



Color scheme in Chatham spurs outcry

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CHATHAM — The simmering passions behind the prim white clapboards of this town's historic facades have erupted yet again.

Shades of neon green, lime green and citrus yellow scream from Hilary and Tina Foulkes' half-painted house at the corner of Main Street and Hallett Road in the Old Village district, a part of town proud of its place on the National Register of Historic Places.

Some neighbors and other Old Village residents see the colorful paint job as the Foulkes' revenge.

"It's hideous," said village resident Norm Pacun, among those unhappy with the homeowners' choice of colors. "It's not what's appropriate."

From 2007 to 2009, Pacun was among dozens of opponents who successfully fought the Foulkeses' plans to renovate the historic John Hallett House. The last hearing was in July 2007.

The couple's lawyer, William Riley, yesterday rejected any thought that his clients are thumbing their noses at people in town, and he just laughed when asked about the choice of colors.

Hilary Foulkes "definitely is a strong believer in private property rights," Riley said, after speaking to his client in Germany as recently as Monday. "This is just the way he wants to use his property. The building needed to be painted."

Such exterior painting requires no local permits or review and doesn't trigger a county review as a substantial alteration of a building listed on the National Register of Historic Places, according to Pacun.

The bold color scheme has brought a mix of abusive comments and praise from passers-by, according to Pati DuVall, the artist on duty yesterday at the Old Village Art Gallery, a cooperative of 10 artists that rents space from the Foulkeses. One critic ended up apologizing for yelling and bought two paintings.

The gallery is caught in the middle of the controversy, DuVall said, and has nothing to do with the exterior paint job.

The colorful building stands out from blocks away in the Old Village, a long-settled part of town between Chatham Harbor and Mill Pond that contains hundreds of historic properties.

The Foulkeses ran into the protective rules in 2007, not long after they bought the unheated house on 0.44 acres of land for \$1.9 million. They sought a special permit to move the building six feet back from Main Street so that they could put up a fence and let their kids out to play in the yard without any worries. They wanted to add a dormer, widow's walk and roof deck and replace a nonhistoric ell to the rear.

They planned to preserve the historic exterior and interior but were denied by every town board, Riley said, which was disappointing. He quoted one appeals board member as saying, "If you want people to buy historic buildings and preserve them, you have to be able to work together."

Hilary Foulkes lives near Frankfurt, Germany, and works in mergers and acquisitions for the law firm of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom. He owns another house in Chatham and vacations here two to three times a year, Riley said.

Pacun said many people believed that Hilary Foulkes simply wanted to make changes in the house and resell it as quickly as he could.

"The simple question is, why did he buy this house?" Pacun said.

After the appeals board meeting several years ago, Foulkes and his supporters waited outside to shout at board members and call them names, Pacun said.

"This is not one nice guy. He's a hard-nosed litigator," Pacun said.

As passions run deep along Main Street, the house painting "has certainly bumped (the topic of) sharks with most people in Chatham," said another neighbor, Don Edge, on Monday.

He was pleased that Hilary Foulkes wasn't letting the property deteriorate but was less happy with the choice of colors and the quality of the paint job. Edge hoped that the paint job was Foulkes' way of convincing his neighbors to support a return trip to the appeals board for the house move.

Riley called Foulkes a generous man of firm convictions who wouldn't resort to such bullying tactics.

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