

Michael Gehr, chair, called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 8, 2015, 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, C. Davis, S. Silas, and M. Wertman. S. Bockmiller, Development Planner/Zoning Administrator, A. Rohrbaugh, Planner, and D. Calhoun, Secretary, were present on behalf of the Planning and Code Administration Division.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 24, 2015:

MOTION: (Wertman/Silas) I move we approve them.
DISCUSSION: None.
ACTION: APPROVED (Unanimous)

CONSENT AGENDA

**269-270 South Prospect Street – WLR Management – Fence and Railing,
Case No. HDC 2015-33.**

63 East North Avenue – Mary E. Cain – Fence, Case No. HDC 2015-38.

Since the last meeting, the application for 269-270 South Prospect Street was amended to include use of metal tube railing for all of the railing, rather than wood and metal railings. Because the application was revised to address staff's comments from the initial report, staff now recommended approval so the case was moved to consent.

There were no concerns raised from the audience, nor by the HDC.

MOTION: (Davis/Wertman) Mr. Chairman, I have reviewed the materials submitted in Cases HDC 2015-33, 269-270 South Prospect Street, and HDC 2015-38, 63 East North Avenue, 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 the applications. Therefore, I move that this commission adopt the staff evaluations and recommendations in the cases as its own and grant Certificates of Appropriateness to the applicants for the previously mentioned cases.

DISCUSSION: None.
ACTION: APPROVED (Unanimous)

DESIGN REVIEW

None.

WORKSHOP

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Comprehensive Plan Update.

(Staff report in meeting file.) Alex Rohrbaugh, Planner, made a presentation on proposed changes to the “Urban Design and Historic Preservation” element of the City’s Comprehensive Plan. The current plan was adopted in 2008 and is currently undergoing an update. Staff’s goal is to incorporate the numerous separate plans that have been prepared since 2008 into the update to create a unified plan. The purpose of meeting with the HDC is to receive feedback on the Historic Preservation section of this element. At the last meeting Mr. Bockmiller shared a list of potential landmarks which is part of this section and up for discussion.

Following are items that were discussed and the HDC proffered changes and/or potential revisions:

- Proposed/Potential Landmarks. Due to the close proximity of several buildings on East Franklin Street that are on the “Potential Landmarks” list, HDC members agreed that it would be beneficial to recommend extending the Downtown Historic District along East Franklin Street to North Mulberry Street. This is a major gateway into the city. Mr. Bockmiller noted that since this area is already part of the National Historic District, the research is already in place and it would be easier to designate as a local district. Any change to the local historic district would need to follow the rezoning process which includes a public review meeting by the Planning Commission and a second public hearing before the Mayor and City Council. Ultimately it is the Mayor and Council’s decision whether to approve or disapprove a rezoning request. It will be a question of how much political backlash would the Mayor and Council be willing to undertake in order to create additional local districts. Mr. Bockmiller felt there would be opposition from property owners in the proposed area, however, improving the gateway into Hagerstown would be a valid argument for urban development.
- On page 8-1 Ms. Davis said the second issue (“Many historic buildings are not being utilized to their fullest extent.”) needs to be reworded. As written, it is an understatement. There is a considerable amount of vacant square footage in the downtown area. There is a

generations-long issue with demolition by neglect, and the most heartbreaking cases the commission has considered are due to demolition by neglect. Mr. Bockmiller suggested a policy such as “Explore ways to arrest the ongoing deterioration of historic buildings before demolition by neglect sets in.” Ms. Wertman agreed with Ms. Davis and added that by the time a building looks bad on the outside, it is too far gone on the inside. Mr. Rohrbaugh noted the City of Hagerstown’s Vacant Structures Program, which is the City’s program for addressing properties that fall in this category. Ms. Allen also noted that vacant properties are not offered for sale, they just sit there.

- Concerning expansion of the Potential Landmarks list, commission members had not looked at all of them, but felt that the list appears to be accurate. The question is more what buildings have been missed. Mr. Bockmiller stated that the previous train of thought was to leave commercial and industrial buildings off the list because it would be a deterrent to economic development. After discussion, commission members felt the following properties should be added to the Potential Landmarks list: Moller Organ Works on North Prospect Street; the remaining portion of the Pangborn Corporation factory; the former Coca-Cola plant on Jonathan Street/Pennsylvania Avenue, near Wheaton Park; North Street School; Hagerstown Table Corporation building on Pennsylvania Avenue; Jamison Door factory.
- Add language concerning connections to the urban areas via transit such as MARC train service.

The next steps will be to take HDC’s recommendations to the Planning Commission for consideration. The Planning Commission will ultimately review the Comprehensive Plan and make a recommendation to the Mayor and City Council. The HDC will be able to comment at the public review meeting with the Planning Commission.

There was discussion about the potential for another historic district in the Potomac Avenue area near Calvert Terrace, Mealey Parkway. The neighborhood was one of the first planned communities and the street layout is very unique. The newer homes are now about the right age—in theory buildings 50 years or older could be eligible. The National Register homework would need to be done before the local districts could be designated. Mr. Gehr stated that it would nice to recognize the neighborhood. Commission members also discussed restoration of the tree canopy along Oak Hill Avenue. More and more trees are being lost.

OLD BUSINESS

Design Guideline Updates to Implement 2015 Ordinance Changes.

This item will be discussed at the next meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

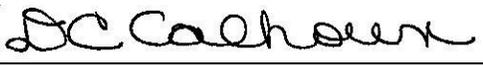
None.

ADJOURN

It was moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn (5:56 p.m.).

10/22/2015

Approved



Debra C. Calhoun – Secretary