

4/13/26

Memo: Pennington HPC - re: 236 S Main St, Pennington, John Sowienski

A couple of weeks ago I had a call from David, a contractor with Home Genius Exteriors, noting that the Boro told him to give me a call about replacing siding at 236 S Main. I described Ordinance and requirements for siding other than aluminum or vinyl, he said OK, he would adjust his quote accordingly.

Subsequent call from John Sowienski, home owner, noting additional expense of Hardie-Plank and asking about vinyl. I said I'd meet him in person to talk to him about requirements. I met him at his house on Monday April 6 where he said "Hardie-Plank cost \$30,000 more than vinyl and I can't afford it" he noted several health and construction reasons why it was important to replace siding. On inspection, the existing aluminum siding on the house is poorly installed and I believe him when he says that moisture is getting underneath. But I said \$30K upcharge didn't sound right and I would talk to the contractor again to better understand the proposed construction details.

In a phone conversation with Dave a few days later he said the reason Hardi Plank is more expensive is because in order to meet warrantee requirements (the only way they will install it) you also have to replace window trim. With vinyl, they can leave the old aluminum wrapped trim in place and wrap a vinyl channel around the window to receive the edge of vinyl. Me: Won't moisture still get in thru old rotten window trim? Dave: yes, but it's a way to save money. We discussed limiting Hardie Plank to the front and sides of the original house, allowing vinyl on the rear. Dave said that with that and a better financing plan he thought he could provide a much better price. BTW, Home Genius plan is to strip existing aluminum to expose existing plywood sheathing, install a new layer of 3/8" insulated sheathing over the existing, and then install vinyl or Hardi over that. I asked if vinyl siding, if allowed, would protrude beyond face of existing window trims – Dave said hopefully not.

Another call from John Sowienski on Friday, April 10. Unhappy about revised costs – still too costly and work has to be done for several reasons. I said I could not approve vinyl as a Minor Work approval, but he could make case to the Commission, although I would not be optimistic about approval, with respect for his time. He said he would submit application.

As a courtesy, I will email him to let him know that he should submit application in advance so that Commission members can take a look at his house, and he should also be specific about product and details he would like to have considered.

Eric Holtermann
Pennington Historic Preservation Commission