

Michael Gehr, chair, called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m. on Thursday, November 12, 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, and S. Silas. P. Nigh was in attendance 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 Division.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – October 22, 2015:

MOTION: (Davis/Silas) So moved.
DISCUSSION: None.
ACTION: APPROVED (Unanimous)

CONSENT AGENDA

34-36 South Potomac Street – TMG Studios/Tracy Carr – Sign, Case No. HDC 2015-41.

106-108 North Potomac Street – William Simmelink – Replacement Windows, Case No. HDC 2015-42.

There was no opposition from the public or from the commission.

MOTION: (Davis/Silas) Mr. Chairman, I have reviewed the materials submitted in Cases HDC 2015-41, 34-36 South Potomac Street; and HDC 2015-42, 106-108 North Potomac Street, 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 the 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 the previously mentioned cases.

DISCUSSION: None.
ACTION: APPROVED (Unanimous)

DESIGN REVIEW

None.

WORKSHOP

831 Oak Hill Avenue – Ernesto Aragon – Solar Panels.

Mr. Aragon was not present.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OLD BUSINESS

Maryland Theatre – 21 South Potomac Street – Replace Rooftop HVAC System (Case No. HDC 2014-23)

Mr. Gehr reported that the Maryland Historic Trust (MHT) is requiring that a screen wall be constructed to hide the mechanical equipment recently installed on the roof. The Theatre’s contractor would like to order materials for the screen wall and wanted to know what color panel to order. They could either match the red of the back of the building or another color, however, black is not an option. A copy of the July 10, 2014, minutes are in the meeting file. At the July 10 meeting, former HDC member, Vicki Hrabal, suggested gray. The unit sits on the front corner of the auditorium section. Mr. Gehr stated that this was the only location where the unit could be placed due to the location of the existing duct work. Ms. Davis agreed that the color of the panel should be gray, and Mr. Silas was not in favor of adding another color to the façade. Ms. Allen had no opinion one way or the other. Mr. Crumrine was in favor of gray.

Potential Landmarks List.

As a point of information, Ms. Allen noted that one of the buildings on the Potential Landmarks list is falling into disrepair. “Ravenswood” in the Kenly Avenue area is currently vacant and will be going to foreclosure soon.

Design Guidelines Review – Downtown.

Discussion picked up with Chapter 6 of the Downtown Design Guidelines:

Chapter 6 – Rehabilitation (Storefronts).

- Ms. Allen asked if this section could be tweaked to encourage the reuse of storefronts for storefront uses. Mr. Bockmiller replied that the HDC does not regulate use, just design. Mr. Gehr stated that if there is a change of use, the new use would need to take into account the historic storefront.
- Add a section on modern materials for storefronts, such as fypon or other materials that replicate the details of wood. Ms. Davis added that engineered products are not detectable from the street.

Chapter 6 – Rehabilitation (Building Elements).

- The use of modern materials needs to be integrated into the text, especially with regard to windows.
- Commission members would welcome a presentation by the City’s Chief Code Official, Blaine Mowen, about when the ADA requirements trump historic preservation concerns. Additionally, Mr. Bockmiller will research how other jurisdictions handle building codes. Guidance needs to be added to aid the HDC in considering projects where building codes are an issue.
- Add language about the concepts of universal design since they are being required more frequently.

Chapter 6 – Rehabilitation (Building Elements – Windows).

- Language should be updated to state that visibility as it applies to modern windows only applies to public ways and spaces; add clarification that alleys are not to be considered as “public ways.”
- Add definition a definition for “alley” and clarify that wider, double-lane alleys will be considered “public ways.”

Chapter 6 – Rehabilitation (Building Elements – Roofing).

- Add language about new modern materials, many of which are undetectable from the street.
- Add a section on rooftop solar systems.

Chapter 6 – Rehabilitation (Building Elements – Porches and Stairways).

- Check on where to move existing sections on new construction for porches and decks.
- Add a section on materials issues.
- Add language about appropriate porch lighting.

Chapter 6 – Rehabilitation (Materials – Masonry).

- Concerning “Masonry,” language needs to stress the importance of proper masonry repointing. There should be a large text box with cautionary language. Add language that addresses the consequences of power washing old brick.
- Add definition a definition for “alley” and clarify that wider, double-lane alleys will be considered “public ways.”

Chapter 6 – Rehabilitation (Materials – Terra Cotta, Metal).

- Terra cotta elements should be preserved.
- There may no longer be any buildings downtown with metal elements.
- Add a section that addresses tile, such as tile entrance ways.

Chapter 6 – Rehabilitation (Detail).

- Add a discussion about new materials (synthetic lumber, HardiPlank for siding, AZAK for tongue-and-groove applications).
- There may no longer be any buildings downtown with metal elements.

Chapter 6 – Handicapped Access.

- Create a chapter that addresses handicapped access in detail.

Chapter 6 – “A Resource” Buildings.

- This section needs to be updated.
- Add a map indicating the location of the A Resources.
- Create an Appendix for this section; it seems out of place in Chapter 6.
- Add an address for “Verdant Mead” since most people do not know it is the stone house in Stone House Square (page 36).

Chapter 7 – Signage.

- Text needs to reflect the window signage regulations recently adopted by the Mayor and City Council.
- Under “Historic Signage,” add text that addresses old signage painted on buildings (e.g., the Leiter Building). Due to their age, these types of signs become a fabric of the building.
- Under “Awnings and Canopies,” language should be added that awnings need to be made of material intended for that purpose; photos need to be updated.
- Concerning “Banners,” staff reported that these may no longer need to come before the HDC since they are now regulated in the signage section of the Zoning Ordinance. Banners were being used for permanent business signage. Staff will review the current regulations for cross applicability to the HDC process.
- The section dealing with the application procedure for signage is out of place. Add a section dealing with applications in general.

Chapter 8 – Site Design.

- Regarding “Plantings,” it was noted that the commission usually considers “hardscape” cases; landscaping would only be reviewed under larger projects where site plans are required.
- Add a section under “Walls and Fences” that addresses retaining walls, including an explanation of each type of retaining wall.
- Change the section labeled “Appurtenances” to “Appurtenances *and Accessory Buildings*”; add language that restricts the number and volume of appurtenances so that they are not out of character with the primary structure (or historic resource??). It was decided that appurtenances and accessory structures would be better addressed in the Residential Design Guidelines. The name of the section might need to be changed.
- Under “Sidewalk Paving,” separate sidewalks that are on private property and public sidewalks.
- “Trash and Dumpster Enclosures” – there is a new City regulation that requires all dumpsters to be enclosed.
- “Telecommunications” – Look at other jurisdictions to see how they are handled elsewhere. Section should be renamed “Utilities” to include modern additions such as solar panels. Satellite dishes may fall under Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations. Staff will check to make sure this is the case.
- “Cemeteries” – Staff conducted exhaustive research on this when the text amendment was added to the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. The language in the guidelines should be revised to be consistent.
- “Subdivisions and Site Plans” – This section is mostly for infill development. Add language that addresses maintaining an historical setting; Mr. Bockmiller will research Planning laws to see if anything has changed.
- “Air Conditioners” – Move to the new “Utilities” section.

Appendices.

- The Glossary needs to be updated. Ms. Davis will send Mr. Bockmiller a list of terms that should be added. This section may need to be revisited to see if any terminology has been added that needs to be included.
- “Maps” should include a map showing all four districts on one map.
- Districts on the National Register should be shown compared to the Local Districts.
- Add a section on demolition in general and should include the work done by the Economic Development Hardship Subcommittee. Applicants need to know what will be expected to be included with the demolition request (what is going back in the place of the demolished building).

Mr. Bockmiller will consolidate the minutes and his notes into a worksheet for the HDC to review before he begins rewriting the guidelines.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Zoning Ordinance amendments affecting Historic District Commission review went into effect on October 30.

ADJOURN

It was moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn (6:10 p.m.).

12/10/2015

Approved



Debra C. Calhoun – Secretary