

**Historic District Commission
MINUTES**

**June 11, 2015
City of Hagerstown, Maryland**

Michael Gehr, chair, called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 11, 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, and S. Silas. S. Bockmiller, Development Planner/Zoning Administrator was present on behalf of the Planning and Code Administration Division.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 9, 2015.

MOTION: (Silas/Allen) Motion to adopt.
DISCUSSION: None.
ACTION: APPROVED (Unanimous)

Mr. Bockmiller announced that the owner of 1019 Oak Hill Avenue is unable to attend this meeting and has requested that his workshop be continued until the next meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Gehr asked if the commission had any comments or concerns with the cases on the Design Review portion of the meeting and whether members were comfortable with moving both cases to the Consent Agenda. There were no concerns by the commission.

MOTION: (Silas/Allen) I move they be moved to Consent Agenda.
DISCUSSION: None.
ACTION: APPROVED (Unanimous)

1009 Oak Hill Avenue – Patricia Wiley – Extend Rear Deck, Case No. HDC 2015-16.

208 South Prospect Street – Paul Drnec – Replace Roof; Alterations to Dormers, Case No. HDC 2015-19.

No concerns were raised by either the commission or members of the audience.

MOTION: (Crumrine/Silas) Mr. Chairman, I have reviewed the materials submitted in Cases HDC 2015-16 and HDC 2015-19 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 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

927-929 Oak Hill Avenue – Varner Paddack – Porch Repairs.

Mr. Bockmiller summarized that Mr. Paddack was before the commission several meetings ago for permission to wrap the soffit and columns on the front porch with aluminum. That application was denied. Pat Paddack, owner of the property, and Paul Johnson, the owner’s contractor, were present at this meeting for guidance on how to move forward.

Applicant Presentation: Mr. Johnson stated that the fascia and the crown molding are all one piece. If he repairs it, he will end up tearing into the main structure itself and destroying what is already there. This will add thousands of dollars to the project because the building elements that would be destroyed would have to be custom made. Mr. Johnson asserted that there are other properties in the neighborhood with aluminum-wrapped or plastic elements on the building. His goal is to make it look as original as possible from the street view. Mr. Johnson said he could replace the wood columns with wood rather than wrapping them. This is a rental property and spending the money to remove and replace the wood would not be cost effective. They want to make sure the outside of the house looks nice and that it stays up to standards.

Commission/Applicant Discussion: Mr. Gehr noted that Mr. Johnson was pleading his case based on the cost of repairing the fascia rather than wrapping it. The Design Guidelines do not give the commission leeway to consider cost. Based on the guidelines, the commission’s charge is to try to preserve architectural features. Ms. Allen said the commission did not feel qualified to advise Mr. Paddock at the last meeting since Mr. Gehr was absent and wanted to wait for his input on ventilation and the possibility that the wood could deteriorate further under the aluminum. Mr. Johnson said the wood is dry now, but there was a leak years ago. The roof has since been replaced with a rubber roof and the visible damage was repaired; however, they never repaired it “underneath.” The porch is currently structurally sound but if he has to tear it up to replace the soffit then that work might compromise the integrity of the porch. In response to a question by the chair, Mr. Silas stated that as an Oak Hill Avenue resident he has not noticed any signs of deterioration on this building, although he has not actively looked for deterioration in the area of the porch roof.

Mr. Bockmiller stated that administratively he has a few concerns that will need to be taken into account by the commission during the workshop. First, when they came in for the original application a few meetings ago, the commission itself denied the application. That means the applicant cannot come back for approval of the same application for a period of a year, unless there is substantial new information that could be presented that may have resulted in a different decision the first time. The purpose of this workshop is to discuss what the applicant would be permitted to do that would be in line with the Design Guidelines. The discussion seems to be trying to justify what the HDC previously denied. If the commission wants to pursue allowing the aluminum wrapping, it needs to make a finding that there is information that could not have been presented at the first meeting that warrants reopening the case. Mr. Johnson said he could not attend the last meeting because he had a doctor's appointment and Mr. Paddack attended the meeting on his own. Mr. Paddack said he just wants to know what they need to do to resolve the problem at a reasonable cost to him.

Mr. Silas indicated that the commission was not provided details as to the structural damage that lies beyond the aluminum at the last meeting. His understanding at the time was that the aluminum wrapping was being done for cosmetic reasons as opposed to having something that has deteriorated to the point where repairs could cause more damage. Mr. Gehr asked if the house has another porch with similar details. Mr. Johnson said no, that was done before 2004. Mr. Johnson began working for Mr. Paddack in 1991 and that is when they did railings and changed a lot of things on the back porch

Ms. Allen asked what would happen if the porch became so unstable that it had to be removed according to the building official. Mr. Johnson said that was his concern—how far do he have to get into it before the building official tells him he has to redo the entire porch. Mr. Gehr said if life safety issues are raised by the building official, then the removal and rebuild would either need to be replicated in-kind or removed and rebuilt with another porch would be compatible with the structure itself. Since the water penetration has been stopped, Mr. Gehr did not think the applicants were at that point. Mr. Gehr wondered what kind of details would be lost (dentil molding, etc.) with the wrapping project. Mr. Johnson noted that there were no details, it was just a straight one-by-six board with a half-round roll to the top. There were no dentils—it was mostly plain. When he put on the wrapping he followed the design as close as possible.

Mr. Gehr said if a new case comes back in the commission would need to see a fairly scaled drawing with details of what was there and then what has been installed. The application should point out the dimensions of the half-round detail and proof that they are maintaining the visual line in the rounded edge. While the convex edge of the rounded corner but there are still points and a bump out. While the Secretary of the Interiors Standards does not approve of wrapping, it would help if the half-round element was visible. The submittal also needs to show where the laps are in the aluminum wrapping. Mr. Gehr said the commission needs to be careful about setting a precedent. There needs to be a good, sound reason. Mr. Bockmiller added that if someone sees this wrapping and they want to do it too, without unique justification the standards lose their

meaning. For the HDC to approve the application, since it is a deviation from the Design Guidelines, they need to come up with a unique justification based on the unique circumstances associated with this particular property, otherwise the rules mean nothing.

Commission members suggested submitting detailed photographs with the application of the details prior to wrapping. Mr. Johnson said he could peel back the aluminum on the south corner and photograph that for the commission's review. Mr. Bockmiller stated that he would check with the City Attorney about whether the commission could reconsider this application based on a change in information. If he gets the go ahead that providing additional information (the state of deterioration of the soffit) overrides the one-year prohibition rule, he suggested looking for a way to tweak the application to make it somewhat different to justify reopening it. Mr. Gehr suggested that a new application be submitted requesting to wrap just the soffit with aluminum between the beam line and the roof edge. A paragraph should be included about all the details that make repairing the soffit as opposed to wrapping it infeasible. The porch posts would remain wood. Ms. Allen added that Mr. Johnson was unavailable the last time so these issues could have been addressed at the last meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OLD BUSINESS

Staff-Approved Work.

Given the limited number of commission members present, this discussion items was postponed until the next meeting.

HDC Downtown Design Guidelines – Draft Letter to City Administrator.

Mr. Bockmiller summarized the commission's concerns on the material adopted at the last meeting (copy in meeting file). The first one is window graphics and the second one concerns demolition. If the commission is okay with the wording in the letter, it and the amendments will be forwarded to the City Administrator for consideration by the Mayor and City Council.

Ms. Allen asked if the Mayor and Council were to adopt the proposed text amendment and not the Design Guidelines amendments how that would affect the HDC. Mr. Bockmiller said that could happen but ultimately the City Attorney has said that the HDC is the body that ultimately decides whether a building is demolished. The language creates a process where the HDC now has a

mechanism to question whether particular demolitions would be advantageous for the City. The letter emphasizes that the safeguards go hand in hand with the amendment.

Commission members discussed the number of “A” resources in the Downtown district. A recent re-survey of the Downtown increased the number of “A” resources from the original survey done in the 1980s. Based on the most recent survey there are a little over 40 “A” resources.

Regarding the letter and the section on Window Graphics, Mr. Gehr referred to the first line of the “Window Graphics” section and whether it was staff’s intention to specifically state “. . . window graphics directly applied to the inside of the windows and/or constructed within one foot of the windows intended to be seen from the outside.” Ms. Allen recalled that this section was reworded several times because some businesses like photographers, display their product which is also an advertisement for their business. The commission wanted to make a distinction between a “graphic” and is “display.”

The commission made no changes to the text of staff’s letter.

West Antietam Street Demolition. Joel Merrbaugh who owns the Lohr Building across the street from District Court on West Antietam Street filed an application for a demolition permit to take the building down. Recently Mr. Merrbaugh considered plans to demolish the front building and keep the garage. Staff reminded him that the HDC approval was for demo of all buildings. Otherwise, staff advised that Mr. Merrbaugh would need to show how the front wall of the garage fits in with the streetscape or provide information about how the garage wall will complement the streetscape. Mr. Merrbaugh has since decided to proceed according to the plans approved by the HDC which is removal of both buildings. He may be coming forward with a site plan for a private parking lot and staff advised that landscaping, paving, curb and gutters, will be required along West Antietam Street.

The City is moving forward with the “office anchor” project. A bid was received from Bowman Development and negotiations are underway. They are anticipating submission of a site plan and HDC approvals in place prior to determining a user. No demolitions would be necessary for this project because the lot is an existing parking lot. In general, the renderings appear to mostly meet the guidelines for new construction. There are a few items that may need to be revised. By agreement, the end user cannot be an existing downtown business moving to a new space.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- June 26 is the last Civil War Sesquicentennial event. The movie, *The Conspirator* will be shown at The Bridge of Life at 7:00 p.m. This free event coincides with the 150th anniversary of the trial of the Lincoln conspirators.

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ADJOURN

It was moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn.

8/13/2015

Approved



Debra C. Calhoun – Secretary