Shearer Cottage Expansion
DRI 712

Land Use Planning Committee
September 13, 2021
Shearer Cottage Expansion

Owner and applicant: Eric Van Allen; Chuck Sullivan (architect)
Permits: Building Permit, Special Permit and/or variances
Checklist: 3.1b (Commercial construction of more than 3,500 ft²), 3.1h (Parking for 10 or more vehicles), 4.1c (Five or more dwelling units or rooms); mandatory review
Charles and Henrietta Shearer
  - Purchased cottage overlooking Baptist Temple in 1903
  - Cottage fully established as a business in 1912
  - Laundry business operated until 1917
Early guests were primarily business owners, politicians, lawyers, doctors, intellectuals
Host to many social and charitable groups
Was listed in the Negro Motorist Green Book
Shearer Summer Theater
First landmark to be designated on the African American Heritage Trail of Martha’s Vineyard in 1997
Cottage featured at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC.
Properties have remained in the family for more than 100 years
Efforts to renovate and expand the cottage began in the 1980s-1990s
Proposal

The properties include two main buildings:

• Two-story cottage with three bedrooms
• Separate one-story building to the south with three rooms

Property at 5 Morgan Ave. is currently used for parking.
Proposal

• Main cottage will be gut-renovated and expanded to the west, with a total of five bedrooms.
• Separate one-story building will be demolished.
• New two-story building with eight bedrooms (including a basement level) will be constructed immediately west of the main cottage.
• New one-story building with two bedrooms will be constructed immediately south of the main cottage.
Proposal

• The southern portion of the site will be regraded to allow for windows and doors on the basement level of the larger of the two new buildings.

• The total number of bedrooms on the properties will increase from six to 15, and the total square footage will increase from 3,061 ft² to 9,003 ft², not including deck and porch space, which will increase from 906 ft² to 2,085 ft².
NORTH ELEVATION - PROPOSED

WEST ELEVATION - PROPOSED

ASUMED HISTORIC POSITION OF BUILDING

NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION
Planning concerns

- Wastewater
- Drainage
- Energy
- Traffic
- Character and identity
- Housing and employment
- Landscape and lighting
Planning concerns

**Wastewater:** The property drains into Oak Bluffs Harbor, and the proposal includes a single Title 5 septic system to serve the new buildings. Information about the existing and proposed wastewater flow is still pending.

**Stormwater and Drainage:** The proposed new parking area will be permeable, and a large patio proposed for the area north of the main cottage will consist of permeable turfstone pavers. The total impervious surface area will increase by about 2,975 ft\(^2\) as a result of the larger buildings.

**Energy:** The applicant is considering rooftop solar panels, as recommended by staff, and has proposed adding one or two electric vehicle charging stations in the parking lot, with a longer-term goal of having one EV station per parking space.

**Traffic and Transportation:** There are currently 12 parking spaces, with 12 proposed, including a handicapped accessible space on Morgan Ave. The applicant also plans to encourage guests to use alternate modes of transportation such as bikes and public transit, and to possibly offer free bus passes.
Planning concerns

**Character and Identity:** The new buildings and exterior renovations will retain some features of the original structure:

- Cedar sidewall
- Double-hung windows
- Decorative moldings facing Morgan Ave.

Certain historic features will be modified:

- Replacement of the large second-floor balcony with a smaller railing and double doors
- Replacement of the solid railing on the first-floor porch with a cross-fence design
- Addition of a second floor on the northern part of the building.

The new buildings to the west and south will be visible from in front of the main cottage, including the gables and chimney of the building to the west (behind the cottage), which will be taller than the existing structure.
Planning concerns

Economic Development and Housing:

• The cottage has recently accommodated overnight guests and private gatherings, including reunions, retreats, weddings, conferences, etc., by private invitation.

• Expanded inn will offer daily, weekly, and monthly rates, whole-house packages, and private events from May through October. The applicant has stated that the inn will also offer whole-house packages and private events, and daily rates to the extent practicable, in the off-season.

• All private gatherings would begin after 9AM and end before 8PM, with sound-generating events such as lectures limited to Fridays and weekends from 12-6PM.

• The applicant estimates the addition of one or two new employees as a result of the project, with onsite housing for up to four employees. As proposed, the inn may also barter with local businesses seeking housing for their senior staff members.

Lighting and Landscape: Lighting and landscape plans have not yet been provided.