

Michael Gehr, chair, called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 14, 2018, 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. Davis, S. Silas, and M. Wertman. K. Maher, Director; M. Flick, Planner; and D. Calhoun, Secretary, were present on behalf of the Planning and Code Administration Department.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: May 24, 2018:

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

CONSENT AGENDA

140 West Antietam Street – WLR Holding Company, Inc./Randall S. Simpson, Trustee – Revision to Previously Approved Application, Case No. HDC 2017-44.

96 West Washington Street – Christopher Montgomery – Window Signage, Case No. HDC 2018-19.

No one was present in the audience with comments or concerns about this case.

MOTION: (Davis/Wertman) Mr. Chairman, I reviewed the materials submitted in Cases HDC 2017-44, 140 West Antietam Street; and HDC 2018-19, 96 West Washington 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 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 a Certificates of Appropriateness to the applicants for Cases 2017-44 and HDC 2018-19.

DISCUSSION: None.
ACTION: APPROVED (Unanimous)

DESIGN REVIEW

58 South Potomac Street – MSB Architects – Revision to Previously Approved Application, Case No. HDC 2018-04.

Janelle Horst and Scott Bowen, MSB Architects, 1165 Imperial Drive, Hagerstown, Maryland, were present.

Staff Report: (A copy of the staff report is in the meeting file.) This building is a B resource in the Downtown Local Historic District. The applicant received approval earlier this year to construct a 46'8" x 42'2" addition on the east side of the property where the existing Beer Garden is located. The applicant is proposing a revision to remove the third floor of the addition and install a fypon cornice and flat roof with TPO rubber roofing material. The addition would be constructed in a manner where the third floor could be added at a later date. The basement level openings would be removed. All other aspects of the original application and approval have not changed. Staff recommended approval. All modifications required in the original approval remain in place.

Applicant/Commission Discussion: Mr. Bowen explained that at the time the application was originally approved the owner was not seeking state funding for the project. Mr. Bloesel is now seeking state funding and the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) had issues with the previous proposal for the three story addition. As a result, the new addition has been made uniquely different in order to discern between the new construction and the old construction. One option is a two-story addition; if funding is sufficient, the third story would be added immediately. Otherwise, the third floor would be added in five or ten years. Mr. Bloesel understands that he would have to come back for approval of the third story.

The MHT did not like the approved design because it was too equal to the front. In the previous version the plans called for opening up some windows on the second floor. They will not be doing much work to the existing building on the exterior. The shape of the roof of the addition is really the only change.

Ms. Wertman noticed that on the plans for the two-story option, the window bay looks different behind the balcony. Mr. Bowen explained these deviations were done intentionally and depending on the proportion of the building, they are proposing different elements. Mr. Gehr asked if there would be any changes to the elevation along the alley. Mr. Bowen stated that at the third floor levels, there will be windows and nothing else. There may or may not be a basement. If they decide to do a basement, an application will be filed for that work.

Mr. Gehr believed the motion could be worded to include both options. Because both options are being bid out, Mr. Bowen wanted to make sure that either version would be acceptable to the HDC so the bid is accurate.

- MOTION:** (Wertman/Davis) Mr. Chairman, I have inspected the project plans and the properties in question, and if constructed in accordance with these plans, and we can approve both plans (the two-story and the three-story) because it is compatible with the character of the district as discussed in the previous application and will generally be in harmony with the Architectural Design Guidelines for the Downtown Historic District and the character of the adjoining properties. Therefore, I move that the HDC grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the applicant for Case No. HDC 2018-04.
- DISCUSSION:** None.
- ACTION:** APPROVED (Unanimous)

24 East Antietam Street – Justin M. Anderson – Stair Replacement, Case No. HDC 2018-20.

Justin M. Anderson, Bowman Development, 10228 Governor Lane Boulevard, #3002, Williamsport, Maryland, was present.

Staff Report: (A copy of the staff report is in the meeting file.) This building is a B resource in the Downtown Local Historic District. The applicant has replaced the stairway on the west side of the house. The new stairs are made of wood and extend from the ground level to the second floor exterior exit. Staff recommended approval. The wood shall be painted or stained once the wood has seasoned. It cannot remain untreated.

Applicant/Commission Discussion: Mr. Anderson asked if the commission could give him any guidance as to stain color for the steps. Commission members advised Mr. Anderson that it did not have a preference as to color. According to Mr. Anderson, the former stairs had no color.

- MOTION:** (Silas/Davis) Mr. Chairman, I have inspected the project plans and the property in question, and if constructed in accordance with these plans, the project is compatible with the character of the district for the reasons that the materials, architectural detailing, are generally in harmony with the Architectural Design Guidelines for the Downtown District and the character of the adjoining properties. Therefore, I move that the HDC grant a Certificate of Appropriateness to the applicant for Case No. 2018-20.
- DISCUSSION:** None.
- ACTION:** APPROVED (Unanimous)

WORKSHOPS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

49 Jonathan Street – Handicap Ramp.

Mr. Bockmiller wanted the Historic District Commission members to be aware that he administratively approved a building permit for a handicap ramp at this property. The ramp is in the back, and as long as it has a plain black metal railing, he had no issues with it.

Recent Building Collapses.

Commission members and staff discussed the two buildings that staff discovered were collapsing this week, in particular 43-47 West Washington Street. Ms. Maher explained that the damage to the building was not visible from the street or from the alley. A former owner had demolished portions of the interior on a center section of the building and the structure was exposed to the elements for years. The resulting water damage caused the building to start collapsing. The City's concern now is that the building is going to fall into the street.

Ms. Wertman was concerned about how many other buildings in downtown that could have similar issues and problems will not become evident until it is too late. She stressed that the City must become proactive so collapses and demolitions by neglect do not have to happen in the first place. Issues need to be caught earlier before damage is irreversible. Ms. Maher indicated that she has discussed this matter with the Code Administration side of the department. The Vacant Structures Program kicks in only when a building is 100% unoccupied.

Some suggestions discussed included:

- Engaging tenants who might be able to help identify problems before they get too far out of hand.
- The City's Main Street Program could help with starting a dialogue with tenants and owners. Sponsor a "come to the table meeting" with all involved.
- Start a friendly conversation with owners.
- Determine how the City could leverage relationships with insurance companies so they are aware of conditions in the buildings they are insuring.
- Creating financing packages for repairs; repairs of this magnitude are expensive.
- The City applied for Appalachian Regional Commission grant for water meter vaults since many renovations will require buildings to be sprinklered.
- Find out from the parties involved what they foresee as the issues that keep buildings from being fixed up.
- The City's First Third Grant program and the private investment it sparked.

Ms. Maher will update the information staff currently has on vacant structures and convey the commission's concerns to the inspection staff. She will share what she finds out with the HDC and possibly have either Paul Fulk, the Neighborhood Services Manager, and/or Pamela Harris, the inspector assigned to Downtown, to attend a future meeting. The commission wants to know if there are any other "ticking time bombs." Ms. Wertman stated that once roadblocks to renovations are identified she can reach out to other Main Street communities for advice on how they addressed these issues in their towns. Ms. Wertman promised to advise HDC members when the next Main Street meeting will be held.

OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Davis was concerned that all the funding for the Maryland Theatre Expansion Project is not in place. Ms. Maher explained that the Theatre has bank loans to cover the gap but they are still fund raising so they do not have to use the bank money. Officials are hoping that donations will cover the gap.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

ADJOURN

It was moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn (5:43 p.m.).

6/28/2018

Approved



Debra C. Calhoun – Secretary