, I think it is possible that they are. We have tried in every instance to avoid changing things that were a memorial; to do that; only if it was going to make a significant difference in accessibility and the other goals we had for the design."

Member Dyson, "I think we were also told, the first time around, that the doors are in good shape and do not need replacement. Is that correct?" Ms. Searl, "They are in good condition; they do not need replacing except that they are 2 inches too short." Member Dyson, "So it's the accessibility that the big issue here?" Ms. Searl, "Yes. I think if we were not trying to achieve an accessible entrance that we would not need to change the doors." Rev. Coerper, "I stand in the vestibule every Sunday and it is quite frightening to help people across those two thresholds; people who are unsteady on their feet are very destabilized by going up and down those thresholds." Chairman Rogers, "It's a tough one." Member Riordan, "If you look at most churches, the majority of them have a solid door; our Village included. If you look at gothic buildings 98% are a solid door. Some churches have insets of the stained glass, but you will never see a clear window in a gothic door." Rev. Coerper, "I'd encourage you to look at Ripon Cathedral in England. They have replaced their doors with glass." Member Riordan, "Well, I didn't look at that one." Member Dyson, "Well it doesn't mean that it was a good choice either, just because it exists." Member Riordan, "Also, the outer doors are open." Rev. Coerper, "They are actually not open for a lot of the year. In cold they have to be closed, so when someone comes – a person in a wheelchair or a person in a walker or a cane, has to get the door open from the outside and get across that threshold. There is just about enough room for a wheelchair on the inside. So those doors are closed a good part of the year."

Member Riordan, "It seems like the threshold is the real problem, not the light. So you really want to address the threshold issue." Ms. Ahrens, "I think it's both. It's a holistic idea." Rev. Coerper, "It is

accessibility in the broader sense of the term. It is giving people the sense that they can get in because they can see in.” Member Dyson, “I grew up in the church. I have been here all my life and went to the church. I actually am old enough to have known Father Miller and Gillespie. I don’t see that it was ever discussed as an issue. It was a welcoming, warm beautiful church. I’m really thinking that by putting clear glass in – as you say it could be memorial glass – for me that’s a problem; whether they have been changed over the years. I think your threshold is your problem that should be addressed. And you are addressing it, which is good.” Chairman Rogers, “I’m struggling similarly to Kathy. I’m trying to run through all the scenarios in my head as to what would be the best solution. It seems to me, at the end of the day changing just the glass in the doors and having it different again from the transom glass is; will be noticeable. Even though it is not the original glass, it’s probably the third glass that’s been in those doors over history, at least what we can see in those photos – you are setting up something that is inconsistent again with what will be in the transom today. I am wracking my brain for a solution because I definitely understand the ADA issue.”

Ms. Searl, “Is your objection to the clear glass? The physical changes to the dimensions of the door compared to what is there now, are quite minimal. If the objection is the clear glass, then maybe the solution is modifying the existing glass that is there by adding enough glass around the edges so that it can be reinstalled to meet the larger size glass opening that you want to achieve.” Member Riordan, “You have a gem of a church. And we’re impressed with how you are maintaining it and the roof you are putting on it is just wonderful. So to disturb all that and disrupt it with the change in glass that would harm the overall look is what we are all struggling with. I think you are looking at the church from the inside out, and we are viewing the church from the outside in. Most churches have a solid door and it certainly fits your church; it has the stained glass. Can you build a new door around that stained glass?” Ms. Searl, “I would like to ask you the same question. Is your concern the clear glass?” Member Riordan, “Absolutely.” Ms. Searl, “If we were to modify the other dimensions of the wood as we have shown, and the leaded glass is maintained, but perhaps made slightly longer to accommodate the Church’s desire for greater light in the space. You are totally stuck on the size of the glass?” Member Riordan, “We are stuck on the stained glass. We are stuck on the feel that it has right now. Ms. Searl, “Is it the clear glass that’s bothering you?” Member Riordan “Yes it is and I’m sorry I thought I said that.” Ms. Searl, “Would you be willing to consider modifying the existing leaded glass so that it could be longer, perhaps the same width but added glass at the top and bottom?” Chairman Rogers, “Reusing the existing stained glass?” Ms. Searl, “Reusing the existing stained glass but adding, in an artistic way.” Ms. Ahrens, “I was wondering what about a new leaded panel that has clear glass, but at least has the leaded?” Member Dyson, “I don’t think you want the clear in there.” Ms. Searl, “They are hung up on the clear glass.” [Multiple conversations.] Ms. Searl, “You need to consider an option on the glass that will allow the larger door, the taller door, to accommodate the accessibility. I think if you want to do that you may be in a position to have to retain the existing stained glass and do we need to come back with a different proposal then?”

Member Birchenough, “Why can’t you just add a couple of inches to these doors if they are in good shape? Because that brings the rail up too high for a cane?” Ms. Searl, “No there is a minimum height not a maximum.” Ms. Ahrens, “You wouldn’t want a Dutchman.” Ms. Searl, “No you wouldn’t want a Dutchman. If you were going to do that, I think you would have to take the doors apart and put a new bottom rail on.” Ms. Ahrens, “And then the proportions would be off. You could add a metal door bottom, but that would look horrible.” Ms. Searl, “You don’t want to cob a little piece on the door anywhere.” Member Dyson, “Part of the beauty of this church over the years, it is gothic and it has been; is the stained glass. You can go all over the area, and what is so beautiful about the church is the stained glass. The ones that have the clear glass are just not as beautiful. They just aren’t.” Ms. Searl, “I think if we were going to keep this door, to respond to your question, I think we would have to change the top rail, because we need 7 inches at the top for the operating door closer.” Ms. Ahrens, “That would not hurt the proportions as much. But then you have to Dutchman in the stiles. I don’t know if you could make it

look..." Rev. Coerper, "I don't know if this pertains, but the bottom of the inside of the doors is not in good shape. There is a hole on one side and there are places where the inside material is broken away." Ms. Searl, "There would be substantial repairs to these doors, that's for sure, if you were to keep them." Ms. Ahrens, "Hayner Hoyt is the general contractor on the job. Their millwork subcontractor is E F Thrush, who can build doors that can put these to shame." Chairman Rogers, "We outlined a couple of possibilities: modifying the top rail, so we can accomplish the ADA issue, but maintaining the existing stained glass window; second, a new door as proposed but with reuse of the existing stained glass; or a new door to just fit the existing window."

Mr. Burton, "The second option you said would be a new door as long as the integrity of the glass that is there now is maintained. Obviously there is going to have to be some rework around that but to maintain it." Chairman Rogers, "I think we'd love to see what the solution proposed for that is - to fit the new door's window opening." Ms. Searl, we are proposing a panel that's 4 inches larger. So understanding what the glass now looks like, my feeling is that probably - and Jerome Durr would be the one to say finally -- that probably 2 inches at the top, 2 inches at the bottom." Chairman Rogers, "Is the new door being custom-built?" Ms. Ahrens, "Yes it is custom." Chairman Rogers, "Then it could be built to just fit the existing leaded glass?" Ms. Searl, "You would have to adjust the proportions. I have to say, representing my client, that keeping that same leaded glass without any increase in glazed area, does not meet their goals." Chairman Rogers, "I think we appreciate that but are struggling with the esthetic." Mr. Burton, "If we work with you on maintaining the glass that's there in a wider hole. The door is damaged at the bottom. I don't think we want to rail it at the top. We want to get new material that's going to me better for heat. Can we work with you on that front?" Member Riordan, "The material of the door, are you considering a wooden door?" Ms. Searl, "Of course." Ms. Ahrens, "It's a custom-made wood door." Chairman Rogers, "Personally for me, I'm OK with that." Member Birchenough, "I'm OK with that."

Ms. Ahrens, "I'm going to ask, because of the time schedule, of the project if we could move forward to having the shop drawings prepared by the millwork fabricator, so that we could move things along? And then depending on what your determination is on the glass..." Chairman Rogers, "I think that's all we are down to." Ms. Ahrens, "We would request that the glass size be able to be larger." Ms. Searl, "Can we agree on a height for that glass this evening? Is that something..." Member Dyson, "You are working with the proportions. I would think it would be whatever you determine would work best." Chairman Rogers, "I think I'm technically OK with what you have proposed." Ms. Dyson, "Yeah." Chairman Rogers, "In my mind, and you guys can agree or not, in my mind it is how are we modifying the glass to fit within the 3 foot 6 high, assuming the width is the same." Ms. Ahrens, "So we could show you drawings of the glazing." Chairman Rogers, "But we could approve the door as it sits today." Ms. Ahrens, "That would be wonderful." Ms. Dyson, "I think the glass is the main thing." Member Birchenough, "It's the glass." Ms. Riordan, "It is."

Chairman Rogers, "So then it's just how your stained glass..." Mr. Burton, "So from a timing standpoint I know that you may want to see one last phase, but we need to hold to the timetable that you have spoken to. We are trying to finish before it is winter." Ms. Ahrens, "This will work." Ms. Searl, "There is a wedding in November and the site work will have to be done before. We can't have a two inch gap at the bottom of the door going into cold weather." Ms. Ahrens, "I think that'll work. We can get these drawings to have the millworker start fabricating the doors, and then Jerome can work with us on getting the window, and we can submit for next third Wednesday in September." [Multiple conversations] Chairman Rogers, "We also can schedule a meeting prior." Mr. Burton, "So in an emergency situation we might be able to ask for, if time is of the essence. We appreciate you working with us." Chairman Rogers, "This is a difficult one, as you can tell from our struggling." Mr. Burton, "Every intention inside our group is to preserve the historical relevance of this building. You've seen that in what we have done with the roof. Our outreach into the community will reflect that even more."

Member Dyson, "What color red?" Mr. Burton, "Episcopal red." Rev. Coerper, "There is a reason for the red. There was a time and it's not so long ago that all the doors on Episcopal churches were changed to red as a symbol of sanctuary."

**Member Dyson, "I move that we continue the Public Hearing on this matter to 7:30 pm on September 16, 2015." Member Birchenough seconded the motion. Upon the unanimous vote of the members present in favor of the motion the motion was carried.**

Mr. Burton, "And if we were to find that we needed it sooner, are we able to come to you and ask?" Chairman Rogers, "Jennifer can contact me, or anyone can contact me, and I can check dates with the Commission."

**Member Birchenough, "I move that we accept the design of the door, just the door not the glass, with the stipulation that the door will be reusing the existing glass, modified to fit." Member Riordan seconded the motion. Upon the unanimous vote of the members present in favor of the motion the motion was carried. This matter was concluded at 8:28 pm.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Dennis Dundon, Clerk to the Boards



**Village of Skaneateles  
Historical Landmarks Preservation Commission  
August 19, 2015**

**Present:** Chad Rogers, Chairman  
Dave Birchenough, Member  
Kathy Dyson, Member  
Lisa Riordan, Member

Dennis Dundon, Clerk to the Boards

**Absent:** Ted Kinder, Member

At 8:29 pm, Mr. Dundon explained that Pioneer Management had just submitted an application to repaint the trim at the building at 1 East Genesee Street. The colors submitted are the existing colors currently on the building. After thorough discussion and review of the colors and the photographs, the commission members present concluded that the matter did not require a Certificate of Approval from the Commission.

Mr. Dundon said that he had also been informed that the applicant wished to make some structural repairs to the porch and steps on the north side (rear) of the building, and wanted to know if they required Commission approval. The work would be done to replicate exactly what is there using the same materials and colors. After thorough discussion and review of the colors and the photographs, the commission members present concluded that the matter did not require a Certificate of Approval from the Commission.

**Chairman Rogers, "I move that the Commission finds that in this case, repairs in-kind and repainting as-is do not require a Certificate of Approval from the Commission." The motion was seconded by Member Dyson.**

Upon the unanimous vote of the members present in favor of the motion the motion was carried. This matter was concluded and by motion of Chairman Rogers, seconded by Member Dyson, the meeting was adjourned at 8:38 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis Dundon, Clerk to the Boards

