

Michael Gehr, chair, called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 11, 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, C. Davis, S. Silas and S. Taylor. Councilmember Penny Nigh was in attendance on representing the Mayor and City Council. S. Bockmiller, Development Planner/Zoning Administrator, and D. Calhoun, Secretary, were present on behalf of the Planning and Code Administration Department.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 14, 2016:

MOTION: (Davis/Silas) So moved (to adopt the minutes as submitted).
DISCUSSION: None.
ACTION: APPROVED (Unanimous)

CONSENT AGENDA

None.

DESIGN REVIEW

None.

WORKSHOP

831 Oak Hill Avenue – Ernie Aragon – Solar Panels.

Ernie Aragon, 831 Oak Hill Avenue, Hagerstown, owner of the property, was present.

Staff explained that the commission rarely has requests for solar panels in historic districts. Mr. Aragon contacted staff for advice on whether solar panels would be an option on his rooftop. Staff noted that the commission’s design guidelines are quiet on the issue; however, there are comparable exterior features such as skylights that could be used for guidance. Mr. Bockmiller provided commission members with a copy of Hagerstown’s design guidelines and included a page from the Frederick Historic District design guidelines which recommend them on back slopes of roofs as long as they are not visible. Ms. Davis would not have a concern if solar panels are visible from a public right-of-way, as long as the roof in question is a rear roof. She noted that it is not practical to prohibit solar panels that are visible from any and all public ways because roofs are visible from many directions. For example, the back slope of the roof of this house can be seen from a side street one house away.

Mr. Aragon explained that he is only exploring whether solar panels would be permissible since Copy-Quik has been adding them on their building. He has contacted several companies about installation, but when they learn that his electric supplier is the City of Hagerstown, they back down. The chair noted that installers' lack of enthusiasm could be due to the inexpensive electric rates charged to City Light customers. Solar panels degrade over time and are not as efficient as they get older.

Back to placement of solar panels on roofs of buildings in historic districts, there was discussion about the roof form itself. If there are numerous angles on the roof, the number of panels might be reduced. Solar panels should be installed on the rear or sides of the house. Mr. Aragon pointed out that due to the way his house is situated on the lot, he would not get the benefit of a southern exposure if the solar panels were placed on the rear or the sides.

NEW BUSINESS

Main Street Design Committee.

Following up on a prior discussion about this committee, two HDC members have volunteered to attend these meetings. The Main Street Design Committee supports various elements of the Main Street mission and looks at design issues in the Main Street area. Commission members C. Davis and M. Wertman have volunteered to represent the HDC on the work group. Staff pointed out that any member who wishes may attend these meetings on behalf of the HDC. Ms. Davis added that the Main Street Design Committee meets for dinner at Bulls and Bears, beginning at 7:00 p.m. The next meeting will be February 18. Ms. Davis offered to attend the first meeting and report back to the HDC.

OLD BUSINESS

Design Guidelines Review – Summary of Work to be Performed.

(Copy of the summary is in the meeting file.) Staff provided a “Summary of Work” that was distilled from the minutes and staff notes. A draft of the revised guidelines is planned for mid-May; at that time a second review will be conducted.

Commission members had the following comments on the summary:

- Ms. Allen suggested rewording the proposed language (page 2, Chapter 4, Ordinary Maintenance, first bullet point) which to her implies the City is offering monetary assistance to property owners. That language was likely intended to mean that property

owners should consult with the HDC for guidance before their property deteriorates to the point of no return.

- Ms. Allen suggested sending realtors copies of the new Design Guidelines to raise awareness and add another opportunity to open communication. Commission members and staff discussed whether it would be possible to add flags to online resources tied to historic properties to let potential buyers know of historic district designation.

There were no additional comments on the summary. Staff will proceed with developing a draft of the design guidelines.

Other Old Business:

- 170 West Washington Street. A question was raised about whether staff had a chance to determine whether the chimney was reduced. Staff stated a photograph of the chimney was taken as it appears now, but staff has not had an opportunity to compare it with “before” photos.
- The state of Michigan is putting forth a bill that would remove historic district restrictions, under the argument that historic districts are too encumbering.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

ADJOURN

It was moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn (5:05 p.m.).

3/24/2016

Approved



Debra C. Calhoun – Secretary