

Michael Gehr, chair, called the meeting to order at 4:37 p.m. on Thursday, October 13, 2016, in the Conference Room, Fourth Floor, City Hall. A roster of the members of the commission and the technical posts they fill are on file and available upon request. Also present were commission members L. Allen, C. Crumrine, and M. Wertman. A. Rohrbaugh and D. Calhoun, Secretary, were present on behalf of the Planning and Code Administration Department.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 22, 2016:

The minutes were not ready for approval.

CONSENT AGENDA

840 Hamilton Boulevard – Jamie Boden-Johnson – Fence, Case No. HDC 2016-32.

810 Potomac Avenue – Fred Hartley for Dolores Defelice – Front Porch Roof Replacement, Case No. HDC 2016-30.

No one was present with objections to any of the Consent Agenda items.

MOTION: (Crumrine/Wertman) Mr. Chairman, I have reviewed the materials in Cases HDC 2016-32 and HDC 2016-34, and their associated staff reports and recommendations, and I have viewed the properties in question. The staff reports recommend approval of these applications as consistent with the applicable standards adopted by this commission, and no one has appeared at this hearing with concerns about, issues with, or objections to these applications. Therefore, I move that this commission adopt the staff evaluations and recommendations in these cases as its own and grant Certificates of Appropriateness to the applicants for Cases HDC 2016-32 and HDC 2016-34.

DISCUSSION: None.

ACTION: APPROVED (Unanimous)

DESIGN REVIEW

**300-302 North Potomac Street – Synergy Management Service, LLC – Replace Windows,
Case No. HDC 2016-33.**

Sheryl Bowers of Synergy Management Service, LLC, was present on behalf of the owner.

Staff Report: This building is a “B” resource in the Potomac-Broadway Local Historic District. The applicant is proposing to replace all of the windows, with the exception of the louvered windows on the stair tower, with MI Windows and Doors, 1650 Series, “Extreme Vinyl,” double-hung windows. Exterior grille patterns will match existing windows being replaced. This project will be phased in and windows will be replaced in units as they become vacant.

Staff recommended approval, subject to a condition that all windows on a façade be replaced at the same time. As stated in their application, the applicant would like to wait for units to turn over before performing work. Staff is concerned this approach will result in a patchwork appearance that could last years; or the manufacturer could discontinue the model selected midway through the project in which case the windows may not match. A solution would be to order all the windows at one time and place them in secured storage.

Applicant/Commission Discussion: Ms. Bowers stated that replacing the windows on one façade at a time is not feasible. There are 15 windows per unit. Currently they have two vacant units on the first floor unit and a third vacant unit on the second floor (south side). Replacing the windows as recommended by staff would be cost prohibitive, not to mention the inconvenience to tenants in the occupied units. Mr. Gehr noted that staff’s recommendation could be a legitimate concern since tenants might not turnover as quickly as planned. Ms. Wertman asked if it would be feasible to replace the windows one floor at a time over the period of a year. Ms. Bowers said that would be a workable solution. Mr. Gehr said he understood the economic factor, but the commission cannot take that into account. Mr. Rohrbaugh said there are two points to staff’s concern: the patchwork effect and the possibility that the selected window model will be discontinued before the project is complete. Ms. Bowers indicated that she would like to get the windows replaced in the vacant units now and then would be agreeable to phase-in replacing the remaining windows over the course of the next year. The window manufacturer told her that the windows she selected are ordered all the time so it would be less likely that the selected model will be discontinued. There are a total of 112 windows and each window costs \$250.

As a compromise to staff’s recommendation, Mr. Gehr suggested replacing half the windows on the south side and at least the first two units on the first floor, including the bays and the hallway windows. This would get the windows on the North Potomac Street and Bethel Street *[sic]* facades for the first two floors taken care of, including one hallway window and three bay windows of the other unit. These facades are more visible; then the next phase could take in the upper floors. Mr. Gehr stated he is not as concerned about the timing on the north side. Ms. Bowers said she would be agreeable to replacing all windows by the end of 2017.

Concerning the window sills, Ms. Bowers stated that every window sill has been wrapped previously. She would like to re-use the wrapping after the windows have been replaced. Commission members advised that the wrapping does not have to be removed if it is an existing condition.

MOTION: (Wertman/Crumrine) Mr. Chairman, I have inspected the project plans and the property in question, and if constructed in accordance with what we just discussed that the three empty units of the building that are on the first floor and the second unit facing Bethel [*sic*] going south on Potomac and including the second floor window above the door and the three bay windows on the north [*sic*] side of the building are included in the first phase of window replacement and that all windows will be replaced by the end of 2017 (December 31, 2017), then if they are constructed or replaced in accordance with those plans, then the project will be compatible with the character of the district for the reasons that all materials will generally be harmony with the Architectural Design Guidelines for the Residential Preservation Districts and the character of the adjoining properties. Therefore, I move that the HDC grant a Certificate of Appropriateness to the applicant for Case No. HDC 2016-33.

DISCUSSION: None.

ACTION: APPROVED (Unanimous)

WORKSHOP

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OLD BUSINESS

Vacant Structure Program Update. Paul Fulk, Inspections Manager for the City of Hagerstown, was present to provide the commission with information about how code enforcement inspections are undertaken.

Currently the City has 556 active vacant structures (residential and commercial). Of that number only 25 are vacant commercial properties; there are 47 vacant structures in the historic districts. The Vacant Structures Program has been in existence since 2010, but until recently it was not

fully staffed. The program was revamped last year and it is now staffed. The first year was spent identifying vacant properties. This year, staff has begun inspecting exteriors of properties and attempting to gain entry for interior inspections. Typically the inspectors do not walk on properties, but view properties from public streets and/or alleys. During an inspection, they are looking for violations to the Property Maintenance Code. The downside to these properties is that most of the time the City is dealing with property management companies, not the registered owners.

For the most part, the majority of the owners of vacant structures have fallen on hard times. Banks have less interest in the properties. As the Vacant Structure Program is developed, Mr. Fulk was hopeful for more success. The City cannot fix issues that are discovered during inspections. If there are enough judgments on a property, then the property goes to tax sale. The hope is that the property will be purchased by an owner willing to properly care for the property.

Ms. Wertman asked if the City would be able to gain access to the interiors of vacant structures to determine if there are issues on the inside that could lead to deterioration of the building. Mr. Fulk stated that blighted properties are required to have an interior inspection immediately and then yearly. Nonblighted properties are inspected once they have been in the program for a year. Mr. Fulk explained the process for labeling properties as blighted. The majority of properties are nonblighted. Owners actively marketing their properties now have a year to sell before they need to be registered as a vacant structure.

Ms. Wertman stated that some vacant properties need to be inspected more regularly and asked if it would be possible to consider a graduated schedule for interior inspections (the longer a building is vacant, the more frequent the inspections). Mr. Gehr stated that there are many circumstances that are out of the City's control. Economic opportunities need to be created within the community that make Hagerstown a desirable place to live.

Mr. Rohrbaugh added that the number of rental properties in Hagerstown is high. Sixty percent of the homes in Hagerstown are occupied by renters. Also, Hagerstown's population is very distressed: 26% of residents are at or below poverty and the age and quality of housing stock is stressed. Referencing The Community's City Center Plan, Mr. Rohrbaugh indicated the positive change afoot, however, there are no simple solutions.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

**Historic District Commission
MINUTES**

**October 13, 2016
City of Hagerstown, Maryland**

ADJOURN

It was moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn (5:35 p.m.).

11/10/2016

Approved



Debra C. Calhoun – Secretary